

# Shifting Responsibilities. Thucydides on losing to Brasidas

*Ezra la Roi*

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Interpreting Thucydides
- 3 Narratology, historiography and interdisciplinarity
- 4 Shifting responsibility for Amphipolis
  - 4.1 Narratological apparatus
  - 4.2 Plot and temporal relation
  - 4.3 Focalisation
  - 4.4 Characterisation
- 5 Linguistic-narratological analysis
- 6 Shifting responsibility for Brasidas' victories
  - 6.1 Brasidas captures Megara
  - 6.2 The 'Acanthian Tryptic'
- 7 Conclusion

References

Appendices

## I INTRODUCTION

Imagine the following scenario. A commander in a war has lost an important city to the enemy. Upon return, he is banished for that. Fortunately, he has the opportunity to present his own version of the events, because he is writing a history of the whole war. How would that version represent the events? What would the historical value of that version be?

Thucydides, a general in the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE) not only had this opportunity, but he is the earliest, most extensive and most trusted historical source for the events of the Peloponnesian War.<sup>1</sup> As he himself notes, his exile allowed him to consult more sources and people in order to present a more comprehensive reconstruction of the events.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, Thucydides' version of the fall of Amphipolis in 424 BCE has appeared objective to many, because a clear apologetic tone seemed to be absent.<sup>3</sup> Westlake has, however, shown that there are some objections to this view, because Thucydides fails to mention some salient details in the Amphipolis narrative (*Th.* 4.102–108) and obtains some self-justification.<sup>4</sup> Although it is revolutionary for its time, Westlake did not want to go so far as to claim that Thucydides' Amphipolis narrative is actually framing historical events, that is, providing a selective and simplified reconstruction that is aimed at shifting Thucydides' responsibility for the loss of Amphipolis. At most, he points at some rhetorical aspects.

<sup>1</sup> For an extensive overview of alternative later sources, see Gomme 1945, 29–84.

<sup>2</sup> *Th.* 5.26.5.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Grundy 1948; Gomme 1956.

<sup>4</sup> Westlake 1962. A considerably larger amount of research

has been conducted on the second Amphipolis battle in book 5, because both Brasidas and the much debated Cleon die because of it. For further references, see Howie 2005.

This paper argues that Westlake's critical approach can be improved in three ways. First of all, using narratology to analyse Thucydides' version provides more textual evidence for his framing than for example Westlake's close reading approach has yielded so far. The use of narratology is essential for a critical evaluation of the narrative form, that is, the report of events as a causally and temporally connected whole, that Thucydides' historical reconstruction takes.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, the idea that Thucydides is subjective in framing his defeat by Brasidas can be supported by extending the scope to a comparison with other attacks by Brasidas throughout book 4 since the primary narrator (the main narrator of the text) has different rhetorical goals in those instances. Thirdly, a linguistic-narratological analysis (as developed in section 4 and applied in 5 and 6) shows that an accurate assessment of the historical value of Thucydides' text can only be made when several passages of the same type (e.g. attacks by Brasidas) are compared, because Thucydidean narrative is strongly literary and rhetorical in its setup.<sup>6</sup> Its use of narrative techniques affects which individuals and circumstances are represented as responsible for the outcome of historical confrontations, as will be shown by the differences between the portrayal of Brasidas at Amphipolis and his portrayals elsewhere. To sum up, this paper examines how the narrative techniques in Thucydides' reconstruction represent responsibility for the outcome of battles in which Thucydides plays a role compared to that of battles in which he does not. To this end, I will first go through some relevant changes in view of Thucydides as a historian (section 2), relate those to some important narratological differences between ancient and modern historiography and motivate the interdisciplinary benefit of applying narratology to ancient historiography (section 3).

## 2 INTERPRETING THUCYDIDES

"Conceptions of Thucydides are never value-free", which makes every interpretative shift of his work change the historical value of his reconstruction.<sup>7</sup> For centuries Thucydides has been admired as the first objective historian antiquity had given birth to, especially due to the allegedly modern historical method he describes in his so-called 'Archaeology' (*Th.* 1-23), his methodological introduction that is programmatic for his work as a whole. Any inadequacies or ellipses in his historical reconstruction were explained analytically by pointing at the unfinished nature of his work or at corruptions of the text due to transmission.

The last century has seen multiple major shifts in interpretation that have changed our conceptions of Thucydides and the value of his text.<sup>8</sup> Two of them are especially relevant for the upcoming linguistic-narratological analysis. As has already been formulated by Cornford in 1907, Thucydides' concept of history is radically different from our modern one. One conspicuous lack on Thucydides' part is that he often fails to consider socio-economic and political relations in his historical reconstruction.<sup>9</sup> He prefers to focus on psychological causes and motivations as historical explanations, while the modern distinction between underlying and immediate causes of events is not made. Thucydides' narrative also strongly resembles the patterns of myths and fictional stories, much more so than modern historiography does. Thucydides' historical reconstruction, for example, assigns importance to irrational reasons such as fortune or fears, which testifies to his debt to epic and tragedy.<sup>10</sup> The second relevant shift concerns the

<sup>5</sup> A useful collection of articles that follow a similar line of approach to Thucydides' text is Tsakmakis/Tamiolaki 2013.

<sup>6</sup> For rhetorical aspects of Thucydides' reconstructions, see Hunter 1973. For both rhetorical and literary aspects, see especially Rood 1998a and 1998b.

<sup>7</sup> Rood 1998, 16. Considering that the scholarship on Thucydides is overwhelmingly large, I have limited

this paragraph to the aspects that are important for the upcoming analysis.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Rood 1998, 3-14.

<sup>9</sup> See Tamiolaki 2013, 40-46; Hornblower 1996, 240.

<sup>10</sup> Cornford 1907, 79-173; Rood 1998b; Howie 2005. The Sicilian expedition and its protagonist Nicias owe a clear debt to tragedy, Hunter 1973, 123-148. See De Jong 2014,

objective quality of his work as claimed by its narrator, the chronicler of the historical reconstruction as created within the narrative that is distinct from the biographical author Thucydides.<sup>11</sup> One key innovation was that the narrator *convince*s the narratee of its objectivity, for example because of the rhetoric in the programmatic ‘Archaeology’. The term narratee is used in narratology to distinguish between the addressees of a narrator internal (e.g. characters) and external (e.g. historical readers) to the narrative, the latter being the type I refer to with narratee.<sup>12</sup> Because of the narrator’s promise in the introduction to carefully and personally examine every source before making his own analysis, the narratee is convinced that the entire reconstruction, offered almost completely without reference to sources, is truthful.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Thucydides’ historiographical description follows patterns of inevitability and anticipation that are problematic if his work is to be seen as objective historical reconstruction. The speeches, for instance, often mirror the narrated events, but more importantly, the outcome of confrontations can be anticipated by the narrator as if it was predetermined from the start by giving the reader some subtle clues.<sup>14</sup> For example, the tragic defeat in Sicily is anticipated by the narrator by foreshadowing its outcome prior to the narration of the events and using verbal echoes of the description of the Athenian victory in Pylos recorded several books earlier.<sup>15</sup>

These shifts into a more critical attitude towards the authority of Thucydides’ text tie in well with findings from narratology.<sup>16</sup> An important distinction narratologists make is that between a biographical author and a textually constructed narrator, thus between Thucydides as historical figure and the narratorial persona created by the narrator in the text.<sup>17</sup> In other words, if the narrator of the history of the Peloponnesian war describes how he skilfully analysed his sources to come to his objective reconstruction, it is naïve to believe that the biographical author did that in every instance. Thus, the fact that the distinction between the narratorial persona of the skilled historian and the biographical author was not made in the past will have supported an objective interpretation of the Amphipolis narrative, because the ‘unapologetic’ primary narrator was simply equated with the character Thucydides in the battles surrounding Amphipolis.<sup>18</sup>

### 3 NARRATOLOGY, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

These interpretative shifts have consequences for the historical value of Thucydides’ text. A common difference between modern historiographical texts and literary fiction lies in the assumption by the narratee that in the former, the author himself relates what really happened, whereas with the latter, it is only the narrator’s claim to do so.<sup>19</sup> Since the primary narrator of Thucydides’ text carefully shapes his narratorial

167–172 for an overview of the discussion of applying narratology to historiography by prominent figures in early narratology such as Barthes, Genette and White.

<sup>11</sup> The narratological distinction between biographical author and intratextual narrator is discussed by De Jong 2014, 17–18.

<sup>12</sup> De Jong 2014, 28–33. For an extensive treatment of the rhetorical assets of this introduction, see Woodman 1988, 1–47.

<sup>13</sup> Two other factors that are thought to grant him his authority are his complex style and his ability to draw the reader into the events, Connor 1985, 7–17.

<sup>14</sup> Hunter 1973, 23–41. Although she does not use narratological terminology, Hunter is somewhat of a pro-

to-narratologist in terms of her keen rhetorical analyses of Thucydides’ narrative.

<sup>15</sup> See Cornford 1907, 201–220; Rood 1998b for ample further references.

<sup>16</sup> That Hornblower 1996 has used narratology in his commentary on Thucydides makes his commentary all the more valuable, also as comparative material to Gomme 1956 as someone still strongly influenced by an analytic school of the interpretation of Thucydides.

<sup>17</sup> De Jong 2014, 18–19.

<sup>18</sup> The fact that very few scholars have paid attention to the rhetoric of this episode in my opinion shows its effectiveness.

<sup>19</sup> Rood 1998, 9–14.

persona in the text and foreshadows the outcomes of events, it is rewarding to acknowledge the literary and rhetorical nature of his text and keep the biographical author and the primary narrator separate.<sup>20</sup> A literary characteristic of his work is, for example, the primary narrator's frequent use of *anachrony*, that is, telling events out of their chronological order. As we shall see, this is also very much the case in book 4. Furthermore, the narrator's ability to disclose the perspectives and feelings of historical agents is at odds with the format of an objective report, but strengthens its rhetorical power to convince the narratee.<sup>21</sup> Last of all, Thucydides' text has a narrative format that aims to represent the reality of the past in a logical, coherent series of causes, but is limited in terms of how many historical factors it can list as relevant for the outcome of specific confrontations.<sup>22</sup>

Narratology is especially equipped for identifying the narrative techniques used in Thucydides' alleged historical reconstruction and enables us to consider the historical implications many of those techniques carry in Thucydides' version of the events. Ideally, such a linguistic-narratological analysis is aided by a comparison to archaeological and other historical evidence, but this type of evidence is extremely poor for Thucydides' time period.<sup>23</sup> It is therefore all the more important to be critical towards the form of the reconstruction and the rhetorical goals connected to it. The application of a linguistic-narratological analysis thereby has an interdisciplinary benefit, because it will better inform historians and archaeologists about the rhetoric that resides in the narrative form of their sources. Even though the linguistic-narratological approach aims to show that Thucydides' reconstruction in subtle ways seems to frame how and why past events happened as they did, it does not set out to say that he completely lacks historical value as a historical source. It is merely aimed at pointing out the rhetorical narrative form of some of his reconstructions.

#### 4 SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR AMPHIPOLIS

The battle at Amphipolis of 424 took place after Brasidas' conquests of other cities in the Thracian region and before his conquests of Torone and Scione (4.110–114 and 120–123). The battle of Amphipolis differs from them, precisely because it is *not* presented as a straightforward victory on Brasidas' part and because Thucydides himself plays an important role in the events. Considering that the primary narrator intertwines the defeat narrative of Amphipolis with Thucydides' successful defence of Eion is of profound rhetorical importance. In the Amphipolis narrative he assigns more historical impact to other circumstances on top of the inevitable influence of Brasidas in order to subtly shift the responsibility for the fall of Amphipolis from Thucydides to other causes. That Thucydides is, however, able to defend Eion decreases the chance of a negative evaluation by the reader of his loss of Amphipolis. Many narrative techniques thus work together to point in the following interpretative direction: Thucydides really did the best he could considering his enemy and the circumstances.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The justification of a literary approach is supported by the recent growth of unitarian approaches to Thucydides' narrative, which assume that 'the work as we have it reflects a coherent interpretation of the war', Rood 1998, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Tamiolaki 2013, 42 and Fulda 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Fulda 2014.

<sup>23</sup> The archaeological analyses I did find confine themselves either to the second Amphipolis battle, e.g. Howie 2005,

231–230 and Jones 1977, or the relationship between Cleon and the Athenian campaign to Amphipolis in 422, e.g. West and Merritt 1925 and Pritchett 1973.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Westlake 1962, 278. An additional argument that supports the possibility of this rhetorical reading is that ancient biographies of Thucydides (that were often based on information from the author in question) also present his loss at Amphipolis as strongly compensated by his rescue of Eion, Düren/Will 2017, 126.

#### 4.1 NARRATOLOGICAL APPARATUS

The narrative techniques in Thucydides' text that contribute to the causal scheme of historical explanation can reconfigure or frame past events in a (perhaps unrealistic) way that turns it into a subjective interpretation of the causes. It is therefore important to consider the historical implications of the narrative techniques that are used. These implications will predominantly be investigated across the following narratological dimensions: 1) plot 2) temporal relation 3) focalisation and 4) characterisation.

#### 4.2 PLOT AND TEMPORAL RELATION

The *plot* of a story is its causally and temporally connected chain of events. It is the result of a narratorial selection and structuring of events.<sup>25</sup> In historiographical narration, especially that of a more literary type, plots are (by their very nature) an interpretation of how past events occurred. After all, not every circumstance can be recorded and the order of the narrated aspects is in itself an interpretation of causality. Given the complexity of the concept and its difficult relationship with actual events, only a rough distinction can here be made between complex and simple plots.<sup>26</sup> The former applies when many temporally separated events are combined into and presented as one causally connected textual unit. The latter applies when several temporally close events are presented as one causally connected unit, as for example happens in smooth attacks which meet with almost no resistance. Within war narratives the plot is made more complex by the narrator's choice to slow down the pace of narrating the events, e.g. for narratorial judgements or other types of reflection. That further separates the causally and temporally connected events. Of course, the distinction is not a simple binary one, but constitutes a continuum from simple to progressively complex.

Both the causal and the temporal dimension of the plot can be articulated in a range of different ways. Apart from the explicit causal connections the narrator signals between events, the causal dimension of plot is for a large part determined by the succession of events that imply causality because they are told in successive narrative order.<sup>27</sup> For example, when a general's tactics are recorded before his attack and later turn out to be successful, this suggests to the reader that his plan is an essential cause of his victory. This is especially the case when other causes are not recorded.<sup>28</sup> Expectations then meet the outcomes. A remaining problem is to determine whether the plan-outcome pattern reflects historical reality or whether it is simply a framing projection by the narrator.

Temporal relation can mirror actual chronological occurrence, but narrators can also choose to tell events out of chronological order, anachrony in narratological terms.<sup>29</sup> Both narrators and characters can refer to past events through a flashback to explain events under discussion, an *analepsis* in narratological terms. They can also flash forward to future events for a range of goals, a *prolepsis* in narratological terms. A narratorial decision to foreshadow a future event within historiographic narration implies that it was necessary to recount that event at this precise moment to facilitate the right interpretation of the episode. Apart from being narrated in different orders, events can be told once, several times or iteratively (once for more times), which is the *frequency* dimension of time.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the *duration* of the time spent on the event, being the amount of text, can differ from the actual amount of time it will have taken.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the narratological term 'plot', see Kukkonen 2014.

<sup>26</sup> For a different application of the term, see White 1980.

<sup>27</sup> For a good overview of the narratological dimension of time in Thucydides' narrative, see Rood 2004.

<sup>28</sup> This phenomenon often occurs with Brasidas, as I will

discuss in section 5.

<sup>29</sup> De Jong 2014, 78-92.

<sup>30</sup> De Jong 2014, 99-101.

<sup>31</sup> Rood 1998, 11. Direct speech entails that the two overlap, whereas an ellipse takes up no textual space.

#### 4.3 FOCALISATION

A conspicuous liberty that classical historiographical texts take is to embed the perspectives of historical agents in wars up to the point that it seems highly unlikely that the narrator could have had that knowledge.<sup>32</sup> The narratological term for this narrative technique is *focalisation*, being “the submission of (potentially limitless) narrative information to a perspectival filter”.<sup>33</sup> Whereas the narrator can present the events through his own focalisation, he can also choose to embed the perspective of characters in the events. This embedding can be explicit with nouns or verbs of emotion, perception and thought, but it can also be implicit. The type and amount of information that occurs in the embedded focalisation depends on whether the narrator or character is internal or external to the events about which information is shared. If s/he participated in the events, then s/he is internal, but if s/he did not, s/he is external.<sup>34</sup> The Thucydidean narrator is somewhat difficult to categorise in these respects, because on the one hand he participated in the battle at Amphipolis, but on the other hand he relies on others for information about the other events and the narratorial persona of the skilled historian allows him to look inside characters’ heads.<sup>35</sup>

Within narratives focalisation serves a rhetorical end for the primary narrator, as the perspectival information tells the narratee why individuals act as they do and what the course of events means for those involved in the events. In other words, it *characterises* individuals in a positive or negative way while at the same time explaining why events happened the way they did according to the primary narrator. In terms of historical value, this means that a perspective embedded by the narrator can also be a projection by the narrator (e.g. to meet the rhetorical goals of his narrative) that attributes responsibility for an outcome to people’s motives. Therefore, the fact that a selective narrator is responsible for plot, temporal relations and perspectives, should be remembered and weighed against all factors that will have been important for the outcome of a confrontation.

#### 4.4 CHARACTERISATION

Individuals can play a defining role in the course of historical events and their *characterisation* helps to understand their role and impact. Since Aristotle, the character (or personality) of individuals was long seen as subordinate to action in the study of character, but since then it has been shown that an individual’s identity is not only constructed by actions.<sup>36</sup> After all, both narrators and characters can ascribe characteristics to an individual, inviting the narratee to consider what this means for the turn of events and how the two interact. Character thus is the result of a dynamic process of characterisation, which entails “ascribing information to an agent in the text so as to provide a character in the story world with a certain property or properties”.<sup>37</sup> The ascription of information to an agent, however, can take place in more subtle ways than has been acknowledged until now, because texts tend to “predetermine the evaluative stance of the reader” towards individuals in narratives.<sup>38</sup>

In Thucydides’ narrative the character of important historical agents is only selectively sketched and serves interpretative rhetorical purposes. Thucydides’ narrative, for example, contains a set of narratorial judgements of characters, made during or after their introduction or at their exit from the narrative, that

<sup>32</sup> De Jong 2014, 170.

<sup>33</sup> Jahn 2007, 94.

<sup>34</sup> Rood 1998, 12.

<sup>35</sup> *Th.* 1.22.

<sup>36</sup> Jannidis 2013 and Margolin 2007 provide helpful over-

views of the issues when dealing with the study of character.

<sup>37</sup> Jannidis 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Jannidis 2013.

highlight aspects of character that are important to the course of events.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the vocabulary in the characterisation becomes meaningful to the narratee by building on character types from predecessors such as Herodotus and Homer.<sup>40</sup> In book 4, for example, the Homeric influence on depicting Brasidas is unmistakable, as his exploits are presented as a Homeric *aristeia*, a relatively fixed set of the most heroic accomplishments of an Homeric warrior such as success at the battlefield and a heroic death.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from narrators, individuals can characterise other individuals in the narrative. Here, the narratological distinction between primary narrator, secondary narrator and characters is beneficial, because involved historical agents can also evaluate the character of others, either in speech, as secondary narrator, or because their thoughts or feelings are recorded in embedded focalisation by the primary narrator. Since narratorial judgements in Thucydides' narrative are well-timed, these kinds of textual evaluation are also likely to be rhetorically well-timed and to contribute to the version the primary narrator wants to present. What is more, the primary narrator's choice to record these characterisations carries the historical implication that these characterisations were historical factors in the outcome of events, if other causes are not pointed out by him. The selective focus on these characterisations instead of other historical causes thereby assigns more relevance to the narrator's interpretation and will seem problematic and literary to a modern historian.<sup>42</sup>

## 5 LINGUISTIC-NARRATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The plot of the battle at Amphipolis is considerably complex, because its causal structure is expanded by the primary narrator with analepses, causal circumstances (more than are given for the other attack by Brasidas), embedded focalisations, narratorial judgments and intertwining with the related battle at Eion.<sup>43</sup> The following table summarises the passage's setup and techniques. The italicised words in the Content column are highly similar to the linguistic formulation of the narrative technique. Fear (*δεδιώς*) in 4.105, for example, is the type of embedded focalisation that the primary narrator assigns to Brasidas.

The overview of table 1 shows how stylised and rhetorical this version of the battle at Amphipolis and Eion in fact is. As with many of the battles at the end of book 4, perceptions are pivotal, since embedded focalisation is used in abundance by the primary narrator as historical factor to explain how the outcome came about. In 106.3-4, for example, the considerations of the Amphipolitans are embedded to explain why they handed over the town to Brasidas *on their own account*.<sup>44</sup> This has two effects. On the one hand, the Amphipolitans and the failing other general present there, Euclides, thereby receive the largest responsibility for the fall, since Thucydides was not there yet.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, it emphasises the persuasive effect of Brasidas' speech to the Amphipolitans. The fact that his mild (*μετρίαν* *Th.* 4.105) appearance has the force to bring about victory is confirmed through a verbal echo in the embedded focalisations of the Athenian response to Brasidas' victory at Amphipolis (*Th.* 4.108.2).

<sup>39</sup> Bakker 2013, 23 convincingly showed how the timing behind these authorial judgements complies to the interpretation he presents of the events.

<sup>40</sup> The evaluation of Themistocles in *Th.* 1.138 is, for example, modelled on the evaluative vocabulary of Herodotus, Bakker 2013, 28-29.

<sup>41</sup> See Hornblower 1996, esp. 38-61 but more in depth by Howie 2005.

<sup>42</sup> See White 1980.

<sup>43</sup> The intertwining with the battle at Eion is effected by vague causal and temporal distinction between the two

episodes in *Th.* 4.107 using *μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο* 'after this'.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Westlake 1962, 282.

<sup>45</sup> Westlake 1962, 283: "Euclides was powerless to prevent, or even to delay, this decision, and the phrase used here in referring to him (...) is perhaps chosen, in preference to his name, in order to underline his responsibility for safeguarding Athenian interests at Amphipolis." For the problematic omission of the amount of forces Euclides must have had at his disposal, see Westlake 1962, 291-281.

<i>Text</i>	<i>Narrative techniques</i>	<i>Content</i>
102.1-4	Analepses	Announcement of Brasidas' expedition against Amphipolis and history of attempts leading to Athenian conquest of Amphipolis.
103.1-2	Embedded focalisation	Brasidas arrives in Aulon and in Bromiscus and hurriedly marches on through the night and bad weather <i>wanting to escape notice</i> of the Athenians inside Amphipolis.
103.3-4	Retardation	Elaboration on Brasidas' Argilian accomplices.
103.4-5	Expectation matches outcome	At exactly the right moment and <i>unnoticed</i> , Brasidas conquers the bridge near Amphipolis with the help of the Argilians, taking advantage of the bad weather and the inefficient guarding of the bridge.
104.1-3	Embedded focalisation Reported narrator	Brasidas' success causes <i>confusion</i> inside the city walls and suspicions amongst themselves. <i>It is reported</i> that Brasidas could already have captured Amphipolis, but he does not.
104.4-5	Embedded focalisation	The Amphipolitans, together with the general present there, send for Thucydides who is residing at Thasos. Thucydides comes as quickly as he can, <i>wishing</i> to capture at least Eion, if he fails to help Amphipolis.
105	Embedded focalisation and speech	Because of <i>fear</i> of Thucydides' arrival, Brasidas hurries to persuade the Amphipolitans to join his side.
106.1-2	Embedded focalisation	Amphipolitan <i>considerations</i> lead them to revolt against Athens and hand over the city to Brasidas.
106.3-4	Hypothetical narration	Brasidas <i>would have captured</i> Eion as well if it had not been for Thucydides.
107	Embedded focalisation	Thucydides prepares for Brasidas' attack on Eion. Brasidas indeed attacks Eion with a tactical <i>plan</i> but fails, although other cities join his side.
108.1-3	Embedded focalisations	The Athenians are <i>alarmed</i> because of the capture of the important city Amphipolis and its effect on the surrounding cities that now want to revolt even more because of their <i>awe</i> at Brasidas' <i>mild</i> ways of conquest.
108.4-7	Narratorial judgement Omni-temporal narration	The Athenians are overconfident about the consequences, because of their recent defeat in Boeotia, the <i>untrue</i> statements of Brasidas and <i>their human nature which is more inclined to rely on careless hope</i> . The Athenians, however, still send out garrisons to the Thracian cities. Brasidas requested reinforcements from his government but was refused any.

Table 1. Summary of the episode and its narrative techniques.



The positive portrayal of Brasidas' first attack on Amphipolis is strengthened because the primary narrator mentions the bad weather during his campaign (*Th.* 4.103.1–2 & 103.5) and highlights his speed (*Th.* 4.103.5–104.5), good timing and element of surprise (*Th.* 4.103.4–104.1).<sup>46</sup> The preceding flashbacks (*Th.* 4.102.2–4) that recorded how difficult it has been for the Athenians to conquer Amphipolis support this positive characterisation. Furthermore, the similarities between Brasidas' plan (*Th.* 4.103.2) and the outcome (*Th.* 4.103.5) and the elaboration by the primary narrator of the effects on Athens help to characterise Brasidas' influence as inevitable.<sup>47</sup> Last of all, the stamina of Thucydides' opponent is enhanced by the more subtle narrative technique of the *reported narrator* (λέγεται 'it is said' *Th.* 4.104.2) for which the primary narrator does not take responsibility.<sup>48</sup> By reporting that it is said that Brasidas could already have taken in Amphipolis at that moment, the expectation that he will be stopped by anyone is lowered *before* the cities' considerations to revolt are reported. In other words, this piece of uncheckable information signals to the reader that it is not to be expected that Brasidas will be withheld from his attempt to conquer Amphipolis.

In *Th.* 104.5 the rhetorical twist to the positive image of Brasidas starts most emphatically, because the primary narrator records Thucydides' reaction to the message that Brasidas has attacked Amphipolis. In the examples I highlight in bold the parts that are either (part of) narrative techniques or signal clues to the interpretation I will discuss.

καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀκούσας **κατὰ τάχος** ἑπτὰ ναυσὶν αἱ ἔτυχον παροῦσαι ἔπλει, καὶ **ἐβούλετο φθάσαι μάλιστα μὲν οὖν τὴν Ἀμφίπολιν, πρὶν τι ἐνδοῦναι, εἰ δὲ μή, τὴν Ἡϊόνα προκαταλαβών** (*Th.* 4.104.5)<sup>49</sup>

And he on hearing this sailed **in haste** with seven ships which happened to be at hand, **wishing above all to secure Amphipolis before it yielded, or, failing that, to seize Eion.**<sup>50</sup>

Thucydides' behaviour in fact mirrors Brasidas' behaviour at Amphipolis by reacting *very fast* and with a *specific aim*.<sup>51</sup> The aim is, however, probably historically too specific since that part of his consideration is matched exactly by the outcome, his successful defence of Eion (*Th.* 4.107.1–2). Also, the fact that Thucydides successfully prepares for an attack, mirrors Brasidas' preparation prior to his conquests of other allied Thracian cities. Additional evidence for the rhetorical exaggeration of Thucydides' impact is the subtle, implicit praise the embedded focalisation of Brasidas gives him and the way in which the hypothetical narration effectively steers the narratee into the right interpretative direction.<sup>52</sup> After all, the primary narrator records in 4.105 how Brasidas' fear of Thucydides *causes* him to press on with his conquest of Amphipolis, something that is dubitable from a historical perspective since Brasidas would have needed to hear from the Amphipolitans that they send for Thucydides and, more importantly, this is the only time that Brasidas acts out of fear.<sup>53</sup> It is therefore more probable that the narrator added the aspect of fear on behalf of Brasidas to strengthen the positive portrayal of Thucydides, since he is the only one

<sup>46</sup> In my view Westlake 1962, 278–279 is too naïve in saying “There is no reason to believe that Thucydides tends to overrate the qualities shown by Brasidas at Amphipolis because he was himself a victim of them.”

<sup>47</sup> The choice to simplify the amount of Athenian perspectives on Brasidas' influence to a generally shared one might therefore be on purpose.

<sup>48</sup> De Jong 2014, 23. Note that Westlake 1962, 279 is not sure how to interpret the choice of the narrator to insert this reported narrator.

<sup>49</sup> Edition Jones/Powell 1942.

<sup>50</sup> *Th.* 4.104.5 (translation Smith 1920).

<sup>51</sup> The linguistic form of his aim echoes Brasidas' aim in 4.103.2: βουλόμενος 'wanting'. Contrast Westlake, 1962, 283: “Its inclusion suggests that even at this stage he had little confidence in the ability of Eucles and his supporters to resist for as long as a single day.”

<sup>52</sup> For hypothetical narration, see De Jong 2014, 76 and Prince 1988.

<sup>53</sup> I disagree with Westlake 1962, 283 who comments on this sentence: “There is every reason to believe that this sentence is an authentic report of what Brasidas thought.”

the great Brasidas allegedly feared. What is more, the narratorial speculation in hypothetical narration praises Thucydides in a subtle way to predetermine a positive evaluation by the narratee.<sup>54</sup>

καὶ οἱ μὲν τὴν πόλιν τοιοῦτῳ τρόπῳ παρέδοσαν, ὁ δὲ Θουκυδίδης καὶ αἱ νῆες ταύτῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ὄψε κατέπλεον ἐς τὴν Ἡϊόνα. καὶ τὴν μὲν Ἀμφίπολιν Βρασίδης ἄρτι εἶχε, **τὴν δὲ Ἡϊόνα παρὰ νύκτα ἐγένετο λαβεῖν: εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐβοήθησαν αἱ νῆες διὰ τάχους, ἅμα ἔω ἂν εἶχετο.** (*Th.* 106.3–4)

In this way they gave up the city, and on the evening of the same day Thucydides and his ships sailed into Eion. Brasidas had just got possession of Amphipolis, and **he missed taking Eion only by a night for if the ships had not come to the rescue with all speed, it would have been taken at dawn.**

This ahistorical speculation by the narrator of what would have happened if Thucydides had not been at Eion selectively marks only the positive side of Thucydides' actions, even though this speculation cannot be checked by the reader. Thereby it indirectly praises Thucydides for warding off bigger losses and is an explicit signal of the rhetorical aims in this passage.<sup>55</sup> Contributing to the positive portrayal of Thucydides is the fact that the positive image of Brasidas is slightly broken down in the last part of this narrative section (*Th.* 4.108).<sup>56</sup> Because the effectiveness of Brasidas' speech to the Amphipolitans stressed in 4.108.2 is contradicted by two narratorial comments in 4.108.4–5, the narratee's positive evaluation of Brasidas that had already been decreased by Thucydides' effective defence of Eion is adjusted. The first is a generalising comment on people's tendency to rely on opportunistic hopes more than on reasoned judgements, which repeats the moral of the responsible parties for the fall of Amphipolis. The second is that Brasidas' statements were enticing but not true (*ἐφολκὰ καὶ οὐ τὰ ὄντα Th.* 4.108.5). The choice to adjust the positive image of Brasidas here aligns with the rhetorical goals of this passage, whereas it would have been out of place in the confrontations that Brasidas won easily.

To conclude, the battle of Amphipolis has an intricate rhetorical structure that effectively shifts the responsibility for the fall of Amphipolis from Thucydides to Brasidas, the Amphipolitans and Eucles. Its rhetorical power lies in its subtlety in predetermining the evaluative stance of the narratees towards Thucydides' conduct.

## 6 SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR BRASIDAS' VICTORIES

The impact of Brasidas' attacks during the Peloponnesian war was so great that, during the war, he was already compared to Achilles, and his fame evolved into an idiomatic expression for defecting from the Athenian side.<sup>57</sup> That he dominates the latter half of book 4 is therefore not surprising, but the Thucydidean sketch of his achievements and character do more than just emphasise that. It *frames* the attacks

<sup>54</sup> Because hypothetical narration is by its very nature ahistorical since it concerns events that did not take place, it would be very rewarding to examine for which narratological purposes ancient historians use this technique. Up until now research on this technique has largely been limited to historical interpretations of the techniques, Pearson 1947, Flory 1988 and Gribble 1998.

<sup>55</sup> Characteristic of Westlake's approach is that he also noted the focus on speed and the hypothetical remark but does

not commit himself to concluding something from it, Westlake 1962, 284. I also strongly disagree with Gomme 1956, 579 who says 'This and 104.5 are all that Thucydides allows himself in self-defence.'

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Westlake 1962, 276 and Rood 1998, 72–74.

<sup>57</sup> Howie 2005, 213–214. *Ar. Pax* 640 records the expression, Olson 1998, 203.

by Brasidas in a powerful way, because Brasidas as a person is presented as the most important historical factor responsible for the outcome of the confrontation.<sup>58</sup> He is able to conquer several cities allied to the Athenians with considerable ease. Whereas for the fall of Amphipolis the primary narrator shifts away responsibility from Thucydides to others, here the responsibility is shifted almost in its entirety to Brasidas to make him the most important historical factor. It thereby gives a remarkable amount of responsibility for the success rate of the confrontations to Brasidas and does so by (ab)using narrative techniques similar to those used in the Amphipolis episode.

The following passages all focus on Brasidas as an attacker of Athenian allies (as at Amphipolis) and are therefore suitable as comparative material for the portrayal of Brasidas' role in the Amphipolis episode at the end of book 4.<sup>59</sup>

- Brasidas captures Megara, 4.70–74
- Brasidas captures Acanthus, Torone and Scione, 4.84–88, 110–116 and 120–123

#### 6.1 BRASIDAS CAPTURES MEGARA

4.66-68	The Athenians conspire with Megarian traitors and make an attempt at Megara
4.69	The Athenians decide to aim for Nisaea because of an obstacle and Nisaea eventually surrenders
4.70	Brasidas happens to be near, requests a Boeotian force and plans to conquer Nisaea
4.71	Brasidas is denied access to Megara
4.72	The Boeotian forces Brasidas requested arrive and fight the Athenians
4.73	Brasidas' army did exactly what was needed and by mere appearance captures Megara
4.74	After his victory, Brasidas goes back to Corinth to go on with preparing his Thracian campaign

Table 2. Summary of the Megara episode and its preceding context.

Brasidas is able to capture Megara in a way that embarrasses the Athenians.<sup>60</sup> The previous attempt on Megara by the Athenians and a revolting Megarian party was quite tough. As such, it contrasts with the easy victory by Brasidas. The primary narrator relates how the Athenians conspire with Megarian traitors in an attempt to capture Megara and the terms on which the Athenians are supposed to do that.<sup>61</sup> Despite their stratagems, the Athenians face an 'obstacle' (*Th.* 69.1 ἐναντίωμα) in their attempt to capture Megara and only fulfill the promise of taking Nisaea, leaving Megara to Brasidas.<sup>62</sup> This contrasts strongly with Brasidas who subsequently only needs preparation and appearance to take Megara and does not need to fight with his own army.

The complexities of the plot leading up to the introduction of Brasidas (in *Th.* 4.70) enhance the surprise of his presence near Megara and the sudden help of a Boeotian army. The surprise of Brasidas'

<sup>58</sup> Howie 2005, 212. I consider Hornblower 1996, 39 to be a bit too hesitant in acknowledging that Thucydides' heroic portrayal of Brasidas would have led to historical distortions.

<sup>59</sup> Brasidas' expedition with king Perdiccas in *Th.* 124–133 is left out of consideration because that passage is not an attack by Brasidas on Athenian allies. His other smaller attacks (e.g. Acte or Potideia) in book 4 are left out because they lie outside the scope of this research.

<sup>60</sup> Rood 1998, 61–82 discusses Brasidas' attacks on Megara, Acanthus, Torone, Scione and Mende, but does not list

all the narrative techniques analysed here. One important difference with the current research that will be discussed here is that Rood favours a less 'local' significance of Thucydides' positive portrayal of Brasidas and focuses on the relevance of his sweeping victories for the peace after the second battle of Amphipolis.

<sup>61</sup> *Th.* 66.1 tells of this Athenian habit in an analeptic iterative narration.

<sup>62</sup> *Th.* 66.4 reports on the promise.

presence also stems from the fact that the narrator has kept this information to himself until now, *paralipsis* in narratological terms, and only introduces him when it becomes important to the development of the narrative.<sup>63</sup> Narrative order thus overrides chronological sequence, as his introduction is an anachrony. There are two more aspects of Brasidas' introduction that are important for the portrayal of his conquest. The first is that the unexpected nature of Spartan help was already anticipated in *Th.* 69.2, when the Nisaeans' considerations whether or not to surrender to the Athenians are embedded by the primary narrator. They did not expect (οὐ νομίζοντες) any speedy rescue from the Peloponnesians, an expectation that is strongly contradicted for the narratee by the surprising introduction of Brasidas in *Th.* 4.70. The second aspect becomes clear in the words used to introduce Brasidas.

Βρασιδᾶς δὲ ὁ Τέλλιδος Λακεδαιμόνιος κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον ἐτύγχανε περὶ Σικυῶνα καὶ Κόρινθον ὦν, **ἐπὶ Θράκης στρατείαν παρασκευαζόμενος**. (*Th.* 70.1)

At this time Brasidas son of Tellis, a Lacedaemonian, happened to be in the neighbourhood of Sicyon and Corinth, **preparing a force for use in the region of Thrace**.

The mention of Brasidas' Thracian campaign is salient, because it prepares the narratee for the fact that his future campaign is a well-prepared one, since Brasidas' preparation was interpreted as an argument for his victories in the portrayal of his attack of Amphipolis.

The disagreement amongst the Megarians whether they should let him in has been anticipated by Brasidas. The primary narrator embeds the considerations of two groups of Megarians (*Th.* 4.71) in order to explain Brasidas' return to his army, but, luckily, Brasidas had prepared for this, as the primary narrator records *before* the refusal of the Megarians.

καὶ ὡς ἦσθετο τῶν τειχῶν τὴν ἄλωσιν, δεισας περὶ τε τοῖς ἐν τῇ Νισαίᾳ Πελοποννησίοις καὶ μὴ τὰ Μέγαρα ληφθῆ, πέμπει ἕξ τε τοὺς Βοιωτοὺς κελεύων κατὰ τάχος στρατιᾶ ἀπαντῆσαι ἐπὶ Τριποδίσκον, (...) καὶ αὐτὸς ἔχων ἦλθεν (...) οἰόμενος τὴν Νισαίαν ἔτι καταλήψεσθαι ἀνάλωτον. ὡς δὲ ἐπύθετο ( ἔτυχε γὰρ νυκτὸς ἐπὶ τὸν Τριποδίσκον ἐξελθῶν, ἀπολέξας τριακοσίουσ τοῦ στρατοῦ, πρὶν ἔκπυστος γενέσθαι, προσῆλθε τῇ τῶν Μεγαρέων πόλει λαθῶν τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ὄντας περὶ τὴν θάλασσαν, βουλόμενος μὲν τῷ λόγῳ καὶ ἅμα, εἰ δύναιτο, ἔργῳ τῆς Νισαίας πειρᾶσαι, τὸ δὲ μέγιστον, τὴν τῶν Μεγαρέων πόλιν ἐσελθῶν βεβαιώσασθαι. καὶ ἡξίου δέξασθαι σφᾶς, λέγων ἐν ἐλπίδι εἶναι ἀναλαβεῖν Νισαίαν. (*Th.* 70.1-70.2)

And when he heard of the capture of the walls, fearing for the safety of the Peloponnesians in Nisaea and apprehensive lest Megara should be taken, he sent for the Boeotians requesting them to come in haste with an army and to meet him at Tripodiscus (...). He (...) himself set out (...), thinking that he would arrive before Nisaea had been taken. But when he learned the truth - for he happened to have gone out by night to Tripodiscus - he selected three hundred of his own army, and before his approach was known reached the city of Megara unobserved by the Athenians, who were down by the sea. His plan was, ostensibly - and really, too, if it should prove possible - to make an attempt upon Nisaea, but most of all to get into the city of Megara and secure it. And he demanded that they should receive him, saying that he hoped to recover Nisaea.

<sup>63</sup> For *paralipsis*, see De Jong 2014, 59. Hornblower 1996, 238 does not think the withholding of this information is significant, but I would say that the surprise enhances the contrast with Athenian struggles for Megara, as Brasidas

takes Megara surprisingly easily without needing to fight the Athenians himself.

Here again the narrative order is paramount to grasp the rhetoric of the Thucydidean reconstruction of the events, because Brasidas' pre-confrontational plans will match the outcomes, something which the narratee must notice.<sup>64</sup> This not only frames Brasidas as a good strategian and gives his actions an air of inevitability, but also suggests that Brasidas really anticipated everything at that time. As this is not the only instance we discussed where Brasidas' actions fit the outcomes perfectly, it needs to be considered that the primary narrator is projecting the outcomes onto Brasidas' expectations to glorify the strength of his attacks and attribute more historical impact to him than could have been the case, in order to explain the many revolts by Athenian allies.<sup>65</sup>

An even more strongly underlined inevitable narrative pattern in this episode is the one leading to Brasidas' victory, which is amplified by a small narratorial prolepsis. After the clash between Boeotian and Athenian armies (*Th.* 4.72), Brasidas and his army present themselves near Megara and chase away the Athenians. Thus, they win the battle without fighting, in an actual 'battle of perceptions'.<sup>66</sup> The inevitability of this outcome is both narratively established by pre-conquest focalisations by Brasidas and his army matching the outcome and underlined by the slight narratorial prolepsis.

μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο Βρασίδης καὶ τὸ στράτευμα (...) οἰόμενοι σφίσι ἐπιέναι τοὺς Ἀθηναίους καὶ τοὺς Μεγαρέας ἐπιστάμενοι περιορωμένους ὀποτέρων ἢ νίκη ἔσται. καλῶς δὲ ἐνόμιζον σφίσι ἀμφοτέρα ἔχειν, ἅμα μὲν τὸ μὴ ἐπιχειρεῖν προτέρους μηδὲ μάχης καὶ κινδύνου ἐκόντας ἄρξαι, ἐπειδὴ γε ἐν φανερωῖ ἔδειξαν ἐτοῖμοι ὄντες ἀμύνεσθαι, καὶ αὐτοῖς ὥσπερ ἀκονιτὶ τὴν νίκην δικαίως ἂν τίθεσθαι, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Μεγαρέας ὀρθῶς ξυμβαίνειν: εἰ μὲν γὰρ μὴ ὤφθησαν ἐλθόντες, οὐκ ἂν ἐν τύχῃ γίγνεσθαι σφίσι, ἀλλὰ σαφῶς ἂν ὥσπερ ἡσσηθέντων στερηθῆναι εὐθύς τῆς πόλεως: νῦν δὲ κἂν τυχεῖν αὐτοὺς Ἀθηναίους μὴ βουλευθέντας ἀγωνίζεσθαι, ὥστε ἀμαχητὶ ἂν περιγενέσθαι αὐτοῖς ὧν ἔνεκα ἦλθον. ὅπερ καὶ ἐγένετο (*Th.* 73.1–73.3)

After that Brasidas and his army, thinking that the Athenians would come against them, and feeling assured that the Megarians would wait to see which side would be victorious. And they thought that matters stood well with them in both of two respects: in the first place, they were not forcing an engagement and had not deliberately courted the risk of a battle, although they had at least plainly shown that they were ready to defend themselves, so that the victory would justly be accredited to them almost without a blow; and at the same time they thought that things were turning out right as regards the Megarians as well. For if they had failed to put in an appearance there would have been no chance for them, but they would clearly have lost the city at once just as though they had been defeated; but by this move there was the possible chance that the Athenians themselves would not care to fight, with the result that they would have gained what they came for without a battle. And this is just what happened.

Brasidas' army reflected on (οἰόμενοι, ἐνόμιζον) the right options, as the proleptic narratorial summary in 73.3 confirms (ὅπερ καὶ ἐγένετο) before explaining how exactly it happened from 73.4 onwards.<sup>67</sup>

A last characterising conclusion to the battle is the following:

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Hunter 1973, 23–41 for this narrative device in a different passage.

<sup>65</sup> Even though this argument is uncheckable from a historical perspective, the fact that this pattern occurs more often turns into a cumulative argument that seems to indicate that some of the Thucydidean versions of battles are framed as determined from its outset. This device also appears in battle descriptions by Caesar, Adema *forthc.*

<sup>66</sup> Rood 1998, 63.

<sup>67</sup> Hornblower 1996, 241–242 rightly notes that things went as Brasidas had foreseen, but forgets to emphasise that the consideration is presented as from the whole army. This to my mind adds more weight to their decision than when it would have been only Brasidas' consideration.

οὕτω δὴ τῷ μὲν Βρασίδα αὐτῷ καὶ τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν πόλεων ἄρχουσιν οἱ τῶν φευγόντων φίλοι Μεγαρήs, ὡς ἐπικρατήσαντι καὶ τῶν Ἀθηναίων οὐκέτι ἐθελησάντων μάχεσθαι, θαρσοῦντες μᾶλλον ἀνοίγουσι τε τὰς πύλας καὶ δεξάμενοι καταπεπληγμένων ἤδη τῶν πρὸς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους πραξάντων ἐς λόγους ἔρχονται (*Th.* 73.4)

So then, finally, the Megarians who were friends of the exiles plucked up courage and opened the gates for Brasidas and the commanders from the various cities, **feeling that he had won the victory and that the Athenians had finally declined battle**. And receiving them into the town they entered into a conference with them, the party which had been conspiring with the Athenians being now quite cowed.

The perspective of the Megarians who let Brasidas enter as ‘victor’ and who considered the Athenians cowards is focalised in the subjective ὡς-clause.<sup>68</sup> The first clearly praises Brasidas and the latter negatively characterises the Athenians, as no other reasons for the Athenian refusal of battle are offered in this episode. In other words, the primary narrator seems to selectively record reasons that complement the framing of Brasidas’ success story as a contrast to the vain Athenian struggles to capture Megara prior to Brasidas’ arrival.

## 6.2 THE ‘ACANTHIAN TRYPTIC’

4.84	Brasidas arrives in <i>Acanthus</i> but the Acanthians are divided whether to admit him.
4.85-87	Brasidas gives a long persuasive speech.
4.88	The Acanthians are persuaded and decide to revolt against the Athenians.
4.110	Brasidas conspires with traitors in <i>Torone</i> and plans a surprise attack.
4.111-113	Brasidas’ aims are fulfilled, he takes <i>Torone</i> and causes chaos.
4.114	Brasidas secures possession of <i>Torone</i> and delivers a speech similar to the one he held in <i>Acanthus</i> .
4.120	Brasidas sails to <i>Scione</i> , calls a meeting and delivers a speech similar to the ones he held in <i>Acanthus</i> and <i>Torone</i> .
4.121-4.122	Brasidas aims to help other cities revolt, but a truce, which according to the Athenians was issued before <i>Scione</i> ’s revolt, officially denies him that. He maintains that the truce was false.
4.123	<i>Mende</i> also defects to Brasidas thinking it was allowed, but the Athenians refute that.

Table 3. Summary of the episodes.

The primary narrator remarkably chose to anticipate the impact of Brasidas’ attacks in the Thracian region in *Th.* 4.80 with a long evaluative prolepsis. Thus, he flashes forward to the end of the whole war, thereby not following chronological sequence anymore, in order to positively evaluate the role of Brasidas in the war *before* he will get to narrating the specific chronological events with Brasidas.

<sup>68</sup> Rijksbaron 2006, 123. ὡς+causal participle is different from ἄτε+causal participle, because the former entails that the responsibility for the reason lies on the subject of the main verb (here: Megarians), but with the latter on the speaker/narrator.

καὶ τότε προθύμως τῷ Βρασίδᾳ αὐτῶν ξυνέπεμψαν ἑπτακοσίους ὀπλίτας, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους ἐκ τῆς Πελοποννήσου μισθῷ πείσας ἐξήγαγεν. αὐτὸν τε Βρασίδαν βουλόμενον μάλιστα Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἀπέστειλαν (προυθυμήθησαν δὲ καὶ οἱ Χαλκιδῆς), ἄνδρα ἔν τε τῇ Σπάρτῃ δοκοῦντα δραστήριον εἶναι ἐς τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἐξήλθε πλείστου ἄξιον Λακεδαιμονίους γενόμενον. τὸ τε γὰρ παραυτίκα ἑαυτὸν παρασχὼν δίκαιον καὶ μέτριον ἐς τὰς πόλεις ἀπέστησε τὰ πολλά, τὰ δὲ προδοσίᾳ εἶλε τῶν χωρίων, ὥστε τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις γίγνεσθαι ξυμβαίνειν τε βουλομένοις, ὅπερ ἐποίησαν, ἀνταπόδοσιν καὶ ἀποδοχὴν χωρίων καὶ τοῦ πολέμου ἀπὸ τῆς Πελοποννήσου λώφησιν: ἔς τε τὸν χρόνον ὕστερον μετὰ τὰ ἐκ Σικελίας πόλεμον ἢ τότε Βρασίδου ἀρετὴ καὶ ξύνεσις, τῶν μὲν πείρα αἰσθημένων, τῶν δὲ ἀκοῇ νομισάντων, μάλιστα ἐπιθυμίαν ἐνεποιεῖ τοῖς Ἀθηναίων ξυμμάχοις ἐς τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους. (*Th.* 4.80.5–81.3)

So, on the present occasion, the Spartans gladly sent with Brasidas seven hundred helots as hoplites, after he drew the rest of his forces from the Peloponnese by the inducement of pay. As for Brasidas himself, the Lacedaemonians sent him chiefly at his own desire, though the Chalcidians were also eager to have him. He was a man esteemed in Sparta as being energetic in everything he did, and **indeed, after he had gone abroad, he proved invaluable to the Lacedaemonians. For, in the present crisis, by showing himself just and moderate in his dealings with the cities he caused most of the places to revolt, and secured possession of others by the treachery of their inhabitants, so that when the Lacedaemonians wished to make terms with Athens, as they did ultimately, they had places to offer in exchange for places they wished to recover and were able to secure for the Peloponnesus a respite from the war; and in the later part of the war, after the events in Sicily, it was the virtue and tact which Brasidas had displayed at this time - qualities with which some had had experience, while others knew of them by report - that did most to inspire in the allies of the Athenians a sentiment favourable to the Lacedaemonians. For since he was the first Lacedaemonian abroad who gained a reputation for being in all respects a good man, he left behind him a confident belief that the other Lacedaemonians were also of the same stamp.**

The prolepsis anticipates how Brasidas' impact on the Thracian region led to peace and even establishes a positive appreciation of the Spartans in the Athenian mind. Its more important rhetorical value is, however, that the primary narrator gives the narratee an (historical) interpretation of Brasidas' impact *before* his impact is actually narrated at, for example, Acanthus or Amphipolis.<sup>69</sup> The emphasis on his historical impact thereby prepares for the convincing victory narratives of Brasidas, most conspicuously illustrated in the battles at Acanthus, Torone and Scione, as the inevitability of their outcomes is mirrored in their narrative form. Amphipolis is the odd one out in that narrative section, because other rhetorical goals are also at stake there.

The framing of Brasidas' attacks as inevitably successful in the three battles is most clearly expressed in the following ways:

- Their plot is kept relatively simple;
- Brasidas' speech in Acanthus is framed as paradigmatic to enhance its historical implications;
- The expectations–match–outcome format highlights the inevitable nature of Brasidas' success.

The plot in all three battles is relatively simple. There are virtually no occurrences of real fighting resistance, little recording of other causal factors and the amount of temporally separated events in one

<sup>69</sup> Rood 1998, 69–82 rightly emphasises how the prolepsis reverses the reader's perspective on past Spartan misfortunes to upcoming fortunes by looking forward to the peace in 421 and to 413. In my opinion, he misses the

more local rhetorical effect of the prolepsis, as I describe it above.

plot is also limited.<sup>70</sup> The narrative form mirrors the ease with which Brasidas was able to conquer these cities, at least so far as the Thucydidean narrative reconstructs it in this way.<sup>71</sup>

The dimension of temporal relation is, however, intricate because the primary narrator analeptically repeats the format of Brasidas' speech in Acanthus to describe how Brasidas spoke in and conquered Torone and Scione. Since the Acanthians were Brasidas' first Thracian victims, the primary narrator records his speech in full (*Th.* 4.85–87) and caps it with an evaluative narratorial judgement.<sup>72</sup>

καὶ καταστάς ἐπὶ τὸ πλῆθος (ἦν δὲ οὐδὲ ἀδύνατος, ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιος) εἰπεῖν ἔλεγε τοιάδε (*Th.* 4.84.2)

So he came before the people – and **indeed, for a Lacedaemonian he was not wanting in ability as a speaker** – and addressed them as follows

Brasidas' speech in Acanthus serves as a paradigmatic one, because it is referred to and actually reused in the narrative on Torone's and Scione's fall (appendix 1).<sup>73</sup> One salient difference between the speeches at Acanthus and Scione on the one hand and the one at Torone on the other hand is that the speech at Torone took place and is recorded after Brasidas' conquest of Torone. In Acanthus and Scione the order of the narration is different and more effectively presented as inevitable, because the primary narrator embeds the speeches *in between* Brasidas' pre-conquest expectations and the matching outcomes.<sup>74</sup> This placement assigns a greater historical impact to Brasidas' speeches, because not many other causes are signalled. Given the nature of Brasidas' attack on Torone as a secret one, it is therefore not that surprising that a persuasive speech would be out of place as means of conquest there.<sup>75</sup> The fact that the speech in Torone is also recorded according to the blueprint of the Acanthian one can be explained by its narratological *tellability*, its noteworthiness to the primary narrator.<sup>76</sup> Apparently the narrator deems its recording tellable enough to retard the speed of the narration for its sake, because it contributes to the rhetorical goals of his portrayal of Brasidas.<sup>77</sup> In this way the primary narrator can characterise Brasidas in a positive way and conclude the tryptic in Scione, the place where he also starts to break down Brasidas' positive image.<sup>78</sup>

The strongest pattern of inevitability woven into the Acanthian tryptic is expressed by the pre-conquest focalisation matching the outcomes illustrated by *verbal echoes* (appendix 2).<sup>79</sup> The considerations recorded before the eventual conquest narratively confirm the narratee's expectation that Brasidas' actions were just what the situation asked for. Brasidas' historical impact thus is portrayed as the prime historical factor for the rapid losses of Athenian ally cities, something that contrasts strongly with the portrayal of Brasidas when he has to face Thucydides.

<sup>70</sup> See *Th.* 84, 88, 103 and 121.

<sup>71</sup> Compared to the Amphipolis narrative, the role of focalisation as a historical explanation is also more marginal.

<sup>72</sup> Bakker 2013, 27. Again the narratorial judgement is well-timed.

<sup>73</sup> *Th.* 114.1–2 and 120.3. For its paradigmatic nature, see Rood 1998, 71–72 and Hornblower 1996, 276–287.

<sup>74</sup> Especially these passages mirror the Aristophanic reception of Brasidas mentioned earlier (among others in footnote 60).

<sup>75</sup> The wording repeats the verbal stem λαθ- for escaping notice in 110.2.

<sup>76</sup> Baroni, 2014.

<sup>77</sup> It could also be said that the speech fits in well with the portrayal of Lecythus as an *Homeric* victory in *Th.* 4.115–116, but this lies outside the scope of this research. For its Homeric aspects, see Hornblower 1996, 354–356.

<sup>78</sup> The fact that his pre-battle consideration at 4.121.2 does not match the outcomes in 4.122–123 might be a cue to the reader that the pattern of inevitability does not apply to Brasidas anymore, especially considering the emphatic narratorial condemnation of Brasidas in 4.123.1.

<sup>79</sup> Hunter 1973, 37 used a similar scheme for the similarities between the speeches and the events.



The comparison between Brasidas' attacks in book 4 shows that Thucydides' alleged historical reconstruction is to a large extent guided by rhetorical purposes. The narrative form given to the other attacks by Brasidas in book 4 strongly mirrors the primary narrator's framing of Brasidas' inevitable historical impact to explain the rapid Athenian losses of ally cities, something the reader can trace back in the use of relatively simple plots, techniques of focalisation, characterisation and steering of the narratee's interpretation by the primary narrator. The differences with the Amphipolis episode are highly significant and point to a different kind of framing, that is, the positive framing of Thucydides' conduct at Amphipolis and Eion. Its stylised form, tactical devaluation of Brasidas and subtle praise of Thucydides together implement the idea that Thucydides did the best he could considering his enemy and the circumstances.

The cumulative argument presented here shows that biographical motivations can play an important role in shaping the reconstruction of battles. Even though biographical readings have been associated with analytic schools of interpretation, the narratologically supported approach presented here is very much in line with the unitarian approach which considers Thucydides' narrative a "coherent interpretation of the war".<sup>80</sup> These rhetorical insights are essential for assessing the historical value of Thucydides' text, as the evaluation of responsibility in wars is almost never completely represented in the narrative form of the historical reconstruction. Interdisciplinarily these insights caution archaeologists and historians about how to interpret the historical value of Thucydides' reconstructions, since his reconstructions are guided by different communicative goals than our modern historical analyses would pursue.

## REFERENCES

### Primary sources:

- Jones, H.S./J.E. Powell, 1942: *Thucydides Historiae*, Oxford.  
Olson, S.D., 1998: *Aristophanes Peace*, Oxford.

### Modern works:

- Adema, S.M., *forthc.*: Encouraging Troops, Persuading Narratees: Pre-battle Exhortations in Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* as a Narrative Device.  
Allan, R.J., 2013: History as Presence. Time, Tense and Narrative Modes in Thucydides, in A. Tsakmakis/M. Tamiolaki (eds), *Thucydides Between History and Literature*, Berlin/Boston, 371-389.  
De Bakker, M.P., 2013: Character Judgements in Thucydides, in A. Tsakmakis/M. Tamiolaki (eds), *Thucydides Between History and Literature*, Berlin/Boston, 23- 40.  
Baroni, R., 2014: Tellability, in P. Hühn (ed.), *The Living Handbook of Narratology (LHN)*.  
Connor, W.R., 1985: Narrative Discourse in Thucydides, in M. H. Jameson (ed.), *The Greek Historians Literature and History*, Saratoga, 1-17.  
Düren, A/W. Will. 2017: *Pseudo-Plutarch über der Zehn Redner, Markellinos Leben des Thukydidides*. Stuttgart.  
Flory, S., 1988: Thucydides' Hypotheses about the Peloponnesian war, *The American Philological Association* 118, 43-56.  
Fulda, D., 2014: Historiographic Narration, in P. Hühn (ed.), *The Living Handbook of Narratology (LHN)*.  
Gomme, A.W., 1945: *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides. Vol 1*, Oxford.  
Gomme, A.W., 1956: *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides. Vol. 3*, Oxford.  
Gribble, D., 1998: Narrator Interventions in Thucydides, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 118, 41-67.

<sup>80</sup> Rood, 1998, 17.

- Grundy, G.B., 1948: *Thucydides and the History of his Age*, Oxford.
- Hornblower, S., 1996: *A Commentary on Thucydides. Vol 2*, Oxford.
- Howie, J.G., 2005: The Aristeia of Brasidas, in F. Cairns (ed.), *Papers of the Langford Latin Seminar*, Cambridge, 207-284.
- Hunter, V., 1973: *Thucydides: the Artful Reporter*, Toronto.
- Jahn, M., 2007: Focalization, in M. Jahn (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, Cambridge, 94-108.
- Jannidis, F., 2013: Character, in P. Hühn (ed.), *The Living Handbook of Narratology (LHN)*.
- De Jong, I.J.F., 2014: *Narratology and Classics: a Practical Guide*, Oxford.
- Jones, N., 1977: The Topography and Strategy of the Battle of Amphipolis in 422 BC, *Classical Antiquity* 10, 71-104.
- Lang, M., 1995: Participial Motivation in Thucydides, *Mnemosyne* 48, 48-65.
- Margolin, U., 2007: Character, in D. Herman (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, Cambridge, 66-79.
- Pearson, L., 1947: Thucydides as Reporter and Critic, *The American Philological Association* 78, 37-60.
- Prince, G., 1988: The Disnarrated, *Style* 22-1, 1-8.
- Pritchett, W.K., 1973: The Woodheadean interpretation of Kleon's Amphipolitan Campaign, *Mnemosyne* 26, 376-386.
- Rood, T., 2006: Objectivity and Authority, in A. Rengakos/A. Tsakmakis (eds), *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, Leiden/Boston, 225-249.
- Rood, T., 2004: Thucydides, in I.J.F. de Jong/R. Nünlist (eds), *Time in Ancient Greek Literature*, Leiden/Boston, 131-146.
- Rood, T., 1998a: *Thucydides: Narrative and Explanation*, Oxford.
- Rood, T., 1998b: Thucydides and his Predecessors, *Histos* 2, 230-67.
- Tamiolaki, M., 2013: Ascribing Motivation in Thucydides. Between Historical Research and Literary Representation, in A. Tsakmakis/M. Tamiolaki (eds), *Thucydides Between History and Literature*, Berlin/Boston, 41-72.
- Tsakmakis, A/M. Tamiolaki, 2013: *Thucydides between History and Literature*, Berlin/Boston.
- West, A.B./B.D. Merrit, 1925: Cleon's Amphipolitan Campaign and the Assessment List of 421, *American Journal of Archaeology* 29-1, 59-69.
- Westlake, H.D., 1962: Thucydides and the fall of Amphipolis, *Hermes* 90, 276-287.
- White, H., 1980: The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality, *Critical Inquiry* 7-1, 5-27.
- Woodman, A.J. 1988. *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*. London/Sydney.

Greek	Translation
<p>καὶ ξύλλογον τῶν Τορωναίων ποιήσας <b>ἔλεξε τοῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀκάνθῳ παραπλήσια, ὅτι</b> οὐ δίκαιον εἶη οὔτε τοὺς πράξαντας πρὸς αὐτὸν τὴν λήψιν τῆς πόλεως χείρους οὐδὲ προδότας ἠγεῖσθαι (οὐ γὰρ ἐπὶ δουλείᾳ οὐδὲ χρήμασι πεισθέντας δρᾶσαι τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ἀγαθῷ καὶ ἐλευθερίᾳ τῆς πόλεως) οὔτε τοὺς μὴ μετασχόντας οἶσθαι μὴ τῶν αὐτῶν τεύξεσθαι: ἀφίχθαι γὰρ οὐ διαφθερῶν οὔτε πόλιν οὔτε ιδιώτην οὐδένα. [4] τὸ δὲ κήρυγμα ποιήσασθαι τούτου ἔνεκα τοῖς παρ' Ἀθηναίους καταπεφευγόσιν, ὡς ἠγοῦμενος οὐδὲν χείρους τῇ ἐκείνων φιλία: οὐδ' ἂν σφῶν πειρασαμένους αὐτοὺς [τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων] δοκεῖν ἦσσαν, ἀλλὰ πολλῷ μᾶλλον, ὅσῳ δικαιότερα πράσσουσιν, εὐνοὺς ἂν σφίσι γενέσθαι, ἀπειρία δὲ νῦν πεφοβήσθαι. [5] τοὺς τε πάντας παρασκευάζεσθαι ἐκέλευεν ὡς βεβαίους τε ἐσομένους ξυμμάχους καὶ τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦδε ἤδη ὅτι ἂν ἀμαρτάνωσιν αἰτίαν ἔξοντας: τὰ δὲ πρότερα οὐ σφεῖς ἀδικεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐκείνους μᾶλλον ὑπ' ἄλλων κρεισσόνων, καὶ ξυγγνώμην εἶναι εἴ τι ἠναντιοῦντο. (<i>Th.</i> 4.114.3-5)</p>	<p>Then calling a meeting of the Toronaeans, Brasidas spoke <b>to them much as he had done to the people at Acanthus. He said that</b> it was not just either to regard as villains or as traitors those who had negotiated with him for the capture of the town – for they had done this, not to enslave it, nor because they were bribed, but for the welfare and freedom of the city – or to think that those who had not taken part would not get the same treatment as the others; for he had not come to destroy either the city or any private citizen. He explained that he made his proclamation to those who had taken refuge with the Athenians for the reason that he thought none the worse of them for their friendship with these; and when they had proved his countrymen, the Lacedaemonians, they would not, he thought, be less but rather far more kindly disposed towards them than towards the Athenians, inasmuch as their conduct was more just; whereas now they had been afraid of them through inexperience. Moreover, he told them all to prepare to show themselves staunch allies and to be held responsible for whatever mistakes they might make from this time on; as to their former actions, it was not the Lacedaemonians who had been wronged by them, but the Toronaeans rather by others who were stronger, and it was pardonable if the Toronaeans had made any opposition to him.</p>
<p>περαιωθεὶς δὲ καὶ ξύλλογον ποιήσας τῶν Σκιωναίων <b>ἔλεγεν ἅ τε ἐν τῇ Ἀκάνθῳ καὶ Τορώνῃ, καὶ προσέτι φάσκων</b> ἀξιωτάτους αὐτοὺς εἶναι ἐπαίνου, οἵτινες τῆς Παλλήνης ἐν τῷ ἰσθμῷ ἀπειλημμένης ὑπὸ Ἀθηναίων Ποτειδαίαν ἐχόντων καὶ ὄντες οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ νησιῶται αὐτεπάγγελτοι ἐχώρησαν πρὸς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν καὶ οὐκ ἀνέμειναν ἀτολμία ἀνάγκην σφίσι προσγενέσθαι περὶ τοῦ φανερώς οἰκείου ἀγαθοῦ: σημειὸν τ' εἶναι τοῦ καὶ ἄλλο τι ἂν αὐτοὺς τῶν μεγίστων ἀνδρείως ὑπομείναι: εἴ τε θήσεται κατὰ νοῦν τὰ πράγματα, πιστοτάτους τε τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἠγήσεσθαι αὐτοὺς Λακεδαιμονίων φίλους καὶ τᾶλλα τιμήσειν. (<i>Th.</i> 4.120.3)</p>	<p>He succeeded in crossing, and having called a meeting of the Scionaeans <b>repeated what he had said at Acanthus and Torone, adding that</b> their own conduct had been most praiseworthy of all because, when Pallene was cut off at the Isthmus by the Athenians who held Potidaea and when they were nothing but islanders, they had not supinely awaited the compulsion of necessity in a matter that was manifestly for their own good, but had of their own free will taken the side of freedom and that, he said, was a proof that they would endure like men any other peril however great; and if things should be settled according to his wish, he would consider them in very truth most loyal friends of the Lacedaemonians and would honour them in other respects.</p>



*Pre-conquest consideration*

Meanwhile Brasidas, having gone forward a little, kept quiet with the rest of his army, but sent forward one hundred targeteers, **in order that as soon as any gates were opened and the signal agreed upon was raised they might rush in first.**

ὁ Βρασιδᾶς διέπλευσε νυκτὸς ἐς τὴν Σκιώνην, τριήρει μὲν φιλία **προπλευούση, αὐτὸς δὲ ἐν κελητίῳ ἄπωθεν ἐφεπόμενος, ὅπως, εἰ** μὲν τι τοῦ κέλητος μείζονι πλοίῳ περιτυγχάνοι, ἢ τριήρης ἀμύνοι αὐτῷ, ἀντιπάλου δὲ ἄλλης τριήρους ἐπιγενομένης οὐ πρὸς τὸ ἔλασσον νομίζων τρέψεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὴν ναῦν, **καὶ ἐν τούτῳ αὐτὸν διασώσειν.** (*Th.* 4.120.2)

Brasidas crossed over by night to Scione, a friendly trireme sailing ahead and **he himself following in a little skiff at some distance behind. His idea was that, if** he should meet with any boat larger than a skiff, the trireme would protect him, but if another trireme of equal strength should come along it would turn, not against the smaller boat, but against the ship, **and in the meantime he could cross safely.**

*Matching outcomes*

Meanwhile the Toronaeans inside who were cooperating with the party which had entered, when the postern had been broken down and **the gates near the market-place had been opened by cutting the bar first** brought some men around to the postern and **let them in**, in order that they might take the townsmen in oblivion by a sudden attack from the rear and on both sides and throw them into a panic; after that they raised the fire-signal **agreed upon** and received the rest of the targeteers through the gates near the marketplace. Brasidas, on seeing the signal, **set off at a run**, calling up his force, and they with one voice raised a shout and caused a great dismay amongst the townsmen.

**περαιωθεὶς** δὲ καὶ ξύλλογον ποιήσας τῶν Σκιωναίων ἔλεγεν ἅ τε ἐν τῇ Ἀκάνθῳ καὶ Τορώνῃ, καὶ προσέτι φάσκων (*Th.* 4.120.3)

He **succeeded in crossing**, and having called a meeting of the Scionaeans repeated what he had said in Acanthus and Torone adding that (...)

