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THE SHADOW OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN:
SIDESHADOWING IN THUCYDIDES
AND XENOPHON

Lisa Irene Hau

It is a common observation that the difference between narrative and reality is the fact that narrative is structured. It has a beginning and an end, placed at meaningful moments in the story, and at the end the reader feels a satisfied sense of closure because the whole, when looked at from the vantage point of the end, displays a complete and unified structure. In this type of hindsight, the reader is usually able to identify certain themes with which the narrative has been concerned. Life, on the other hand, is messy. It has a natural beginning and end point, but they often do not happen at any meaningful points in any 'story', and what comes in between is not necessarily structured or concerned with any identifiable themes. Life does not have a plot.

Another difference between life and narrative is that narrative can be shaped by foreshadowing. Foreshadowing, to take the metaphor seriously, allows the future to cast a shadow into the present, thus giving the characters populating the present – or at least the reader of their story – an inkling of what is going to happen in the future. In real life the future cannot be felt so tangibly; we do not go around our daily lives plagued by foreshadows of the waterpipe that is going to leak and flood our house next week, the affair that is going to end our marriage next year, or the death of a loved one some time in the future.

This discrepancy between narrative and life has been pointed out forcefully by the narratologist Gary Saul Morson. He argues that foreshadowing can only happen in a 'closed temporality' where the future is predetermined; that foreshadowing is only possible if the future has already been decided, i.e. if there is only one possible future. Foreshadowing, he argues, is an example of 'backwards causation', where some features of the present are caused by the future, not by the past. This regularly happens in literature, where both the ending and the way to get there have been pre-determined by the author, but in order to believe in

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foreshadowing in real life, you would need to be a predeterminist or fatalist (Morson 1994).

This is all very convincing, even obvious, when pointed out in this manner. However, it seems to relate exclusively to fiction rather than to historiography. Surely, no one uses foreshadowing in a serious historical narrative? Well, foreshadowing as such may not be a staple of historiography, but many historiographers nevertheless write about the past as if there had always only been one possible outcome – namely the present – and as if the people living in the past should have known what was going to happen. We could call this ‘hindsight as foresight’; Morson borrows a term from Michael André Bernstein and calls it ‘backshadowing’ (Bernstein 1994). The phenomenon is linked with the tendency to write teleological historiography as if the past had been a linear process towards one specific goal. Such history has been written consciously by ideological historians from Neo-classicists to Marxists and Liberalists and has been vividly criticised in the past,¹ but even many historians who have tried to write about the past objectively have inadvertently fallen into the trap of expressing themselves as if what happened in the past was the only thing that could happen. This can happen out of what Morson terms *chronocentrism*, the tendency unconsciously to regard our own time as somehow privileged and ‘right’ in terms of knowledge, attitudes, opinions, and prejudices – or it can be an inadvertent by-product of turning history into narrative, because narrative almost automatically imposes not just a beginning, a middle, and an end on the historical events it narrates, but also themes, plots, and subplots, all of which only emerge in the clarity of hindsight.²

So, how can we avoid applying such hindsight to history? Morson’s answer is the invention of the concept *sideshadowing*. Whereas foreshadowing allows the future to ‘cast a shadow’ into the present and so allows the reader some degree of knowledge about what is yet to happen, sideshadowing allows possible alternative presents to ‘cast shadows’ into the narrative’s actual present and allows the reader some degree of knowledge about what might have been. The advantage of this technique, Morson argues, is a closer approximation of the narrative to reality, where the future is never set in stone and every moment offers a myriad of different possible futures, of which only one will be realised.³

One type of sideshadowing in historiography is counterfactual history. By writing about what did not happen, but might as well have happened, some modern historiographers have shown the importance of the choices made and the coincidences realized in pivotal historical situations and so have forced the reader to become aware of the ease with which history

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could have gone in a different direction.⁴ However, such elaborate accounts tend to acquire a life of their own and develop into entertaining showpieces without saying much about what it actually *felt* like to live in that specific time with the uncertainty of the future – in Greece on the eve of the Battle of Salamis or in Italy just before the Battle of Actium. More subtle techniques of sideshadowing seem to be needed. I believe we can see such techniques being employed by some of the ancient historiographers. Before examining these, however, I want first to exemplify the opposite, namely ancient historiographers who write backshadowing accounts on the basis of chronocentrism.

One such backshadowing ancient historiographer is Polybius. He has often been criticised for judging historical characters according to their level of success so that the successful are praised for their foresight and skill at planning while the unsuccessful are censured for their shortsightedness and carelessness.⁵ Arthur Eckstein (1995) has shown that this description of Polybius' practice is too black and white and that Polybius also applies criteria such as honour and dignity when judging the characters of his *Histories*, but it remains true that his work is characterised by hindsight, by backshadowing rather than sideshadowing. A typical example is this passage:

Σχεδὸν δὴ πάντες οἱ συγγραφεῖς περὶ τούτων ἡμῖν τῶν πολιτευμάτων παραδεδώκασι τὴν ἐπ' ἀρετῇ φήμην, περὶ τε τοῦ Λακεδαιμονίων καὶ Κρητῶν καὶ Μαντινέων, ἔτι δὲ Καρχηδονίων· ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ περὶ τῆς Ἀθηναίων καὶ Θηβαίων πολιτείας πεποίηται μνήμην. ἐγὼ δὲ ταύτας μὲν ἐὼ, τὴν γὰρ Ἀθηναίων καὶ Θηβαίων οὐδὲ πᾶν τι πολλοῦ προσδεῖσθαι πέπεισμα λόγου διὰ τὸ μήτε τὰς αὐξήσεις ἐσχηκέναι κατὰ λόγον μήτε τὰς ἀκμὰς ἐπιμόνους, μήτε τὰς μεταβολὰς ἐνηλλαχέναι μετρίως, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἐκ προσπαίου τινὸς τύχης σὺν καιρῷ λάμψαντας, τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον, ἔτι δοκοῦντας ἀκμὴν καὶ μέλλοντας εὐτυχεῖν, τῆς ἐναντίας πείραν εἰληφέναι μεταβολῆς.

Nearly all historiographers who have written about these constitutions have reiterated their reputation for excellence; I mean the constitutions of Sparta, Crete, and Mantinea as well as Carthage. Some have also mentioned the ones of Athens and Thebes. I for my part am willing to admit the excellence of the three former, but I am absolutely convinced that the constitutions of Athens and Thebes do not deserve prolonged mention because they did not evolve in a rational manner, did not attain lasting power, and did not undergo change moderately. Rather, suddenly, when some kind of fortune had shone on them, so to speak, at an opportune time, while they still seemed powerful and people thought they would remain successful, they experienced a complete reversal. (Polybius 6.43)⁶

Polybius goes on to argue in some detail that the power of Athens and Thebes was due to a few remarkable individuals and disappeared with their

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deaths. What is striking is the complete lack of acknowledgement that things could have turned out differently, that Athens or Thebes could have continued victorious, and perhaps even gone on to conquer as much of the world as the Rome of Polybius' *Histories*. The very real power of Athens and Thebes is described as *μη κατὰ λόγον*, 'irrational', apparently because it was brief – seen in hindsight – and ended violently. There is no attempt at imagining how formidable that power must have seemed to contemporaries or to explain its downfall. From the vantage point of the 2nd century BC the hegemony of both states seemed destined to be shortlived, and the historiographer and his reader can shake their heads pityingly at the fact that the people living in the 4th century had not foreseen the reversals of their fortunes.

Conversely, from Polybius' vantage point the world domination of Rome seems the only possible outcome of the past. Witness this famous passage from his preface:

τὸ γὰρ τῆς ἡμετέρας πραγματείας ἴδιον καὶ τὸ θαυμάσιον τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς καιρῶν τοῦτ' ἔστιν ὅτι, καθάπερ ἢ τύχη σχεδὸν ἅπαντα τὰ τῆς οἰκουμένης πράγματα πρὸς ἓν ἔκλινε μέρος καὶ πάντα νέειν ἠνάγκασε πρὸς ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν σκοπὸν, οὕτως καὶ δεῖ διὰ τῆς ἱστορίας ὑπὸ μίαν σύνοψιν ἀγαγεῖν τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι τὸν χειρισμὸν τῆς τύχης, ᾧ κέχρηται πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὅλων πραγμάτων συντέλειαν.

The special feature of my work and the amazing fact of our times is that, just as *tychē* has made almost the whole world lean towards one destiny and has forced everything to incline towards one and the same end, in the same way it is necessary through my history to create an overview for my readers of the manipulation of affairs which *tychē* has used to accomplish the consummation of her whole plan. (Polybius 1.4.1)

I have argued elsewhere (Hau 2011) that Polybius' use of *tychē* in this passage does not mean that he subscribed to a religious belief in Fate. Nonetheless, there is an inescapable sense of *telos*: just as 'almost the whole world' (*ἅπαντα τὰ τῆς οἰκουμένης πράγματα*) is now leaning towards Rome, the reader senses that every event in the past has been one step in the long process towards Roman world dominance. It is an interesting, but ultimately unanswerable, question whether Polybius did this on purpose: if asked, would he have argued that Roman hegemony over the known world had been inevitable? Or did he fall into the trap of chronocentrism inadvertently?

Whatever Polybius' level of consciousness about the issue, historiographers of Rome's rise to power seem to have been especially prone to such chronocentric backshadowing. An obvious example is this passage from the preface of Livy:

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ad illa mihi pro se quisque acriter intendat animum, quae vita, qui mores fuerint, per quos viros quibusque artibus domi militariaeque et partum et auctum imperium sit; labente deinde paulatim disciplina velut desidentes primo mores sequatur animo, deinde ut magis magisque lapsi sint, tum ire coeperint praecipites, donec ad haec tempora, quibus nec vitia nostra nec remedia pati possumus, perventum est.

I would like each reader individually to turn his mind to the following: what life, what customs, through what men and by what methods, both at home and in war, the empire was created and increased; then, when discipline begins to slip, let him first follow in his mind the, as it were, downward spiralling customs, then notice how they slip more and more and then go into free fall, until it has come to these times where we cannot stand either our vices or their remedy. (Livy *Praefatio* 9)

The slippery slope of increasingly corrupt morals is presented as inexorable, the grim outcome as inevitable once the slippage had begun. Admittedly, this is an extremely rhetorical passage from Livy's showpiece preface, and any added sideshadows, any suggestions that the corruption might have been halted somewhere along the way, would have detracted from its impact. Nevertheless, it is symptomatic of Livy's approach to historiography. In his work, even counterfactuals are used to show that history really could have gone no other way. Witness this passage relating to the beginning of the Second Punic War:

His anxius curis ita se Africo bello quod fuit sub recentem Romanam pacem per quinque annos, ita deinde nouem annis in Hispania augendo Punico imperio gessit ut appareret maius eum quam quod gereret agitare in animo bellum et, si diutius vixisset, Hamilcare duce Poenos arma Italiae inlaturos fuisse quae Hannibalis ductu intulerunt. Mors Hamilcaris peropportuna et pueritia Hannibalis distulerunt bellum.

Upset by these troubles he [Hamilcar] conducted himself in the African War (which took place for five years immediately after the conclusion of peace with Rome) and then for nine years in Spain while the Carthaginian dominion was spreading, in such a way as to make it clear that he was planning a war bigger than any in which he was presently engaged, and that, if he had lived longer, the Carthaginians would have taken the invasion, which they actually carried out under Hannibal, to Italy with Hamilcar as their commander. The premature death of Hamilcar and the youth of Hannibal postponed the war. (Livy 21.2.1)

So, if Hamilcar had lived longer, he would have attacked Italy himself – in fact, he would have taken *exactly the same war* to Italy as Hannibal eventually did. The only difference would have been in the commander, everything else would have turned out just the same. This complete confidence in the privileged status of the historiographer's own particular present can be seen even more stunningly in a passage famous for being our only ancient

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example of sustained counterfactual history: Livy 9.17–18 speculating on what would have happened if Alexander the Great had lived to attack Rome.⁷ The passage is too long to quote here in its entirety, so I have included only its beginning:

tamen tanti regis ac ducis mentio, quibus saepe tacitus cogitationibus volutavi animum, eas evocat in medium, ut quaerere libeat quinam eventus Romanis rebus, si cum Alexandro foret bellatum, futurus fuerit. Plurimum in bello pollere videntur militum copia et virtus, ingenia imperatorum, fortuna per omnia humana maxime in res bellicas potens; ea et singula intuenti et universa sicut ab aliis regibus gentibusque, ita ab hoc quoque facile praestant invictum Romanum imperium. Iam primum, ut ordiar ab ducibus comparandis, haud equidem abnuo egregium ducem fuisse Alexandrum; sed clariorem tamen eum facit quod unus fuit, quod adulescens in incremento rerum, nondum alteram fortunam expertus, decessit. Ut alios reges claros ducesque omittam, magna exempla casuum humanorum, Cyrum, quem maxime Graeci laudibus celebrant, quid nisi longa vita, sicut Magnum modo Pompeium, vertenti praebruit fortunae? Recenseam duces Romanos, nec omnes omnium aetatum sed ipsos eos cum quibus consulibus aut dictatoribus Alexandro fuit bellandum, M. Valerium Corvum, C. Marcium Rutulum, C. Sulpicium, T. Manlium Torquatum, Q. Publilium Philonem, L. Papirium Cursorem, Q. Fabium Maximum, duos Decios, L. Volumnium, M. Curium? Deinceps ingentes sequuntur uiri, si Punicum Romano praevertisset bellum seniorque in Italiam traiecisset. Horum in quolibet cum indoles eadem quae in Alexandro erat animi ingenique, tum disciplina militaris, iam inde ab initiis urbis tradita per manus, in artis perpetuis praeceptis ordinatae modum venerat.

However, the mention of such a great king and commander prompts me to express publicly the reflections which I have often turned over in my mind, and so I want to ask the question what would have happened in Roman history if Rome had been at war with Alexander [the Great]. What seems to carry most weight in war is the number and quality of troops, the genius of the commanders, and fortune, which has power over all human endeavours, and especially in war. When these factors are considered both individually and collectively, they guarantee that the Roman empire would easily have remained unconquered also by him, just as by other kings and peoples. Now, in the first place, to begin with a comparison of commanders, I do not deny that Alexander was an exceptional commander. But what made him especially famous was the fact that he did not have to share his fame, and that he died while he was still a young man and his power was still growing, before he could experience adverse fortune. Not to mention other famous kings or commanders, who offer examples of the changeability of human fortune, let us take Cyrus, whom the Greeks praise and celebrate: what delivered him into the hands of changing fortunes if not his long life, just as happened recently with Pompey? Shall I enumerate the Roman commanders, not everyone from every age, but only those whom, as consuls or dictators, Alexander would have had to fight: M. Valerius Corvus, C. Marcus Rutulus, C. Sulpicius, T. Manlius Torquatus, Q. Publilius Philo, L. Papirius Cursor, Q. Fabius Maximus, the two Decii, L. Volumnius,

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M. Curius? Some immensely great men follow immediately upon these, if Alexander had chosen to undertake the war against Carthage first and cross over to Italy when he was older. In every one of these was found the same natural ability of heart and mind as in Alexander; and as for military training, it had been transferred from generation to generation right from the origin of the city and had been turned into an art-form regulated by eternal rules. (Livy 9.17)

The passage continues with a detailed argument to the effect that even if Alexander had lived to attack Rome, he would easily have been defeated. Thus, nothing about the present would have changed. Rome would have had one more war to look back on with pride, but apart from that its history would have run the same course as it did, and the present would look exactly as it does now. It does not bother Livy that back in the time of Alexander the Great no one worried much about Rome or whether or not Alexander might attack it; that question only became interesting when Rome grew into the greatest warrior nation of the Mediterranean. This makes the passage not only a stunning piece of chronocentrism, but also a perfect example of backshadowing, i.e. of projecting the concerns of the present into the narrated past.

After these examples of backshadowing, chronocentric historiography it is now time to see how it could be done differently. So we turn to Thucydides.

On one level, Thucydides is guilty of a certain amount of backshadowing: he has worked the events of the recent past into a narrative with a beginning, a clear progression of plot, and some significant themes, all of which can only be done in hindsight and makes the written account differ from any lived experience of the period. It is indicative of how much the past has been narrativized in his account that Hunter Rawlings (1981) on the basis of the work's narrative structure felt able to predict how it would have ended if Thucydides had lived to carry through his plan.⁸ However, Thucydides is also the ancient historiographer who most regularly engages in sideshadowing in order to show that events could, in fact, have turned out differently. Let us examine some of the sideshadowing techniques he employs.

One technique is the *explicit mention of a potentially different outcome, or counterfactual statements*.⁹ One famous passage falls into this category, namely the last-minute saving of the Mytileneans from massacre:

καὶ τριήρη εὐθύς ἄλλην ἀπέστελλον κατὰ σπουδὴν, ὅπως μὴ φθασάσης τῆς προτέρας εὐρωσι διεφθαρμένην τὴν πόλιν· προεῖχε δὲ ἡμέρα καὶ νυκτὶ μάλιστα. παρασκευασάντων δὲ τῶν Μυτιληναίων πρέσβων τῇ νηὶ οἶνον καὶ

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ἄλιφτα καὶ μεγάλα ὑποσχομένων, εἰ φθάσειαν, ἐγένετο σπουδὴ τοῦ πλοῦ τοιαύτη ὥστε ἥσθιόν τε ἅμα ἐλαύνοντες οἶνω καὶ ἐλαίῳ ἄλιφτα πεφυραμένα, καὶ οἱ μὲν ὕπνον ἤροῦντο κατὰ μέρος, οἱ δὲ ἤλαινον. κατὰ τύχην δὲ πνεύματος οὐδενὸς ἐναντιωθέντος καὶ τῆς μὲν προτέρας νεὼς οὐ σπουδῆ πλεούσης ἐπὶ πρᾶγμα ἀλλόκοτον, ταύτης δὲ τοιοῦτω τρόπῳ ἐπειγομένης, ἢ μὲν ἔφθασε τοσοῦτον ὅσον Πάχητα ἀνεγνωκέναι τὸ ψήφισμα καὶ μέλλειν δρᾶσειν τὰ δεδομένα, ἢ δ' ὑστέρα αὐτῆς ἐπικατάγεται καὶ διεκώλυσε μὴ διαφθεῖραι. παρὰ τοσοῦτον μὲν ἢ Μυτιλήνη ἦλθε κινδύνου.

Immediately another trireme was sent out in all haste, since they feared that, unless it overtook the first trireme, they would find on their arrival that the city had been destroyed. The first trireme had a start of about twenty-four hours. The ambassadors from Mytilene provided wine and barley for the crew and promised great rewards if they arrived in time, and so the men made such speed on the voyage that they kept on rowing while they took their food (which was barley mixed with oil and wine) and rowed continually, taking it in turn to sleep. By chance they had no wind against them, and as the first ship was not hurrying on its distasteful mission, while they were pressing on with such speed, what happened was that the first ship arrived so little ahead of them that Paches had just had time to read the decree and prepare to carry it out, when the second ship put in to the harbour and prevented the massacre. So narrow had been the escape of Mytilene. (Thucydides 3.49.2–3 [translation adapted from Rex Warner])

Everything that makes this narrative dramatic – the mention of what is at stake both at the beginning of the passage and at the end, the gritty details of the crew's efforts to make speed, the repetition of the verb φθάνω, the explicit statement that they only made it due to the weather, ruled by *tychē* – all of this aims to show the reader two things: how easily the events could have turned out differently, and what that anxiety about the future felt like for the people involved. There is no hint of hindsight or backshadowing here; the reader feels transported into that very time when the crew of the second trireme were exerting themselves in order to catch up with the first, and with those sailors he feels anxious about the outcome. When the issue is resolved, we are in no doubt that it might as well have turned out differently: the Mytileneans might as well have been destroyed despite the Athenian change of heart; it was only due to human effort and *tychē* that they were saved.

The same technique of explicitly pointing out how easily things could have gone differently is employed in less dramatic fashion in numerous places throughout Thucydides' *History*. A typical example is this brief passage from the events surrounding the Battle of Amphipolis:

Βρασίδας δὲ ἐβοήθει μὲν τῇ Τορώνῃ, αἰσθόμενος δὲ καθ' ὁδὸν ἐλαωκυῖαν ἀνεχώρησεν, ἀποσχὼν τεσσαράκοντα μάλιστα σταδίους μὴ φθάσαι ἐλθῶν.

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ὁ δὲ Κλέων καὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τροπαία τε ἔστησαν δύο, τὸ μὲν κατὰ τὸν λιμένα, τὸ δὲ πρὸς τῷ τειχίσματι, καὶ τῶν Τορωναίων γυναῖκας μὲν καὶ παῖδας ἠνδραπόδισσαν, αὐτοὺς δὲ καὶ Πελοποννησίους καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος Χαλκιδέων ἦν, ξύμπαντας ἐς ἑπτακοσίους, ἀπέπεμψαν ἐς τὰς Ἀθήνας· καὶ αὐτοῖς τὸ μὲν Πελοποννήσιον ὕστερον ἐν ταῖς γενομέναις σπονδαῖς ἀπῆλθε, τὸ δὲ ἄλλο ἐκομίσθη ὑπ' Ὀλυνθίων, ἀνὴρ ἀντ' ἀνδρὸς λυθείς.

Brasidas was coming to relieve Torone, but while he was on his way he heard that it had been captured, and so he turned back, having come forty stades short of arriving in time. Kleon and the Athenians put up two trophies, one by the harbour and one by the wall, enslaved the women and children of the Toroneans, and sent the Toronean men, the Peloponnesians, and any Chalkidean they found back to Athens. This amounted to 700 men. Of these, the Peloponnesians were given back later during the truce, and the rest were exchanged for prisoners taken by the Olynthians, man for man. (Thucydides 5.3.3–4)

This is a different kind of narrative from the Mytilenean one. It is faster paced, there are no telling details of food or specific measures taken by commanders, no intimations of the feelings of any of the participants. The remark that is interesting for our purposes is ‘he had been about four miles short of arriving in time’ (ἀποσχὼν τεσσαράκοντα μάλιστα σταδίου μὴ φθάσαι ἐλθῶν). Why tell us that in the middle of such a fast-moving narrative of events? Surely part of the reason is to show how easily things could have gone differently. If Brasidas had only marched a little faster or been quicker to set out, he might have reached Torone in time. Then the women and children of Torone would not have been enslaved, the men would not have been sent to Athens, and the Athenians would have had less leverage when negotiating the Peace of Nikias and the prisoner exchange with the Olynthians. This would certainly have meant a momentous difference in many individual lives, and might potentially have changed the outcome of the entire Archidamian War. As opposed to his practice in the Mytilene passage, Thucydides does not express this alternative outcome explicitly, but only hints at it. And again the verb φθάνω is used to show the closing off of alternatives.¹⁰

Another sideshadowing technique employed by Thucydides is the *expression of unfulfilled expectations*. A famous example of an elaborate narrative of unfulfilled expectation in indirect speech is the beginning of book 8 where the Athenians have received the news of the disaster in Sicily:

ἄμα μὲν γὰρ στερόμενοι καὶ ἰδία ἕκαστος καὶ ἡ πόλις ὀπλιτῶν τε πολλῶν καὶ ἱππέων καὶ ἡλικίας οἷαν οὐχ ἑτέραν ἐώρων ὑπάρχουσαν ἐβαρύνοντο· ἄμα δὲ ναῦς οὐχ ὀρώντες ἐν τοῖς νεωσοίκοις ἱκανὰς οὐδὲ χρήματα ἐν τῷ κοινῷ οὐδ' ὑπηρεσίας ταῖς ναυσὶν ἀνέλπιστοι ἦσαν ἐν τῷ παρόντι σωθῆσθαι, τοὺς τε ἀπὸ τῆς Σικελίας πολεμίους εὐθὺς σφίσι ἐνόμιζον τῷ ναυτικῷ ἐπὶ τὸν

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Πειραιᾶ πλευσεῖσθαι, ἄλλως τε καὶ τοσοῦτον κρατήσαντας, καὶ τοὺς αὐτόθεν πολεμίους τότε δὴ καὶ διπλασίως πάντα παρεσκευασμένους κατὰ κράτος ἤδη καὶ ἐκ γῆς καὶ ἐκ θαλάσσης ἐπικεῖσεσθαι, καὶ τοὺς ξυμμάχους σφῶν μετ' αὐτῶν ἀποστάντας.

Both the city and each person in it were oppressed by the loss of so many hoplites and cavalrymen and particularly of more men of military age than they saw left living. At the same time they saw that there were not sufficient ships in the shipsheds, nor money in the treasury, nor rowers for the ships, and they despaired of surviving the present situation. They believed that their enemies from Sicily would make a seaborne attack on the Piraeus because they had already beaten them so soundly, and that the enemies from nearer by would now redouble their efforts and attack them in force on both land and sea, and that their allies would revolt and join them. (Thucydides 8.1.2–3)

The desperateness of the situation is expressed as if it was real: ‘they *saw* (ἑώραν, ὀρώντες)’ the inadequacy of their men, ships, and financial resources. And yet we know that Athens fought on for another ten years, often successfully. Scholars have often remarked on this discrepancy and wondered what Thucydides’ purpose was: was he trying to force the reader to respect and admire the resilience of the Athenians? Or did he, perhaps, write this passage early, soon after the event, when he was one of those who did not believe that Athens would pull through? I would venture a different explanation. When we as modern historians look at a passage like this and wonder what on earth was in the author’s mind, we are engaging in chronocentric backshadowing. We are reading as if the Athenians of 413 *should have known* that they would be able to fight on and that Sicily was not going to be their final downfall. In fact, of course, they did not know this. Some probably thought so, but it is likely that Thucydides is correct in his assessment of the prevailing atmosphere in Athens at the time. Moreover, he has attempted to recreate that atmosphere in his writing so the reader can experience it for himself, thereby learning more fully what that situation was *really like* than he possibly could from any backshadowing account along the lines of two modern works, whose descriptions of this situation are respectively, ‘The immediate crisis was or was perceived to be imperial, the threatened break-up of the empire (8.2.2;4). There were some creaking noises as we shall see, but the break-up did not happen’ (Hornblower 1991, 173) and ‘[Athens] failure [in Sicily] decided the war, and thereby determined that Greek history would not go the way of Italian history’ (Davies 1993, 133).¹¹

The expressions of unfulfilled expectations are not always as elaborate as here; sometimes they are much briefer, the alternative outcome being allowed to cast only a quick shadow across the actual outcome.¹² This

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example recounts the Athenian reaction to the Spartan foundation of Herakleia in Trachis:

οἱ δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι τῆς πόλεως ταύτης ξυνοικιζομένης τὸ πρῶτον ἔδεισαν τε καὶ ἐνόμισαν ἐπὶ τῇ Εὐβοίᾳ μάλιστα καθίστασθαι, ὅτι βραχύς ἐστιν ὁ διάπλους πρὸς τὸ Κήναιον τῆς Εὐβοίας. ἔπειτα μέντοι παρὰ δόξαν αὐτοῖς ἀπέβη· οὐ γὰρ ἐγένετο ἀπ’ αὐτῆς δεινὸν οὐδέν. αἴτιον δὲ ἦν οἷ τε Θεσσαλοὶ ἐν δυνάμει ὄντες τῶν ταύτη χωρίων, καὶ ὧν ἐπὶ τῇ γῆ ἐκτίζετο, φοβούμενοι μὴ σφίσι μεγάλη ἰσχύι παροικῶσιν, ἔφθειρον καὶ διὰ παντὸς ἐπολέμουν ἀνθρώποις νεοκαταστάτοις, ἕως ἕξετρώχωσαν γενομένους τὸ πρῶτον καὶ πάνυ πολλούς.

When this city was founded, the Athenians were first afraid and thought that it had been established with designs on Euboeia because of the short crossing to Kenaion in Euboeia. In the event, however, things turned out contrary to expectations for them and the city came to pose no threat at all. The reason was that the Thessalians, who were powerful in this area and on whose land the city had been founded, were afraid that their new neighbours would become a major force and therefore kept making destructive raids on the colonists until they had ground down their previous strength. (Thucydides 3.93.1–2)

Here, the unfulfilled expectation of the Athenians is given a perfectly reasonable justification in the position of Herakleia, as opposed to the actual outcome, which is marked as unexpected – and unexpectable – by the expression *παρὰ δόξαν*. This phrase becomes an adjective in late Classical Greek and is extremely common in the Hellenistic historiographers, but in Thucydides it is only found as a prepositional phrase and is fairly rare (7 occurrences). In this passage he uses it to show the reader how what actually happened was not what was most likely to happen, i.e. how the present we live in is not necessarily the most likely result of the past that has gone before it.¹³

Finally, there is the technique of *reporting advice which was ignored*. A typical example is the case of Alkidas, the Spartan general sent to help the Mytilenaeans in their revolt. On his way there he receives reports that the city has fallen. He then receives this detailed advice from one of his Elean allies:

‘Ἀλκίδα καὶ Πελοποννησίων ὅσοι πάρεσμεν ἄρχοντες τῆς στρατιᾶς, ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ πλεῖν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ Μυτιλήνην πρὶν ἐκπύστους γενέσθαι, ὡσπερ ἔχομεν. κατὰ γὰρ τὸ εἶκος ἀνδρῶν νεωστὶ πόλιν ἐχόντων πολλὸ τὸ ἀφύλακτον εὐρήσομεν, κατὰ μὲν θάλασσαν καὶ πάνυ, ἢ ἐκεῖνοί τε ἀνέλπιστοι ἐπιγενέσθαι ἂν τινα σφίσι πολέμιον καὶ ἡμῶν ἢ ἀλήθῃ τυγχάνει μάλιστα οὔσα· εἶκος δὲ καὶ τὸ πεζὸν αὐτῶν κατ’ οἰκίας ἀμελέστερον ὡς κεκρατηκότων διεσπάρθαι. εἰ οὖν προσπέσοιμεν ἄφνω τε καὶ νυκτός, ἐλπίζω μετὰ τῶν ἔνδον, εἴ τις ἄρα ἡμῖν ἐστὶν ὑπόλοιπος εὖνους, καταληφθῆναι ἂν τὰ πράγματα’

‘Alkidas and Peloponnesian fellow commanders, I propose that we sail against Mytilene before we are discovered, just as we are. Most likely, as the

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men have only recently got possession of the city, we shall find their guard down in many places, on sea especially, where they do not expect that an enemy might attack them and where our strength especially happens to lie. Probably their land-army will be dispersed in the various houses carelessly relaxing now that they have been victorious. So if we were to fall on them suddenly at night, I expect that with the help of those inside the city, if there is anyone left alive who is on our side, we might well take the place.’ (Thucydides 3.30.1–2)

Alkidas does not follow the plan, but turns around to sail back to the Peloponnese, casually executing some captured merchants on the way. It has been pointed out by others that the level of detail of the advice and its apparent soundness makes it likely that Thucydides thinks Alkidas should have acted on it. But I would argue that it is not just there to put Alkidas in a bad light (although that is doubtless part of its purpose). What the detailed advice also does is conjure up an image in the reader’s mind of an alternative fate for Mytilene, one where it was relieved by the Spartans before the Athenians could even hold the sinister Mytilenaeon Debate. That is, it acts as a sideshadow on the historical reality, showing us what might have been, alongside what was.¹⁴

After this brief overview of sideshadowing techniques, it is time now to look more systematically at the *History* of Thucydides in this light. It has often been argued that one of the characteristics of Thucydides’ *History* is a narrative where one event follows what has gone before naturally and *inevitably* in a way that makes any alternative versions unthinkable, as if there was no other possible outcome.¹⁵ The examples given as evidence for this typically come from Book 1, and it is certainly true that the *Archaeologia* and *Pentecontaëtia* are composed from a strongly chronocentric standpoint and are streamlined towards one seemingly inevitable endpoint. Such teleological inevitability is characteristic to a lesser degree of much of Book 1, where every event, every action, every human choice seems to lead inexorably to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.¹⁶ However, I would argue that different parts of Thucydides’ *History* are imprinted with different ‘shadows of time’. While Book 1 is characterised by backshadowing, which leads to a feeling of inevitability, Books 2–6 and Book 8 are full of sideshadows: time in these parts of the work is open, life is uncertain, the possibilities are endless. All of the examples of sideshadowing presented above come from this part of the *History*. In book 7, however, where the Sicilian Expedition turns sour for the Athenians, sideshadowing is replaced by backshadowing and even foreshadowing, and the result is a feeling of impending doom.

Jacqueline de Romilly in a famous study (1967, especially pp. 48–49) analyses in great detail the narrative of the wall-building race between the

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Athenians and Syracusans at the end of Book 6 and beginning of Book 7. Among other things she shows how Thucydides' elimination of all but the most essential events makes the outcome seem necessary, as if that was the only outcome possible. I am convinced by her analysis, but would like to add a few observations on the topic of sideshadowing, backshadowing, and foreshadowing.

When Gylippos first leads the Syracusans into battle against the Athenians, Thucydides says:

ἔτυχε δὲ κατὰ τοῦτο τοῦ καιροῦ ἐλθὼν ἐν ᾧ ἑπτὰ μὲν ἢ ὀκτὼ σταδίων ἤδη ἀπετετέλεστο τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ἐς τὸν μέγαν λιμένα διπλοῦν τεῖχος, πλὴν κατὰ βραχὺ τι τὸ πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν (τοῦτο δ' ἔτι ᾠκοδόμουν), τῷ δὲ ἄλλῳ τοῦ κύκλου πρὸς τὸν Τρωγίλον ἐπὶ τὴν ἑτέραν θάλασσαν λίθοι τε παραβηβλημένοι τῷ πλείονι ἤδη ἦσαν, καὶ ἔστιν ἅ καὶ ἡμέτερα, τὰ δὲ καὶ ἐξειργασμένα κατελέλειπτο. παρὰ τοσοῦτον μὲν αἱ Συράκουσαι ἦλθον κινδύνου.

He happened to come at this very moment when seven or eight stades had already been completed by the Athenians of a double wall down to the Great Harbour, except for a short section down by the sea (this they were still in the process of building), and for the other section, from the Circle to Trogilos and the sea on the other side, stones had already been piled up alongside; some parts were half-finished, others had been left behind completed. So narrow was the escape of the Syracusans. (Thucydides 7.2.4)

Why has Thucydides not told the reader about the progress of the Athenians' wall earlier? Why are we only told after the Syracusans prevent them from completing it? The concluding statement 'So narrow was the escape of Syracuse' (παρὰ τοσοῦτον μὲν αἱ Συράκουσαι ἦλθον κινδύνου) echoes the end of the Mytilene passage quoted above.¹⁷ It is a sort of retrospective sideshadowing, or sideshadowing in hindsight; it does not put us in the Athenians' place or allow us to imagine with them their hopes for the completion of the wall – and not only because it is focalized through the Syracusans – rather, it allows us the tiniest glimpse of a potentially different outcome of the events, but only after that potentiality has been closed off and no longer exists. Such retrospective sideshadowing does not give the story an air of *inevitability* exactly, I think, but of completedness, pastness, unchangeability because it has already happened. It draws attention to the hindsight with which both the author and the reader contemplate the events and so emphasizes the fact that they are mere on-lookers, powerless to change anything in the story that is unfolding before them – much like an audience spell-bound by the disastrous chain of events in a fifth-century tragedy.¹⁸

The air of tragedy and doom in the wall-building passage, and in Book 7 generally, is enhanced by the use of not sideshadowing, but foreshadowing. At the moment when the Athenians decide to face the

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Syracusans in battle in order to prevent them from completing their counter-wall and so destroy any chance the Athenians have of taking Syracuse, Thucydides describes their thoughts:

ὁ δὲ Νικίας καὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι νομίζοντες, καὶ εἰ ἐκείνοι μὴ ἐθέλοιεν μάχης ἄρχειν, ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι σφίσι μὴ περιορᾶν παροικοδομούμενον τὸ τεῖχος. ἤδη γὰρ καὶ ὅσον οὐ παρεληλύθει τὴν τῶν Ἀθηναίων τοῦ τεύχους τελευτὴν ἢ ἐκείνων τεύχεσις, καί, εἰ προέλθοι, ταῦτόν ἤδη ἐποίει αὐτοῖς νικᾶν τε μαχομένους διὰ παντὸς καὶ μὴδὲ μάχεσθαι, ἀντεπῆσαν οὖν τοῖς Συρακοσίοις.

Nikias and the Athenians believed that, if the other side refused to begin battle, they themselves must not stand by and ignore the completion of the cross-wall. For this wall now all but passed the end of the Athenian wall and, if it should proceed beyond it, it would make no difference if they fought and won continuous battles or did not fight at all. Therefore they marched out to meet the Syracusans. (Thucydides 7.6.1)

The Athenians are said to imagine a possible and undesirable outcome of future events, and they then act to prevent this. It is a storyteller pattern that often functions as a sideshadow: if the Athenians had gone on to be victorious in the battle, their pre-battle musings would be a powerful reminder to the reader that the battle had been a pivotal point where things could have turned out differently and thereby changed the outcome of the entire war. As it is, the Athenians are defeated in the battle and their expressed fears come true. What we have, then, is not sideshadowing, but foreshadowing.

Foreshadowing is a technique that lends itself to the creation of an atmosphere of inevitable disaster, and in Book 7 Thucydides repeatedly uses it to this effect.

Let me sum up my reading of Thucydides: Book 7 uses foreshadowing to create a sense of doom, small doses of sideshadowing to hint at possible alternative outcomes at the very moment when they are no longer possible, and teleological backshadowing to make the Athenian disaster seem inevitable. Book 1, likewise, uses backshadowing to make the outbreak of the war seem unavoidable. In the middle part of the *History*, however, Thucydides' narrative is characterised by sideshadowing, which highlights pivotal moments in the narrative – those moments which Stahl (2003) has called 'hinges', and which are pivotal exactly *because* the result could come out either way. Stahl argues that these moments held a particular interest for Thucydides – as they surely do for all historians – and the examples of sideshadowing provided here confirm this. By employing various techniques of sideshadowing, Thucydides ensures that, although his readers know how it is all going to turn out, still, at the same time, we also read *as if* things could turn out differently. It is this interplay of inevitability

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and the impossible possibility of an alternative outcome that makes reading Thucydides such a devastating experience; this is what makes his historiography feel so close to tragedy.

Before concluding, I would like to show briefly that Thucydides is not alone among ancient historiographers in using sideshadowing to great effect. Perhaps surprisingly, Xenophon does it too. Space limitations prevent me from going into much detail, but a few examples may suffice. One obvious instance is the end of the narrative of the Battle of Koroneia:

ἐνταῦθα δὴ Ἀγησίλαον ἀνδρεῖον μὲν ἔξεστιν εἰπεῖν ἀναμφισβητήτως· οὐ μέντοι εἴλετό γε τὰ ἀσφαλέστατα. ἔξῃ γὰρ αὐτῷ παρέντι τοὺς διαπίπτοντας ἀκολουθοῦντι χειροῦσθαι τοὺς ὄπισθεν, οὐκ ἐποίησε τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ἀντιμέτωπος συνέρραξε τοῖς Θηβαίοις· καὶ συμβαλόντες τὰς ἀσπίδας ἐωθοῦντο, ἐμάχοντο, ἀπέκτεινον, ἀπέθνησκον. τέλος δὲ τῶν Θηβαίων οἱ μὲν διαπίπτουσι πρὸς τὸν Ἑλικῶνα, πολλοὶ δ' ἀποχωροῦντες ἀπέθανον. ἐπεὶ δ' ἡ μὲν νίκη Ἀγησίλαου ἐγεγένητο, τετρωμένος δ' αὐτός προσενήκετο πρὸς τὴν φάλαγγα, προσελάσαντές τινες τῶν ἱππέων λέγουσιν αὐτῷ ὅτι τῶν πολεμίων ὡς ὀγδοήκοντα σὺν ὄπλοις ὑπὸ τῷ νεῷ εἰσι, καὶ ἠρώτων τί χρὴ ποιεῖν. ὁ δέ, καίπερ πολλὰ τραύματα ἔχων, ὅμως οὐκ ἐπελάθετο τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ' ἔαν τε ἀπιέναι ἢ βούλοιντο ἐκέλευε καὶ ἀδικεῖν οὐκ εἶα. τότε μὲν οὖν, καὶ γὰρ ἦν ἤδη ὄψε, δειπνοποιησάμενοι ἐκοιμήθησαν.

At this point Agesilaos may undisputedly be called brave; he did not, however, choose the safest option. For while it was possible for him to let the men pass who were trying to fight their way through and then to follow them and attack those in the rear, he instead clashed with the Thebans front to front. And setting shield against shield they pushed, fought, killed, and were killed. In the end some of the Thebans fought their way through towards Mount Helikon, but many others were killed in the retreat. When the victory had fallen to Agesilaos and he himself, wounded, had been carried to the phalanx, some of the horsemen rode up and told him that about eighty of the enemy, with their arms, had taken refuge in the temple, and they asked him what they should do. And although he had received numerous wounds, he nevertheless did not disregard the god, but ordered them to allow the men in the temple to go away to whatever place they wanted, and did not allow them to commit any wrongs. Then (for it was already late), they had their evening meal and went to sleep. (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.19–20)

There are two instances of sideshadowing in this passage. The first one is a counterfactual description of Agesilaos' and the Spartans' actions in the battle. By turning the reader's attention to what Agesilaos *did not* do, Xenophon not only shows us the unexpectedness of Agesilaos' actions, but also holds up for a moment the possibility that the battle might have been fought differently and thus, perhaps, might have ended differently. Similarly, in the second instance of sideshadowing in the passage, the

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information that Agesilaos *did not* disregard the god makes the reader contemplate that other possibility for a moment: the wounded Spartan king ordering his men to cut down the enemy soldiers seeking refuge in the temple – before returning to the much more serene reality of an evening meal and sleep. Both instances could be called counterfactuals, or ‘emphasis through negation’, and their primary function is probably to shed light on Agesilaos’ character. At the same time, however, they cast sideshadows from an alternative reality into the narrative, and the reader is left with the sense that events could easily have turned out differently – if Agesilaos had been a different man from the one he was. Indeed, it is not hard to imagine that the 80 Boiotian soldiers huddling together in the temple were debating this very question among themselves: What kind of man is Agesilaos? Will he storm the temple and attack us? Will he burn it to the ground? Or will he let us go? The brief sideshadow lets the reader see the different possibilities, like paths forking out from a single timeline.

Most of the sideshadowing in the *Hellenika* is of this kind.¹⁹ It is probably no coincidence that both Thucydides and Xenophon wrote about events of their own lifetimes, events in which they themselves had taken part, or for which they had consulted eyewitnesses. After only a short temporal gap the possibilities that had been there, but had been closed off when other choices had been made, were perhaps more visible, more present to the memory, than for Polybius or Livy looking back over 200 years to the Theban hegemony or the Second Punic War.

It will be fitting to end with another example from Xenophon, one where he uses the technique of expressing unfulfilled expectations to great effect. It is the very last words of the *Hellenika*:

τούτων δὲ πραχθέντων τούναντίον ἐγγένητο οὐ ἐνόμισαν πάντες ἄνθρωποι ἔσεσθαι. συνεληλυθίας γὰρ σχεδὸν ἀπάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ ἀντιπεταγμένων, οὐδεὶς ἦν ὅστις οὐκ ᾔετο, εἰ μάχη ἔσοιτο, τοὺς μὲν κρατήσαντας ἄρξιν, τοὺς δὲ κρατηθέντας ὑπηκόους ἔσεσθαι· ὁ δὲ θεὸς οὕτως ἐποίησεν ὥστε ἀμφοτέροι μὲν τροπαίον ὡς νενικηκότες ἐστήσαντο, τοὺς δὲ ἰσταμένους οὐδέτεροι ἐκόλυον, νεκροὺς δὲ ἀμφοτέροι μὲν ὡς νενικηκότες ὑποσπόνδους ἀπέδοσαν, ἀμφοτέροι δὲ ὡς ἠττημένοι ὑποσπόνδους ἀπελάμβανον, νενικηκέναι δὲ φάσκοντες ἐκάτεροι οὔτε χώρα οὔτε πόλει οὔτ’ ἀρχῆ οὐδέτεροι οὐδὲν πλέον ἔχοντες ἐφάνησαν ἢ πρὶν τὴν μάχην γενέσθαι· ἀκρισία δὲ καὶ ταραχὴ ἔτι πλείων μετὰ τὴν μάχην ἐγένετο ἢ πρόσθεν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι. ἐμοὶ μὲν δὴ μέγρι τούτου γραφῆσθαι· τὰ δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα ἴσως ἄλλω μελήσει.

At the end of this battle, the opposite had happened to that which everyone had expected. For considering that almost all of Greece had come together and were ranged against each other, everyone had thought that, if a battle would take place, the victors would rule and the vanquished would become their subjects. But the god made it so that both sides set up trophies as if

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victorious, but neither side prevented those who were setting them up, and both sides granted a truce for the collection of the dead as if victorious, but both sides also collected their dead under a truce as if defeated. Although claiming to have won the victory, each side turned out to have no more land, cities, or power than before the battle took place. There was more uncertainty and confusion in Greece after the battle than before it. Let the history up until this point suffice for me; what followed will perhaps be the task of another. (Xenophon *Hell.* 7.5.26–27)

By reporting the expectations of ‘everyone’, Xenophon briefly sets up an alternative world, where peace reigns, albeit at the price of the domination of one state over the rest of Greece. The tone of the entire passage is sad and resigned, and the sideshadow of this other, peaceful reality adds to that feeling. Instead of such a well-ordered, resolved state of affairs, we have ‘uncertainty and confusion’ (ἀκρίσια καὶ ταραχή). In the face of such inexplicable, meaningless history the narrator throws up his hands and leaves the continuation of the narrative to someone else. This ending – along with the non-preface of the work – is immensely effective in showing the un-narrative character of the past, in demonstrating that history does not make a neat story.

And on this note we might conclude. History is not the same as story. Foreshadowing and backshadowing turn the past into a packaged story much like a novel, with a beginning, middle, end, a plot, and some central themes. Sideshadowing alerts the reader to possible alternative outcomes, to that myriad of different futures which were all realisable at some point in the past. It recreates some of the experience of living in that past and makes the reader realize that what is now our past was once someone else’s future, and as open and unpredictable as the future is today. By being alert to the restrictions and advantages of these three narrative tools we can understand ancient historiography better and gain a truer picture of the ancient past.

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Notes

¹ Classically by Butterfield 1931.

² The unavoidable narrativisation of the past when writing historiography has, of course, been brought to the attention of modern historians by Hayden White. See e.g. White 1987.

³ Sideshadowing has made an appearance in only a few contributions to Classical scholarship. When I delivered this paper at the Celtic Conference in Classics in Edinburgh in 2010, I was aware of only two items: Liveley 2008 (on Ovid's *Heroides*) and Pagan 2006 (on Tacitus). Since then has appeared Grethlein 2010, which (pp. 242–280) discusses Thucydides' narrative of the Sicilian Expedition partly in terms of sideshadowing, thus overlapping somewhat with the middle section of this paper. However, Grethlein uses the concept only to argue that Thucydides' narrative foregrounds 'the contingency of chance' as a major factor in history; he does not discuss differences in this respect between different books of the *History*, and he only discusses one of the passages analysed in the present paper – in short, our studies complement each other rather than retread the same ground.

⁴ See e.g. the very entertaining essays in Ferguson 1998.

⁵ See e.g. Pédech 1964, Walbank 1972 and 1974, and Sacks 1980. On Polybius and the general question of hindsight, see the chapter of Felix Maier in the present volume.

⁶ All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

⁷ For a good close reading of this passage along with a detailed discussion of scholarship on it and speculation about a 'tradition of counterfactual boasting' in Rome see Morello 2002.

⁸ Rawlings argues on the basis of a detailed and largely convincing analysis of the parallels between books 1–3 and 6–8 that Thucydides envisioned a work of 10 books ending with an 'Athenian Dialogue' to mirror the Melian Dialogue.

⁹ This aspect of Thucydides' *History* has been discussed briefly by Dover 1981. Interestingly, Dover feels the need to defend the existence of counterfactual statements in Thucydides, and he does so by sensibly stating that 'We expect a historian to tell us what matters; and in order to decide what matters, what made the difference, he needs to pose and answer in his own mind questions about what would have happened if something had been otherwise'. Dover counts 20 occasions of counterfactuals in Thucydides' narratorial voice.

¹⁰ Some other examples are: Thuc. 4.54 where Nikias has in secret negotiated with the Kytherians and now gets them to surrender on favourable terms: 'Otherwise the Athenians would have expelled the population of the island, since they were of Spartan blood and their island lay so close to Laconia'; and 4.106 where Thucydides as a character in his own *History* does not arrive in time to save Amphipolis, but saves Eion: 'he (Brasidas) was within a night of taking Eion too. If the ships had not arrived so quickly to relieve it, it would have been in his hands by dawn.'

¹¹ Davies continues: 'There a dominant power, Rome, imposed its authority, commanded preponderant resources, and ultimately merged its sovereignty in a larger-scale entity. Greece was to continue to be polycentric, competitive, spoiling, and subject to influence and pressure from outside.'

¹² Another elaborate example of an expression of unfulfilled expectations as a means of sideshadowing is 8.96 on the possibility that the Peloponnesians could take the Piraeus and the entire Athenian empire after the fall of Euboea, used as an example

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of an elaborate counterfactual by Dover 1981. Dover discusses in detail 7.42.3, but with the purpose of deciding whether or not the passage is meant to reflect Thucydides' own thoughts rather than with a view to discussing the wider implications of counterfactuals in the *History*.

¹³ Another interesting example is 2.83: 'the Corinthians did not imagine that the twenty Athenian ships would venture on a battle with their own force of forty-seven ships' (translation by Rex Warner) – recreating the (lack of) foresight of contemporaries.

¹⁴ Further examples of advice ignored: 3.77 and 3.79. See also 3.113: 'if the Akarnanians and Amphilochians had been willing to follow the advice of Demosthenes and the Athenians and to seize Ambrakia, they could have done so without striking a blow' (translation by Rex Warner). As it was, they were victorious, but caused a major bloodbath.

¹⁵ De Romilly (1967, 47–48 and 1971) discusses the feeling of inevitability surrounding the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in Thucydides. See also Ostwald 1988.

¹⁶ See especially 1.23 with the discussions of de Romilly 1971 and Ostwald 1988 1–5.

¹⁷ This repetition is highlighted by Hornblower (1994, 158–9), who describes it as a rhetorical use of a Homeric/poetic counterfactual.

¹⁸ This passage is also briefly discussed by Grethlein 2010 as an example of sideshadowing in Thucydides, but he does not discuss the sense of inevitability.

¹⁹ An example is *Hell.*5.4.64: 'After sailing round the Peloponnesian Timotheos went straight on to Kerkyra and took the island over. However, he did not enslave the inhabitants nor banish individuals nor change the constitution. The result of this conduct was to make all the states in that area better disposed towards Athens.' (translation by Rex Warner)

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