CHAPTER EIGHT

THUCYDIDES

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In his narrative of the winter of the sixteenth year of the war (416/415), Thucydides describes how the Athenians want ‘to sail to Sicily again with a larger force than the one under Laches and Eurymedon and subjugate it if possible’—though most of them were ‘unaware of the size of the island and the number of its inhabitants’ (6.1.1).¹ He then gives an account of the colonization of Sicily that looks back to its earliest alleged inhabitants (the Cyclopes and Laestrygonians) and traces the successive non-Greek and Greek settlers of the island (6.2–5). It is after this analepsis that he explains how the Athenians had come to form their plan of conquering Sicily:

Against a place of this size the Athenians were bent on campaigning ... In particular, the presence of Egestan envoys and the increased urgency of their invitations spurred them on. The Egestans, neighbours of the Selinuntians, had gone to war with them over marriage rights and disputed territory, and the Selinuntians, by bringing in the Syracusans as allies, were pressing them hard in the war on both land and sea. So the Egestans reminded the Athenians of the alliance formed with the Leontines in the time of Laches and the earlier war and begged them to send ships in their defence ... The Athenians listened to them in assemblies and, after the Egestans and their supporters had repeated their arguments many times, voted to send envoys first ... (6.6)

In this brief stretch of narrative, we see the force of the narratological categories of time. The importance of order is shown by the allusion to the earlier force that the Athenians had sent to Sicily ‘under Laches and Eurymedon’. That phrase looks back to the first Athenian expedition to Sicily (427–424) and indeed compresses together two separate fleets, the twenty ships sent with Laches in 427 and the forty sent with Eurymedon in 425 (3.86.1; 4.2.2). At the same time, the phrase shows how aspects of

¹ All references in this chapter are to Thucydides unless otherwise stated and all dates are BC. I have used, with slight adaptations, the translation of S. Lattimore 1998 (Hackett).

temporal order may be linked with focalization. Is it the Athenians who want to send a larger fleet than the earlier one? Or is it the narrator who is comparing the two fleets?

The most striking departure from a linear order comes with the account of Sicilian colonization—and here too we see how temporal order is related to focalization. The analepsis (which has a scope of several hundred years) fills a gap in the knowledge of the characters (here, the Athenians). The narrator's greater knowledge is set against his characters' limited perspective.

Particularly controversial is the actorial analepsis in Thucydides' account of the Egestan envoys. Why do the Egestan envoys remind the Athenians of the alliance between Athens and Leontini (itself not previously mentioned by Thucydides) and not of their own alliance with Athens, attested epigraphically (Meiggs & Lewis [1969] 1988: 37) and datable to 458/457, 454/453, or 418/417? One solution to this problem is to extend the scope of the narratorial analepsis at 6.6. Thucydides does not specify when it was that the Egestans first appealed to Athens. It has been suggested that Thucydides is compressing events that took place over a number of years (note the iterative presentation of the Athenians' decision-making: 'after the Egestans and their supporters had repeated their arguments many times'). That is, the original Egestan appeal is in fact to be dated before 418/417 and their failure to mention their alliance with Athens explained by the fact that that alliance had not yet been formed.² If that is a plausible interpretation of Thucydides' chronological strategy, the effect of his imprecision is to make the Athenian decision to invade Sicily seem more spontaneous and ill-considered. Thucydides would be manipulating narrative time to increase the sense of foreboding surrounding the Athenian expedition at its outset. On the other hand, it may be that the Egestan alliance is to be dated to the 450s, and the Egestans' failure to mention it explained by their perception that the Athenians would respond better to an appeal to a more recent alliance with their fellow Ionians.³

Thucydides' treatment of the Egestan embassy to Athens shows the interpretative problems raised by his handling of time. This section is by no means untypical of Thucydides' work as a whole: it is not

² Smart 1972, esp. 133–136.

³ The phrasing *Leontinōn hoi Egestaioi*, as Dover notes in Gomme, Andrewes & Dover 1945–1981: ad loc., perhaps supports this interpretation in that the slightly forced juxtaposition stresses the unexpectedness of the Egestan appeal.

least by his manipulation of the narratological categories of time that Thucydides tries to persuade the narratee to accept his interpretation of the Peloponnesian War. Variations of order are perhaps the most marked and interpretatively potent form of deviation in Thucydides' work, but, as we shall see, variations of frequency and speed are also used to great effect.⁴

Frequency

Departures from a singulative frequency are relatively infrequent in Thucydides' narrative. Repetition is most commonly introduced by actorial analepses: references to the past in Thucydides' speeches mostly repeat information contained in the earlier war narrative or in the narrative of the *Pentecontaetia*. When speakers allude to events earlier than the *Pentecontaetia*, the analepses are not strictly repeating. But it is striking that such allusions tend to repeat information found in Herodotus:⁵ if Thucydides can be seen as making his own story in a sense continuous with Herodotus', then references to events covered by Herodotus are similar in effect to repeating analepses. Sometimes, however, speakers in Thucydides add details not contained in the earlier narrative, as when the Plataean speakers say that the Theban attack on Plataea happened at a sacred time of the month (3.56.2).⁶

A good example of iterative narration is the account of the burial of the Athenian war dead (2.34). Thucydides narrates (using the present tense, in a quasi-ethnographic manner) the first instance of a procedure he says was used throughout the war. One part of this procedure was a funeral oration, and here too Thucydides gives only the speech delivered by Pericles in the first year of the war. Pericles' speech stands in a sense for all the funeral orations delivered in the course of the war, even though it is important for the narrative that it is placed where it is (just before the outbreak of the plague) and even though some of its content is perhaps to be explained by the specific context of 431.⁷

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of Thucydides' handling of narrative time see Rood 1998: ch. 5, and also index, s.vv. 'analepsis', 'frequency', 'order', 'prolepsis', 'speed', 'time', with the further bibliography cited there. Many of the passages discussed in this chapter are treated more fully in that book.

⁵ S. Hornblower 1991–1996: II 133.

⁶ On actorial analepses in Thucydides see further *SAGN* 1:124–127.

⁷ Bosworth 2000.

Iterative presentation is used more often in the narrative of the first year of the war than elsewhere in the work. Thucydides lets the narrative know that there will be ellipses in the later narrative by recording at their first occurrence proceedings that took place regularly—the dispatch of cavalry to protect the Attic countryside (2.22.2), for instance, and the Athenian invasion of the Megarid (2.31). The iterative narration of Athenian invasions of the Megarid contrasts with the singulative narration of the annual Peloponnesian invasions of Attica, but that is not to say that Thucydides is downplaying Athenian aggression against Megara. The Athenian strategy is in fact stressed by prolepsis: ‘later in the war there were other Athenian invasions of the Megarid every year, both with cavalry and in full force, until Nisaea was captured by the Athenians’ (2.31.3). At the same time, Thucydides’ presentation implies that the Peloponnesians’ invasions of Attica were more important to their strategy than invasions of the Megarid were to the Athenians’ strategy.

Thucydides also uses iterative narration in his more developed battle narratives to offer a generalized account of the course of a battle. Indeed, some of his most famous and emotive descriptions owe much of their effect to iteration. The final battle in the harbour at Syracuse is a particularly good example: ‘any who saw their own men prevailing would take heart and turn to appeals to the gods that they not be deprived of their salvation; but those witnessing defeat would let out cries of lamentation ... one could hear everything at the same time, lamentation, shouting, “we’re winning”, “we’re losing”, every other possible outcry that would be wrung from a great army in great danger’ (7.71.3–4). Iteration is here linked with a slowing down of narrative speed—an unusual technique, as iterative narration normally brings about an increase of narrative speed. The climactic battle of the Sicilian campaign is further accentuated by the iterative treatment of Nicias’ battle exhortations. Thucydides reports in direct speech Nicias’ appeal to the whole army, then in indirect speech the further appeals he makes to individuals, ‘supposing, as leaders usually feel about great battles, that ... everything expressed in words was not yet sufficient’ (7.69.2). Encouragement that Nicias uttered more than once is reported once. Nicias’ exhortations are iterative in a broader sense too: he says ‘other things as well which men in so great a time of crisis would not mention if they were guarding against appearing to speak in platitudes, especially references to women and children and ancestral gods’. That is, Nicias’ words at this crisis stand for what men say at all such crises.

Iterative narration is used for speeches elsewhere too. There is an iterative element in speeches attributed to more than one speaker: two Plataeans are named at 3.52.5 as speakers of the Plataean appeal to the Spartan judges, while a pre-battle speech is attributed to ‘Gylippus and the Syracusan generals’ at 7.65.3. At times, this iterative element is explicit: at 8.76.3–7, a passage of indirect speech gives the substance of many different speeches. In the case of the Egestan envoys at Athens (6.6.2), as we have seen, appeals made at a number of different assemblies are narrated once. So too with other envoys: Thucydides gives the first Spartan appeal for peace in 425 in full (4.17–22), but treats their later envoys iteratively (4.41.4)—a hint at the futility of those further appeals once the Athenians were set on further gain. Iterative presentation of advice-giving (Themistocles at 1.93.7, Pericles at 2.13.2, 9), by contrast, seems to point to the constancy of these two politicians, both admired by Thucydides. Thucydides uses a similar technique for Brasidas’ appeals to Athens’ allies in the north: Brasidas is said to have made speeches at Torone and Scione (4.114.3, 120.3) similar to his speech at Acanthus (4.85–87). Some of the special arguments used by Brasidas on the later occasions are included, but the first speech is given in most detail because it is paradigmatic.⁸

Paradigmatic sections of narrative such as Brasidas’ speech at Acanthus may themselves be regarded as the converse of Genette’s category of pseudo-iteration.⁹ Genette was struck by some scenes in Proust that are supposed to be iterative but that are narrated in such detail that they cannot in practice be interpreted as iterative. It is typical of Thucydides, by contrast, to narrate once an episode that the narratee comes to understand as paradigmatic. Thucydides records, for instance, the debate at Athens over the treatment of the first ally in the war to revolt, Mytilene (3.36–49), but not the similar debates that took place over later allies such as Scione (4.122.6). One debate is enough for the relevant arguments to be aired. It is telling, indeed, that much of the debate over Mytilene revolves precisely around the town’s status as a paradigm: it is as if Thucydides is self-consciously pointing to the paradigmatic role of the debate. The Mytilene debate is also paradigmatic of the nature of debate in the Athenian assembly, and here too

⁸ Cf. S. Hornblower 1991–1996: II 86–89 on ‘Brasidas’ periodically adjusted manifesto’.

⁹ Genette [1972] 1980: 121–123.

Thucydides perhaps alerts the narratee to its function by making Cleon start his speech with an iterative narration of his own views of democracy: 'Many times before now, I have felt that a democracy is incapable of ruling others, and more than ever during your current change of heart ...' (3.37.1; the iteration is also a mark of Cleon's desire to endow himself with a Periclean constancy).

The narrative of the civil war at Corcyra (the first in the war) may also be regarded as a narrative of all later civil wars in the Peloponnesian War (only the oligarchic coup at Athens will receive detailed treatment). Indeed, the detailed narrative culminates in an explicitly iterative account of the collapse of moral values caused by civil war: Thucydides writes, for instance, that 'the man of violent temper was always credible, anyone opposing him was suspect ... kinship became alien compared with party affiliation' (3.82.5–6). Like Nicias' emotive speech at Syracuse, the account of what happened during the course of the civil wars is also iterative in a deeper sense: 'during the civil wars the cities suffered many cruelties that occur and will always occur as long as men have the same nature, sometimes more terribly and sometimes less, varying in their forms as each change of fortune dictates' (3.82.2). That is, Thucydides claims to describe not just what happened in the civil wars that occurred in the Peloponnesian War, but what happens in all civil wars. His account is almost omnitemporal.

Thucydides' claim about his account of civil war recalls the bold ambition he proclaims for his work as a whole: 'any who wish to look at the plain truth about both past events and those that at some future time, in accordance with human nature, will recur in similar or comparable ways' (1.22.4). Thucydides collapses together the events of the Peloponnesian War with those of all later wars. His whole narrative is an account of events that occurred once and of events that occur many times. In Herodotus, by contrast, a singulative narration of the campaigns of different oriental monarchs comes to seem repetitive because of the similarities between those campaigns. What Herodotus is able to achieve owing to the broader chronological extent of his fabula, Thucydides manages by claiming that his whole narrative is, in essence, iterative.

One sentence in Thucydides' analysis of civil war even seems to call for an expansion of Genette's temporal scheme:

In peacetime when they had neither the pretext nor the willingness to call them in—but during war, with alliances available to both factions for damaging their opponents and at the same time strengthening them-

selves, occasions for bringing in outsiders were readily found by those wishing to make any change in government. (3.82.1)

What is striking here is the anacoluthon in the first part of the sentence: the *men*-clause (*kai en men eirēnēi ouk an ekhontōn prophasin oud' hetoimōn parakalein autous*) breaks off after a genitive absolute. Textual corruption has sometimes been suspected. But 'the missing main verb in the first limb of the sentence ... is to be supplied by the reader ... and what happened in peace—anyway, in effect nothing—is not the historian's concern'.¹⁰ That is, Thucydides twists the sentence so that a blank at the textual level is felt to correspond to a blank in the story—a temporal organization that is hard to fit to Genette's scheme. Does the blank of peace happen once or repeatedly? How long does this blank last? Thucydides' narrative of the nothingness of peace seems to deconstruct the division between singulative and iterative narration—and the division between narrative pause and narrative acceleration for that matter.

Speed

It is not only when an unchanging state of peace is (not) narrated that narrative speed is hard to measure. As with Herodotus (→) and other ancient historians, Thucydides' narrative rarely gives precise information on how long an action has taken. Sometimes lengths in days are given (e.g. 4.6.2, the Peloponnesians spent fifteen days in Attica—the shortest invasion; 7.87.3, the Athenian prisoners were in the quarries at Syracuse for some seventy days). More precise chronology within seasons is given by reference to the beginning or end of the season, the morning rising of Arcturus (2.78.2), the winter solstice (7.16.2; 8.39.1), and, most commonly, crops (e.g. 2.19.1; 3.1.1, 15.2; 4.6.1); but these indications are often isolated and (in the case of crops) vague and often explanatory (the state of the corn or wine harvest can affect behaviour). The variations in speed that are easiest to discern are variations between different seasons and years.¹¹ Analysis shows that winters tend to be narrated more quickly than summers and that the years of

¹⁰ C. Macleod 1983: 136 n. 5.

¹¹ Cf. the chart of war-years at Luschkat 1971: 1117–1118 (measured by Teubner pages); the shortest year is 2.5 pages, the longest 59.5; the average page-length for years 1–10 is 24.9, for years 11–16 8.7, for years 17–19 46.0, and for years 20–21 35.

the uneasy peace are narrated more quickly than most other years (five years in 39 OCT pages—fewer than devoted to four separate single years). There is also a slowing down in Thucydides' treatment in books 6–8 (→ Herodotus). While the space devoted to the Sicilian expedition may be explained by its importance in Thucydides' conception of the war as a whole, the slow speed of book 8 is more unexpected: to some scholars the accumulation of facts that creates the slow-down is a mark of the book's incompleteness, but it may also reflect a slight change of style for the more complex narrative of the Ionian War.

Variations within the narrative of individual seasons are also easy to spot, but harder to analyse with the same accuracy. Slow-downs, for instance, happen whenever direct speech is included ('scenes'). A challenging instance of a variation of pace between speech and narrative is when Thucydides devotes seven pages to a conference between the Athenians and the Melians and then describes the Athenian treatment of the Melians after their surrender in a summary of just three lines: 'They killed all the grown men they captured, enslaved the children and women, and settled the place themselves by sending out five hundred colonists later' (5.116.4). How are we to interpret the brevity with which Thucydides narrates the Melian massacre? Is it the cool detachment of the historian scornful of the Melians' folly in earlier resisting the Athenians' arguments as to why they should surrender? Or is it a way of bringing out the Athenians' brutality? On other occasions, Thucydides uses brevity to indicate speedy, effective action by characters—especially by the Athenians, who are overtly characterized as swift. The swift (iterative) treatment of the later Spartan embassies in 425 (discussed above: the Athenians 'sent them away unsuccessful as often as they came', 4.41.4) seemed, by contrast, to highlight the futility of those embassies and the intransigence of the Athenians. This brevity is especially effective at the close of the detailed Pylos narrative.

In many of his more detailed sections Thucydides does offer (at least in part) a day-by-day narrative that enables narrative speed to be charted with some accuracy (indications of mealtimes also occur). In his narrative of the civil war at Corcyra, he uses temporal markers sufficiently detailed for the narratee to see how the arrivals of Athenian and Peloponnesian ships provoke a change in the speed of the narrative, corresponding to their influence on events. The decisive Athenian arrival, for instance, is followed by a brief, iterative narrative of slaughter: 'during the seven days that Eurymedon stayed with his sixty ships, the Corcyraeans were engaged in butchering those of their fel-

low citizens whom they regarded as their enemies ... Death thus raged in every shape; and, as usually happens at such times, there was no length to which violence did not go; sons were killed by their fathers ...' (3.81.4–5).

Order

The Corcyra *stasis*-narrative's day-by-day progression to a murderous climax gains from its linear order, which well brings out the escalation in violence. But within the generally linear structure there are variations of order, notably an analepsis to highlight the arrival of Eurymedon's fleet: 'towards night the Peloponnesians learned through torch signals from Leucas that sixty Athenian ships were approaching, which the Athenians had sent ... when they found out about the civil war and that the ships with Alcidas were going to sail to Corcyra' (3.80.2). By mentioning the Athenian ships when the Peloponnesians learn of their approach, Thucydides emphasizes the reversal to their ambitions. As often, the placement of information is related to the perceptions of participants.

The Corcyra narrative itself starts with mention of the revolutionary action initiated after their return to Corcyra by prisoners taken in the battle of Sybota (3.70.1, looking back to 1.55.1). As their release is not dated, it is not certain whether this analepsis is external or internal—unless, that is, one includes the Corcyra dispute in book 1 within Thucydides' story. His story can most easily be taken as 'the war between the Peloponnesians and Athenians' (1.1.1)—that is, the war that starts at the beginning of book 2.¹² Like Polybius (→), however, Thucydides precedes his account of his main topic with a narrative of its antecedents: 'as to why they broke the peace, I have first written an account of the complaints and disputes' (1.23.5)—that is, the disputes over Corcyra and Potidaea and the diplomacy preceding the Peloponnesian declaration of war. The account of these events (covering 435–432) fills book 1, and can be seen either as analeptic to the main story

¹² The absolute chronological markers at 2.1—in the fifteenth year of the truce, 'when Chrysis had been priestess at Argos for 48 years, Aenesias was ephor at Sparta, and Pythodorus had two more months as archon at Athens ... at the beginning of spring'—are fitting for the start of the story; they also prepare for Thucydides' criticism of dating by local magistracies at 5.20.

or (less satisfactorily) as the start of the story. As for the end of the story, Thucydides defines the end of his work in the narrative of 421, when he insists that the peace made in 421 was not a proper peace and looks ahead to the renewed outbreak of full-blown war again: ‘The same Thucydides ... has recorded these events as well ... up to the point when the Spartans and their allies overthrew the empire of the Athenians and captured the long walls and the Piraeus’ (5.26.1). In fact the narrative is incomplete, breaking off in the twenty-first year of the war (411). There are, as we shall see, some prolepses to the final years of the war which are external if the story is defined as ending in 411, internal if it is defined as ending in 404: the distinction is a purely formal one.

The introduction of analeptic material is linked with focalization not just in the internal analepses in the Corcyra *stasis*-narrative but also in a number of much longer external analepses. We have already seen that the account of Sicilian colonization (6.2–5) fills a gap in Athenian knowledge. Similarly the excursus on the tyrannicides (6.54–59) corrects mistaken Athenian beliefs. The *Archaeology* (1.2–19), by contrast, is a survey of Greek history that justifies Thucydides’ perception at the start of the war that the war would prove to be great; while the *Pentecontaetia* (1.89–118) is a narrative of the growth of Athenian power placed at the moment when the Spartans are swayed by their fear of that power to declare war on Athens. The only other extensive external analepses are explained by the manipulation of the past in the diplomacy before the start of the war: the invocation of curses connected with Cylon and Pausanias prompts the narrator to explain the origin of those curses (1.126, 128–134); at the same time, the level of detail of these analepses (especially the Pausanias excursus, 1.135–138, which itself is extended to cover the later career of Themistocles) exceeds the needs of the narrative and encourages thematic readings (the contrasting Spartan and Athenian treatments of Pausanias and Themistocles pointing ahead to the careers of Lysander and Alcibiades).

There are also many shorter external analepses. A number of later analepses, for instance, fill in gaps in the *Pentecontaetia*: 2.68.8 (the Athenian alliance with Acarnania); 3.2.1 (a Lesbian appeal to Sparta before the war); 4.102 (the foundation of Amphipolis). The mention of the alliance with Acarnania is itself part of a longer analepsis starting with the foundation of Amphilochean Argos (‘Amphilochus the son of Amphiarus founded Amphilochean Argos and the rest of Amphilocheia on the Ambracian gulf after the Trojan War ...’, 2.68.3). As such, it

resembles a number of other analepses recounting the foundation and some of the later history of places when they first become prominent (e.g. 1.24.2–4 on Epidamnus).

Common to many such foundation narratives is an interest in the origin of place names and the inclusion of what we would regard as mythical material. Thucydides explicitly says that Amphilochous named Amphilochoian Argos ‘after his own country’ (2.68.3; he does not need to comment on the derivation of ‘Amphilochia’ from ‘Amphilochous’). Elsewhere he reports that Alcmeon named Acarnania after his son Acarnan (2.102.6), and that the inhabitants of Scione, ‘a city in Pallene’, ‘say that they are Pellenians from the Peloponnese, and that when their founders were sailing from Troy, they were forced into this place by the storm which the Achaeans encountered, and settled it’ (4.120.1). The Scionaeans’ claim that they came from Pellene is evidently offered in explanation of the name Pallene—or perhaps Thucydides is suggesting that it is the name Pallene that explains their claim. Such notes on foundations are particularly common in geographical works such as the *periplus*: the form and the aetiology of Thucydides’ notice on Scione is close, for instance, to that found at Ps.-Scylax 22 (‘The neighbours of the Bulini are the Hylli. These people say that Hyllus the son of Heracles settled them’). Another type of analepsis common in the *periplus* and occasionally found in Thucydides is the mythological notice based on a geographical link. Of the strait of Messina, for instance, Thucydides comments that ‘this place is the water between Rhegion and Sicily where Sicily is the shortest distance from the mainland, also the place called Charybdis where Odysseus is said to have sailed through’ (cf. 3.96.1 on Hesiod and 4.42.2; cf. also e.g. Ps.-Scylax 98: ‘next ... the harbour of the Achaeans; in this the Achaeans are said to have deliberated whether to make an expedition against Telephus or to go away’; 104). Like the detailed foundational narratives, these passages tend to be found in the earlier parts of the history and in descriptions of marginal areas. Perhaps indeed they are in part a way of marking marginality—and so the geographical spread of the Peloponnesian War, itself justification of Thucydides’ belief in the war’s greatness.

There is strong stylistic differentiation both among the various external analepses and between external analepses and the rest of the narrative. Some are argumentative and marked by an overt narratorial presence, by arguments from probability, and by the citation of evidence such as inscriptions (e.g. the *Archaeology*; 2.15, an account of the settle-

ment history of Attica and Theseus' synoecism; 2.29, where Thucydides is sceptical about a link between Teres and the Thracian ruler Tereus; 6.55, on Hippias as the eldest son of Peisistratus). Other sections have a more Herodotean style. Herodotean features are particularly marked in the excursuses on Cylon, Pausanias, and Themistocles. The start of the Cylon narrative—'Cylon was an Olympic victor, an Athenian of former times, both well-born and influential' (1.126.3)—adopts a classic story-telling manner. Here the indeterminacy about the scope of the analepsis ('an Athenian of former times') is itself telling: the sense of Cylon's conspiracy as something remote and detached from the present stands juxtaposed—and in tension—with the report of the Spartans' attempt to exploit the Cylonian pollution. By pointing to the antiquity of the Cylon affair, Thucydides is sardonically anticipating his analysis of the Spartans' motivation: the Spartans were reviving an old story to undermine Pericles, who was connected on his mother's side with the family that had incurred the pollution (1.127).

At the start of his war narrative, Thucydides writes that the account 'has been written in the order that events occurred, divided into summers and winters' (2.1). This claim is justified in the sense that one season follows another, but within each season there are considerable variations of order, including analepses and prolepses that go beyond the seasonal divisions. Many departures from a linear order are caused by the complexity of the historian's subject matter, which necessitates the narration of simultaneous events.¹³ As in Herodotus (→), explanatory analepses following on from introductory 'headers' are common: material is delayed until it is most relevant, and it is most relevant when it is explanatory. Common, too, is the technique of prolepsis to round off a passage, also found in Herodotus (→) and seen already in the allusion to the later colonization of Melos at the end of the Melos narrative (5.116.4, cited above). The scope of such explanatory analepses and proleptic closure is often left imprecise, presumably an indication

¹³ The extremely helpful chronological tables at Gomme, Andrewes & Dover 1945–1981: III 716–721 and V 445–453 list the introductory chronological marker and bring out the main structuring techniques; see now also the detailed analysis by Dewald 2005, which particularly focusses on the formulaic opening sentences to new sections. The weakest marker is 'in the same summer/winter' (*tou autou therous/kheimōnos*); 'at the same time' (*hupo* or *kata ton/tous auton/-ous khronon/-ous*) is used at e.g. 2.26.1, 95.1; 3.18.1, 52.1; *en de toutōi* or *en toutōi de* is commonly used for a sudden event that interrupts an existing state of affairs (esp. often in book 8: Rood 1998: 257 n. 28).

that this detail is not essential to their function in the narrative (it does not matter much how long afterwards the Athenians sent colonists to Melos).¹⁴

In interweaving simultaneous actions, Thucydides tends to give just enough detail to understand the relation between events. It is telling that when there is a dispute over whether Scione had revolted before or after the armistice of 423, the narrator has to add that ‘the truth about the revolt was more in accordance with Athenian claims, since the Scionians had revolted two days later’ (4.122.6). The narratee could not have inferred this fact from the earlier narrative. The greater complexity of the events in book 8 called for a slight development of technique: here there are longer overlapping narratives with the temporal relationship between the parallel accounts indicated where necessary.¹⁵

Analepses acquire a greater interpretative weight when they are used to compare or contrast past and present. After the Athenians’ defeat in the final battle at Syracuse, Thucydides writes that ‘what they had suffered was almost exactly what they had dealt out at Pylos; for when the ships of the Spartans were destroyed, their men who had crossed over to the island were also as good as lost, and this time there was no hope for the Athenians to reach safety by land unless something unaccountable happened’ (7.71.7). This explicit parallel is bolstered by a number of implicit parallels between the Athenian victory at Pylos and their defeat at Sicily—parallels that bring out the causal connection between their overconfidence in the aftermath of Pylos and their ambition to conquer Sicily. External analepses may also be fruitfully used to the same effect. When Thucydides compares the position in which the Spartans were placed at Thermopylae and on Sphacteria (4.36.3), the analepsis explains the contemporary perception of the Spartan surrender at Sphacteria as the most unexpected event in the war (4.40.1).

This interpretative use of analepsis is especially potent in a number of passages focussing on the strengths and weaknesses of Athenian resources and strategy. Many of these instances of temporal deviation concern the Sicilian expedition—in Thucydides’ view, the Athenians’ greatest blunder. When Thucydides reports the departure of the fleet for Sicily, he notes that ‘in number of ships and hoplites, the one against Epidaurus under Pericles and then against Potidaea under Hagnon was not inferior ... But it set out for a short voyage

¹⁴ Cf. 3.50.2–3, 68.3; 4.74.4; cf. further Rood 1998: 113–115, 222–223, 273 n. 67.

¹⁵ Cf. Rood 1998: 263–265, 272–274.

with limited equipment, and this expedition sailed with expectations of a long campaign and furnished with both ships and men' (6.31.2–3). The contrast with the earlier expedition shows how much is at stake in the Sicilian expedition—and how the expedition goes against Pericles' defensive strategy. That is to say, the analepsis has itself the function of foreshadowing:¹⁶ it furthers the sense of doom that hangs over the Athenian expedition. But the Athenian rashness is combined with an extraordinary resilience, and this resilience is brought out forcibly in a passage of striking temporal shifts where Thucydides describes the effect on Athens of the Spartan occupation of Decelea. Thucydides looks ahead to the later effects of Decelea on Athens' war effort—but he also delays until this point a comment on how the Athenian decision to invade Sicily in 415 had astonished the Greeks: 'in their strength and daring they did something so astounding for the Greeks—inasmuch as some of these thought they would survive a year, some two, and no one more than three if the Peloponnesians invaded their land—as coming to Sicily in the seventeenth year after the first invasion' (7.28.3). From the perspective of 413, Thucydides invites the narratee to look back not just to the Athenian decision to attack Sicily two years earlier, but also to perceptions of Athenian weakness at the start of the war.

Thucydides' treatment of Decelea is typical in that he looks at the later effects of the Spartan fort at the moment when the site is first occupied. So too he treats Athens' 'enslavement' of the allies in the *Pentacontaetia* in the context of the subjection of Naxos (1.99); he describes the full effect of the plague at Athens when it first appears (2.47–54); and he gives a general analysis of civil war in the context of the first instance during the war (3.82–83). As we have seen, emphasis may be given to such first occurrences because they are taken by participants as paradigmatic. Thucydides lays great stress, for instance, on the arrival of Brasidas, the first Spartan general to appear in the north, at one point making explicit his paradigmatic force with a specific prolepsis: 'In the later part of the war after the Sicilian expedition, the courage and intelligence of Brasidas in earlier times, known to some by experience and assumed by others from hearsay, especially inspired enthusiasm for the Lacedaemonians among the Athenian allies. For by being the first to go out, and by showing himself a good man in all respects, he left behind the lasting conviction that the others were of the same

¹⁶ On foreshadowing see Introduction (→). The technique is common (cf. e.g. Laiteiner 1977 on laughter in Herodotus as a hint of a reversal of fortune).

sort as well' (4.81.2–3). The prolepsis creates a striking shift in temporal perspective that takes the narratee from a period of great Athenian momentum after Pylos to an anticipation of their decline.¹⁷ This prospective vision is itself balanced by a slightly later prolepsis where Thucydides describes the response of Athens' allies to the revolt of Amphipolis: 'they were strongly motivated toward revolutionary action ... It was obvious to them that they could do so with impunity, a mistake about Athenian power as great as the obviousness of that power later on' (4.108.3–4). Here Thucydides seems to be looking ahead to the surprising Athenian resilience after the Sicilian disaster. There is a tension between the two prolepses that raises questions about the nature and durability of Athenian power. At the same time, the prolepses strengthen the teleological momentum of a narrative geared to explaining the Athenians' defeat in Sicily and their paradoxical recovery.¹⁸

The two most important prolepses in Thucydides' work look ahead explicitly to the final defeat of Athens. Following Pericles' speech encouraging the Athenians not to give in to the Spartans (2.60–64), Thucydides anticipates Pericles' death and then extends this prolepsis by drawing an extensive contrast between Pericles' style of leadership and the inferior ability of his successors—a decline which he sees as the cause of Athens' final defeat (2.65). At the same time, the fact that Athens was able to last for so many years after the defeat in Sicily is seen as justification of Pericles' analysis of Athens' strength.

The straight contrast drawn at 2.65 between Pericles and his successors is complicated by the second most important prolepsis—Thucydides' analysis of Alcibiades. In the context of Alcibiades' speech in the debate on invading Sicily—the decision that contributed above all to Athens' ruin—Thucydides returns to the causes of Athens' final defeat:

¹⁷ Compare the prolepsis on Athenian recovery at 8.97.2, placed immediately after a strong stress on how the Spartans miss the opportunity to exploit to the full the revolt of Euboea.

¹⁸ A similar teleological momentum is gained through the prolepses in the *Pentecontaetia* that look ahead in various ways to the war that the account helps to explain (Rood 1998: 226–228); the brief allusion at 4.8.9 to 'the ones finally trapped there'—which is oblique without knowledge of later events on Sphacteria; and the paired prolepses at 7.4.6 and 7.24.3, both instances of 'firsts' that propel the Athenians to disaster in Sicily (Rood 1998: 175–176).

He was held in such esteem among the citizens that he indulged himself in expenditures beyond his actual resources, both for horse-breeding and for other luxuries; and to a great extent it was this that destroyed the Athenian city. The masses, frightened by the magnitude of his license in conducting his personal life and of his aims in absolutely everything he did, whatever it was, developed hostility toward him as an aspiring tyrant, and while he as a public person managed the war with the utmost skill, they as private individuals detested him for his behaviour, and by entrusting the city to others they ruined it in short order. (6.15.3–4)

While Alcibiades is guilty of the same sort of personal ambition Thucydides deplored in other post-Periclean leaders, it emerges here that the Athenians' greatest problem was their failure to cope with a leader of Alcibiades' style of individualism.

Thucydides includes no external prolepses—that is, he nowhere looks beyond the final defeat of Athens—unless, that is, the prolepsis at 2.100.2 on the achievements of Archelaus of Macedon (who died in 399) is taken as a post-mortem assessment, and unless the third eruption of Etna mentioned at 3.116.2 is the eruption of 396.¹⁹ Where the narratee is invited to look beyond the end of the war is in an emotive actorial prolepsis placed immediately before Thucydides' analysis of the causes of Athens' defeat. Pericles closes his final speech by imagining how Athens will be seen in the future: 'Athens ... has acquired certainly the greatest power known up to this time, of which it will be forever remembered by posterity, even if in the present we give way at some time (for it is in the nature of all things to be diminished too), that we as Hellenes ruled over most Hellenes ...' (2.64.3).²⁰ It is Thucydides' work—'a possession for all time' (1.22.4)—that will guarantee Athens' fame—even while its temporally complex narrative invites a more questioning view of the nature of Athenian power.

¹⁹ Cf. the discussions of Gomme, Andrewes & Dover 1945–1981 and S. Hornblower 1991–1996: ad loc.; the allusion to Etna is more commonly taken to imply a date before 396. The extent to which a historian of contemporary events can use external prolepsis is always of course limited.

²⁰ There are, of course, many other actorial prolepses (speakers typically express expectations about the future when they formulate plans), but there is no space to discuss these here.