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in der nachklassischen Geschichtsschreibung

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Truth, vividness and enactive narration in ancient Greek historiography

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1. Truth in ancient historiography

Do ancient historians mean the same as today's historians when they lay claim to the truth? The "classical foundations of modern historiography"[1] seem to suggest that Herodotus and his ancient successors coined the notion of truth that is now so dear to historians. Opposing this view, Tony Woodman has made a case for crucial differences between ancient and modern practice. In his opinion, ancient historiography, being a province of rhetoric, was primarily concerned with impartiality and plausibility.[2] *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography* features close readings of Thucydides and Cicero which successfully challenge established and widely-held convictions, but both ancient comments on historiography and the works of ancient historians themselves make it ultimately hard to maintain Woodman's radical assertion that a positivist sense of truth is merely a retro-projection of modern readers. Take for example one of the earliest theoretical reflections on historiography, to be found in chapter 9 of the *Poetics*. Even the most positivist historians today would be happy with Aristotle's definition of historiography as describing 'what happened' and dealing with 'the particular' instead of the universal.[3] Turning to ancient historiography itself, Christopher Pelling trenchantly notes:[4]

> "It is hard to see why, for instance, the loss of records in the Gallic sack (Livy 6.1, cf. *De fort. Rom.* 326A) or the confusion of the early *fasti* (Livy 2.21.4) or the secrecy of imperial records (Dio 53.19) should be a hindrance to recovering truth, if truth be interpreted in terms of impartiality and plausibility."

While a positivist notion of truth is by no means alien to ancient historians, it seems that it was flanked by other concepts which seem to conflict with it and are not shared by the majority of modern historians. A case in point is the ideal of narratorial vividness. In a

1 Momigliano (1990).
2 Woodman (1988).
3 Arist. Poet. 1451b4–7.
4 Pelling (1990) 42 n. 65.

much-quoted passage, Plutarch touches on Thucydides to illustrate Simonides' apophthegm that poetry is a speaking painting:[5]

> "Thucydides is always striving for this vividness in his writing, since it is his desire to make the reader a spectator, as it were, and to instil into readers the emotions of amazement and consternation felt by eyewitnesses."

Plutarch continues by adducing the Pylos episode and the Syracusan harbour battle as two exemplary instances of Thucydidean vividness. His comment not only illustrates that a vivid style was deemed crucial in ancient historiography, it also drives home that the practice of historians preceded the emergence of *enargeia* as a critical concept. The scanty transmission of ancient literature makes it difficult, if not impossible, to prove such assertions, but it seems that the use of *enargeia* for the vivid quality of narrative emerged only in the Hellenistic period.[6] At the same time, the responses that songs and stories elicit from audiences in the *Odyssey* demonstrate the appreciation of gripping narrations right from the beginning of Greek literature.

In this paper, I shall take a fresh look at the vividness of ancient historiography. Elsewhere I argued that, together with such linguistic features as tense and *deixis*, the three fundamental narratological categories of time, voice and focus are keys to the historians' efforts of restoring presence to the past. While focalization and speeches give the reader access to the minds of the historical agents, the alignment of narrative time with narrated time makes her re-experience the action in the frame of 'as-if'.[7] Here, I wish to consider another aspect. Recent cognitive theory shows that enactive narration is an important means of enabling readers to imagine the narrated world. After sketching the main tenets of enactivism (2.), I will use the two passages singled out by Plutarch to see what role enactive elements play in Thucydides' history. An example from the *Lives* will show that Plutarch himself, actually more than Thucydides, employs enactive narration (3.). In a final step, I will return to the relation between narratorial vividness and historical truth. While there is evidence that ancient historians did distinguish between the two, they seem to have sensed an affinity between them. This may be at odds with our ideas, but I will argue that an experiential presentation, even if it relies on fictional means, can have referential value (4.).

5 Plut. de glor. Ath. 347a: ὁ γοῦν Θουκυδίδης ἀεὶ τῷ λόγῳ πρὸς ταύτην ἁμιλλᾶται τὴν ἐνάργειαν, οἷον θεατὴν ποιῆσαι τὸν ἀκροατὴν καὶ τὰ γινόμενα περὶ τοὺς ὁρῶντας ἐκπληκτικὰ καὶ ταρακτικὰ πάθη τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν ἐνεργάσασθαι λιχνευόμενος.

6 See Zanker (1981) for the influential argument that in the Hellenistic era *enargeia* enters the language of criticism from philosophy. More recently, see Manieri (1998); Otto (2009); Bussels (2012), 61–71. Even if it is doubtful that critics borrowed the term of *enargeia* from philosophers, it seems that the term did not gain currency as a *terminus technicus* for the vividness of narrative until the Hellenistic Era. See also Maier and Baumann in this volume.

7 Grethlein (2013).

2. Enactive narration[8]

Classicists as indeed many other literary scholars tend to assume that narratorial vividness hinges on detailed descriptions. Graham Zanker, for instance, lists "verisimilitude, the attention to precise, minute and even significant detail"[9] as core aspects of realism across ages, championed in exemplary fashion by Hellenistic poetry. The more detailed an account is, the easier, it seems, it is for the reader to imagine the scene. This view is indebted to a pictorialist understanding of perception that corresponds to our intuition and has been elaborated on in science especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Such scholars as Stephen Kosslyn argued that seeing is a computational process, that we form internal mental images of the world.[10] If we transfer this model from perception to imagination, it is natural to believe that accumulative descriptive details allow a reader to form a picture of the narrated world and feel absorbed by it. However, recent research on perception has forcefully undermined this "jigsaw model"[11] of the readerly imagination. Confirming in many regards older phenomenological theory, scientists have proved that the perceived world is not a gap-free photograph. Perception rather tends to be selective and attention-dependent.[12] Instead of forming a photographic image of our surroundings, we concentrate on aspects that relate to our potential actions. The feeling that we fully picture our surrounding results from the possibility that we *can* attend to all of its aspects. By no means, however, do we actually collect pieces of information to form a photo-like representation. We rather concentrate on the features that presently matter. Perception, to quote one of the most influential advocates of the enactive model, takes place 'in action'.[13]

Literary scholars have just begun to realize the consequences this shift from a pictorialist to an enactive model has for our understanding of narratorial vividness.[14] Contradicting the economy and selectivity of our perception, lengthy and detailed descriptions are not cognitively realist and therefore impede the vividness of narrative. The enactivist approach in literary scholarship is still in its infancy, but the following aspects seem to contribute to the 'imageability' of the narrated world:

(1) 'Just in time': We may pause to contemplate a landscape or object, but in general we experience the world differently. New aspects come to our attention as and when they become relevant. Consequently, such narratives are cognitively realist that, instead of furnishing meticulous descriptions for their own sake, describe features which pertain to the action.[15]

8 For a fuller introduction to enactive theory and its application to narrative, see Grethlein/Huitink (2017).
9 Zanker (1987), 5.
10 E. g. Kosslyn (1980); Kosslyn et al. (2006); Marr (1982).
11 Jajdelska et al. (2010), 440–441.
12 See, for example, Noë (2004); (2009); Gallagher/Zahavi (2008) on the importance of the phenomenological tradition, among others Husserl and Merleau-Ponty.
13 Noë (2004)
14 Pioneering studies include Grünbaum (2007); Troscianko (2014); Kuzmičová (2012); Caracciolo (2014).
15 Cf. Kuzmičová (2012), 13; Troscianko (2014), 125–126.

(2) 'Simple bodily actions': While the principle of 'just in time' ties together description and action, we can further specify what kind of action is perceived as most vivid. "Simple bodily actions",[16] in particular "volitional transitive movements"[17] seem to be suited best to enthrall readers. Analogous to our perception of the world through bodily movements, such narration has strong motor resonance in the reader's mind.
(3) 'Dynamic veracity': In order to stimulate the reader's imagination, the narration of actions should be dynamically veracious; that means, the time it takes to read a text ought to be commensurate with the duration of the action performed in the narrated world. While it is notoriously difficult to measure exactly the relation between narrated and narrative time, it is obvious that an alignment of both renders narrative experiential.[18]
(4) 'Affordances': It is not only the quantity of descriptive details which matters but also their quality. We tend to perceive our environment in terms of its affordances for embodied action: when we look at, say, a hammer, we do not so much perceive it in all its details as how we could use it, how, for instance, it would fit into our hands and what we could do with it. In corresponding to the logic of our perception, narratives that focus on the affordances of objects are felt to be particularly vivid.[19]

Before I try to make this model fruitful for our understanding of vividness in ancient historiography, two modern sample texts may help to give flesh to these claims. First a paragraph from Fontane's *Irrungen, Wirrungen*:[20]

> "At the intersection of the Kurfürstendamm and Kurfürstenstrasse, diagonally across from the Zoological Garden, there was still, in the middle of the '70s, a large market garden, which stretched out in the direction of the fields; the house belonging to this, small and with three windows, situated some hundred paces back in a little front garden, could still, despite the fact that it was so small and secluded, be readily spotted from the street that led past it. Yet another part of the market-garden as a whole, what in fact amounted to its real core, was hidden by precisely this little residence, as if by a stage-curtain, and only a little wooden tower, painted red and green, with a clock-face, half broken off, below the tower's top (no question of an actual clock being there) suggested that behind this curtain something else must be hidden – a suspicion which came to be confirmed by a flock of doves that flew up from time to time, swarming around the turret, and even more so by the occasional barking of a dog. Where this dog was actually to be found was, however, beyond the powers of perception, although the front door, hard by the left corner of the tower, always ajar from dawn till dusk, permitted a glance into a little piece of courtyard."

16 Grünbaum (2007), 300, 303.
17 Kuzmičová (2012), 28.
18 Kuzmičová (2012), 28–29.
19 On the concept of 'affordance', see especially Gibson (1979).
20 Fontane (1971) [1888], 319, cited and transl. by Troscianko (2013), 188.

Compare this with the following passage taken from Jacobsen's short story *Mogens*:[21]

> "When Camilla had entered her room, she pulled up the blind, leaned her brow against the cool pane, and hummed Elisabeth's song from 'The Fairy-hill.' At sunset a light breeze had begun to blow and a few tiny, white clouds, illuminated by the moon, were driven towards Camilla. For a long while she stood regarding them; she followed them from a far distance, and she sang louder and louder as they drew nearer, kept silent a few seconds while they disappeared above her, then sought others, and followed them too. With a little sigh she pulled down the blind. She walked to the dressing table, leaned her elbows against it, rested her head in her clasped hands and regarded her own picture in the mirror without really seeing it."

From a pictorialist perspective, Fontane's description would appear to be fully geared to stimulate the reader's imagination. The rich details, a pictorialist would argue, make it easy to form a mental image of the scene. And yet, while some readers may be able to imagine a holistic picture of the location, for many readers the quantity of detail provided will detract from, rather than add to, the vividness of their impression. The separation of the description from the action in particular makes it hard to keep track of all the details. Jacobsen's account of the room is far scantier, and yet most readers will find it more vivid. We learn about features of the room as they become part of the action. The blinds, for example, are mentioned when Camilla draws them up. The account features numerous simple bodily movements, besides the drawing of the blinds also the walking into the room and the leaning against various objects. The qualification of the windowpane as 'cool' highlights precisely the aspect which is experienced by Camilla when she leans her brow against it. It would be impossible to draw the room on the basis of the information given, and yet, in conforming to how we experience the world, the enactive narration stimulates our imagination far more strongly than meticulous pictorialist descriptions.

3. Vividness and enactive narration in Thucydides and Plutarch

Now let us see whether or not enactive elements contribute to the vividness of the Thucydides passages singled out by Plutarch. The first passage stems from the Pylos episode in book 4, in Plutarch's summary:[22]

> "For he tells how Demosthenes is drawing up the Athenians at the very edge of the breakwater at Pylos, and Brasidas is urging on his pilot to beach the ship, and is hurrying to the landing-plank, and is wounded and falls fainting on the forward-deck; and the Spartans are fighting an infantry engagement from the sea, while the Athenians wage a naval battle from the land."

21 Jacobsen (1979), 29–30, cited by Grünbaum (2007), 307.

22 Plut. de glor. Ath. 347b: ὁ γὰρ παρὰ τὴν ῥαχίαν αὐτὴν τῆς Πύλου παρατάττων τοὺς Ἀθηναίους Δημοσθένης, καὶ ὁ τὸν κυβερνήτην ἐπισπέρχων Βρασίδας ἐξοκέλλειν καὶ χωρῶν ἐπὶ τὴν <ἀπο>βάθραν καὶ τραυματιζόμενος καὶ λιποψυχῶν καὶ ἀποκλίνων εἰς τὴν παρεξειρεσίαν, καὶ οἱ πεζομαχοῦντες μὲν ἐκ θαλάττης Λακεδαιμόνιοι ναυμαχοῦντες δ' ἀπὸ γῆς Ἀθηναῖοι.

Thucydides first narrates the action in panoramic fashion:[23] the Athenians "went down and took up their position right by the sea" (ἐπικαταβάντες ἐτάξαντο παρ' αὐτὴν τὴν θάλασσαν). The Spartans "set out" (ἄραντες) and "attacked" (προσέβαλλον) the fort from land and sea, here "making their attacks a few ships at a time" (κατ' ὀλίγας ναῦς διελόμενοι […] τοὺς ἐπίπλους ἐποιοῦντο) due to the narrow space. Then Thucydides zooms in on Brasidas, who "was especially prominent" (φανερώτατος).[24] He focalizes the scene through his eyes and deploys indirect speech to render Brasidas' appeal to the Spartans and their allies not to save their ships. Here, the orchestration of voice and focus helps to bring the reader close to the action. She is made to see the action through the lens of a character. This is an important aspect of the vividness of Thucydides, who sometimes seems to focus more on the perception, thoughts and motives of the characters than the action itself. We will return to this point in due course.

And yet, the part to which Plutarch assigns most space in his summary shows that Thucydides also knows how to draw on the devices of enactive narrative:[25]

> "In this way he urged everyone else on and advanced to the gangway after compelling his own helmsmen to run the ship ashore. In the attempt to land, he was beaten back by the Athenians and fainted after receiving many wounds, and when he fell into the outrigger his shield slipped off into the sea […]."

The summarizing verbs of 4.11.2–3 have been replaced by verbs denoting individual actions, several of which consist of simple bodily movements. The movements are carefully charted: Brasidas goes to the gangway and, after receiving his injury, falls into the outrigger while his shield slips off into the sea. The directional terms applied to the movements endow the scene with a high degree of imageability.

Objects are mentioned 'just in time', that is as and when they play a role in the action. The gangway is referred to when Brasidas wants to step on it in order to leave the ship. Historians of ancient seafare have feasted on the outrigger;[26] Thucydides, however, does not mention it with the purpose of supplying technical information, he brings it in as part of the action. The outrigger appears when Brasidas falls into it while the shield gets mentioned as it slides into the sea. On a pictorialist account, the narration of Brasidas' injury would score poorly. We are far from being able to picture the scene, there is not even a description of the location. And yet, the enactive approach helps us understand Plutarch's appraisal of the scene. We do not take in our surroundings in the form of a gap-free photo. Instead we attend selectively to the features that pertain to our potential interaction with the environment. Seen from this perspective, Thucydides' narration is cognitively realist: it concentrates on simple actions and qualifies the movements in spatial terms. Objects are referred to as and when they are relevant to the action. In

23 Thuk. 4.11.1–3. Allan (2013), 378 analyses this account as an example of his descriptive mode.

24 Thuk. 4.11.4.

25 Thuk. 4.12.1: καὶ ὁ μὲν τούς τε ἄλλους τοιαῦτα ἐπέσπερχε καὶ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ κυβερνήτην ἀναγκάσας ὀκεῖλαι τὴν ναῦν ἐχώρει ἐπὶ τὴν ἀποβάθραν· καὶ πειρώμενος ἀποβαίνειν ἀνεκόπη ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀθηναίων, καὶ τραυματισθεὶς πολλὰ ἐλιποψύχησέ τε καὶ πεσόντος αὐτοῦ ἐς τὴν παρεξειρεσίαν ἡ ἀσπὶς περιερρύη ἐς τὴν θάλασσαν […].

26 Morrison/Coates (1986), 163–164.

conforming to the enactive nature of our perception, the narration allows the reader to imagine the scene. Furthermore, the slowing down of the narrative pace makes narrative time approximate narrated time.

The immediacy of the narration is linguistically enhanced. There are no discourse particles, no negations, no temporal and modal adverbs all of which would highlight the presence of the author.[27] The preference of parataxis over subordination further conveys the impression of having unfiltered access to the event. The connective particle καί used by Thucydides here seems to be more conducive to an immediate mode of presentation than δέ, which establishes a stronger boundary in the discourse.[28] There is one feature, though, which does not enhance the enactive nature of the narration. This is the passive voice: Brasidas is beaten back and is wounded. That being said, the passive voice serves the same purpose as the enactive presentation: to put the spotlight on Brasidas whose feat is cast in heroic light through the word ἐπισπέρχειν, deployed by Homer and Aeschylus, but rare in Attic prose. As Simon Hornblower notes, "the description is unusually detailed and lively, but this was not the shield of an ordinary soldier […] where Brasidas is concerned, Th. enjoys using the whole paintbox".[29]

This draws our attention to an important general point, namely that enactive narration derives its power from being embedded in less enactive parts of the narrative. Speaking of a "periodic diet", Kuzmičová argues that

> "presence cues become effective only if moderately dosed. Not only should they appear periodically, once in a while, for a continuous sense of presence to arise. They should appear just once in a while, if presence is to be instantaneously elicited at all".[30]

This is nowhere more obvious than in Thucydides who is as economic as he is efficient in his use of narratorial vividness. He marshals *enargeia*, to use the ancient term, very selectively to flag crucial events.[31] It is not incidental that Lucian, when he warns against too detailed accounts in historiography, references Brasidas' *aristeia* as a case in which detail is warranted.[32]

The second passage evoked by Plutarch corroborates this claim that vividness is a means of highlighting important events.[33] For Thucydides, the Syracusan harbour battle is a pivotal point in the Peloponnesian War. The defeat of the Athenians defines the failure of a hybristic endeavor that would ultimately lead to Athens' fall. It is noteworthy that Plutarch selects two passages which correspond with each other. Thucydides himself compares explicitly the Syracusan harbour battle with the Pylos affair[34] and schol-

27 Cf. Allan (2013), 375.
28 Allan (2013), 375.
29 Hornblower (1996) ad 4.12.1.
30 Kuzmičová (2012), 43, see also 33.
31 On the various modes of discourse employed by Thucydides, see Connor (1985).
32 Luk. hist. conscr. 49.
33 For an analysis of the Syracusan harbour scene in terms of collective experience, see Grethlein (2015), 125–129.
34 Thuk. 7.71.7.

ars have teased out the manifold parallels.[35] Most importantly, perhaps, the unexpected land victory of the Athenians at Pylos mirrors their unexpected defeat in Syracuse.

The text of Plutarch's verbatim quote is corrupt and seems to be beyond redemption, but it stems from arguably the most striking part of the battle narrative, the long description of the soldiers at land and their response to the battle on sea. This description does not add anything noteworthy to the action and offers merely a rehash of the preceding account through the lens of an internal audience. In an author famous for his economy, the considerable amount of narrative space and rhetorical fervour devoted to mere bystanders is remarkable. Plutarch has, it seems, identified a salient aspect of the narration's vividness: the internal audience grants the reader a viewing point on the scene and thereby renders the account experiential. Thucydides here deftly wields a device that would loom large in the later history of ancient historiography when authors such as Polybius, Livy and Tacitus make frequent use of embedded recipients.[36]

However, the account of the battle which precedes the description of the bystanders is also in itself vivid. The use of verbs in the imperfect gives the impression of immediacy. Take for example the beginning:[37]

> "When the Athenians drew close to the barrier, they sailed against it and in their first charge overpowered the ships stationed next to it and tried to break the chains; but after this, when the Syracusans and their allies bore down on them from all directions, the sea battle was no longer fought only by the barrier but throughout the harbor […]."

The durative aspect of the imperfect makes it the default tense for describing the backdrop of actions. When the imperfect is used to report action as it is here, the durative aspect creates immediacy: it presents the action as ongoing and thus puts the reader into the shoes of an eyewitness who is following the scene as it is progressing.[38]

The stylistic presentation of the action, geared to drive home the special nature of the battle, is different from the account of Brasidas' *aristeia*. Thucydides avoids finite verbs, gives preference to nouns and repeatedly uses the copula γίγνεσθαι. The language is thus less enactive, but simultaneously it expresses formally the situation which gave little room for action: in the narrowness of the harbour, the battle just 'happened'. Consider for example the following sentence:[39]

35 Finley (1967), 145–149; Rawlings (1981); Macleod (1983), 142–143; Flory (1993), 119–120.

36 On Polybius, see Davidson (1991); on Livy, Feldherr (1998); on Tacitus, Grethlein (2013), 140–167.

37 Thuk. 7.70.2: ἐπειδὴ δὲ οἱ ἄλλοι Ἀθηναῖοι προσέμισγον τῷ ζεύγματι, τῇ μὲν πρώτῃ ῥύμῃ ἐπιπλέοντες ἐκράτουν τῶν τεταγμένων νεῶν πρὸς αὐτῷ καὶ ἐπειρῶντο λύειν τὰς κλῆσεις· μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο πανταχόθεν σφίσι τῶν Συρακοσίων καὶ ξυμμάχων ἐπιφερομένων οὐ πρὸς τῷ ζεύγματι ἔτι μόνον ἡ ναυμαχία, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὸν λιμένα ἐγίγνετο […].

38 For different approaches to the imperfect's mimetic capacity, see Bakker (1997); (2005), 154–176; (2007); Rijksbaron (2012).

39 Thuk. 7.70.6: ξυνετύγχανέ τε πολλαχοῦ διὰ τὴν στενοχωρίαν τὰ μὲν ἄλλοις ἐμβεβληκέναι, τὰ δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐμβεβλῆσθαι, δύο τε περὶ μίαν καὶ ἔστιν ἣ καὶ πλείους ναῦς κατ' ἀνάγκην ξυνηρτῆσθαι, καὶ τοῖς κυβερνήταις τῶν μὲν φυλακήν, τῶν δ' ἐπιβουλήν, μὴ καθ' ἓν ἕκαστον, κατὰ πολλὰ δὲ πανταχόθεν, περιεστάναι, καὶ τὸν κτύπον μέγαν ἀπὸ πολλῶν νεῶν ξυμπιπτουσῶν ἔκπληξίν τε ἅμα καὶ ἀποστέρησιν τῆς ἀκοῆς ὧν οἱ κελευσταὶ φθέγγοιντο παρέχειν.

> "It so happened that, because of the restricted space, in many places ships had rammed others but were rammed themselves, so around one ship, two, in some places even more, were fused together, and it fell to the helmsmen to ward off some while aiming at others, not one at a time but many and from all over, and the great din from many ships colliding caused consternation and at the same time inability to hear the voices of the coxswains."

Here, it is not γίγνεσθαι but ξυντυγχάνειν that expresses the automatism of the battle. The perfect tense of the infinitives depending on the impersonal verb freezes the sequential action into one scene. The staccato effect of the prose makes the confusion felt by the participants tangible: the series of short clauses juxtaposed in sharp antithesis linguistically mimics the disarray of the scene as perceived by the soldiers. Scholars have complained about the insufficiency of Thucydides' report of the battle: He "fails even to suggest the factors that determined the outcome. Instead, he dwells on certain typical incidents in the confused fighting that followed […]".[40] It is true that we learn little about the course of fighting, but this may be due to its chaotic character which impedes a step-by-step analysis. What is more, it is part of Thucydides' strategy to make the experience of the battle palpable. He exposes the reader to the same confusion as the soldiers fighting.

If the narration of the Syracusan harbour battle is not very enactive, then this does not disprove the value of an enactivist approach for our understanding of Thucydidean vividness. An enactive narration is obviously less appropriate to the rendering of a battle in which the possibility of action was severely curtailed. Thucydides here relies on other means of bringing the reader close to the scene, in particular internal focalization, but also stylistic mimesis. At the same time, the analysis of Brasidas' *aristeia* has revealed that Thucydides knows how to narrate enactively.

Nonetheless, we have to ask how prominent enactive elements are in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Thucydides now and then intersperses enactive passages in his work, but on the whole, I think, he prefers to engage the reader intellectually. As already said, the perception and minds of the historical agents receive an equal, if not larger, amount of attention as the action. In the absence of prolepses (by and large), the reader is prompted to conjecture herself about what will happen and what would be best to do. As I argue elsewhere, this process is an important part of the usefulness that Thucydides ascribes to his work. The *History of the Peloponnesian War* can be viewed as an exercise in the art of assessing situations that is at the core of politics.[41] The intellectual challenge that Thucydides wishes to pose seems to be more prominent than the desire to trigger strong motor resonances in the readers. Enactive narration is certainly an arrow in Thucydides' quiver, but it is in the midst of other arrows and is pulled out very selectively.

To complement this discussion of vividness and enactive narration in ancient historiography let us use Plutarch as more than a stepping-stone and briefly consider his

40 Ferguson (1935), 308.
41 Grethlein (2010a), 277–279; (2013), 48–49.

Lives.[42] Plutarch is not only appreciative of *enargeia* in other authors, he is himself a master of vividness. As argued elsewhere, Plutarch downplays temporal sequence: he is often vague about time and tends to link episodes thematically.[43] While the episodic structure of the *Lives* foregoes the experiential appeal inherent in an alignment of narrative and narrated time, Plutarch lavishly describes individual scenes. Here, one such scene, the taming of Bucephalas from the *Life of Alexander*, will illustrate the salience of an enactive style in Plutarch's vignettes.[44]

Plutarch sets the stage narrating the annoyance of Philipp at the failure of his entourage to break the horse bought at a truly royal price. He then reports a dialogue between Philipp and Alexander in which the latter bets the price of the horse that he will be able to break him. The taming is rendered as follows:[45]

> "There was laughter at this, and then an agreement between father and son as to the forfeiture, and at once Alexander ran to the horse, took up the reins, and turned him towards the sun; for he had noticed, as it would seem, that the horse was greatly disturbed by the sight of his own shadow falling in front of him and dancing about. And after he had trotted a little besides him, and had stroked him with his hand, when he saw that he was full of spirit and courage, he quietly threw away his mantle and with a light spring safely bestrode him. Then, drawing the bit a little with the reins on the left and the right side, without striking him or tearing his mouth, he held him in; but when he saw that the horse was rid of the fear that had beset him, and was impatient for the course, he gave him his head, and at last urged him on with sterner tone and thrust of foot."

It is first noteworthy that Plutarch does not provide the reader with a precise description of the place,[46] which would be a prerequisite for a vivid account on a pictorialist understanding. Instead, Plutarch concentrates on the action which is rendered in great detail. His narration brims with simple action verbs which are spatially qualified through prefixes: Alexander "runs to" the horse (προσδραμών), "takes up" the reins (παραλαβών) and "turns" the horse "towards" the sun (ἐπέστρεψε), since he has noticed that Bucephalas is disturbed by his "shadow falling in front of him" (σκιὰν προπίπτουσαν, 6.5). Alexander then "trots besides" Bucephalas (παρακαλπάσας) and caresses him, literally, "strokes down" (καταψήσας), before he "throws away" his mantle (ἀπορρίψας) and mounts the

42 Strictly speaking, the *Lives* are biographies. However as scholars have demonstrated, the boundary between biography and historiography was less firm in antiquity. See, for example, Gentili/Cerri (1988); Duff (1999), 17–22; Schepens (2007).

43 Grethlein (2013), 116–125.

44 On the scene, see Frazier (1992), 4496–4499; Stadter (1996), 291–296; Whitmarsh (2002), 180–181; Grethlein (2013), 122–125.

45 Plut. Alex. 6.5–8: γενομένου δὲ γέλωτος, εἶθ' ὁρισμοῦ πρὸς ἀλλήλους εἰς τὸ ἀργύριον, εὐθὺς προσδραμὼν τῷ ἵππῳ καὶ παραλαβὼν τὴν ἡνίαν, ἐπέστρεψε πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον, ὡς ἔοικεν ἐννοήσας ὅτι τὴν σκιὰν προπίπτουσαν καὶ σαλευομένην ὁρῶν πρὸ αὑτοῦ διαταράττοιτο. μικρὰ δ' αὐτῷ παρακαλπάσας καὶ καταψήσας, ὡς ἑώρα πληρούμενον θυμοῦ καὶ πνεύματος, ἀπορρίψας ἡσυχῇ τὴν χλαμύδα καὶ μετεωρίσας αὐτόν, ἀσφαλῶς περιέβη. καὶ μικρὰ μὲν περιλαβὼν ταῖς ἡνίαις τὸν χαλινόν, ἄνευ πληγῆς καὶ σπαραγμοῦ προσανέστειλεν· ὡς δ' ἑώρα τὸν ἵππον ἀφεικότα τὴν ἀπειλήν, ὀργῶντα δὲ πρὸς τὸν δρόμον, ἀφεὶς ἐδίωκεν, ἤδη φωνῇ θρασυτέρᾳ καὶ ποδὸς κρούσει χρώμενος.

46 Cf. Frazier (1992), 4497.

horse, literally, "encircles" him (περιέβη, 6.6). "Drawing" the reins both "on the left and the right side" (περιλαβών),[47] Alexander "holds in" Bucephalas (προσανέστειλεν, 6.7). The sequence of verbs meticulously designing and spatially charting Alexander's individual moves triggers a high motor resonance in the reader's imagination.

As noted above, it is difficult to measure exactly the relation between narrated and narrative time. I am inclined to surmise that 'dynamic veracity' is the reader's basic assumption: following a narration, she implicitly assumes that it takes a character so long to perform an action as it takes her to peruse the account of it. The reader only gives up the expectation of 'dynamic veracity' when she cannot sustain it anymore, for example in panoramic narrative or in pauses. Whether or not this idea is correct, the account of Bucephalas' taming is certainly one that qualifies as 'dynamically veracious'. After Plutarch has summarily referred to previous attempts at breaking the horse, the dialogue between Alexander and his father assimilates narrative time to narrated time. In representing words, direct speech closes the gap between narrated and narrative time. The detailed description of individual movements that follow makes it easy to maintain the impression that narrated time proceeds in conjunction with narrative time. Mimicking the flow of the action, the narrative becomes vivid.

Plutarch's narration also champions the principle of 'just-in-time'. Objects crop only up as a part of the action. We learn about Alexander's cloak when he throws it away in order to be better able to mount the horse. The reins and bridle are mentioned when Alexander uses them. The reference to objects as and when they matter to actions corresponds to our perception which takes in our environment in terms of actual and possible interaction. Besides the description of simple actions and the dynamic veracity, the cognitively realist engagement with place and objects helps the reader imagine the scene.

Plutarch uses the enactive narration to highlight an anecdote that carries significance far beyond the event it purports. Placed prominently at the beginning of the biography, the breaking of Bucephalas establishes major features of Alexander's character, notably his wit, ambition and brashness. It also foreshadows Alexander's later achievements. When he manages to tame Bucephalas, Philipp comments: "My son, seek out a kingdom equal to yourself; Macedonia has not room for you."[48] Just as Alexander tames Bucephalas, he will subjugate entire countries. The direction of his conquests is even adumbrated by the sun towards which he leads the horse. Other interpreters envisage Bucephalas as an "equine counterpart of Alexander"[49] and emphasize the similarities between horse and rider.[50] Seen from this perspective, the taming of Bucephalas mirrors Alexander's own education by Aristotle, "a task for many bits and rudder-handles", as

47 On this meaning of περιλαμβάνειν see Ziegler (1935), 369–370, who defends the transmitted form against the various conjectures.

48 Plut. *Alex.* 6.8.

49 Anderson (1930).

50 Stadter (1996), 293–294 who, like Duff (1999), 85, identifies a Platonic background.

Plutarch states with a quotation from Sophocles.[51] Whether as a cipher for Alexander's conquests or for his education, the taming of Bucephalas is a highly charged story.

There is no lack of similar episodes in the *Lives* of Plutarch. In the proem to the *Alexander and Caesar*, Plutarch expounds on the value of anecdotes for "a phrase or a jest often make a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities".[52] Many anecdotes are narrated enactively. The enactive presentation helps Plutarch to engage his readers and thereby to reach the moral goal of his biographies, namely that his readers learn from the model of the great men whose lives he is dissecting. Vividly narrated anecdotes are a powerful means of conveying moral messages, arguably more so than ethical reasoning would be.

My inquiry here can offer no more than selective spotlights. It has become clear though that enactive narration is part of the ancient historian's and biographer's toolbox. At the same time, we have seen that an enactive style is not the only means by which ancient historians engage their readers. The Syracusan harbor scene for example, where the possibility of action is seriously constricted, is made tangible through an embedded audience and stylistic mimesis. Highly invested in the minds of his characters, Thucydides tends in general to engage the reader more intellectually than through motor resonances. That being said, the injury of Brasidas illustrates that Thucydides is capable of wielding the means of enactive narrative in order to draw his audience's attention to a scene or character. Nonetheless, enactive narration is more prominent in the *Lives* of Plutarch, who relies on captivating anecdotes to drive home his moral messages.

4. Truth and vividness

In his paper *Enargeia and the Spectator in Greek Historiography*, Andrew Walker quotes approvingly Emilio Gabba: "For the ancient historian, Gabba stresses, 'the search for an effective style and a lively presentation was never regarded as an alternative to the truth.'"[53] 'Likeness to reality' seems to have been the central category for the evaluation of historical works. However, the works of ancient historians feature explicit comments that sit uneasily with the claim that the idea of truth was indistinct from a compelling presentation. Take for example Polybius' polemic against Phylarchus:[54]

> "In his eagerness to arouse the pity and attention of his readers he treats us to a picture of clinging women with their hair disheveled and their breast bare, or again of crowds of both sexes

51 Plut. *Alex.* 7.1.
52 Plut. *Alex.* 1.2. See Blank in this volume.
53 Walker (1993), 374 quoting Gabba (1991), 74.
54 Pol. 2.56.7–8: σπουδάζων δ' εἰς ἔλεον ἐκκαλεῖσθαι τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας καὶ συμπαθεῖς ποιεῖν τοῖς λεγομένοις, εἰσάγει περιπλοκὰς γυναικῶν καὶ κόμας διερριμμένας καὶ μαστῶν ἐκβολάς, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις δάκρυα καὶ θρήνους ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν ἀναμὶξ τέκνοις καὶ γονεῦσι γηραιοῖς ἀπαγομένων. ποιεῖ δὲ τοῦτο παρ' ὅλην τὴν ἱστορίαν, πειρώμενος ἐν ἑκάστοις ἀεὶ πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν τιθέναι τὰ δεινά.

> together with their children and aged parents weeping and lamenting as they are led to slavery. This sort of thing he keeps up throughout his history, always trying to bring horrors vividly before our eyes."

Visual appeal, emotional effect and attention to details are all crucial aspects of what ancient critics, arguably since the Hellenistic era, theorized in their evaluative judgements as *enargeia*. Against the inappropriate adorning of minor events, Polybius pits the following ideal of the historian:[55]

> "A historical author should not try to thrill his readers by such exaggerated pictures, nor should he, like a tragic poet, try to imagine the probable utterances of his characters or reckon up all the consequences probably incidental to the occurrences with which he deals, but simply record what really happened and what really was said, however commonplace."

That Polybius takes Phylarchus to task for factual inaccuracy is crystal clear when he accuses him of spreading lies.[56] Polybius' polemic shows that for ancient readers lively presentation did not necessarily map onto factual truth and could even be seen as detracting from it. *Enargeia* did not exhaust the issue of truth.[57] Ancient historians may have had more leeway to flesh out their evidence in order to provide a compelling account, but they nonetheless had a sense of factual truth independent of narratorial vividness.

While vivid presentation and factual truth were not deemed to be identical, ancient historians seem to have sensed an affinity. It is striking that for example Thucydides couches his claims to truth in imagery that is also used by critics defining *enargeia*. Notably *saphēneia* has visual connotations that evoke the idea of words making the audience nearly see something.[58] *Akribeia* is another term prominent in Thucydides' reflections that figures in discussions of *enargeia*, denoting fullness as well as accuracy.[59] I do not

55 Pol. 2.56.10: δεῖ τοιγαροῦν οὐκ ἐπιπλήττειν τὸν συγγραφέα τερατευόμενον διὰ τῆς ἱστορίας τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας οὐδὲ τοὺς ἐνδεχομένους λόγους ζητεῖν καὶ τὰ παρεπόμενα τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις ἐξαριθμεῖσθαι, καθάπερ οἱ τραγῳδιογράφοι, τῶν δὲ πραχθέντων καὶ ῥηθέντων κατ' ἀλήθειαν αὐτῶν μνημονεύειν πάμπαν, κἂν πάνυ μέτρια τυγχάνωσιν ὄντα.

56 Pol. 2.58.10–12; Marincola (2013) emphasizes that Polybius is primarily concerned with factual inaccuracy in his critique of Phylarchus.

57 See Maier in this volume.

58 See, above all, Thuk. 1.22.4: ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὖθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἕξει. –"Yet if they are judged useful by 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, that will suffice." Cf. Edmunds (1975), 155–163; Woodman (1988), 23–28; Kallet (2006), 360–363; Greenwood (2006), 40–41.

59 See, for example, Thuk. 1.22.2: τὰ δ' ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος πυνθανόμενος ἠξίωσα γράφειν, οὐδ' ὡς ἐμοὶ ἐδόκει, ἀλλ' οἷς τε αὐτὸς παρῆν καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀκριβείᾳ περὶ ἑκάστου ἐπεξελθών. – "About the actions of the war, however, I considered it my responsibility to write neither as I learned from the chance informant nor according to my own opinion, but after examining what I witnessed myself and what I learned from others, with the utmost possible accuracy in each case." For *akribeia* as an aspect of *enargeia*, see, for example, Ps.-Dem. 209–210. Cf. Walker (1993), 366–367. On *akribeia* in Thucydides, see Swain (1993), 39–41 and the literature cited in 39 n. 17.

think that Thucydides envisages truth only in the sense of lively presentation,[60] but the vocabulary he uses suggests that an experiential narration can be an important aspect of presenting the truth. In the same vein, Polybius, while opposing accounts that are gripping at the expense of factual truth, considers vivid narrative as an essential task of the historian.[61] Not to be forgotten, his own history features highly experiential accounts.[62]

This affinity between factual truth and narratorial vividness will strike most historians today as odd. Whereas the former will be seen in terms of research, the latter seems to be merely a matter of presentation. Against this discomfort with the ancient view, I wish to sketch how a lively presentation can contribute to the historian's striving for truth. Even the use of fictional elements, anathema to most contemporary historians,[63] can, I contend, have a referential value. My argument is premised on the temporal dynamics of history that I have labeled "future past".[64] History is written in retrospect. This gives the historian a significant advantage over the historical agents: she can view their experiences and deeds in light of the outcome. What is still future to the characters is already past to the historian and allows her to form historical explanations that the characters could not yet see. "Future past" thus describes an asymmetry between historian and historical protagonists that is at the heart of historiography. Hindsight privileges the historian and endows her with a sovereignty she is lacking in her own life, but it also comes at a considerable price. The more a historian cashes in on hindsight, the more her reconstruction will be removed from the experiences of the historical agents. Retrospect cues the historian to envisage the past as it was not experienced.

Now narrative has the capacity to make the reader re-experience its plot.[65] A narrator can suppress the retrospect that is tangible in the preterite as the default tense of narrative and endeavour to put his audience into the shoes of the characters. The reader's experience is of course only an indirect one and takes place in the frame of 'as-if', but still the narrator can subject the reader to the very tension between expectation and experience that defines the temporal structure of her consciousness in the everyday world. If the narrator tries to restore presence to an actual past, fictional elements may be crucial, perhaps even indispensable, to his endeavour. In most cases, the evidence preserved will not suffice to yield a narrative in whose world the reader can immerse herself. Ancient historians, for example, had in general no evidence of speeches, and yet the speeches in their works are a powerful means of making the past present again.[66] Fictional though they are, the speeches not only inform the reader about the perspectives of the charac-

60 Here, I part company with Woodman (1988), 23–28. See, for example, Hornblower (1991) ad Thuk. 1.22.2 for the idea that *akribeia* means "in conformity with reality".

61 Pol. 12.25.

62 Cf. Grethlein (2013), 245–263. On Polybius' appreciation of *enargeia*, see also Schepens (1975); (2005), 162–163; on vivid narration in Polybius, see also McGing (2010), 72–74; Miltsios (2013).

63 See, however, Grethlein (2013), 355–364 for a discussion of recent works of history that readily embrace fictional elements. See also Nicholson in this volume.

64 Besides Grethlein (2013), see also Grethlein (2014).

65 Cf. Grethlein (2010b).

66 Grethlein (2013), 36–39; 64–69.

ters, but make her re-experience them. Thucydides' comment in 1.22.1 reveals that the composition of the speeches, fictional as it is, is not beyond methodological control.[67]

Enactive narration will in many cases also require fictionalizing. There may have been testimonies for Brasidas' fall into the outrigger, but the precise movements of Alexander are likely to have been filled in by Plutarch. Often the detail necessary to create a strong motor resonance in readers will be lacking in the historical record; if the historian wants to make his account experiential, he has to fictionalize. The elements he invents may deviate from what actually happened, but in helping to restore presence to the past, they have a referential significance: they prevent readers from envisaging the past only in light of later events and let them experience what the past felt like when it was still present. Through their capacity of grasping and conveying the experiential aspect of the past, fictional elements have the power to supply an important aspect to the reconstruction of the past.

I say that fictional elements prevent readers from envisaging the past *only* in light of later events, because retrospect is undeniably an important aspect of historiography which, however, needs to be balanced off by the effort to view the past in its own right. As Golo Mann puts it with inimitable elegance:[68]

> "The historian has always to try to do two things simultaneously. He must swim with the stream of events, allowing himself to be carried along as though he had been present. He must from outside converge on his subject from various directions, a later, better-informed observer, and catechize it, yet never quite have it in the hollow of his hand."

While enactive narration shows the historian, as it were, swimming with the stream, in analytical passages he steps forward as a better-informed observer ready to draw out the lines still hidden in the past.

Hayden White made a strong case that the emplotment of narrative is pivotal to establishing historical meaning.[69] Historians rely on the same kind of plots as authors of fiction to render the past tellable and comprehensible. The 'narrative references' for which I argue here suggests that narrative is formative to historiography in yet another way: besides allowing us to make sense of what happened, narrative is a powerful means of encountering the past in its own right. Vivid narration jolts the reader to the scene of the action and, to quote Plutarch a last time, this time in an appraisal of Xenophon, "makes the listener much affected by the events, not as they have happened, but as they are happening, and sharing their dangers".[70] Narratorial vividness may seem to be unrelated, potentially detrimental, to the historian's search for the truth. However, ancient historiography alerts us to the value that an account made experiential through enactive narration or other devices can have for the reconstruction of the past.

67 Cf. Moles (2001), 207–209; Grethlein (2010a), 277–278.
68 Mann (1976), 7.
69 White (1973).
70 Plut. *Art.* 8.1: […] Ξενοφοφῶντος δὲ μονονουχὶ δεικνύοντος ὄψει καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν ὡς οὐ γεγενημένοις, ἀλλὰ γινομένοις ἐφιστάντος ἀεὶ τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἐμπαθῆ καὶ συγκινδυνεύοντα διὰ τὴν ἐνάργειαν […].

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Index locorum

Bei den Zitationsweisen kann es zu leichten Abweichungen zwischen den einzelnen Aufsätzen kommen.

Index nominum et rerum

Zusammengehörende Begriffe verschiedener Sprachen sind unter dem deutschen Oberbegriff subsummiert. Ausschließlich englisch oder französisch verwendete Begriffe sind nicht eingedeutscht. Namen von Orten oder Personen sind nach der Schreibweise im Deutschen aufgeführt. Römische Namen sind nach dem *nomen gentile* eingeordnet; Angehörige des Kaiserhauses sowie Literaten, die im Deutschen üblicherweise nicht nach dem *nomen gentile* bezeichnet werden (Arrian, Caligula, Cicero usw.) sind unter diesen im Deutschen geläufigen Namen eingereiht.