THUCYDIDES IN GAUL:
THE SIEGE OF PLATAEA AS CAESAR'S MODEL
FOR HIS SIEGE OF AVARICUM

To John Moles, in memoriam

Abstract: In his account of the Roman siege of Avaricum (*BG* 7.14–28), Caesar adapts and alludes to Thucydides' description of the siege of Plataea (2.75–7). This is evinced by instances of translation and close paraphrases and numerous common narrative details; and with the help of the verbs *imitari* and *tradere*, Caesar even seems to signpost his engagement with Thucydides. He thus enhances both his own narrative and his accomplishment in Gaul.

Thucydides lived a sprightly afterlife at Rome around the middle of the first century BCE. He seems to have formed, along with Herodotus and Xenophon, the canonical triad of Greek historiographers;[1] Lucretius' partial translation of Thucydides' account of the Athenian plague (2.47–57) in his *De Rerum Natura* (6.1138–286) circulated in the mid 50s; slightly later there were, amongst orators of the early 40s, those who, Cicero quipped, professed their allegiance to Atticism and, more particularly, *se Thucydidios esse*;[2] and, last but not least, some evidence suggests that he enjoyed the respect of some republican historians even before Sallust embarked on his distinctly Thucydidean history.[3]

Caesar's education and, more importantly, intellectual pursuits and stylistic leanings make him a highly likely candidate for frequent perusal of Thucydides' histories;[4] and the latter's presence, along with Xenophon's and

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[1] Nicolai (1992) 297–339. Cf. Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 2 for the long line of philosophers and rhetoricians οἳ κανόνα τῆς ἱστορικῆς πραγματείας ἐκεῖνον ὑποτίθενται τὸν ἄνδρα (sc. Θουκυδίδην) καὶ τῆς περὶ τοὺς πολιτικοὺς λόγους δεινότητος ὅρον.

[2] Cic. *Orat.* 28–32 (the quotation, 30); cf. also *Brut.* 287–8, *Opt. gen. or.* 15–16. For discussion of 'Atticisme et "Thucydidisme"', see Leeman (1955) 195–205, along with Fleck (1993) 54–8. The mention of Thucydides in *Catalepton* 2 (*App. Verg.*), while slightly later, would seem to fall into this context, too. On Lucretius: Commager (1957).

[3] See Canfora (2006) 721–31.

[4] For a survey of Caesar's education and intellectual interests and contributions, see Fantham (2009) and Schiesaro (2010). For discussion of Caesar's Atticism, see Pezzini (2016, forthcoming). One may also want to mention in this context Caesar's acquaintance with the later 'Thucydidean' Sallust; but we do not know when they became friendly nor when Sallust fell for the Greek historian.

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Polybius', has been felt in his account of the naval battle off Marseille during the Civil War.[5] In the following pages I will argue that Caesar's presentation of the siege of Avaricum (*BG* 7.14–28, esp. 22) is closely and specifically modeled on Thucydides' narrative of the battle for Plataea (2.75–7). Thucydides' passage was famous for its siege description, unrivaled in technical detail, paraphrased in part by Aeneas Tacticus (2.3–6 with Whitehead), singled out by Dionysius of Halicarnassus for its lucidity, and perused and used by Arrian, Procopius, and 'many more'.[6] This influential account served Caesar as his *modello-esemplare*, as is evinced by (as I shall argue in detail below) first, a literal translation of ὑφέλκειν τὸν χοῦν with the unparalleled expression *aggerem subtrahere*; second, numerous highly particular narrative details that do not form part of the standard siege descriptions (including the duration of the ramp construction) or such details that do belong to the tradition but are mentioned by Caesar here only (*coria*, below). Many of these echoes center on what the Gauls did (rather than Caesar), which, assuming that Caesar's opponents had not read Thucydides, makes it virtually certain that they are owed to the memory of Caesar, the man of letters, rather than the experience of Caesar, the man of war. Third and last, Caesar signposts his 'creative imitation' with the help of the verbs *imitari* and *tradere*.[7] This adaptation allows Caesar to add luster to his own (highly polished) narrative, much in the same way as Cato did in evoking a famous Greek episode to enhance 'the Roman Leonidas',[8] score a point in Rome's ongoing rivalry with Greece in general and Sparta in particular, and highlight—with an ironic wink perhaps—his superior rain-or-shine leadership.

An allusion to a famous instance in Greek historiography will indeed not surprise in a text as fine-spun as the seventh book of the *Gallic War*, struc-

[5] Reggi (2002) 73ff., 77–92; some may find the purported parallels too generic or loose to qualify as 'allusioni' (74). Powell (2009) had already proposed 'some markedly Thucydidean touches in Caesar's *Commentaries*, especially in the *BC* and in the form of psychological comment' (121).

[6] '[L]a più dettagliata descrizione di un assedio che troviamo in Tucidide e in genere nella letteratura di età classica', Fantasia (2003) 521. Poppo and Stahl (1875–83) 158: 'quae hinc usque ad c. 75 sequuntur propter perspicuitatem laudat Dion. Hal. p. 900 (= Thuc. 36)'; 164: 'multa hinc in suos libros transtulerunt Arrianus et Procopius, nonnulla Iosephus et alii'.

[7] For an up-to-date overview of the discussion of intertextuality in classics, as catalyzed by Conte (1974) and (1980), see Baraz and van den Berg (2013). They might, however, have mentioned also West and Woodman's edited volume (1979), 'another programmatically important intervention', as Hinds (1998) 18 put it. Several working papers on *Histos* (http://research.ncl.ac.uk/histos/Histos_WorkingPapers.html) pertain too. On signposting, see n. 19.

[8] See Krebs (2006).

tured around the sieges of Avaricum, Gergovia, and Alesia.[9] Caesar develops the first one (7.14–28), which is also the first major siege in the *BG*, as an *Einzelerzählung* whose beginning and end are marked by a speech, the ring-compositional repetition of *misericordia uulgi* (15.6; 28.6), and the fact that, just as capable men are sent <u>to</u> the stronghold for its defense (15.6 *defensores <u>oppido</u> idonei deliguntur*), so the episode ends with a few escaping <u>from</u> it (28.5ff. *qui primo clamore audito se <u>ex</u> <u>oppido</u> eiecerant, incolumes ad Vercingetorigem peruenerunt. quos ille multa iam nocte silentio ex fuga excepit*).[10] The narrative is built for dramatic effect, its suspense heightened twice by retarding elements (23.1 *muri autem omnes Gallici hac fere forma sunt*, 26.1 *omnia experti Galli … postero die <u>consilium ceperunt</u> ex oppido profugere … 26.5 <u>consilio destiterunt</u>*; note the ring-compositional repetition of *consilium*). Its presentation is enlivened throughout by (in)direct speech, 'dialogue', autopsy, and vivid detail. Each of its two parts commences with a speech by Vercingetorix. The first part is an extended 'prelude' (14–19); the second offers an elaboration of the traditional *urbs-capta* topos—but with Thucydides' specific help.[11]

1. Higher and Higher

In Thucydides' narrative of the siege (which I will follow),[12] the Peloponnesian army, under the leadership of Archidamus, 'first erected a wooden palisade' (75.1 πρῶτον μὲν περιεσταύρωσαν), 'then threw up a ramp against the city' (ἔπειτα **χῶμα ἔχουν πρὸς τὴν πόλιν**). They worked, Thucydides continues after providing a blueprint of noticeably technical and rarely rivaled detail,[13] 'for seventy days and nights, continuously' (ἡμέρας δὲ ἔχουν **ἑβδομήκοντα** καὶ νύκτας **ξυνεχῶς**, 75.3). Unfortunately, the attested number of days has been

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[9] The following is taken from my forthcoming commentary (with Cambridge University Press) on *BG* 7.

[10] Strictly speaking, the end of the Avaricum episode is implied by Vercingetorix's speech at the very beginning of the next phase of the war (7.29). For the 'set piece', see Witte (1910). It would soon become characteristic of Livy.

[11] On the *urbs-capta* motif see Paul (1982), Rossi (2004) 17–53.

[12] In consequence, as Caesar does not follow Thucydides' sequence of events, references to the *BG* will be out of narrative order. All references to Thucydides and Caesar are to *Hist.* 2 and *BG* 7 respectively, unless otherwise noted. All translations are mine, again unless specified otherwise.

[13] ξύλα μὲν οὖν τέμνοντες ἐκ τοῦ Κιθαιρῶνος παρῳκοδόμουν ἑκατέρωθεν, φορμηδὸν ἀντὶ τοίχων τιθέντες, ὅπως μὴ διαχέοιτο ἐπὶ πολὺ τὸ χῶμα· ἐφόρουν δὲ ὕλην ἐς αὐτὸ καὶ λίθους καὶ γῆν καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο ἀνύτειν μέλλοι ἐπιβαλλόμενον (Thuc. 2.75.2). Such detail is, in general, rare in historical narratives; one may be surprised to find it in Lucan 3.394–8. Generally on ramps in antiquity, and the duration of construction in particular, see Roth (1995).

challenged by most editors and commentators as too large by far, as 'the longest time spent in Attica in the ordinary invasions was 40 days (57.2)'; various emendations have been suggested, none fully satisfactory.[14] Whatever the exact number, however, Thucydides does provide the specific duration of the ramp construction, which seems to have been the exception rather than the rule.[15]

Hundreds of years later, in Gaul, Caesar analyzed the topographical situation of Avaricum and decided to bring up Rome's war machinery (17.1): 'he began to prepare a ramp, advance the mantlets, construct two towers; for the nature of the place rendered circumvallation impossible' (***aggerem apparare***, *uineas agere, turres duas constituere coepit. nam circumuallare loci natura prohibebat*). This ramp was, as he informs his readers later, a testament to Roman engineering and endurance (24.1): 'they worked continuously and overcame all [of the Gauls' defensive countermeasures] and erected within twenty-five days a ramp 330 feet wide and 80 feet high' (***continenti*** *labore omnia haec superauerunt et diebus* **XXV** *aggerem latum pedes CCCXXX, altum pedes LXXX exstruxerunt*). This is the one and only instance that Caesar specifies the time it took to construct a ramp; in fact, there is only one other occasion on which such detail is provided for any construction at all.[16] Given the other parallels I shall discuss below,[17] it would seem likely that Caesar was motivated by Thucydides' specification to do so; and, since the three Roman figures are clearly intended to impress, it seems safe to assume that Caesar trusted his readers would be even more impressed, if they recalled Thucydides' description in the context of 'the greatest war' (ὁ πόλεμος οὗτος ... μείζων γεγενημένος, Thuc. 1.21.2).[18] As a matter of fact, one may wonder whether,

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[14] Gomme (1956) *ad loc.* offers the most detailed discussion among more recent commentators. It is certainly worth noting in this context that '70' seems to have served as a rhetorical number in certain contexts; see Dreizehnter (1978) but with J. Briscoe's grouchy review (in *CR* 30 (1980) 80–2).

[15] As suggested by a wildcard search of χῶμα and ἡμέρα in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. Polyb. 4.63 seems to be the only comparable instance.

[16] *BG* 4.18.1 of the Rhine bridge: *diebus decem, quibus materia coepta erat comportari, omni opere effecto exercitus traducitur*. The picture hardly changes even if the description at *BC* 1.36.3 is included: *turres uineasque ad oppugnationem urbis agere, naues longas Arelate numero XII facere instituit. quibus effectis armatisque diebus XXX, a qua die materia caesa est, adductisque Massiliam his D. Brutum praeficit, C. Trebonium legatum ad oppugnationem Massiliae relinquit.* There are no instances in the *corpus Caesarianum*.

[17] I have marked the adjective in *continenti labore* as one might want to hear therein a faint echo of ξυνεχῶς; but Caesarian references to unremitting toil are altogether too frequent to allow for such a claim.

[18] Unfortunately, I see no way to use Caesar's number of days as an argument in the debate about the doubted number of days in Thucydides. For a highly readable and important discussion of Thucydidean superlatives see Grant (1974).

given the fame of Thucydides' account, this numerical detail serves as a sign-post meant to alert the reader to the Thucydidean pre-text.[19] One may further wonder whether Caesar chose *apparare* (‹ *ad* + *parare*), which occurs here for the first time in his work and nowhere else in all of extant Latin in collocation with *aggerem*, to capture the movement expressed by πρός in Thucydides;[20] and may he, lastly, also attempt to reproduce with his assonance the, albeit different, sound play in χῶμα ἔχουν?[21]

Thucydides then zooms in on the countermeasures (75.4): 'The Plataeans, meanwhile, in view of the rising ramp, assembled a wooden framework and set it atop their own wall at the point where the ramp was being thrown up; into this frame they put bricks taken from the neighboring houses' (οἱ δὲ Πλαταιῆς ὁρῶντες τὸ χῶμα αἰρόμενον, **ξύλινον τεῖχος ξυνθέντες** καὶ **ἐπιστήσαντες** τῷ ἑαυτῶν τείχει ᾗ προσεχοῦτο, ἐσῳκοδόμουν ἐς αὐτὸ πλίνθους ἐκ τῶν ἐγγὺς οἰκιῶν καθαιροῦντες). Caesar's Gauls, equally threatened by the Romans' rising ramp, endeavor a similar construction (22.3): *totum autem* **murum** *ex omni parte* **turribus contabulauerant**, which Edwards plausibly translates as: 'Further, they had furnished the whole wall on every side with a superstructure of wooden turrets.'[22] Plausibly insofar as the crucial word, *contabulare*, is rather rare; and, while this instance roughly falls under the first definition offered by the *OLD* as 'to cover with boards, furnish with a roof or floor', its precise meaning eludes, which is true also, unfortunately, of Caesar's second instance of the term.[23]

But Caesar returns to the Gauls' set-up shortly after, elaborating on how the Gallic bulwark eliminated the advantage of the Roman ramp (22.4–5): '[the Gauls] again and again matched the height of our towers, as much as the daily increase of the ramp lifted them, by conjoining the beams on their

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[19] For such 'signposting' of allusions by Roman poets, see Hinds (1998), esp. 1–5. Obviously, the signposting I propose here differs from the more generic kind (*traditur*) discussed there and proposed further below for *BG* 7.22.1.

[20] Other instances of *apparare* in Caesar (according to Menge and Preuss (1972) s.v.) are: 7.26.3 *haec facere noctu apparabant*, 41.4 *Fabium … se in posterum diem similem ad casum apparare* (*parare* β), *BC* 2.7.4 *ad defensionem urbis reliqua apparare coeperunt*, 3.21.5 *familia … quae proditionem oppidi appararet*. Menge and Preuss (*ibid.*, s.v. *agger*) also reveal that Caesar does not have a formulaic expression for 'to throw up a ramp'. The *Bibliotheca Teubneriana Latina* yielded no other instance of *aggerem apparare*.

[21] The *glossaria Latina* gloss 'agger' with the Greek terms χῶμα, σωρὸς γῆς (*TLL* 1.0.1305.45 [Vollmer]).

[22] Edwards (2006) 403.

[23] The *TLL* (4.0.623.75–86 [Lommatzsch]) defines the verb in question as *contignare, tabulatis instruere*; it lists a total of fifteen instances. Edwards (n. 22) 287 translates *BG* 5.40.6 *turres contabulantur, pinnae loricaeque ex cratibus attexuntur* as 'the towers were raised stage by stage, battlements and breastworks of hurdles were attached to them'. But, as he points out, others have rendered it as 'raised a stage' or 'boarded over'.

own towers' (*nostrarum turrium **altitudinem**, quantum has cotidianus **agger** expresserat, commissis suarum turrium malis adaequabant*). This remark not only corresponds to Thucydides' similar comparative statement (75.6): 'the height of the wall rose greatly, and the mound opposite it went up no more leisurely' (ἤρετο δὲ τὸ ὕψος τοῦ **τείχους** μέγα, καὶ τὸ **χῶμα** οὐ σχολαίτερον ἀντανῄει αὐτῷ); it also provides helpful information for our understanding of the details of the rising Gallic bulwark. For if it is *commissis suarum turrium malis* that the Gauls add storeys to their fortification,[24] the concise expression *murum turribus contabulare* would seem to mean the following: the Gauls built turrets, which they superimposed as another level on their wall, to be raised higher even by extending the turrets' uprights. In other words, I read *murum turribus contabulare* as expressing the same idea as τεῖχος ξυνθέντες ἐπιστῆσαι τῷ τείχει.

Thucydides then specifies how the Plataeans made sure that their construction 'also had for cover skins and hides so that the workers as well as the wood would not be hit by fiery missiles but be in safety' (καὶ προκαλύμματα εἶχε **δέρσεις** καὶ **διφθέρας**, ὥστε τοὺς ἐργαζομένους καὶ τὰ ξύλα μήτε πυρφόροις οἰστοῖς βάλλεσθαι ἐν ἀσφαλείᾳ τε εἶναι, 75.5). This is a detail Caesar chooses to provide as well (22.3): *atque has* (scil. *turres*) **coriis** *intexerant*. Unsurprisingly, such hide covers for towers were a standard feature in the Greek and the Roman worlds (judging from Aeneas Tacticus and Vitruvius);[25] this makes it all the more surprising, then, that this is the first time Caesar mentions any *coria* at all, and the one and only time he mentions them of all the towers built and pulled and pushed in the landscape of his *commentarii*.[26]

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[24] 'The *mali* were the four uprights, one at each angle, which formed the principal part of the skeleton, so to speak, of each tower; and the tops of the uprights, which projected above the highest story, were connected by planking so as to form a new storey' (Rice Holmes (1914) *ad loc.*).

[25] Aen. Tact. 33.3 ἔπειτ᾽ ἄν τινες ὦσι τῆς πόλεως ξύλινοι μόσυνες ἢ τοῦ τείχεός τι, χρὴ τούτοις ὑπάρχειν πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐμπίμπρασθαι ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων πίλους καὶ βύρσας πρὸς τὴν ἔπαλξιν. Vitr. 10.13.5: *tegebat … [turrem] coriis crudis ut ab omni plaga essent tutae*. And centuries later, Veg. *Mil.* 4.17: *turres autem dicuntur machinamenta ad aedificiorum speciem ex trabibus tabulatisque conpacta et, ne tantum opus hostili concremetur incendio, diligentissime ex crudis coriis uel centonibus communita, quibus pro modo altitudinis additur latitudo.*

[26] Menge and Preuss (1972) list four more instances of *coria* in Caesar's works: *BC* 1.54.2 *reliquum corpus nauium uiminibus contextum coriis integebatur*, 2.10.6 *super lateres* [scil. *musculi*] *coria inducuntur, ne canalibus aqua immissa lateres diluere posset. coria autem, ne rursus igni ac lapidibus corrumpantur, centonibus conteguntur*, 3.44.6 *atque omnes fere milites aut ex coactis aut ex centonibus aut ex coriis tunicas aut tegimenta fecerant, quibus tela uitarent.* They specify the instances of *turris* at 67.

2. Biting the Dust

The Plataeans did not content themselves with their ever-rising defensive wall. They also opened up a lower part of it, exited stealthily, and then carried back inside the soil the Peloponnesians were heaping onto the side of the mound that was closing in on them.[27] Once these efforts were discovered and thwarted, the defenders embarked on yet another scheme and 'dug a mine from the town and calculated their way to below the mound and began, once again, dragging off its soil back into the town' (ὑπόνομον δὲ ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ὀρύξαντες καὶ ξυντεκμηράμενοι ὑπὸ τὸ **χῶμα ὑφεῖλκον** αὖθις παρὰ σφᾶς **τὸν χοῦν**, 76.2). In the *Gallic War*, to which Poppo and Stahl refer in their discussion of the difference between χοῦς and χῶμα,[28] Caesar's opponents dig mines too (22.2): *et **aggerem cuniculis subtrahebant**.*[29] While the digging of mines was yet another standard defense,[30] Caesar's expression *aggerem subtrahere*, 'to drag away the soil from under', is a literal translation of Thucydides' ὑφέλκειν τὸν χοῦν; as such, it is all the more noteworthy for its singular occurrence in extent Latin Literature and its containing one of only two instances of *subtrahere* in all the *commentarii*.[31]

The Peloponnesians, meanwhile, bring up war engines too (καὶ μηχανάς): one against the city's main defensive structure,[32] 'others to various parts of the wall, which the Plataeans, however, caught with nooses and turned aside' (ἄλλας δὲ ἄλλῃ τοῦ τείχους, ἃς **βρόχους** τε περιβάλλοντες ἀνέκλων οἱ Πλαταιῆς,

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[27] καὶ οἱ Πλαταιῆς τοιόνδε τι ἐπινοοῦσιν· διελόντες τοῦ τείχους ᾗ προσέπιπτε τὸ χῶμα ἐσεφόρουν τὴν γῆν (Thuc. 2.75.6).

[28] But without claiming an actual relationship (their comment is not entirely clear to me): 'ὑφεῖλκον … τὸν χοῦν. Χοῦς est quidem humus aggesta (vid. IV 90, 2) ab eoque χῶμα recte discernitur; sed cum Lat. *agger* ambobus Graecis vocabulis respondeat, *aggerem cuniculis subtrahebant* aut pro his aut pro iis quae paulo post de χώματι leguntur dixit *Caes. Bell. Gall.* VII 22, 2.'

[29] Edwards translation, 'and they tried to under-cut the ramp by mines' (n. 22, 411), does not quite cut it. Much closer to the mark is the entry in the *OLD* under which this instance of *subtraho* is listed (1b): 'to drag away the base of', even though it would seem to imply that *agger* is here the 'ramp' rather than the 'soil'. For these two (metonymically related) meanings of *agger*, cf. the entry in the *TLL* (1.0.1305.50 + 1.0.1306.4 [Vollmer]): (I) *materies adgesta vel adgerenda* and (II) *res aggerendo effectae* (*ut arae, rogi, moles*); cf. also n. 26.

[30] Aen. Tact. 37 discusses mining in the context of a siege. Cf. Veg. *Mil.* 4.20 for a particularly famous instance of the scheme.

[31] The other example is *BG* 1.44.5 *si per populum Romanum stipendium remittatur et dediticii subtrahantur* … Neither the *TLL* (1.0.1305.58–9 [V.]) nor the *Bibliotheca Latina Teubneriana* provides a parallel for Caesar's phrasing.

[32] ἅμα δὲ τῇ χώσει καὶ μηχανὰς προσῆγον οἱ Πελοποννήσιοι τῇ πόλει, μίαν μὲν ἣ τοῦ μεγάλου οἰκοδομήματος κατὰ τὸ χῶμα προσαχθεῖσα ἐπὶ μέγα τε κατέσεισε καὶ τοὺς Πλαταιᾶς ἐφόβησεν (Thuc. 2.76.4).

76.4). The μηχαναί must here, commentators agree, refer to rams, possibly mentioned 'for the first time … in siege operations'. What exactly happened to these once caught by the defenders is debated, as the precise meaning of the verb ἀνακλᾶν has caused slight disagreement. But that they '"[t]urned them aside (upwards or sideways)" so as to weaken [the rams'] impact against the wall, seems the right meaning here.'[33] As some among the older commentators on this Thucydidean passage remark, Caesar describes the same operation; but it merits emphasis that once more he uses very similar language too (22.2): 'They deflected, with the help of nooses, the (Romans') grappling hooks, which, once caught, they pulled back inside with wind lasses' (**laqueis** *falces* **avertebant**, *quas cum destinaverant, tormentis introrsus reducebant*).[34] This appears all the more noteworthy if compared to a passage in Sisenna, wherein a similar scene is described (*FRHist* 126, transl. J. Briscoe): 'they broke the scythes which had been thrown onto the walls; they cast down the screens placed nearer them with grappling-hooks' (*falces iniectas comminuunt; pluteos propius conlocatos ⟨h⟩arpagis deiiciunt*). And it seems as though, once again, Caesar uses singular vocabulary for this adaptation: *laqueus* does not occur anywhere else in his work.[35]

3. Sieging in the Rain

'After this the Peloponnesians, on the grounds that their engines effected nothing and their mound was met by the counter-work' (μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο οἱ Πελοποννήσιοι, **ὡς αἵ τε μηχαναὶ οὐδὲν ὠφέλουν** καὶ τῷ χώματι τὸ ἀντιτείχισμα ἐγίγνετο, 77.1) realized the inadequacy of their efforts. And so do Caesar's Gauls (26.1): 'The Gauls had tried everything and, on the grounds that nothing had succeeded' (*omnia experti Galli*, **quod res nulla successerat**), took counsel. One of the Gauls' various defensive efforts had

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[33] Gomme (1956) *ad loc.* Krüger (1860) *ad loc.* glosses the verb with 'in die Höhe zogen' and adds 'wie bei App. *Mithr.* 74' as well as a reference to the other instance in Thuc. 7.24.5. Poppo and Stahl (1875–83) *ad loc.* gloss the term 'sursum attollendo conuellebant, sursum trahendo auertebant'; they refer to Caesar as well as Veg. *Mil.* 4.23 'alii laqueis captos arietes per multitudinem hominum de muro in obliquum trahunt et cum ipsis testudinibus euertunt'. Kraner, Dittenberger, and Meusel (1961) *ad* 'reducebant': 'Vgl. den Bericht des Thucyd. II 76.4 über die Vorgänge bei der Belagerung von Plataea.' It is unclear whether Aen. Tact. 32.4 (καὶ ὅταν ἢ πύλην ἢ ἄλλο τι τοῦ τείχους διακόπτῃ, χρὴ βρόχῳ τὸ προΐσχον ἀναλαμβάνεσθαι, ἵνα μὴ δύνηται προσπίπτειν τὸ μηχάνημα) bases his description on Thucydides' account (cf. Aen. Tact. 2.3–6 with Whitehead) or describes a common practice.

[34] The meaning of *tormentis* is debated; cf. Krebs (n. 9) *ad loc.*

[35] Menge and Preuss (1972) s.v. The *glossaria Latina* gloss 'laqueus' with βρόχος, παγίς. ποδάγρα, ἀρπεδόνη. βροχίον. ἀγχόνη (*TLL* 7.2.961.23–4 [Pecere]).

been an attempt to set ablaze the Roman ramp (24.4): 'they threw from a distance torches and tinder from the bulwark onto the ramp' (*faces atque aridam* **materiam de muro in aggerem** *eminus* **iaciebant**). For the Peloponnesians such conflagration was the last-ditch effort too (77.3): 'They then brought bundles of wood and threw them from the mound into the space between the wall and the mound, at first' (φοροῦντες δὲ ὕλης φακέλους παρέβαλον ἀπὸ τοῦ χώματος ἐς τὸ μεταξὺ πρῶτον τοῦ τείχους καὶ τῆς προσχώσεως). While the use of fire in such circumstances is common,[36] it is striking once again how closely Caesar's phrasing follows Thucydides.

Neither the Peloponnesians nor the Gauls carry the day in the end. The former suffered adverse conditions: although there arose a great and nearly fatal blaze, the wind failed to do its bit, 'and some also report that heavy rain and thunder appeared and quenched the flames and thus ended the danger' (νῦν δὲ καὶ τόδε λέγεται ξυμβῆναι, ὕδωρ [ἐξ οὐρανοῦ] πολὺ καὶ βροντὰς γενομένας σβέσαι τὴν φλόγα καὶ οὕτω παυσθῆναι τὸν κίνδυνον, 77.6). In Caesar's case rain certainly played a decisive role—but not in quenching the fire of the ramp (which the Romans handled themselves) but in favor of the besieging party (27.1): 'Heavy rain came on and [Caesar] thought this storm the right moment to enact a (new) plan' (**magno coorto imbri** *non inutilem hanc ad capiendum consilium tempestatem arbitratus*).[37] This circumstance gains an ironic touch in light of the Thucydidean pre-text: for whilst the Peloponnesians failed in their siege quite possibly *because* of rain, Caesar succeeds not in spite but because of it.

'After the Peloponnesians had failed in this [their latest attempt] as well, … they began to build a wall in a circle around the city' (οἱ δὲ Πελοποννήσιοι ἐπειδὴ καὶ τούτου διήμαρτον … περιετείχιζον τὴν πόλιν κύκλῳ, 78.1). They hoped to starve out the Plataeans. Thucydides resumes the narrative of the siege in book 3 (20–4), when, in the winter of the following year, the remaining Plataeans 'were still beleaguered' (ἔτι … ἐπολιορκοῦντο, 20.1). This passage is noteworthy for three reasons. It contains, in chapter 21, a lengthy description of the Peloponnesians' siege wall, set off, by ring-compositional repetition (21.1 τὸ δὲ τεῖχος ἦν τῶν Πελοποννησίων τοιόνδε τῇ οἰκοδομήσει … 21.4 τὸ μὲν οὖν τεῖχος ᾧ περιεφρουροῦντο οἱ Πλαταιῆς τοιοῦτον ἦν). This may be one reason why Caesar opted to furnish his readers with the lengthy description of the *murus Gallicus* (23.1 *muri autem omnes Gallici hac fere forma sunt*) in the context of the siege of Avaricum—which, given that he describes the standard Gallic wall, he could have given in an earlier *commentarius*.[38] Second-

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[36] Aen. Tact. 33. Veg. *Mil.* 4.28.

[37] It seems noteworthy that Caesar mentions rain only twice more outside of the Avaricum episode (7.24.1, 27.1): 3.29.2; 6.43.3.

[38] On Caesar's manipulation of his Gallic information see Riggsby (2006) 73–83.

ly, the Plataeans, at least part of them, undertake a sophisticated and ulti-mately successful sortie and escape (22.1–24.3), rendered in most vivid colors. The Gauls attempt a sortie too (24.2–25.3), which Caesar elevates by dwell-ing, in conspicuously historiographical language, on the episode ('worthy to be remembered', *dignum memoria*, 25.1) of Gallic warriors accepting death in order to feed the conflagration. Third, Thucydides ends his account of their escape in an upbeat tone (3.24.3): 'in this way, the men of Plataea escaped to safety' (οἱ μὲν δὴ τῶν Πλαταιῶν ἄνδρες οὕτως ὑπερβάντες ἐσώθησαν). Not so in Caesar: however valiant the Gauls' defensive and offensive efforts, they fal-tered and failed faced with Rome's superiority. When Avaricum falls, massa-cre ensures; and 'out of a total number of about forty thousand, a mere 800, at best, made it safely to Vercingetorix' (*omni eo numero, qui fuit circiter milium XL, vix DCCC … incolumes ad Vercingetorigem pervenerunt*, 28.5).

4. Tell Them about It: Time, Narrative, Signposting

Reading the respective narratives in Thucydides and Caesar side by side re-veals further points of interest. While the former specifies the duration of the ramp construction early on and prior to his detailed account of the action (2.75.3), Caesar mentions the beginning of construction work early on in the episode (17.1 *aggerem apparare … coepit*) but its completion (along with the total time elapsed) seven chapters later towards the end of the episode (24.1 *diebus XXV aggerem latum pedes CCCXXX, altum pedes LXXX exstruxerunt*). In the Cae-sarian narrative the discourse time is representative of the story time; not so in Thucydides.[39]

Second, Caesar, unlike Thucydides, arranges events on Gallic grounds into a narrative arch bending in suspense toward a climax.[40] The siege is be-gun but then when the Roman towers are already rolling closer to the defen-sive wall suspended in favor of a possible military engagement elsewhere. The engagement fails to happen (18ff.); in consequence, and after a vote of confidence in Vercingetorix (20), Caesar resumes the siege proper, more Gal-lic troops are sent to Avaricum (21), and the (description of the) confrontation gathers momentum (22). With the ramp completed, the battle over Avaricum reaches its dramatic climax one night (25) when Gauls sally forth carrying fire, whilst others, atop the bulwark, accept certain death, one after the other, in defense of their city. To read, then, that 'the Gauls had tried everything'

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[39] For these two different time spheres, see Bal (1999) 101–11. For a narratologial read-ing of Thucydides see Rood (1998). A similarly subtle and comprehensive study of Cae-sar's *commentarii* is a desideratum; but see: Görler (1975), Mannetter (1995), Kraus (2007), Grillo (2011).

[40] For discussion of narrative suspense, see Bal (1999) 95, 160ff.

(*omnia experti Galli*, 26.1)—but to no avail—comes as no surprise; nor does their hastily conceived plan to flee, as hastily aborted, or their final defeat. Clearly, Caesar's presentation proceeds, to borrow musical terminology, distinctly *crescendo*, whereas Thucydides' is consistently *fortissimo*.

It is in this context of the carefully maintained suspense that Caesar's narrative slows down and comes to a halt. 'At moments of great suspense, slow-down may work as a magnifying glass',[41] and both Thucydides and Caesar apply such magnifying glass to events on the grounds when they include highly technical detail in their narratives: Thucydides of the Peloponnesian ramp (quoted in n. 13), Caesar of the *murus Gallicus* (*BG* 7.23). But in the instance of the latter, the amount of detail, filling an entire paragraph,[42] results in a genuine 'pause' rather than the slow-down in Thucydides; it also states in unequivocal terms the level of sophistication of Caesar's opponents,[43] and thus casts his success in an all more glowing light. (It is true that Thucydides realizes both of these effects too in his later resumption of the Plataean episode in book 3.)

The narrative of the siege of Avaricum is spun masterfully. It serves to highlight Caesar's accomplishment, as does the evocation of the siege of Plataea—an evocation all the more fitting, one could argue, as it marked the true beginning of the Peloponnesian war (cf. Thuc. 2.1.1 ἄρχεται δὲ ὁ πόλεμος ἐνθένδε ἤδη) just as the battle over Avaricum marks the true beginning of the final showdown between Caesar and Vercingetorix. And Caesar would almost certainly seem to signpost his engagement with the Thucydidean narrative in the following, introductory, sentence to the chapter that contains the most detailed siege information (and Thucydidean material): 'Our men's matchless courage met with all manner of contrivances from the Gauls, as is to be expected of a nation of the highest ingenuity and thoroughly capable of copying and effecting whatever anyone suggested to them' (*singulari militum nostrorum uirtuti consilia cuiusque modi Gallorum occurrebant, ut est summae genus sollertiae atque ad omnia* **imitanda** *et efficienda, quae ab quoque* **traduntur**, *aptissimum,* 22.1). It is remarkable that Caesar chooses this particular moment and these particular verbs to comment on the Gauls' *imitative* skills (the comparison with the passages in the footnote is instructive).[44] Both highlighted verbs are note-

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[41] Bal (1999) 107.

[42] This has led some Caesarian critics to doubt the authenticity of this detailed description. But see Krebs (n. 9) *ad loc.* for discussion.

[43] *ad utilitatem et defensionem urbium summam habet opportunitatem, quod et ab incendio lapis et ab ariete materia defendit* (*BG* 7.23.5).

[44] Caesar had already commented on Gauls copying Romans earlier: 3.23.5–6 (*hi* **consuetudine populi Romani** *loca capere, castra munire, commeatibus nostros intercludere instituunt*), 5.42.2 (*haec et superiorum annorum* **consuetudine ab nobis** *cognouerant et quosdam de exercitu nacti captiuos ab his docebantur*). In neither instance do any words invite a meta-historic

worthy: the former insofar as it occurs only once more in the *commentarii*;[45] the latter for its highly common sense of 'to hand down or pass on (information, etc.), relate; to tell of' (*OLD* 10), as frequently used in historiographical texts and, as such, in the first sentence of Tacitus' *Agricola* (1.1): 'to hand down to posterity the deeds and characters of great men' (*clarorum uirorum facta moresque posteris tradere*). The latter verb also belongs to the group of expressions—including *ferunt, dicuntur, fama est*—that Roman poets employ to signal their engagement with the literary tradition and, more specifically, their adaptation of a literary predecessor, as Catullus does, famously, in the first lines of his *carmen* 64: 'Once upon a time pine-trees, born on Pelion's peak, **are said** to have swum through Neptune's clear waters' (*Peliaco quondam prognatae vertice pinus* **dicuntur** *liquidas Neptuni nasse per undas*).[46] There 'dicuntur' has been shown to bring to the reader's attention the highly allusive nature of the opening section of the poem. As for the former verb, *imitari*, one should compare Hind's discussion of Ovid's reference to Corinna's parrot as (*Am.* 2.6.1) ***imitatrix*** *ales* as a veiled acknowledgment of its being modeled on Lesbia's sparrow (Cat. 2.1 *passer, deliciae meae puellae*).

In combining these two suggestive verbs in a slightly abundant ethnographic comment, Caesar would seem to me to signpost the Gauls' adaptation of the Plateans' defense, or, rather, his skillful adaptation of Thucydides' famous account thereof.[47]

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reading. *B. Alex.* 3 (*ea sollertia* **efficiebant** *ut nostri illorum opera* **imitati** *uiderentur*) is clearly written with *BG* 7.22.1 in mind.

[45] Menge and Preuss (1972) also list *BG* 6.40.6. For *B. Alex.* 3, cf. previous n.

[46] Hinds (1998) 1–5, developing further David Ross's observations on the 'Alexandrian footnote'.

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