

## THE GAZE IN POLYBIUS' *HISTORIES*\*

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Summarizing Polybius' contribution to the study of Roman history, Mommsen paid him the following compliment: 'His books are like the sun in the field of Roman history; where they begin, the misty veils which still cloak the Samnite and Pyrrhic wars are lifted, where they finish, a new and if possible still more vexatious twilight begins.'<sup>1</sup> Since Mommsen our understanding of Polybius' methods, his bias and omissions, his ideology and concerns, has progressed immeasurably, thanks largely to the work of Pédech and Walbank. Nevertheless, the idea that the *Histories* represent, at least in their conception, the illumination of an intrinsic reality persists.<sup>2</sup> Polybius' supposed 'poor style' is often treated as in some way an absence of historiographical mediation. In this case, 'transparency' in a text, the sensation that it provides unmediated access to what it describes, is achieved not by a smooth and inconspicuous style, but by coarseness. Tarn compared Polybius' work to rescripts and despatches, as if he were only interested in an unobtrusive recording role,<sup>3</sup> and this attitude to the historian, far from being in decline, has received some radical and authoritative support in recent years. One reappraisal of Roman imperialism has argued that Polybius was much closer to the reality of the process than many twentieth-century historians.<sup>4</sup> Another study claims to 'want to say no more than what Polybius said'.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, I have no argument with those who stress Polybius' honesty and reliability. More problematic, however, is an attitude to our use of Polybius' history which is often assumed in eulogies of his truthfulness: that when we read Polybius, we are enabled to gaze directly on the landscape of Roman history, a single substantial unitary reality, structured out of objective facts.

In this paper I would like to suggest that Polybius does not concern himself with such a reality at all, but with several different realities. Instead of a single line of sight from the libraries of the twentieth century to the field of historical facts in the third and second centuries B.C., we are presented in the *Histories* with a complex network of appearances and perceptions, where events are always mediated through the gaze of the inhabitants of his history and that of his supposed readers. Instead of a single reality, therefore, we are given several, constructed out of different points of view, several readings of the same episodes, a history, in other words, about histories. In the course of this investigation into the gaze of the *Histories*, I hope to show that it is these different realities, their development, and the tension between them that constitute the main focus of Polybius' work.

My choice of the term 'gaze' perhaps requires some justification. On the one hand, some may think that the significant elements of the investigation concern *psychology*, and Polybius' treatment of it. Yet 'psychology' assumes too much. Often it is only possible to talk of *what appears* in Polybius; lines of sight form their own structures, linking the protagonists and the readers of the *Histories* together in the act of looking, relationships which sometimes actually seem to preclude any individuated 'psychology'. On the other hand, those familiar with

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<sup>1</sup> Th. Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte* (9th ed, 1903), II, 453: 'Seine Bücher sind wie die Sonne auf diesem Gebiet; wo sie anfangen, da heben sich die Nebelschleier, die noch die Samnitischen und den Pyrrhischen Krieg

bedecken, und wo sie endigen beginnt eine neue womöglich noch lästigerer Dämmerung.'

<sup>2</sup> See for instance S. Usher, *The Historians of Greece and Rome* (1969), 105: 'Turning finally to Polybius, we are emphatically back in the world of reality'; 123: '... we have a competent, clear and technically knowledgeable account of battles and stratagems and a precise description of the psychological reactions of the participants in each situation'; Eric W. Marsden, 'Polybius as a military historian', in *Polybe [Entretiens du Fondation Hardt XX]* (1974), 294-5: 'As he wanted to be, Polybius is a veritable mine of information for the military man. It may be a positive advantage that he did not include more interpretative sections, which might have contaminated the evidence rather than clarified it.'

<sup>3</sup> W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilisation* (1927), 231.

<sup>4</sup> W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* (1979), esp. 111-13 and 115-16.

<sup>5</sup> F. Millar, 'The political character of the classical Roman Republic, 200-151 B.C.', *JRS* 74 (1984), 2.

narratology may wonder why I have chosen a new term instead of the well-established 'focalization', as formulated by Gérard Genette in his *Figures III* (1972). A narratological study of Polybius would indeed touch on many of the features I deal with here. But 'focalization', as a term formulated for the analysis of fictional texts, a complement to 'narration', is problematic when applied to history, which must participate in what Hayden White has called 'a discourse of the real'.<sup>6</sup> If I were to refer to Hannibal 'focalizing', I could only possibly be referring to techniques of narration. 'Gaze' has the advantage of reflecting the visual metaphors which are used consistently by Polybius, though rejected by Genette (*ibid.*, 185) as a naive view of narrative.

#### I. WAR AS SPECTACLE

As a starting point for this investigation we can take a casual remark made by Walbank, commenting on a textual problem at IX.9.10. The historian has just given an account of Hannibal's march on Rome in 211 and, after adducing some parallel examples, he praises the conduct of both sides as exemplary

... not for the purpose of extolling the Romans or the Carthaginians ... but rather for the sake of the leaders of both these states, and of all, no matter where, who shall be charged with the conduct of public affairs, so that by memory or actual sight of such actions as these, they may be moved to emulation, and not shrink from undertaking ...<sup>7</sup>

At this point in the text, as the earliest editors observed, there is a lacuna. A number of suggestions for what may have fallen out of the text have been made, but none has gained general acceptance. So what kind of actions, as exemplified by Hannibal's march on Rome, does Polybius wish to urge upon his readers? As Walbank observes, there are really only two possibilities: (i) '... *not* actions which are fraught with risk and peril, but those which are bold without being hazardous ...' or (ii) '... actions which *seem* to be fraught with risk and peril, but *are* on the contrary bold without being hazardous ...'. Walbank himself marginally prefers the former version, 'since there is no particular reason why Polybius should stress the *apparent* danger of the course advocated ...'.<sup>8</sup> However, I think it can be demonstrated that Polybius does indeed reveal reasons why the apparent danger of a course of action is important.

Certainly, scattered through the *Histories* are actions which according to Polybius seemed dangerous or difficult to contemporaries or even to later generations, while they were actually quite safe. Cleomenes' invasion of the Argolid is one example: 'Most people think that this was rash and hazardous on his part, owing to the strength of the frontier, but if we judge rightly, it was really a safe and wise course' (II.64.2). In a similar vein, we are told that although everyone else had despaired of taking Sardis by storm, Lagoras knew from experience that it would be 'very easy to subject', like all supposedly strong cities (VII.15.2-4).<sup>9</sup>

The issue seems to matter a lot to our historian. In a well-known piece of polemic, he criticizes those historians of the Second Punic War who exaggerated the steepness and

<sup>6</sup> See his essay, 'The value of narrativity in the representation of reality', in W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *On Narrative* (1981), 19.

<sup>7</sup> IX.9.9-10: ταῦτα μὲν οὖν οὐχ οὕτως τοῦ Ῥωμαίων ἢ Καρχηδονίων ἐγκωμίου χάριν εἰρηταί μοι ... τὸ δὲ πλείον τῶν ἡγουμένων παρ' ἀμφοτέροις καὶ τῶν μετὰ ταῦτα μελλόντων χειρίζειν παρ' ἐκάστοις τὰς κοινὰς πράξεις, ἵνα τῶν μὲν ἀναμνησκόμενοι, τὰ δ' ὑπὸ τὴν ὄψιν λαμβάνοντες ζηλωταὶ γίνωνται <...> παρὰ βολον ἔχειν τι καὶ κινδυνώδες τοῦναντίον ἀσφαλῆ μὲν τὴν τόλμαν ... F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius II* (1967), discusses the suggested emendations ad loc. (p. 132).

<sup>8</sup> Walbank, *op. cit.* (n. 7), ad loc. Walbank concludes by suggesting as the most likely restoration Reiske's γίνονται <οὐ [corr. Hultsch μὴ] τῶν δοκούντων > παρὰ βολον ἔχειν τι καὶ κινδυνώδες, <ἀλλ' ὅσα>

τοῦναντίον κτλ. (J. J. Reiske, *Animadversiones ad Graecos auctores* (1757-66) IV, 487). However, both W. R. Paton in his Loeb edition (vol. IV, 1925) and Raymond Weil in his Budé edition (vol. VII, 1982), the most recent text available, base their translations on Walbank's second version. Both leave the Greek text unaltered, with the lacuna, although Weil comments in the apparatus 'Supplevi e.g. τῶν τοιοῦτων ἂν δοκούντα'.

<sup>9</sup> Polybius is attacking an *exemplum* of proverbial strength, see Herodotus 1.84 and Lucian, *De Mercede Conductis* 13. For other illusions of danger, cf. 1.47, where the 'Rhodian' amazes the Romans at Lilybaeum by his recklessness, although in fact, he is able to rely on his knowledge of the shoals, and III.78.8-79.1, where Hannibal's troops think the march through the marshes of Etruria will be dangerous, but Hannibal himself has discovered that the water is shallow and the ground firm.

desolation of the Alps (III.47.9),<sup>10</sup> whereas in truth, the crossing is not nearly so difficult (III.48.6) and Hannibal had made careful enquiries as to its feasibility (III.48.11 and III.34.2). And as for the greatest venture of them all, he is at pains to point out that far from being dependent on chance and accident, the Romans had a 'very well-founded basis for conceiving the ambition of achieving a world-empire' (1.3.10 and 1.63.9).<sup>11</sup>

Not all the contradictions and corrections are so explicit, however. We read in v.14.9, for instance, that Philip's attack on Thermus was considered dangerous. But the information which contradicts this opinion is contained in a passage a few chapters earlier (v.7.1aff.). Hannibal's crossing of the Alps seemed a difficult undertaking not only to the readers of inferior histories, but also to Scipio the Elder, who is made to register his surprise at the venture in two places (III.61.5-6 and 49.2), giving grounds for his amazement that Polybius himself discounts (III.49.2, cf. 34.2 and 48.11). Sometimes, there is not even this much, but only references to what seemed, or what someone thought, or what the general opinion is or was. The author thus distances himself from statements about the difficulty of actions or the boldness of the individuals who undertake them by putting such views into the mouths and minds of other characters.<sup>12</sup> He writes of amazement at dangerous deeds rather than of danger itself.

If we return to IX.9.10 and Hannibal's march on Rome, we find the same phenomenon. Although Walbank argues that it was 'not especially dangerous even in appearance', Polybius makes the Romans in the city suggest 'that the enemy would never have approached so near and displayed such audacity if the legions before Capua had not been destroyed' (IX.6.2).<sup>13</sup>

Why, then, does Polybius make a point of describing *perceptions* of difficulty and danger among the actors in his *Histories*, even though he sometimes goes out of his way to deny the validity of these perceptions? Where, moreover, does the recommendation come from? Is it possible the historian would exhort his readers to undertake 'actions which *seem* to be fraught with risk and peril'? For what advantage?

One benefit is immediately apparent, surprise. The use of surprise is presumably what lies behind the advice offered in the digression on the art of the commander where the author recommends a knowledge of local topography: '... for often this shows seemingly impossible things to be possible and vice versa' (IX.13.8). If an action seems too difficult or dangerous to the enemy, they will not be expecting it. There is a paradox here that Polybius exploits with relish. Apparently difficult actions are really feasible precisely because they seem difficult. This is the logic of Lagoras' rule, mentioned above, about the 'most impregnable' citadels being the easiest to take (VII.15.2) and forms the basis of Leontius' calculations about an attack on Thermus (v.7.2). Hannibal uses the principle to set an ambush at Trebia. He anticipates that the Romans would not be expecting an attack on flat and treeless ground, an apparently difficult place to hide a substantial detachment, 'not being aware that such places are better adapted than woods for the concealment and safety of men...' (III.71.2-3). The Romans' perception of the difficulty of an ambush in such a place is crucial to Hannibal's success.

The illusion of danger or difficulty, then, far from being a casual bonus is something consciously aimed at by a clever commander who is aware of and makes use of the mistaken opinion of his enemies to give himself the benefit of surprise. However, the ramifications are rather wider than this. The author's concern with the perception of difficulty and audacity throws light on a very significant aspect of his writing which privileges appearances in the account of warfare. For he has produced a narrative, above and beyond the descriptions of physical events, where battles are treated not so much as military actions, with strategic or logistical objectives, but as episodes, which can only be put into context, only be made meaningful, when they have been observed and interpreted, written and read.

<sup>10</sup> cf. F. W. Walbank, 'Polemic in Polybius', *JRS* 52 (1962), 1-4; P. Pédech, *La Méthode historique de Polybe* (1964), 549.

<sup>11</sup> This emphasis on calculation and planning reflects Polybius' concern with the importance of *πρόνοια* in military activity (see Pédech, op. cit. (n. 10), 217-22). It would damage his argument somewhat, if it appeared that so successful a general as Hannibal had launched himself on the Romans without due care and attention. For other examples of Hannibal's foresight, see III.34; 47.7-8; 48.11; 49.9; 53.1; 70.12; 71.2; 79.1; 92.10; VIII.34; XI.19.

<sup>12</sup> Other examples are 1.52.1; 60.8; 78.6; II.47.4; III.34.2-3; 92.3; V.14.9-10; 36.7-8; 102.1; VII.15f.; 16.2; VIII.15.1 and 6; 32f.; X.3.7; 39.2; XI.39.15; XV.5.8; 35.6; XXIII.5.5.

<sup>13</sup> Walbank, op. cit. (n. 7), ad loc. Polybius himself does not make it clear whether he thinks the march actually dangerous or not, but he does stress the care taken by Hannibal to scout ahead (IX.5.8), and describes no opposition along the route.

Polybius, then, can be seen writing through the eyes of others. He gives us sometimes several different viewpoints of the same event. We are told how Hannibal viewed the crossing of the Alps, as well as how other historians have presented it, and how Scipio the Elder saw it. These different views of the same episode are not primarily cited for *variatio*, I think, nor especially to characterize the observers, but take their own place as events within the history he is composing. They can be seen as little narratives, fragmentary versions of what was going on, overlaying one another and competing with each other. And this competition of versions produces its own narrative within Polybius' work, as can most readily be demonstrated in his account of the first few years of the Second Punic War in Book III.

The Romans begin the debate with a distinct advantage. In his speech before the battle at the Ticinus, Scipio is able to treat Roman superiority as a given fact, demonstrated by past events, i.e. the First Punic War and more recently in the skirmishes by the banks of the Rhone (III.64.4 and 6). He cites the behaviour of the Carthaginians to show that they themselves agree with this idea of the relative strength of the two armies in present conditions. Taking all this evidence into consideration, and using it 'to calculate correctly', there seems only one possibility as to the future (6). In case the soldiers are as panic-stricken as he himself was at Hannibal's seemingly impossible crossing of the Alps, he provides an interpretation that attempts to reverse the more obvious conclusion: that it was in order to escape from the Romans that the Carthaginians had fled into the Alps (7). The mountain range, then, instead of being a gauge of Hannibal's daring (formidable enough to cross the Alps), becomes a mark of the terror the Romans inspire in their enemies (better to cross the Alps than to tackle the Romans). Because of the 'faith' they have in the speaker, and the verisimilitude of his version of history, the men are confident of their superiority and eager to join battle.

Polybius was not the first historian to give generals speeches before battle and to fill those speeches with examples of previous successes. The difference here is that the speeches of generals are merely volleys fired in the struggle over the interpretation of events which develops in the course of Book III. As each battle is fought it enters the catalogue of *exempla*, and attempts are made by both sides to wield it symbolically or, on the other hand, to dismiss its significance.

The Romans' first defeat at Ticinus does not count, since 'the Romans were in no shortage of pretexts to make it appear to themselves that what had happened was not a defeat'.<sup>14</sup> But this Roman version of events becomes more difficult to reconcile with reality, as further evidence mounts up. Longus attempts to disqualify his defeat at Trebia by ascribing it to the storm, but the Senate at least is a little more concerned (III.75.1-3). It is only with the battle of Trasimene, however, that the acceptable picture of what is going on becomes overwhelmed by a more lifelike one. The story of their own inferiority finally reaches the people, since the leaders of the state are unable to 'hush it up' (στέλλεσθαι), or 'minimize' it (ταπεινοῦν) (III.85.7).

Trasimene, then, is the first real victory in this competition of readings, this battle of versions; it constitutes 'an agreed defeat' (τῆς ὁμολογουμένης ἥττης, III.85.9), although Hannibal, counting Trebia and Ticinus as well, claims the Carthaginians have scored three agreed victories by the time of Cannae, ἕξ ὁμολογουμένου (III.111.7). (The discrepancy is the result of Hannibal reading his own version of the battle of versions.)

Nevertheless, despite this apparent consensus after Trasimene, there is still some room for debate and the consul Aemilius Paullus devotes his speech before Cannae to disposing of this authorized version with its implications of Carthaginian superiority. He dismisses the evidence of Roman weakness, suggested by previous battles, in each case arguing bad luck and mitigating circumstances (III.108.3). The forthcoming battle can, however, provide 'no pretext' (οὐδεμία . . . πρόφασις) for defeat (5); their task now is to prove the plausibility of his version, 'to make clear to all that their former defeats were due not to the Romans being worse (χείρους) than the Carthaginians, but rather to the inexperience of the soldiers and the force of circumstances' (III.109.12). So, the judge's decision at Cannae seems to be final (βραβευθείσης τῆς μάχης, III.118.1), the argument seems to be finally settled (ὁμολογουμένως, 8), not so much because of the numbers killed, or any absolute military

<sup>14</sup> III.68.9; . . . οὐ μὴν ἠπόρουν γε σκήψεων πρὸς τὸ μὴ δοκεῖν αὐτοῖς ἥτταν εἶναι τὸ γεγονός . . .

advantage gained in the fighting by the Carthaginians, but because there are no pretexts to explain it away, no fog on the battlefield (III.108.8–10), no storm to interrupt the action (III.75.1), nothing to obscure the clear evidence of Carthaginian superiority.

This, then, is the battle of perceived realities, a combat above and beyond the military engagements, providing a slightly different narrative, a level of the history privileged over purely material effects. However, this combat reflects only the perceptions of the combatants, but these are not the only views presented by Polybius. Others are watching too, besides the major players. In the First Punic War, we have Hiero of Syracuse (I.16.4; cf. I.11.15 and 83.3) assessing the prospects of the Romans and divining the final outcome of the war. For the Second, we have Philip, urged by Agelaus to look to the West, and the Greek cities who need no encouragement to gaze in the same direction (V.104.5 and 7, cf. 105.5). Then there is the Spaniard Abilyx:

This man, reviewing the situation (θεωρῶν τὰ πράγματα) and thinking that the prospects of the Romans were now the brightest, reasoned with himself in a manner thoroughly Spanish and barbarian on the question of betraying the hostages (III.98.3).

Then again, beyond these observers, we have the silent spectators, the readers of Polybius who are urged to keep the events always 'before their eyes' (ὕπὸ τὴν ὄψιν, IX.9.10), who 'should mentally turn and direct their gaze to the locations as each in turn is displayed in the course of the narrative'.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the sense of sight is very important to Polybius,<sup>16</sup> as he spells out elsewhere in the *Histories*. He quotes Heraclitus for the view that 'the eyes are more accurate witnesses than the ears' (XII.27.1). He compares good history to good painting (XII.25h.3). In fact, Polybius' stress on the screening of historical events seems rather similar to the despised 'tragic history' of Phylarchus 'who is always trying to place horrors before our eyes' (II.56.8, cf. II.16.17).<sup>17</sup> There is a difference, however. Phylarchus' pictures are intended 'to arouse sympathy' (συμπαθεῖς ποιεῖν II.56.7, cf. 11). Polybius, on the other hand, insists upon visualization for the purpose of instruction:<sup>18</sup> 'It is only when one has looked closely at the details [of the operations of the two sides in the Second Punic War] that one fully admires them'.<sup>19</sup>

## II. A DIDACTIC ARENA

In fact, Polybius provides us with an audience for the readers to model themselves on, together with a paradigmatic gaze and exemplary responses, when he describes in a simile the spectators at a boxing-match, 'who although they are unable to note and foresee each attack or each blow, can nevertheless get a fair idea of the combatants' respective experience, strength, and spirit from their general action and determination'.<sup>20</sup> The simile is explicit; the boxers represent Hamilcar versus the Romans on Eryx; the spectators are the readers (I.57.3).

This simile brings to mind another fighting-contest with heavy symbolic overtones, that is the prize-fight between two of the Celtic prisoners-of-war who all compete avidly amongst themselves for the chance to participate, even though the loser will die. The spectacle is put on by Hannibal with the audience, his men, in mind. The little battle is used self-consciously as a model for the situation of his own men, so that 'having seen what happened to others, they would consider more wisely what was their own best policy in the present situation' (III.63.2).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> III.38.5: ... τῆ διανοίᾳ χρῆ συνδιανεύειν καὶ συρρέπειν ἐπὶ τοὺς τόπους αἰεὶ τοὺς διὰ τοῦ λόγου συνεπιδεικνυμένων.

<sup>16</sup> For ancient ideas about the relative value of the senses, cf. H. Blum, *Antike Mnemotechnik* (1969), 164–71 and F. Hartog, *Le Miroir d'Hérodote* (1980, Eng. trans. 1988), 260ff.

<sup>17</sup> cf. Pédech, op. cit. (n. 10), 394; and F. W. Walbank's excellent survey of the problem of 'tragic history', *Polybius* (1972), 34–40.

<sup>18</sup> For *emphasis*, see Pédech, op. cit. (n. 16), 226ff. and 258.

<sup>19</sup> VIII.1.4; ... ὁ καὶ μάλιστα ἂν τις εἰς τὸ κατὰ μέρος ἐμβλέψας θαυμάσειε.

<sup>20</sup> I.57.1–2: ... λόγον μὲν ἢ πρόνοιαν ἔχειν ὑπὲρ ἐκάστης ἐπιβολῆς καὶ πληγῆς οὔτε τοῖς ἀγωνίζ[-]ομένοις οὔτε τοῖς θεωμένοις ἐστὶ δυνατόν, ἐκ δὲ τῆς καθόλου τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐνεργείας καὶ τῆς ἐκατέρου φιλοτιμίας ἐστὶ καὶ τῆς ἐμπειρίας αὐτῶν καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως, πρὸς δὲ καὶ τῆς εὐψυχίας, ἱκανὴν ἔνοιαν λαβεῖν ...

<sup>21</sup> For the didactic and apodeictic elements in Polybius, see Walbank, op. cit. (n. 17), 87–91 and Pédech, op. cit. (n. 10), 43ff.

These two passages have to be put in the context of a large number of metaphors used by Polybius, which describe war in terms of fighting-contests. As Wunderer and de Foucault pointed out in their analyses of Polybius' similes and metaphors, these comparisons with the ἀγών or ἀμίλλα occur with quite striking regularity in the *Histories*.<sup>22</sup> This leads Wunderer to conclude, 'it seems natural to the historian to look at the wars he describes from the point of view of an athletic competition.'<sup>23</sup> If we add in the spectators, we can go a little further than this. Polybius presents his *Histories*, and perhaps himself conceives of history, as a didactic arena. Events must always bear the burden of observation.

In fact, we can use this image of the arena to locate the gazes we have identified, to differentiate new ones, and to map out the structures of their operation. There is the gaze of one combatant towards his opponent, and to the blows exchanged between them; there is the gaze of the spectators, at some distance away, directed towards the centre. There are other sight-lines too. The gaze of the combatants turned on themselves, assessing their own performances, and the gaze they direct towards the spectators, aware of the impression they will be making. It is this latter gaze which transforms the fight into something of a presentation, an exhibition.

But what of the middle distance observers, of Hiero, Abilyx, and the Greek cities, and especially Philip at Naupactus, whose gaze is directed westwards by Agelaus? There is a term, ἔφεδρος, which Polybius uses on a few occasions, and which is normally translated without its full metaphorical overtones as 'biding one's time', or 'lying in wait'. But quite often in classical and later Greek, the word refers specifically to the third competitor,<sup>24</sup> who waits in the wings to tackle the victor in a contest, and this, I think, must be its sense in Agelaus' speech<sup>25</sup> addressed to Philip:

For you, sire, the best security is instead of exhausting the Greeks, and making them vulnerable to invaders, on the contrary to take thought for them as for your own body . . . If you want action, turn your gaze to the West, and keep your mind on the wars in Italy, so that waiting on the reserve-bench, like a wise competitor, you may make the attempt when your opportunity comes, to fight over the sovereignty of the world.<sup>26</sup>

These potential combatants, then, who must choose a role of seconding one of the main antagonists, or of waiting to challenge the eventual victor, hold a variety of positions between the current fighters and the spectators, situated away from the arena in the stalls. Their gaze mediates the close observation of the participants, and the more remote stares of the historian and his readers in the auditorium.<sup>27</sup>

Within this complex nexus of lines of sight, we can distinguish two general tendencies. One the gaze of σύγκρισις, or comparison, takes a remote view of things, assessing,

<sup>22</sup> C. Wunderer, *Polybios — Forschungen (III Gleichnisse und Metaphern bei Polybios)* (1909), 55: '... ausserordentlich häufig . . .'; J. A. de Foucault, *Recherches sur la langue et le style de Polybe* (1972), 233: '... un emploi extraordinairement fréquent . . .'. For other examples, see the list in Wunderer, 55–60, and de Foucault, 229 and 331. Some, as Wunderer remarks (58), have probably lost their *Grundbedeutung*.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 55: '... es ja dem Historiker nahe liegt die Kriege, die er schildert, unter dem Gesichtspunkt eines Wettkampfes anzusehen . . .'.

<sup>24</sup> The ἔφεδρος is the competitor in any of the heavy sports, who has drawn a bye to go through to the next round: see Michael B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World* (1987), 21–2, and for its use as a literary metaphor, A. F. Garvie (ed.), *Aeschylus Choephoroi* (1986) on lines 866–8. ἔφεδρος and its cognates are very common in Polybius and usually do mean nothing more than 'lying in wait' or 'reserves'. However the technical sense is implied by the context at IV.9.6 and XXVIII.17.5, where Antiochus is seen as the next foe to be faced after Perseus, cf. also II.13.6 and III.23.6. Xenophon uses the term similarly in a metaphor in *Anab.* II.5.10.

<sup>25</sup> Surprisingly, many historians are prepared to accept the speech as authentic, cf. Walbank, *op. cit.* (n. 17), 69, n. 11 and Harris, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 116, n. 4, with bibliography.

<sup>26</sup> V.104.5–7: εἶναι δὲ φυλακὴν ἔαν ἀφέμενος τοῦ καταφθεῖρῃν τοὺς Ἕλληνας καὶ ποιεῖν εὐχειρώτους τοῖς ἐπιβαλλομένοις κατὰ τοῦναντίον ὧς ὑπὲρ ἰδίου σώματος βουλευῆται . . . εἰ δὲ πραγμάτων ὀρέγεται, πρὸς τὰς δύσεις βλέπειν αὐτὸν ἤξιον καὶ τοῖς ἐν Ἰταλίᾳ συννεσῶσι πολέμοις προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν, ἵνα γενόμενος ἔφεδρος ἐμφρῶν πειραθῆ ἄν καιρῷ τῆς τῶν ὄλων ἀντιποιήσασθαι δυναστείας.

<sup>27</sup> Exactly what kind of auditorium Polybius has in mind for these agonistic contests is hard to say. Strictly speaking it ought to be a stadium of some kind, see Poliakoff, *op. cit.* (n. 24), 20–1. In a later period there is plenty of evidence for the use of theatres to put on gladiatorial shows, see L. Robert, *Les Gladiateurs dans l'orient grec* (1971), 36 and 246–7. It is surely not inconceivable that they could have been used for combat-sports in an earlier period. Suidas s.v. σκηνή has the arena (κονίστρα) as an area of the theatre.

contrasting, and placing into a context.<sup>28</sup> It is the gaze of the audience in the simile at I.57.1–2, who ‘get a fair idea of the respective qualities of the two competitors’. It is the method of observing used successfully by Hiero in the First Punic War, and Abilyx in the Second (I.16.4, cf. II.15 and 83.3; III.98.3), when deciding which of the two sides would come out on top in the end. It is a kind of looking employed by Polybius himself on several occasions, when, for instance, he takes a long view of the antagonists to reflect on their respective strengths (e.g. I.63.4–64; II.24.8), and it is assumed to be an essential part of the reading of history; in Book XII, he criticizes Timaeus because ‘he does not induce us to consider and compare, but exposes to ridicule the men and the actions he is championing’.<sup>29</sup>

The other tendency of the gaze shares a lot with the gaze of comparison, but its process is much more involving, entailing the ‘projection’ (μεταφερέσθαι) of the sufferings of others onto one’s own circumstances. This empathetic gaze is the one Hannibal would have his soldiers employ, as they watch the Celtic prisoners fighting to the death (III.63.2). It is also the reading method implied by Polybius in Book I: ‘For there are two ways by which all men can reform themselves, the one through their own misfortunes, the other through those of others’ (I.35.7, cf. XII.25b.3 and 251.8).

By using the simile Polybius himself provides for us, we can look at the *Historiēs* as a series of concentric circles of spectators, from the combatants in the centre to the remote reader in the twentieth century. These spectators located at various distances from the action, and at various levels of involvement, see through each other, one level mediating the gaze of the next. The historian controls the gaze of the reader as Hannibal directs the stares of his soldiers, sometimes crudely, when he orders us to turn our eyes to each location in turn, now to observe closely, now to sit back and assess and compare at a distance, and now to apply what we see to ourselves; but sometimes more discreetly and subtly, when he induces us to look through the eyes of others. We watch the Celtic fighters through the eyes of the Carthaginians. We learn not only from the events of the Punic Wars, but also from Hiero’s learning, and from Abilyx’s. The didactic arenas of I.57 and III.63 are located securely within the greater arena which is the *Historiēs*, within which all spectators are carefully seated, all gazes carefully structured and gently directed. And because of this mediation, the text is porous; there is no great break between the participants and the readers; they are all implicated in their observing. The arena spills over into the auditorium, and the auditorium into our own present, as we view through the eyes of the Polybian reader, the spectators in the text.<sup>30</sup> We are a long way now from Mommsen’s straightforward vision.

As I suggested earlier, the combatants are aware that they are a spectacle and this transforms their action already into represented action, a presentation, a demonstration. It has already been given a particular reading even before it is read and interpreted by the spectators. What this means in the accounts of warfare is that military actions become exhibitions of superiority, in which the best result is not one which secures the most important military objectives, but one which most clearly and unambiguously demonstrates the plausibility of one’s own expectations of ultimate victory, and the futility of one’s opponent’s resistance.

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of this point is contained in the account of Hannibal’s invasion of the plain of Campania in 217. In Livy’s more strategically-minded version, the venture is presented as an attempt to take Capua, which goes badly wrong because the native guide misunderstands the thick Punic accent. Hannibal is unpleasantly surprised to find himself hemmed in by mountains on all sides (XXII.13).<sup>31</sup> In Polybius’ version, however, the Carthaginian’s purpose is to demonstrate superiority.<sup>32</sup> His calculations are sound (III.91.1), the site well-chosen, since ‘the whole plain seems completely secure and inaccessible’ (91.8).

<sup>28</sup> For the use of comparison in Polybius, see K. Lorenz, *Untersuchungen zum Geschichtswerk des Polybios* (1931), 81, n. 73 and n. 74; Pédech, op. cit. (n. 10), 408–10 and 420–5.

<sup>29</sup> XII.26c.1: ... οὐκ εἰς σύγκρισιν, ἀλλ’εἰς κατα[-]μώκησιν ἄγει καὶ τοὺς ἀνδρας καὶ τὰς πράξεις...

<sup>30</sup> And possibly even beyond the text, where the *agon* is between Polybius and his rivals among the historians. For this competition, see M. Vercauthe, ‘A la Recherche du mensonge et de la vérité. La fonction des passages méthodologiques chez Polybe’, in *Purposes of History. Studies in Greek Historiography from the Fourth to the*

*Second Century B.C.* (Studia Hellenistica xxx) (1990), 34–6 and cf. T. Wiedemann, ‘Rhetoric in Polybius’, in *idem*, 291.

<sup>31</sup> The versions of Livy and Polybius are very different, but both mention the effect of Hannibal’s campaign on Rome’s allies. Unlike Polybius, however, Livy sees the attempt to win defectors not in terms of a show-case comparison between the two sides, but as a much more brutal use of force to compel them to change their allegiance by devastating their land.

<sup>32</sup> III.90.11: ... πᾶσι δῆλον ποιήσιν...

The Carthaginians, continues Polybius, turned the region into a 'kind of theatre' in which they 'intended to make a show of the timidity of the enemy and themselves to appear in command of the open country' (10). In Polybius' version, strategic aims are elided. There is no hint that Hannibal might have made a mistake; the difficulties or, to be strict, the apparent difficulties are anticipated and used to make the exhibition of superiority clearer.

This demonstrational character of warfare can be seen in Polybius' accounts of regular engagements too. We might have thought Africanus would have tried to dispose of Andobales (Indibilis) as quickly and easily as he could, with as little risk to his own men as possible. If he did not use his Spanish allies, we might have put this down to fear of treachery. But this is only if we think of battles in purely strategic and logistical terms. In Polybius' version the Roman general is making a point: he tells his men that

he had not consented to call in the aid of a single Spaniard, but was going to give battle with his Romans alone, *that it might be evident to all* that it was not due to the help of the Spaniards that they had crushed the Carthaginians and driven them out of Spain, but that they had conquered both the Carthaginians and the Celtiberians by Roman valour and their own brave effort (XI.31.5-6).<sup>33</sup>

The great battles at Cannae and Zama are likewise treated as exhibitions by their generals in Polybius' account (III.109.12; XV.11.12). It is clear that for the author, they have no meaning on their own. It is only when viewed by the observers, whoever they are, and represented to themselves that actions can take their place as statements, and events become meaningful.

Polybius is really only interested in impressions, in perceived realities; it is only these images, *whether true to life or illusory*, that count in the narrative. Scipio (at III.61.5) is amazed that Hannibal managed to cross the Alps, although we, the readers, have been told by Polybius that Gallic tribes achieved this feat quite regularly (III.47.6). Scipio's amazement may well be based on false impressions, but Hannibal really does appear bold and more formidable an opponent as a result. Likewise, Philip's raid on Thermus really did greatly increase his reputation among his own men:

For it seemed that he had run a great risk in entering such dangerous country and one that no one before him had ever ventured to invade with an army. And now he had not only invaded it, but had made his retreat in safety after accomplishing his purpose. (V.14.9)

Polybius, Aratus, Leontius, and the reader all know that the venture was not as impressive as it appeared (V.7.1-2). But this does not matter; the substantial effect on Philip's reputation is just as real as if it had in actual fact been difficult and dangerous.

This stress on the substantial effects of perceived realities can perhaps best be seen in Polybius' accounts of the sackings of cities. Sardis was proverbial for the strength of its citadel.<sup>34</sup> Lagoras the Cretan, however, knows from his extensive military experience that

the strongest cities are those which fall most readily into the hands of the enemy, owing to the negligence of the inhabitants . . . He had also noticed that these very cities are usually captured at their very strongest points, where the enemy are supposed to regard attack as hopeless. At present, he saw that owing to the prevailing notion of the extreme strength of Sardis, everyone despaired of taking it by storm . . . and this made him pay all the more attention to the matter . . .<sup>35</sup>

The 'prevailing notion', in this case, has shown itself quite incorrect; nevertheless, it takes its place in the narrative as a fact, and enables Lagoras to infiltrate the citadel and ultimately to capture it. In the Second Illyrian War, Aemilius Paullus chooses Dimale especially because of its formidable reputation, which qualifies it as a suitably spectacular arena for a demonstration of Roman power:

<sup>33</sup> It is worth comparing Livy's account (XXVIII.32), which in the narrative immediately after Scipio's speech follows Polybius' very closely. Livy's Scipio, too, notes the absence of a foreign element in the Roman army, but fails to admit the apodeictic intention which Polybius stresses in his version.

<sup>34</sup> See above, n. 9.

<sup>35</sup> VII.15.2-5: . . . τριβὴν ἔχων ἐν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς ἱκανήν, καὶ συνειροσάκως ὅτι συμβαίνει τὰς ὀχυρωτάτας πόλεις ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ ῥάστα γίνεσθαι

τοῖς πολεμοῖς ὑποχειρίους διὰ τὴν ὀλιγομίαν τῶν ἐνοικούντων . . . καὶ τούτων αὐτῶν ἐπεγνωκῶς διότι συμβαίνει τὰς ἀλώσεις γίνεσθαι κατὰ τοὺς ὀχυρωτάτους τόπους καὶ δοκοῦντας ὑπὸ τῶν ἐναντίων ἀπληθίσθαι, καὶ τότε θεωρῶν κατὰ τὴν προὔπαρχουσαν δόξαν περὶ τῆς τῶν Σάρδεων ὀχυρότητος ἀπαντας ἀπεγνωκῶς ὡς διὰ τοιαύτης πράξεως κυριεύσειν αὐτῆς . . . τοσοῦτω μᾶλλον προσείχε καὶ πάντα τρόπον ἡρεῦνα, σπεύδων ἀφορμῆς τινος ἐπιλαβέσθαι τοιαύτης.



... observing that the enemy were very confident in the natural strength of Dimale and the measures they had taken for its defence, there being also a *general belief* that it was impregnable, he decided to attack it first, wishing to strike terror into them.<sup>36</sup>

The site is chosen, according to Polybius, for its reputation among the natives, not for any strategic or logistical advantage, simply as a place suitable for a show of strength. Polybius does not comment on the actual strength of the city, only on Paullus' observation of the natives' opinion. For the real terror which Paullus anticipates if he is successful stems not from a real loss, but a perceived loss, not from the real strength of the Roman army which carried out the operation, but from its perceived strength. In the same way, Philip is able to take Acrolissus without a blow because of the defenders' 'confidence in the strength of the place' (VIII.14.5). For when he

unexpectedly made himself master of these places, he assured by this action the submission of all the district around ... For there seemed no strength or safety against Philip's βία, for those resisting, when the aforesaid fortresses had been overwhelmed μετὰ βίας (VIII.14.10-11).

Pédech notes Polybius' preoccupation with the strength of cities, and draws a parallel with his assessment of men in terms of their military and political capacities.<sup>37</sup> He argues that in the *Histories*, the cities have had their identities absorbed by the kingdoms and federations of the third century. They remain only political and military bases like pieces on a chequer-board, the cities, pawns in the hands of the great powers. But this, I think, misrepresents Polybius' war-narratives. In fact, if we look for a coherent plot in military terms, we will be disappointed.<sup>38</sup> There is no mention of Dimale commanding the area, or of Lissus driving a wedge between Philip's enemies,<sup>39</sup> and the Macedonians abandon Thermus as soon as they have sacked it. Each city is treated rather as an individual (and largely insulated) arena, in which exhibitions and demonstrations of power take place for the benefit of the audience. If we wish to restore the narrative thread, we must follow this gaze of the observers and allow it its proper place in the plot of the *Histories*.

### III. LEVELS IN NARRATIVE

In fact, we can use the gaze and its modes of operation to take us through three distinct levels within the narrative. At the origin, as the source of the phenomena to be observed, we have the level of military action. Then, the level of signifying action, when events are perceived and interpreted and taken to imply something about some invisible essential qualities of the actors, their βία or τόλμα, or superiority in general. But if we continue to follow the gaze through the eyes of the spectators, we reach another level, what we might call the pathological level, where the full effect of these impressions is felt and transformed back into material responses, as the observers are encouraged to become more aggressive, or terrified into surrender by the qualities they have perceived through these actions.

It is the second level, the level of signification, which holds the pivotal role in the narrative, the level which joins up the dots, so to speak. In this level, military action is reduced to the status of signifier, it means little on its own, but becomes meaningful only for what it says about something else, about the invisible qualities of the participants. Historical action comes to resemble discourse, with events transformed into statements. There is, therefore, a general prejudice against material forces in the *Histories*, and in favour of immaterial qualities.<sup>40</sup> In Book 1, for instance, the Carthaginians, relieved at Lilybaeum, are delighted

<sup>36</sup> III.18.3: ... θεωρών τοὺς ὑπεναντίους θαρροῦντας ἐπὶ τῇ τῆς Διμάλης ὀχυρότητι καὶ ταῖς παρασκευαῖς, ἐτι δὲ τῷ δοκεῖν αὐτὴν ἀνάλωτον ὑπάρχειν, ταύτην πρῶτον ἐγχειρεῖν ἔκρινε, βουλόμενος καταπλήξασθαι τοὺς πολεμίους.

<sup>37</sup> Pédech, op. cit. (n. 10), 548. Even in cases where Polybius does not deny the strength and strategic importance of cities, it is still usually a *perceived* strength he is talking about, cf. IV.70.4 and XXXVIII.3.3.

<sup>38</sup> Marsden, op. cit. (n. 2), 290 and 294-5.

<sup>39</sup> There is no indication in the surviving text that there was any reference to Lissus and its acropolis before VIII.13. For the site and its strategic role, see Walbank, op. cit. (n. 7), ad loc. and E. Badian, *Studies in Greek and Roman History* (1964), 20.

<sup>40</sup> This disdain is especially apparent in the over-confidence of Longus (III.72.2) and of the inhabitants of 'strong' cities, who 'relying on the natural and artificial strength of a place omit to keep guard and in general become remiss' (VII.15.2).

not so much at the arrival of relief, although their prospects were much improved and their force increased thereby, as at the fact that the Romans had not ventured to try to prevent the Carthaginians from sailing in (I.44.7).

What the capture of the cities of Lissus and Tyre demonstrates is not the strength of the forces brought against them, but the βία of their generals, Philip V and Alexander (VIII.14.11 and XVI.22.5).<sup>41</sup> Horatius, fighting on the bridge, struck fear into the enemy 'not so much by his strength (δύναμις) as by his steadfastness (ὑπόστασις) and daring (τόλμα)' (VI.55.2).

In fact, τόλμα (especially when joined with λογισμός) receives the greatest emphasis of all military virtues in the *Histories*.<sup>42</sup> It is, we remember, what Hannibal's crossing of the Alps signified to the stunned Scipio (III.61.6 and 49.2), and what amazed Hannibal, in turn, about Scipio's son Africanus (15.5ff., esp. 8). Sosibius, in Alexandria, held 'the τόλμα of the Spartan Cleomenes before his eyes'. It so terrified him that he plotted to have him locked up (V.36.7-8). Likewise, it is not Philip's resources, or military preparations which make the Romans wary of him, but his 'daring' as represented in his military actions (X.65.8), particularly, perhaps, that march on Thermus that was not really as difficult as was supposed. Finally, we are told that Hamilcar's τόλμα was 'the most feared thing of all at the time' during the First Punic War. Lutatius begins the battle of the Aegates Islands hurriedly, in order to avoid it (I.60.8). Of course, Sosibius cannot really see Cleomenes' τόλμα, any more than Horatius' assailants can see his, but this is what their actions, their stance and their histories represent to the observers.

However, although this level of essential qualities signified by military actions is the pivotal one, which makes the military narratives meaningful, it is the next level, the pathological, which gives this level its importance in turn, and joins it back to the military history.

The word most often used to describe the effect of a show of force on the observers is καταπλήττω (sometimes ἐκπλήττω), translated variously as 'strike with terror', 'stun', 'impress', a range which reflects the word's scope of emphasis in the *Histories*. Polybius uses it to describe the Roman blockaders' reaction to the sight of the 'Rhodian' sailing into Lilybaeum harbour, and Scipio the Elder is similarly 'struck' by Hannibal's apparently impossible march across the Alps (I.46.13; III.61.6). On the other hand, it is the word used to describe Aemilius Paullus' objective with regard to the Illyrians, which could well be translated 'terrify into submission' (III.18.3).<sup>43</sup>

The range of effects, then, is rather broad. At one end of the scale, the result is to dent the confidence of the enemy and make them think twice about their opposition.<sup>44</sup> At the other extreme, the impressions received strike into the spirit (ψυχή) of the enemy and render them utterly despondent. 'By capturing Dimale in seven days', says Polybius, 'Paullus immediately defeated in spirit all the enemy so that they at once flocked to surrender themselves unconditionally to Rome.'<sup>45</sup> The gaze employed is the gaze of projection, or transference, like that of the people around Lissus (VIII.14.11, cf. XVI.22a,5), who represent Philip's βία to themselves as seen in action against the great citadels, and calculate their own chances accordingly.

It is at this point, in the 'soul', that defeat is properly located. The military defeat pales in comparison. When the praetor announces the defeat at Trasimene, it produces 'such consternation that to those who were present on both occasions, what had happened seemed much worse now than during the actual battle' (III.85.8). Represented realities are always worse than the real thing. Moreover, the process can be cumulative; defeats, signifying intrinsic inferiority, produce more defeats and therefore more demoralization. The Carthaginians are 'already defeated in spirit' when they begin the Battle of the Great Plains in the winter of

<sup>41</sup> cf. XI.14.2: 'Most results in war are due to the skill or the reverse of the commanders'; I.35.4-5: 'For one man and one brain laid low those great numbers of men who seemed so invincible and efficient'; XVIII.28.6-7.

<sup>42</sup> cf. Pédech, op. cit. (n. 10), 211, with n. 38 and 251.

<sup>43</sup> See also I.46.6; 52.1; 78.6; II.47.4; III.34.2-3; 92.3; V.14.9-10 (cf. V.7.1-2); VII.15f.; 16.2; VIII.32f.; X.3.7; 39.2; XI.39.15; XV.5.8; 35.6. καταπλήττω and its cognates are extremely common in Polybius. For a complete list, see Mauersberger's *Polybios-Lexicon*.

<sup>44</sup> See II.20.10-21.1; VIII.32.4-33.2; cf. III.102.11; 104.2; III.1; V.69.11.

<sup>45</sup> III.18.5-6: λαβὼν δὲ κατὰ κράτος ἐν ἡμέραις ἑπτὰ παραχρῆμα πάντας ἤττησε ταῖς ψυχαῖς τοὺς ὑπεναντίους. διόπερ εὐθέως παρήσαν ἐκ πασῶν τῶν πόλεων ἐπιτρέποντες καὶ διδόντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων πίστιν. Cf. also V.74.3; II.6.1; III.116.8; XIV.9.6.

204–3, because of their previous disasters. However, as a result of this demoralization, they give way easily before Massinissa, and so are defeated again, this further blow taking them still further into despair (xiv.8.8; 9.6).

#### IV. DISCOUNTING DEFEAT

Because it is not military actions in themselves which defeat, but the impression made by the representation (through military actions some time in the recent or distant past) of intrinsic qualities, no blows should need to be struck to ensure capitulation. At Trebia, Longus moves his army out of camp, thinking that because of his cavalry's previous success, the whole affair will be settled ἐξ ἐπιφανείας, without any fighting necessary (iii.72.2, cf. iii.68.12; 64.8; ii.29.7). The Roman fleet, wrecked off Camarina in 255, was trying to 'strike terror into some of the cities which they passed by the image (φαντασία) of their recent success, and thus win them over' (i.37.5–6).<sup>46</sup> Polybius is here a little contemptuous of these 'meagre expectations', but he himself depicts Cleomenes using the same principle with great success, for 'having struck terror by his victories', he captures a large number of Peloponnesian cities, including Argos, Epidaurus, and Corinth, simply by marching past and 'brandishing fear' (τὸν φόβον ἀνατεινόμενος, ii.52.1–2).

However, working on the same principle, it need not be a disaster if one has suffered a military defeat, so long as one can represent it to oneself as something else, taking retrospective action to intercept the image of inferiority before it has 'defeated one in spirit'. There are several examples in Polybius of men doing exactly this, and discounting defeat. In 152–1, after a truce in the so-called 'Fiery War', Rome's Spanish allies are found urging harsh measures on their compatriots, the rebellious Aravacae, not as just punishment for their misdemeanours, nor even as a warning to others, but simply to convince them of their defeat. Otherwise they would rebel again, 'under the idea that they had proved themselves more than a match for the Romans' (xxxv.2.8). And the Aravacae themselves, when they stand up to speak, confirm the diagnosis: 'they left the impression that in all the engagements, they themselves had fought more brilliantly than the Romans' (xxxv.2.14; cf. 3.4).

Antiochus the Great, at Raphia, is another who discounted defeat, and 'persuaded himself that as far as it depended on him, he had won' (v.85.13); and perhaps most famous of all, we have Hamilcar the Barcid, who 'was undefeated by the Sicilian War [i.e. the First Punic War] in his soul, since he thought he had maintained the troops at Eryx unimpaired in the martial spirit with which he himself was imbued' (iii.9.7). This re-interpreting of history can be undertaken years after the events. It constitutes a rewriting of what happened, an attempt at replacing the old version with a new one. So we find the Younger Scipio rewriting the history of his father's campaigns earlier in the war and

... having learnt by careful inquiries (ἱστορῶν) at Rome about the treachery of the Celtiberians, and the separation of the Roman armies, and reaching the conclusion (συλλογιζόμενος) that his father's defeat was due to these causes, he was not in terror of the Carthaginians, nor was he defeated in spirit like most people (x.7.1–2).

In the light of what results from Hamilcar's and Scipio's own versions of history, we might well agree with Polybius that

men should observe when it is that people come to terms through force of circumstances, and when owing to their being defeated in spirit, so that in the former case, they may regard them as reserving themselves for a favourable opportunity . . . (iii.12.5–6).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> For other examples of this phenomenon, see iii.72.2; iii.92.3; v.55.1; xi.34.15; xxix.27.13. For the concept of φαντασία, especially as a function of mimetic narrative as used in oratory, see Anon., *De Subl.* xv.1.

<sup>47</sup> cf. Philip after Chios (xvi.8.3–4). In the case of Hamilcar, it is, of course, Hannibal, his son, who completes his father's unfinished business. This pattern of

sons putting their father's plans into operation occurs elsewhere in the *Histories*, and lies behind the bizarre theory ascribing the origins of the Third Punic War to the deceased Philip V (xxii.18), which relies to some extent on the analogy with Philip II's initiation of Alexander's Persian expedition (ibid. 10); cf. also Eumenes (xxi.20.6).

If we take all these examples into consideration, then, the historian's emphasis on demonstrations of superiority as the most important aim of warfare can be more readily understood. Defeat is not so much a strategic or material affair, as a state of mind. It is never enough merely to win. One must win convincingly.

#### V. MORALE

Finally, then, we come to the gaze directed at oneself or one's own side, and the effects of this reflexive gaze at the pathological level. Just as the losers are 'struck down' (*καταπλήττω*) by defeat, so the victors are 'raised up' by their successes (*ἐπαίρω*).

Often, in fact, the two effects working in contrary motion are highlighted by antithesis. When Ptolemy 'showed himself to his forces' before Raphia, he 'disconcerted' (*κατεπλήξατο*) the enemy and inspired the 'aggressive impulse' (*ὄρμη*) and enthusiasm of his own men (v.85.8). With a slight change of nuance, Minucius' small success against Hannibal makes the Carthaginians 'more cautious' (*εὐλαβέστερον*) and the Romans 'more reckless and overconfident' (*θαρραλεώτερον καὶ προπετέστερον*).<sup>48</sup> As with demonstrations designed to terrorize the enemy, so clever generals plan engagements deliberately with no military objectives in mind, but only to raise or restore their men's spirits. Fabius' guerilla tactics have this aim in view, among other things, since he wished 'to strengthen and restore the spirits of his own forces through partial successes, broken as they were (*προητημένως*) by the general reverses' (III.90.4). Hannibal has a similar motive in precipitating the Battle of Cannae (III.11.1). However, the clearest and fullest example of such an exhibition within the *Histories* is at Tarentum. For having captured the city, Hannibal stages a little engagement with the resident Roman garrison. He anticipates that they will 'make a show of strength' against the wall he is building and plans his own counter-demonstration, 'since he thought that nothing was more necessary with respect to the future than to strike terror into the Romans and give confidence to the Tarentines' (VIII.32.1-5). The result is all he could wish for, and having seen the Romans routed, the Tarentines 'had such confidence that they considered themselves a match for the Romans even without the Carthaginians' (VIII.33.2-3).<sup>49</sup> Hannibal knew what Polybius also knew, that the only hope of safety for a general in a foreign country is 'to renew continually the hopes of his allies'.<sup>50</sup>

Like demoralization, a morale-boost connects represented action back to the level of military action. Just as the successive defeats of the Carthaginians produce yet another defeat at the Battle of the Great Plains, so success sponsors success. Polybius' theory of a chain of conquests (III.32.7 and VI.50.6) has been extensively analyzed.<sup>51</sup> To be sure, part of the chain is supplied by a knowledge of the increased resources brought by each new acquisition (VI.50.6) and the increased experience and training gained in wars of conquest (II.20.8-10), but more importantly, each victory is a demonstration to the victors of their own qualities, their own intrinsic superiority; each success provides an assessment continually revised upwards of their own potential.

#### VI. PRE-EMPTIVE IMPERIALISM?

This brings us to two topics which have greatly exercised scholars in the past decades: Polybius' presentation of Roman imperialism, and his treatment of the origins of the First

<sup>48</sup> III.102.11, cf. I.46.13; II.64.7; III.116.8; VIII.32ff.

<sup>49</sup> A comparison with Livy's account is again illuminating (xxv.11). The details are close enough to suggest the Roman knew Polybius' version and deliberately altered the emphasis. In both accounts, Hannibal anticipates the Roman attack, but his purpose, according to Livy, is not to demonstrate superiority, but to decimate the enemy's forces. Livy, the 'armchair historian', seems deliberately to prefer a more material military narrative to

the more psychological and dialectical approach of Polybius, the 'man of action'.

<sup>50</sup> III.70.11: ... τὸ συνεχῶς καινοποιεῖν αἰεὶ τὰς τῶν συμμάχων ἐλπίδας.

<sup>51</sup> See P. Pédech, in the introduction to his Budé edition, *Polybe, Histoires, Livre I* (1969), xvi f. and Walbank, *op. cit.* (n. 17), 160 ff. and n. 38, n. 44, and n. 46; cf. Harris, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 107 ff. and 110.

Punic War. It has long been observed that Roman aims were extended, according to Polybius, in the course of the First Punic War, and that victory in the Second Punic War was somehow the first step on the way to the acquisition of universal power (I.3.6, cf. v.104.3; ix.10.11).<sup>52</sup> In the first stage, success at Agrigentum leads them to aim for the complete expulsion of the Carthaginians from Sicily (I.20.1). Heuss noted the closeness between this passage and II.31.8, where Polybius describes how after their victory at Telamon the Romans 'expected to be able to completely expel the Celts from the Po region'.<sup>53</sup> Derow, in turn, has pointed out the similarity between these passages and I.3.6 where Polybius says victory in the Second Punic War was what 'emboldened the Romans to reach out for the rest' (cf. III.2.6 and I.6.6).<sup>54</sup>

There are more examples of such extended aims. Roman ambitions in the First Punic War do not stop at Sicily. After their first victory at sea, their confidence and enthusiasm for the war is doubled (I.24.1). After the victory off Tyndaris, they plan an invasion of Africa itself (I.26.1-2); another victory at Ecnomus, leaves the Carthaginians 'convinced that the enemy, buoyed up by their recent success (ἐκ τοῦ γεγονότος προτερήματος ἐπαρθέντας), would immediately attack Carthage itself from the sea . . .' (I.29.4). Victory at Ecnomus enabled the invasion of Africa in a more straightforward way, since it removed an obstacle on the invasion route, but it is the psychological effects on their enemies which are paramount in the calculations of the Carthaginians. Each victory proves something to the Romans about themselves and gives them confidence to feed their ambitions.

But the Romans are not unique in this respect; the same thought-processes are found elsewhere in the *Histories*. It is the confidence gained from his victories in Spain that emboldens Hannibal to give short shrift to the Roman envoys who protest about Saguntum and so precipitate the Second Punic War (III.15.6; cf. III.89.6 and 90.4). It is Antiochus' success against Molon (ἐπαρθεὶς τῷ γεγονότι προτερήματι) that leads him to think he can tackle Artabazanes (v.55.1). Even among the obscure Selgians, we find the same mechanism (v.73.8).

In the case of the Roman victory at Ecnomus, as we have seen, it is the Carthaginians who anticipate the extension of aims, and Polybius treats the process of accumulating confidence/ambition as something known not only to himself, but generally available. Agelaus in his famous speech at Naupactus says that whoever wins the Second Punic War, the result will be 'an extension of aims' (διατείνειν τὰς ἐπιβολὰς), not because of increased resources, since in his account the Romans would win only what they started out with (i.e. Italy and Sicily), but because of an inflated view of their own capabilities, as proved by their success (v.104.3).<sup>55</sup> Aratus even uses the principle as a law of history, in predicting the behaviour of Cleomenes and the Aetolians πρὸ πολλοῦ (II.47.4). He gets the Megalopolitan envoys to outline the scenario to Antigonus Doson. It is not only the Achaeans who are threatened by an alliance between the two. For 'it is easy for anyone with any sense' to see that the allies would not rest content with a victory over the Achaeans. There is no claim that Cleomenes or the Aetolians *intend* to attack Antigonus yet. Rather, they predict that this *will* be their ambition *if* they succeed in defeating the Achaeans (II.49).<sup>56</sup> At present, they admit Cleomenes 'is aiming only at the ἀρχή of the Peloponnesians, if he attains this, he will at once reach out for the ἡγεμονία of the Greeks' (II.49.4).

The scenario which draws the Romans into the First Punic War in 264 is similar: 'It was clear to them', says Polybius, 'that once Messene had fallen into the hands of the Carthaginians, they would shortly subdue Syracuse also . . .'. Once all Sicily was in their possession they would threaten Italy (I.10.5-9). Gelzer in 1933 thought this scenario so implausible that it

<sup>52</sup> Walbank, op. cit. (n. 17), 161-2.

<sup>53</sup> A. Heuss, 'Der erste punische Krieg und das Problem des römischen Imperialismus', *Hist. Zeit.* 169 (1949-50), 457-513; cf. F. W. Walbank, 'Polybius and Rome's eastern policy', *JRS* 53 (1963), 6. Heuss uses the parallel to attack Polybius' version of events. But, as Harris has pointed out, the mental process he describes is not in itself unconvincing. It is true there was no full-scale battle at Agrigentum, but it was nevertheless a great 'trial of strength', which is what matters for Polybius. See Harris, op. cit. (n. 4), 111 n. 3.

<sup>54</sup> P. S. Derow, 'Polybius, Rome and the East', *JRS* 69 (1979), 2: '... for Polybius, it was success or one signal

success in particular, that helped to stimulate the Romans to broaden their aims.'

<sup>55</sup> For the authenticity of Agelaus' speech, see n. 25. However, it must be admitted that in style and idea, the speech conforms to Polybius' view of the world.

<sup>56</sup> As Gruen ('Aratus and the Achaean alliance with Macedon', *Historia* 21 (1972), 617) points out, Polybius is unlikely to have got this version from Aratus' Memoirs. As with Agelaus' speech, it is so much in harmony with the author's understanding of human action, that we are entitled to view the whole episode as a Polybian deduction.

must derive from Roman propaganda, and accordingly ascribed it to Fabius Pictor, along with several other passages including I.20.<sup>57</sup> Most of these other ascriptions have since fallen by the wayside, but I.10 is still accepted as deriving from Fabius in most recent scholarship, Pédech being virtually the only dissenter.<sup>58</sup> It must be emphasized, however, that Polybius does not describe a Carthaginian intention to invade Italy, let alone an *Einkreisungspolitik*,<sup>59</sup> but only a scenario in which such an ambition might develop, a very Polybian plot, I would argue. It is in fact hard to see how predicting a *future* intention to invade, instead of ascribing a current one, would have assisted Roman efforts to justify intervention in Sicily.<sup>60</sup>

What is going on in I.10.5–9 is by now quite familiar. The Romans are simply predicting in the Carthaginians the same processes of thinking they shall themselves reveal (according to Polybius) in their conquest of the Mediterranean, and before that in the course of the First Punic War. The capture of a town on the island will encourage them to attempt to take the whole of Sicily, and this in turn will encourage them to hope for the success of an attack on the mainland (Africa for the Romans, Italy for the Carthaginians). The Romans, like Aratus, are πρὸ πολλοῦ, preempting not an invasion, but the ambition to invade (cf. also XXXI.10.8).

#### VII. CONCLUSION

I hope I have succeeded in this paper in demonstrating the importance of perception for Polybius, and the pivotal role of the gaze in the *Histories*. I have focused narrowly on this author and this text, and deliberately avoided parallels in other historians. To broaden the scope of the investigation, and to examine the role of the gaze or appearances more widely in ancient concepts of warfare would be a much greater task, and the results would probably be much more ambiguous. However, there is a need to try to place these findings in a larger context and in particular to ask whether we are talking about a function of history or of historiography, or only of an idiosyncrasy of the author.

There is no reason why the truisms which are used to assess Polybius' reliability in other contexts should not apply equally here. He was a man of practical experience, who boasted of putting that experience to use in his *Histories*. He was an intimate of several influential Roman statesmen, and made good use of that intimacy to inform his analysis of events and motivations. He is self-conscious and ideological about the need for truth and accuracy in history, and usually, but not always, abides by his own principles.<sup>61</sup> Of course, this does not mean that because Polybius describes war in terms of appearances and demonstrations it must have been treated that way by the generals. But at the very least, we have one very well-informed participant in those events, who certainly did see war in these terms, and published a history for the perusal of his ancient readership, which reflects those views. Polybius' account, taken seriously, could provide a useful corrective to our often too rationalizing and too material view of ancient warfare. An account of the First Punic War which placed Hamilcar's τὸλμα alongside the maps of strategy and the tables of logistics would make interesting reading.

It would help if we could demonstrate a similar emphasis in other historians. Indeed, scholars working on the texts of Herodotus and Thucydides have discovered some of the features I have highlighted in this paper: the narration of events through the eyes of other characters in the history, for instance, or the listing of different versions of the same events.<sup>62</sup> There is no absolute line to be drawn between these historians and Polybius. The difference between them and the Arcadian is simply that he is more explicit about the importance of perception, and pursues this thread more consistently throughout his work, using it to weave a complex web of relationships. References to how others see things in these other historians

<sup>57</sup> M. Gelzer, *Hermes* 68 (1933), 151. Heuss challenged him on Agrigentum (op. cit. (n. 53), 488 n. 1, but cf. Harris, op. cit. (n. 4), 110 n. 1).

<sup>58</sup> See Walbank, op. cit. (n. 17), 77 n. 60; J. Molthagen, 'Der Weg in den ersten punischen Krieg', *Chiron* 5 (1975), 104; Harris, op. cit. (n. 4), 186; E. Ruschenbusch, 'Der Ausbruch des 1. punischen Krieges', *Talanta* 12–13 (1980–1), 57; cf. Pédech, op. cit. (n. 51), 8–9.

<sup>59</sup> Ruschenbusch, op. cit. (n. 58), 57.

<sup>60</sup> Polybius himself, as Derow has shown, op. cit. (n. 54), 9, is not interested in *Kriegsschuldfragen*.

<sup>61</sup> cf. F. W. Walbank, *Selected Papers* (1985), 259f.

<sup>62</sup> cf. for Herodotus, Hartog, op. cit. (n. 16), 260–309. For Thucydides, Ch. Schneider, *Information und Absicht bei Thukydides. Untersuchung zur Motivation des Handelns* [= Hypomnemata XL1] (1974).

seem to me much more isolated, serving the function not of parts within a complex system, but as brief variations in the narrative, designed to increase pathos. Take for example Thucydides VII.71, where he describes the Athenians on shore watching and reacting to the sea-battle between their own forces and those of the Sicilians in Syracuse harbour. Thucydides' account is straightforward. The Athenians watch closely how the action is unfolding in different areas of the battle, and anticipate the result accordingly, moving from confident expectation to despondency and back again. If we look again at Polybius' account of the capture of Dimale (III.18), we see how much more complex his treatment of perception is. Polybius talks not only of how the observers watched the action and responded to what they saw, but of their perception (false) of the strength of the citadel, of Paullus' perception of their perception, and of how this perception turns his assault on the citadel into a demonstration. The Thucydides passage is, by contrast, a snapshot on which little in the plot depends. The whole episode could easily have been omitted. Polybius' Dimale campaign, on the other hand, is told entirely in terms of the different views of the protagonists, and cannot be properly understood without taking them into account.

In fact, if we are looking for precursors for Polybius in Greek intellectual history, the best candidate seems to be not a historian, but the sculptor Lysippus of the late fourth century B.C., 'who often used to say that by [earlier sculptors] men were represented as they really were, but by him that they were represented as they appeared'.<sup>63</sup> I would argue that it is Polybius' comparison of historiography with painting, together with the metaphor of war as an arena-combat, with its ἐφεδδοὶ waiting on the benches and its θέατρον of spectators, and his constant awareness of his readers, for whom his work must always be vivid enough to be taken seriously, that provides the main impetus to view war systematically through perception.

All of this leads to the author's treatment of the *Histories* as a text to be *seen through*, an apodeictic history which does not *tell* but *show*.<sup>64</sup> In this, surprisingly, Polybius comes close to the realistic novel of Henry James and his followers, with its emphasis on *scene*. Criticizing this view of narrative rather pedantically, as 'parfaitement illusoire', which it obviously is, Genette comments: 'feindre de montrer, c'est feindre de se taire'.<sup>65</sup> A history which shows has no need of a mediator; nothing should come between the reader and his vision. It is no wonder that for Mommsen and others, Polybius is invisible; he had long ago arranged for himself to disappear.

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<sup>63</sup> Pliny, *NH* xxxiv.65; cf. Plato, *Soph.* 235d–236c, on distortion in sculpture, J. J. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (1972), 174ff. I am not necessarily suggesting a direct influence, but it is possible that Duris of Samos provided some kind of link between art theory and history, cf. Kenneth Sacks, *Polybius on the Writing of History* (1981), 159.

<sup>64</sup> On the old debate about the nature of Polybius' apodeictic history, cf. Pédech, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 43–53 and K. Sacks, *op. cit.* (n. 63), 171–8.

<sup>65</sup> G. Genette, *Figures III* (1972), 187.