

## *F*UNCTIONS OF POLEMIC IN THE COMPOSITION OF POLYBIUS, BOOKS I–V

Polybius's greatest ambition, concerning the literary aspect of his work, was to present it as a coherent and uniform whole, similar to a living organism (σωματοειδής – an adjective that refers to the subject of the *Histories* in I 3.4, can also be referred to the work itself, as suggested by the analogy between the two in I 4.1). For an author of non-monographic history it was not an obvious ambition – it suffices to recall Xenophon's *Hellenika*. Also the works of an Ephorus or a Timaeus, comprising many centuries and countries and ending at an arbitrary point in time could not have had this kind of unity. Nor did the *Histories* of Herodotus have it. Among the predecessors of Polybius only Theopompus in his *Philippica* might have shared this ambition, but extant fragments are not enough to know. In any case, there are no indications that he had any influence on Polybius in this respect.

Despite the fact that structural unity was a well-established principle of Hellenistic literature that could find its theoretical justification in works of Plato and Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> the task that Polybius undertook was therefore a novel one. Its effective realization should be counted among his greatest achievements:<sup>2</sup> thanks to a careful composition and a transparent, albeit complex, logical structure, Poly-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. F. Walbank, *Polybius*, Berkeley, CA 1990, 67.

<sup>2</sup> Due to its pedantic and monotonous style, Polybius's work has never been prized for its literary value, neither in antiquity, nor in modern times. Only in the last decades scholars have begun to appreciate its sophisticated composition and the careful organization of material. Cf. among others J. Davidson, 'The gaze in Polybius' *Histories*', *JRS* 81 (1991), 10–24; F. Walbank, *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World*, Cambridge, MA 2002, 235; B. McGing *Polybius' Histories*, Oxford 2010, 19–22, 25, 127.

bios was able to impose unity on events spanning almost eighty years (excluding the first two books) and the whole of the Mediterranean – which, it is worth having in mind, was for him equal to the whole known world.

The first five books (or six, to be exact, but I will have only little to say about book VI here) of the *Histories* fulfills in their composition and structure a special function. One of the purposes of this paper is to present an interpretation of this function. Another, and more specific purpose is to explore one of the aspects of Polybius's compositional method in those books: the use of polemical digressions.<sup>3</sup> Thus, my considerations should shed some light not only on the composition of the *Histories*, but also on the much-debated issue of the function of polemic in Polybius.

One issue demands immediate explanation, as the reader will surely wonder why I limit my investigation to only five books of *Histories*, especially if one remembers that the longest and most famous among Polybius's polemics is in book XII. One reason is the special compositional and logical role of the first five books, that will be explicated in section 1. Another reason has to do with the unlucky fortunes of Polybius's text. It is only books I–V that are still extant in their entirety. Since my main interests here are with composition and structure, book XII, or any of the polemics in other books after VI, do not provide enough material. There is, of course, a lot that can and has been said about the polemic with Timaeus, its contents and purposes, but we simply cannot know how Polybius introduced it or how he justified devoting so much space to it, what was its overall conclusion, or what narrative passages directly preceded and followed it – and those are the kinds of questions that will be essential to my interpretation of polemics with Fabius, Philinus, and Phylarchus.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I use the traditional term 'polemical digression' for reasons of convenience, but as my analysis will show, most of the relevant passages are not in fact digressions, as their content and function is closely related to the compositional structure of the work.

<sup>4</sup> There is another aim one may hope to achieve by focusing on the function of polemic in the first five books of Polybius. Modern reflection on the role and character of Polybius' polemical digressions has been shaped to a large extent by the classic study by Walbank (F. Walbank, 'Polemic in Polybius', *JRS* 52 [1962], 1–12), which focuses mostly on book XII and extrapolates the results of a detailed study of Polybius' attitude towards Timaeus onto his polemics with other authors. Walbank concludes, therefore, that '[t]hroughout his *Histories* [...] Polybius allows his private sympathies to colour his attitudes towards earlier writers, and indeed one may suspect that it is primarily because of these attitudes that such writers are discussed at all in what are, after all, digressions'. While this is certainly to some extent true, and especially so with regard to book XII, it is not, as will hopefully emerge from my argument, an adequate characteristic of the purpose and nature of Polybius' polemical digressions *in general*, as it ignores the compositional and logical functions of the digressions in the structure of the *Histories*. To appreciate this, however, one must refrain from treating the polemic with Timaeus as paradigmatic, as natural as it might be in face of its length and privileged position.

After a short analysis of the compositional role of books I–V in the whole of *Histories* in section 1, section 2 will be devoted to an overview and classification of polemical passages in those books. Section 3 will discuss the most important polemics in the introductory parts of books I and III, and in book V, with a special focus on the idea of universal history and on the criticisms of Fabius and Philinus. A separate section 4 will be devoted to the polemic with Phylarchus. Section 5 will briefly summarize the conclusions.

## 1. The composition of books I–V and their place in the logical structure of the *Histories*.

What makes it possible for Polybius to achieve a unity of composition in his work is, in the first place, the unity of his subject.<sup>5</sup> For the topic of his history he chose Rome's rise to power over the *οἰκουμένη*. A subject defined in this way naturally fixes the chronological boundaries of the work.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, and more importantly, it provides the historian with a regulative idea that defines the logical structure of the whole, i.e. the idea of *συμπλοκή*, the interconnection of events in all parts of the world, so that from now on (precisely, since the year 217,<sup>7</sup> see V 105.3–8) they all belong to a single historical process, whereas before they were sporadic and isolated. By virtue of this *symploke* a work that could at first glance seem to have a relatively narrow subject attains the dignity of a universal history.

If Polybius's chief idea, to which the composition of his whole work is subordinated, is the interconnection of events in all parts of the *οἰκουμένη*, it is significant that the precise moment of this interconnection only occurs at the end of book V. This seems to imply that the first five books of the *Histories* have a somehow preparatory or introductory function. It is indeed the case and can be shown both in respect to literary composition and to logical structure of the work. Under both aspects the first five books fall into two parts.

Books 1 and 2 form an introduction (*προκατασκευή*; I 13.1) to the whole work. They describe events before the period of 53 years that started in 220 and led to Rome's acquiring hegemony over the *οἰκουμένη*. Polybius presents their

<sup>5</sup> Cf. F. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, Oxford 1970, 43 (*comm. ad* I 3.4).

<sup>6</sup> Only to some extent, of course: as the 'new program' of I 4–5 shows, Polybius changed his mind regarding the point in time at which to end his history. Nonetheless, both 167 and 145 are not arbitrary dates and can be easily understood as natural end-points. I will not discuss this issue in any way. The extension of the work by ten books and twenty years is no small matter, of course, but it has no greater significance for the composition and function of books 1–5.

<sup>7</sup> All dates are BCE, unless specified otherwise.

content in I 13.1–5: they contain the First Punic War, the Libyan War, the first Illyrian expedition, Roman struggles against Gauls in Italy and the Cleomenean War. Apart from short excursions into more distant past, which serve to portray the situation right before the beginning of the events described, the chronological boundaries of the two books are the years 264–220 in the West and 224–221 in Greece. Different parts of the *prokataskeue* differ greatly in their composition and the level of detail.

At the beginning of book I, immediately after presenting the main subject of his work (I 3.7–10) Polybius justifies his decision to precede the proper narrative with two books of introduction. He argues that in order to properly understand the whole of his work, it is necessary to be acquainted with the constitution and powers of both the Roman and the Carthaginian state just before the Hannibalic War and to know for what reasons and with what resources the Romans had entered upon the undertakings that led them to world-dominion (this justification is repeated by Polybius in I 12.7). These questions have to be dealt with because the past of the two Western empires is unknown to most of the Greeks.

It is easy to notice that this argument concerns only the ‘western’ part of the introduction: the First Punic War and the subsequent actions of Rome and Carthage. It therefore seems to be at odds with the fact that a substantial part (a little over a half) of book II is devoted to the affairs of Greece. Polybius’s justification for that, given by him in II 37, is somewhat unclear and does not explain why the Cleomenean War is presented in relatively more detail than the events in the West. In principle, however, Polybius’s argument is convincing: since his subject is Rome’s rise to hegemony over the *oikoumene*, i.e. besides Carthage, Greece in the first place, it is also necessary to present the situation of the two main (at least in the historian’s opinion) political powers in the latter region: the kingdom of Macedonia and the Achaean League. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the *Achaica* form a disproportionately large part of the *prokataskeue*, if one takes into consideration its proper purpose.<sup>8</sup> From a logical point of view the *Achaica* are nothing more than a supplement to the story of Roman-Carthaginian conflicts before 220.

<sup>8</sup> It has been often observed that the more extensive treatment of the Achaean affairs in book 2 is not sufficiently justified by the general purpose of the *prokataskeue*. Polybius was undoubtedly led by patriotic and personal motivations, cf. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, 215 (*comm. ad* II 37–70). The peculiar role of the so-called *Achaica* in Polybius’s work was studied above all by Gelzer, see M. Gelzer, *Über die Arbeitsweise des Polybios*, Heidelberg 1956, 17–19; *idem*, ‘Die hellenische ΠΡΟΚΑΤΑΣΚΕΥΗ im Zweiten Buche des Polybios’, in K. Stiewe, N. Holzberg (eds), *Polybios*, Darmstadt 1982, 24–37; *idem*, ‘Die Achaica im Geschichtswerk des Polybios’ in Stiewe, Holzberg (eds), *Polybios*, 38–78. Cf. J.-L. Ferrary, *Philhellénisme et impérialisme. Aspects idéologiques de la conquête romaine du monde hellénistique*, Rome 1988, 284–286, 293–306.

The main purpose of the first two books should be therefore considered to lie in presenting the situation of Rome at the time when she entered the first of a series of wars that was to lead her to world dominion. In their literary aspect books I–II serve as an exposition of the protagonist of the work. They also build up the suspense, for if a mere introduction to the work covers a war so great and long as the War for Sicily (see I 13.1) – and one that the Republic had won – the reader can expect even greater victories on Rome's part further on.

One should not be surprised by those triumphs, however, Polybius implies. The place of books I–II in the logical structure of the whole work is determined by their argumentative role: they provide evidence for the claim that the Romans had good foundations for their ambition to conquer the *oikoumene*: ὅτι καὶ λίαν εὐλόγοις ἀφορμαῖς χρησάμενοι πρὸς τε τὴν ἐπίνοιαν ὥρμησαν καὶ πρὸς τὴν συντέλειαν ἐξίκοντο τῆς τῶν ὅλων ἀρχῆς καὶ δυναστείας (I 3.10). Therefore, the *prokataskeue* serves an introductory and preparatory function in the whole *Histories* not only in relation to the beginnings of events, i.e. in the chronological dimension, but also in the logical dimension, in relation to their causes. I will return to this distinction shortly.

Books III–V form a second stage in the composition and logical structure of the work. I shall start with an explanation why in my opinion they should be treated together as a separate unit in the *Histories*.

Most obviously, they are distinguished by their compositional features. First, Polybius does not employ here his usual chronological technique: the division of events into Olympiad years, where in every year the events of the particular theaters of war are described. Instead, the whole of book III is devoted to the Hannibalic War up to the battle of Cannae, while books IV and V treat of the affairs of Greece and Asia in the same four years.<sup>9</sup>

Second, books III–V are separated from the rest of the work (where the Olympiad-based chronological scheme is employed) by the long digression on Roman constitution in book VI. This digression is anticipated already at the end of book III (118.9–12) and constitutes a compositional pause between the introductory parts and the main body of the *Histories*. It serves also an essential role, one strictly connected with books III–V, in the logical structure of the whole.

Moreover, the events described in books III–V comprise a single Olympiad, the 140<sup>th</sup>, and it should be considered to be more than just a convenient coincidence, given how much attention Polybius devotes to choosing and justifying the chronological boundaries of his work. The most important reason, however, for bringing the narrative to this very point, i.e. to the year 217/6, is its central significance in the plan of the *Histories*.

<sup>9</sup> On the composition of books IV–V, see McGing, *Polybius' Histories*, 25 and 95; Walbank, *Polybius*, 103–105.

With Hannibal's victory at Cannae, the affairs of Italy reach a critical point – in Polybius's lifetime Rome would never again be so close to being defeated. From a literary point of view it is a moment of climax. After that, book VI provides a retardation, a narrative pause that strengthens the artistic effect. In the context of the logical structure of the work it is also a point where Polybius's fundamental question seems most pressing: what were the reasons and the foundations of Roman success? Book VI brings an answer to that.<sup>10</sup>

In the meantime, in Greece (the affairs of Asia are far less important here) a decisive moment comes as well, when all eyes turn to the West (V 104.7) and Philip V decides to engage in the war between Rome and Carthage. It is in this very moment that the *symploke* occurs, the interconnection of all events in East and West, which had been Polybius's main reason to embark on writing a universal history. The fact that it is only from this point onwards that the history of the *oikoumene* really forms a single body also explains the different chronological scheme of books III–V (cf. IV 28).

Therefore, the main purpose of books III–V, together with book VI, is to present the subject of the *Histories* in both its aspects: the rise of Rome and the interconnection of events in all of the *oikoumene*. These books expose the problem and its significance, but at the same time they also provide the first and most important part of the answer. For they depict both the chain of events that led to this 'greatest feat of Fortune' and its essential causes. In a way the rest of the work is just an elaboration and an illustration of what is already present in its first six books.

The analysis of the compositional and logical function of books I–II, as well as III–VI, has brought our attention to the concepts of beginning and cause, which play such a significant role in Polybius's thinking. It is time to look closer into this.

In the introductory books Polybius frequently emphasizes the importance of a proper consideration of both the beginnings and causes of events (see e.g. I 5; I 12.5–6; II 38.5; III 31; but also in later books: XI 18a; XXII 18.6–11). The most important theoretical remarks appear in III 6.3–7,7 and V 31.8–32.5.

The former of these passages opens the discussion of the causes of the Hannibalic War and it presents the well-known distinction between beginnings and causes.<sup>11</sup> Polybius's definition, illustrated with numerous examples, stipulates that

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<sup>10</sup> On the place and function of book VI in the composition of the *Histories*, see Walbank, *Polybius*, 130–134.

<sup>11</sup> The passage is one of the most frequently commented on by Polybian scholars. Cf. among others P. Derow 'Historical Explanation: Polybius and his Predecessors', in S. Hornblower (ed.), *Greek Historiography*, Oxford 1994, 73–90; T. Luce, *The Greek Historians*, London – New York 1997, 134–135; McGing, *Polybius' Histories*, 48; K. Meister, *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung*, Stuttgart 1990, 158; Walbank *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, 305–309 (*comm. ad* III 6–7).

beginnings are first steps in an execution of an already made decision, while causes are whatever has led to the decision itself: deliberations, intentions, calculations.

The latter passage, concerning the notion of the beginning, appears in a place where the narrative of the war in Coele-Syria starts and directly precedes Polybius's criticism of some historians' pretenses to be authors of universal history. Polybius emphasizes here that a proper understanding of any whole, and in particular of the whole of a historical period, requires first of all an adequate determination of its beginning.

In no case, Polybius insists in those passages, should one mistake the beginning of an event with its cause. Nonetheless, both are equally important for the historian's method. Moreover, they are essentially connected, since the chronological sequence of events is closely related to the logical chain of causes and effects. This is most evident in III 32.6–7, where Polybius narrates the series of events that led from the First Punic War, through Hannibalic War and the war with Philip, to the war with Antioch. In 32.7 the historian comments on how one war follows another; in the preceding sentence, 32.6, he points to the importance of investigating the causes, and thus he brings together both orders, the logical and the chronological one. Polybius applies this strategy in considering particular cases: the long discussion in III 8–30 eventually presents the issue of Sardinia – which resulted as an aftermath of the First Punic War – as the true cause of the Second War (28.1–2; 30.4); V 101–5 shows how the events of the Hannibalic War provoked Philip (esp. 105.4–5); in book XVIII the Aetolians' dissatisfaction with Flamininus's decisions in the wake of the Second Macedonian War anticipates the war with Antioch (e.g. 39.1–2).

Many scholars are rather skeptical about Polybius's considerations on beginnings and causes, as they find them to be over-schematic and ambiguous. Indeed, on a theoretical level they seem little convincing. It should be remembered, however, that Polybius did not intend to give a lecture on the methods of history, which is shown, among other things, by the fact that his theoretical discussions are scattered throughout the work and that they only appear in close relation to some concrete problem which they help to solve.<sup>12</sup> In practice, on the other hand, Polybius's analyses of beginnings, causes and the logical and chronological sequences of events can be very subtle and convincing. The very discussion in II 6.3–7.7 is a good example – the theoretical digression forms an element of an argumentation that concerns a concrete problem: that of the true causes of the Hannibalic War. Methodological reflection serves polemical and explanatory ends here. Moreover, the solution that Polybius eventually arrives at is far from sche-

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<sup>12</sup> It is otherwise with discussions of the essence and purpose of history as such – there Polybius seems to be motivated mostly by purely theoretical interests.

matic and much more convincing than the alternative explanations. I will return to these issues later.

Let me now go back to the question of the functions of books I–VI in the whole of *Histories*. As I have argued, it should be considered against the background of the notions of beginnings and causes, which are so important for Polybius. The first six books serve the double purpose of establishing causes and determining beginnings of the events that form the main subject of Polybius's work: Rome's rise to power over the Mediterranean and the *symploke* of all events. Furthermore, the determination of the beginning proceeds in two steps: the beginning has to be indicated and narrated, but first it has to be made comprehensible. Polybius mentions that in I 5.3–5, where he says that a starting point must be chosen which is determined in its chronology and understandable as regards the events – to do this, however, one must go back in time. In their actual context these remarks concern only the proper *prokataskeue*: it begins with the outburst of the First Punic War; nevertheless, it is necessary to go back as far as the war with Pyrrhus to make this beginning comprehensible in itself. It is, however, easy to notice that this scheme can be applied to the *Histories* as a whole: their formal beginning is the Second Punic War, but a proper determination and understanding of this beginning requires to precede it with a narrative of the events to which books I and II are devoted.

At the same time this complex logical structure serves above all to establish the true causes of the events. An exact indication of the beginning – both in its chronology and its content – is necessary, because only in relation to a determined beginning can the causes be properly named. This is also why in III 6.7 causes are defined through their chronological relation to beginnings: as that which precedes the decision to act.

I hope to have shown in this section that books I–V (together with book VI) have a special, complex function in the composition and the logical structure of Polybius's *Histories*, which is the function of an introduction – on two levels. On one level, books I–II narrate events that precede the proper timeline of the work, which begins in book III. On another level, the whole of books I–VI forms an exposition of Polybius's main subject, presenting both the characterization of the problem – why and how Rome has risen to power over the known world – and the determination of the proper beginning of the work, and especially the precise moment of *symploke*. Thus, while in some respects the first two books that form an 'introduction' to the work, in other respects all six first books have an introductory function.

That books I–VI can be regarded as such a double introduction is also supported by the fact that *Histories* have two proems: in book I and book III. Formally

both comprise only a few chapters (I 1–5; III 1–5), but in fact the role of a proem should be attributed to much longer initial parts (I 1–15; III 1–32) – despite the fact that they contain narrative passages, they both serve purposes that are characteristic of prefaces: they contain methodological reflection, deal with issues of chronology, present summaries of the subsequent books etc. (The compositional unity of those passages will become apparent in the course of their more detailed analysis in section 3.) It should therefore be expected that it is no accident that almost all important polemical digressions in books I–V – the only significant exception being the criticism of Phylarchus in book II<sup>13</sup> – are to be found within those ‘long prefaces’, as I will henceforth call them. Before I can draw appropriate conclusions from this observation, however, it is worthwhile to take a look at the polemical digressions of books I–V in general.

## 2. Polemical digressions in books I–V – overview

In this section I will present an overview and classification of polemical passages in the first five books of *Histories*. Not all of them have a significant compositional or structural function; those that do will be discussed in more detail in sections 3 and 4. Let me start with enumerating all the polemical passages in those books. These are: I 14–15; I 64.3–4; II 56–63; III 6–12; III 20.1–6; III 26; III 32; III 47.6–48.12; IV 20.4–21.4; V 33.<sup>14</sup>

The second one, I 64.3–4, can be eliminated at once. Polybius makes here only a fleeting mention of some previous writers that have dealt with Roman constitution in an unsatisfying manner. The remark is important for the study of Polybius’s relation to Roman historians, but has no significance in the present context. The remaining passages, on the other hand, deserve a closer look.

I 14–15. These two chapters conclude the digression (which began at 12.6) that was provoked by Caudex’s crossing to Sicily in 264. At the same time they conclude the initial, introductory part of the book (the long preface) and precede the proper narrative of the First Punic War. The immediate reason for this polemic against Fabius and Philinus is to explain why this war should be treated in more detail: mainly because both historians, despite their high reputation, often depart

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<sup>13</sup> And this exception is not accidental either, as I will argue.

<sup>14</sup> One more passage could be included here: II 16.11–13, where Polybius alludes to mythical stories told by the Greeks about the area of the Po Valley. He does not discuss them in any detail, though, and only mentions that he will come back to the topic later, mainly because of Timaeus’ ignorance of the region. Since there is no explicit polemical argument here, I will not discuss this passage.

from the truth. Although they do not lie on purpose, they are misled by their partisanship: the Roman citizen presents all events in a way favorable to the Romans, while the Greek ally of Carthage favors the Carthaginians. In illustrating this claim, however, Polybius gives examples only of Philinus misrepresenting the facts.

II 56–63. This long digression appears in the course of the narrative of the Cleomenean War, after Cleomenes's capture of Megalopolis. In this part of book II Polybius's main source are the memoirs of Aratus of Sicyon (cf. II 40.4, 47.11, 56.1). In some respects, however, Aratus's version is contradicted by that of Phylarchus, a historian of some repute. Therefore, Polybius tries to show, by invoking several examples, that Phylarchus is in no way trustworthy. One of the examples is the latter's description of the fall of Megalopolis.

III 6–12. Immediately after the proem to book 3 Polybius begins a discussion of the causes of the Hannibalic War, which – including narrative passages that are related to this issue – lasts for the next 25 chapters (until and including chapter 30). There are three polemical digressions in this part of the book (and another one right after it). The first digression, in ch. 6–12, deals directly with the causes of the war. Polybius begins by criticizing some anonymous authors (6.1) who indicate the siege of Saguntum and the crossing of Ebro by Hannibal as the sole causes, and then he argues against Fabius, who named Hasdrubal's lust of power as an additional cause. Only 8.1–9.5 deals explicitly with Fabius, but in fact 9.6–12.5, where Polybius's interpretation of the causes is presented, also belongs to this polemic.

III 20.1–5. The polemic with Chaereas and Sosylus regarding the alleged debates that took place in the Roman Senate after the fall of Saguntum is more loosely tied to the question of the causes of the Hannibalic War. This digression appears in a chronologically proper place within a narrative passage.

III 26. Shortly after that, Polybius begins a lengthy discussion of Roman-Carthaginian treaties – their content is of course highly relevant to the issue of the responsibility for the war. The aforementioned Philinus mentions a certain treaty the existence of which Polybius denies.

III 32. After the part devoted to the causes of the Second Punic War and responsibility for it is finished, a two chapter-long passage of methodological character follows. In its first part (ch. 31) Polybius argues for the great value of history; in the next chapter he criticizes authors of historical monographs, as their works cannot adequately present the connections and relations between events. This chapter concludes the long preface to book III.

III 47.6–48.12. Here, Polybius criticizes historians who present overly dramatic depictions of Hannibal's crossing of the Alps. This digression, just as the polemic against Chaereas and Sosylus, appears in direct connection to the narrative.

IV 20.4–21.4. This polemical digression is of a peculiar character. It bears no direct relation to the events that are recounted here. Instead, it concerns the national character of Arcadians and the role of music in cultural development. Polybius's conviction that music has a civilizing potential stands in contradiction to Ephorus's claim that its main purpose is to deceive and manipulate people.

V 33. In V 30.8 Polybius turns to the affairs of Asia. In the next chapter he presents a summary of the contents of this part of book V and emphasizes the importance of choosing the right beginning for a narrative. This observation leads him to a methodological passage in chapter 32, that was already discussed above (section 1). Methodological remarks, in turn, lead Polybius again to the subject of universal history. Therefore, chapter 33 is devoted to a criticism of some historians who claim to be authors of such histories.

The nine passages enumerated here are easily divided into three groups. One group is formed by I 14–15, III 6–12, III 26 and III 32. These digressions remain in close relation to the themes of the long prefaces to books I and III. Because of its place in the quasi-proem to the affairs of Asia, V 33 should also be counted in this group. Another group is formed by III 20.1–5, III 47.6–48.12 and IV 20.4–21.4. These are digressions in a strict sense (I will call them simply 'proper digressions'); they do not play any important role in the composition or the logical structure of the work. The criticism of Phylarchus stands out (thus forming a single-membered third group): on the one hand, it bears some features of a proper digression, while, on the other hand, it plays an important part in the economy of book II.

I shall start with a short comment on the passages that I have classified as proper digressions. As was already mentioned, they do not seem to play any role in the composition or logical structure of the work (or even the specific books in which they appear), but serve only their particular purposes. At the same time, they appear in non-accidental and natural contexts, within the narrative parts and right after the facts to which they relate. In two cases (both in book III) their main purpose seems to be to help establish some facts against opposing versions of other historians (the issue of debates in the Senate after the fall of Saguntum is discussed in III 20.1–5; Hannibal's crossing of Alps in III 47.6–48.12); in the third case (polemic with Ephorus regarding the role of music and the character of Arcadians) the digression presents some reflections on cultural matters, which is not unusual in Polybius. Of course, the 'naturalness' of these digressions should not be regarded as self-evident. Polybius certainly had many other occasions to criticize his predecessors regarding some details of their stories, or to reflect on civilization and culture. One might reasonably wonder, why he chose these occasions and not others. The main reason was probably, in the first two passages, his dislike for the method and style of the historians in question, and in the last one, his sympathy

for the Arcadians. In any case, the answer to this question falls beyond the scope of the interest of this paper. In the remaining part I will focus on the first group of digressions and the polemic with Phylarchus.

### **3. Polemical digressions in the long prefaces to books I and III, and in V 33**

The digressions of the first group appear in non-accidental places and play important roles in the context of the introductory parts of books I and III (I 1–15; III 1–32) – which, due to their special position that was discussed in section 1, also form a part of the introduction to Polybius's subject as such – and in the context of the quasi-proem to the affairs of Asia in book V as well. I will start with a more detailed analysis of the content and structure of those parts, and an interpretation of their main function in the *Histories*.

The introduction to book I is visibly divided into three segments. The first four chapters form the proper proem. It begins with the traditional topics: the value of history and the grandness of the subject (1–2). Chapter 3 deals with the question of determining the adequate beginning and justifies the choice made. Chapter 4 returns to the issue of the grandness of the subject and claims that it is necessary to write a universal history, which is supported by previous remarks on the interconnection of all events (3.3–6) and Rome's rise to power over the world (2.7–8).

The following segment, comprising chapters 5–13, is an introduction to the *prokataskeue* of books I–II, with a special emphasis on the First Punic War. Both traditional themes appear here (summary of the following narrative 13.1–5; greatness of the subject 13.10–13) and a topic that is of special importance to Polybius: the question of beginnings (5.1–5; 12.5–9). The relation of the *prokataskeue* to the work as a whole is also explained here (13.8–9). What is characteristic of Polybius, passages of methodological content are interrupted with a narrative part (5–12.4), which, however, remains in direct relation to them, as its purpose is to adequately present and determine the beginning of the events (which is suggested also by the fact that remarks on the question of beginnings directly precede and follow the narrative).

A third segment comprises chapters 14–15, containing the criticism of Fabius and Philinus (which, of course, interests me the most here). I will discuss its proper functions later; now let me only emphasize that in the structural aspect it should be treated as the last part of the long preface, and not an isolated digressive passage. First, it appears in this place in direct connection to Polybius's

remarks on the importance of the topic of the war for Sicily: the fact that both Fabius and Philinus frequently depart from the truth is named by Polybius as one of the reasons to treat this war in more detail. A justification of the choice of topic is a traditional theme of a preface. Second, the digression begins with a general remark of a methodological character (about the necessity and difficulties of impartiality). Such a remark is at its proper place in a preface to a historical work. It is also worth noting that this remark refers not only to the *prokataskeue*, but just as well to the whole work.

The methodological discussion is closely followed by a criticism of Philinus's version of Caudex's actions at the beginning of the war (which were narrated by Polybius in the passage 11–12.4). This concludes the discussion of beginnings. The narrative of the First Punic War can now begin.

This quick analysis shows that the long preface to book I deals both with methodological questions, concerning the importance of determining beginnings and the necessity of impartiality, and factual issues: presentation and analysis of the first events of the War for Sicily. Both groups of questions are intrinsically related; on the one hand, factual problems provoke methodological reflection; on the other, the latter serve the main purpose of establishing the facts. There is an analogous situation in the long preface to book III, to which I will now turn.

Three segments can be distinguished here as well. The formal proem, comprising chapters 1–5, serves an analogous function to the proem of book I: it presents the plan of the work and emphasizes the benefits that the reader will draw from it (4.8–12).

A lengthy second segment (chapters 6–30) is devoted to the discussion of the causes of the Second Punic War (6.3–12.6; 21.9–30.4) and the narrative of its beginnings (12.7–21.8) – again analogously to the second segment of the preface to book I. Here too, discursive parts are interrupted by a narrative passage, which contains in addition two digressions (justified by the chronological order) on the first Roman expedition to Illyria (16.1–7; 18.1–19.13).

The third part of this long preface, which does not find a direct analogy in book I, is formed by chapters 31–32 with strictly methodological content. Although they are formally a digression, they relate directly to the subject of the preceding parts. Chapter 31 emphasizes the importance for history of investigating causes and therefore it justifies the fact that Polybius devotes so much space to the discussion of the causes of the Hannibalic War. Chapter 32 treats of universal history and its superiority over historical monographs. It alludes therefore to the formal proem of this book (and book I as well) and underscores the importance of the task undertaken by Polybius.

There are two important polemical passages in the second segment of the long preface: 6–12 and 26 (not counting the criticism of Chaereas and Sosylos in 20.1–6). In the former Polybius criticizes some anonymous historians of the Hannibalic War and Fabius, in the latter he argues against Philinus. Both polemics directly concern the issue of the causes of the war and responsibility for it, which is the main topic of this part of the preface. In addition to this, the mention of anonymous historians in 6,1 provokes the well-known methodological passage on causes and beginnings (6.3–7.7 – discussed already above, in section 1).

In this second part of the long preface to book III (it can be regarded here together with chapter 31), just as in the analogous part in book I, one can find again both methodological questions (beginnings and causes; the method of writing history) and factual issues (the causes of the Hannibalic War) entangled together, as well as an alteration of discursive and narrative passages. Similarly to book I, they cannot be separated. Facts provoke methodological reflection; considerations of method serve to establish facts.

The polemical passage in chapter 32, as already remarked, does not find a direct analogy in book I. Both in content and in function, however, it is similar to V 33. In V 30.7 Polybius brings the affairs of Europe to the winter of 218 and then he moves to the affairs of Asia. It is for the first time in his work that he deals with events on that continent; moreover, it is the first time that he changes to a completely new theater of war within a single book (outside of the *prokataskeue*). This fact motivates his remarks on the composition of his work in chapter 31. Again, this leads Polybius to reflect on the issue of beginnings, to which chapter 32 is devoted. In turn, Polybius moves to the subject of universal history and criticizes authors who claim to have written such histories without adequate grounds. In Polybius's mind, only Ephorus among his predecessors can be granted the title of a universal historian (even though Ephorus's work is 'universal' in a chronological sense, while Polybius's is in a geographical one.)

Five polemical digressions that are the subject of considerations in this section can again be divided into two sub-groups, according to their subject. One group is formed by the polemics – against Fabius, Philinus and other, anonymous historians – which concern the problem of causes and beginnings of the first two Punic Wars. Another is formed by the two digressions on the superiority of universal history over monographic works. The function of passages belonging to the latter group is quite unambiguous and transparent in the compositional and logical structure of the *Histories*. Nevertheless, it is worth devoting a few paragraphs to them in the next sub-section, before I turn to more complex functions of the first group of passages.

### 3.1. Universal history; III 32; V 33

In those two passages Polybius criticizes two different groups of historians – in the former, writers of monographs; in the latter, authors of some kind of historical summaries or tables listing all events in different parts of the world, but in a very superficial way (both groups remain anonymous)<sup>15</sup> – but with a single purpose: to prove the superiority and great value of universal history.

Polybius emphasizes above all two aspects of the task that he has undertaken in his work. First, the aim of universal history is to demonstrate connections between events taking place in different parts of the world (III 32.4–6). Second, it has to treat the most important events, such as the Hannibalic War, in substantial detail (V 33.2–4). These remarks serve as a justification of the program of the *Histories* and as an excuse for their immense size (V 32.1–2).

It is this justificatory purpose that determines the position of these passages in the composition of the work. One of them appears at the end of the long preface to book III, which is at the same time an introduction to the whole work. Remarks on the value of the work, and on its composition, find a natural place here. The other passage concludes the quasi-proem to the affairs of Asia in book V, which has the purpose of explaining the most problematic aspect of Polybius's composition, i.e. the constant switching of theaters of war.<sup>16</sup>

It is worth observing that Polybius could have just as well presented his reflections on the value of universal history and an explanation of his compositional method in non-polemical digressions. It seems, therefore, that polemic is his preferred way of presenting methodological remarks, even when there is, so to speak, nothing more at stake (none of the criticized historians is mentioned by name and they are characterized only in a very general way).

### 3.2. The historical tradition about the Punic Wars: I 14–15; III 6–12; III 26

Let me now turn to Polybius's criticisms of historians writing on the First and Second Punic Wars. So far I have analyzed the three passages in question only

<sup>15</sup> See Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, 360 and 563 (*comm. ad* III 32,3 *et* V 33,2). The former passage concerns, of course, a large group of historians. In the latter case, as well, there are no reasons to conjecture that Polybius had some particular authors in mind.

<sup>16</sup> The digression appears in this particular place, because, as I have already mentioned, it is the first time when Polybius moves to another region within a single book. J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography*, Cambridge, MA 1997, 190, demonstrates that it is a characteristic feature of the composition of *Histories* that methodological digressions appear when Polybius does something new and unusual, such as introducing a new kind of argument (causes and beginnings in III 6.1–7.7) or changing the manner of speaking about himself (XXXVI 12).

in regard to their position in the long prefaces of books I and III. We should now take a closer look at their content and immediate context.

I 14–15. This passage, as was already mentioned, concludes the long preface to book I. In 14.1 Polybius states that one of the main reasons for his relating the events of the war for Sicily in more detail is the fact that Fabius and Philinus, the most respected historians of that period, failed to present the matter adequately. For both are clearly biased in their relations, one in favor of the Carthaginians, the other in favor of Rome (14.3), even though they should not be suspected of deliberate falsehoods. It is safe to assume that it was just a matter of their patriotic feeling getting the better of their diligence as historians. Next (14.4–8), Polybius argues that patriotism, however priceless in both public and private life, can have no access to the domain of historiography as it threatens the truth, without which history becomes useless (14.6). Polybius proceeds to give examples of how dangerous such a bias can be for a historian, indicating some mistakes of Philinus. After a detailed inspection of his narrative of the first actions of the Romans in Sicily, Polybius claims that the whole work of Philinus is full of such mistakes. Then he adds that things are in no way better in Fabius and promises to show that in due time. The digression concludes (15.13) with an assurance that Polybius will do his best (*scil.* in contrast to his two predecessors) to present the truth about the war. Immediately after that the proper narrative part begins.

Two inconsistencies in what Polybius says may be noted. First, in the remaining part of the *Histories* he never produces proof of Fabius's bias, despite his promise in I 15.12. Even when he explicitly criticizes the Roman's account of the causes of the Hannibalic War, the charge of bias is absent (although it is silently implied – I will return to this). On the other hand, the way in which Polybius argues against Philinus in III 26 seems to contradict his assurances that he suspects neither of the historians of deliberate falsehoods. No such accusation is made explicitly, but the passage clearly implies that Philinus simply fabricated the whole story about another Roman-Carthaginian treatise in order to blame the Romans with full responsibility for the war. Polybius's sympathies obviously lie with Fabius rather than his Greek counterpart. Nevertheless, he takes pains to present the situation as one of formal symmetry between two opposing sides. This symmetrical structure is of central importance for my interpretation of the function of polemical passages in the long prefaces, as will be made clear in the following paragraphs.

III 26. I will now turn to the criticism of Philinus concerning the Roman-Carthaginian treaty, and only after that return to the beginning of book III. The reason for this is that the subject of the digression in III 26 is more closely related to the events described in book I than to those in book III, i.e. to the First rather

than the Second Punic War. The treaty in question, the existence of which Philinus asserts and Polybius denies, was supposed to define Sicily and Italy as spheres of privileged interests of Carthage and Rome respectively (26.3). If there really was such a treaty, the landing of Roman troops on Sicily in 264 would be a clear violation of it (26.4). Therefore, this issue is directly related to the events told in I 10.1–11.3 (which Polybius himself indicates in III 26.5). It does not appear before book III, however, because the immediate occasion for the digression is the history of Roman–Carthaginian diplomacy.

In contrast to the passage just discussed, this one has no methodological content. Nevertheless, it does not concern merely a particular factual question, to which its first half (26.1–5) is devoted: the existence or inexistence of the treaty in question. Instead, the main issue at stake here is whether or not the Romans can be charged with full responsibility for the First Punic War (which is suggested in 26.6). Polybius takes a moderate stance, arguing that perhaps Romans can be blamed for extending their help to the Mamertines, but not for a violation of a treaty with Carthage, because there was never such a treaty.

III 6–12. In this long passage devoted to a discussion of causes of the Hannibalic War two sections that are explicitly polemical can be distinguished: 6.1–3 and 8.1–9.5, whereby 6.1–3 and 8.1–11 concern directly the issue of causes of the war, while 9.1–5 has a different function. Polybius explains in 9.1–5 why he mentions Fabius in this place: it is because of the great authority of this author, which could convince the readers to believe his version, even if it was not inherently plausible. This remark has, therefore, a methodological sense.

In 6.1–3 Polybius criticizes some anonymous historians writing on the Hannibalic War who indicate the siege of Saguntum and the crossing of Ebro by the Carthaginians as its sole causes. Polybius rejects this version – it is obviously biased against the Carthaginians and implies that they bear full responsibility for the war<sup>17</sup> – and observes that those events could only be seen as the beginnings, and not causes of the conflict. This is followed by the well-known theoretical discussion of beginnings and causes (6.3–7.7), which I have commented on already.

Next, Polybius turns again to the specific problem of the causes of the Hannibalic War and cites Fabius's opinion, which adds another cause to the two already mentioned (i.e. Saguntum and Ebro): Hasdrubal's greed and lust for power (8.1). According to Fabius, Hannibal shared the insatiate ambitions of his brother-

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<sup>17</sup> It is sometimes suggested that in III 6.1 Polybius refers to some Carthaginian authors of monographs on Hannibal. However, the version of the causes of war presented by those authors is clearly anti-Carthaginian. It is much more plausible, therefore, that Polybius refers to Roman rather than Carthaginian historians, cf. K. Meister, *Historische Kritik bei Polybios*, Wiesbaden 1975, 153–154.

in-law and that was the reason why he decided to go to war with Rome, against the will of the Carthaginians, who did not approve of his actions in Spain (8.2–7). Polybius, however, finds this version utterly implausible (8.8–11). If the Carthaginians had been indeed opposed to Hannibal's actions and intentions, they would have given him up to the Romans immediately. Instead, they supported him for the whole time of a 17 years-long war.

After the methodological remarks in 9.1–5 Polybius presents his own version of the causes of the conflict (9.6–12.6) and then continues with a narrative passage on its beginnings. After that (and the digression on the history of Roman-Carthaginian diplomacy) he comes back to the question of causes in chapters 28–30.

After this short overview of the polemical passages in the long prefaces of books I and III, I turn now to a more detailed analysis. I will begin my interpretation of the three polemical digressions in reverse order, starting with III 6–12, as their functions are easier to grasp in book III than in book I.

Since the role of III 6–12 is strictly related to the issue of causes, we should take another look on Polybius's use of this notion. One of the most important features of the notion of cause as employed by Polybius is its subjective and one-sided character. As a matter of fact, Polybius does not investigate what modern historiography could conceive of as the most important causes of a war: external circumstances, social, economic and ideological conditions, objective interests of both sides etc. Instead, he is interested solely in what led one of the sides (which sometimes means a single individual in power) to the decision to go to war with the other – which for a modern historian would be only a part, and not necessarily the most important one, of the explanation. In fact, for Polybius, just as for any other ancient historian, war is not only an event, something that happens because of these or other causes, but above all an intentional action that follows from these or other motives. No matter how many different factors have contributed to the outbreak of a war, it does not begin before one of the sides makes the decision to fight and then acts on it. Therefore, what is the most interesting to Polybius and what he takes to be the true causes of war are the motives that lead to such a decision.

In this way the question of causes is strictly connected to the question of responsibility. For decisions – in contrast to circumstances and conditions – are subject to moral appraisal. Passages like III 26.6–7 or III 30.3–4 show that an appraisal of the justness of actions of the warring sides was a matter of great importance for Polybius.

It is worthwhile to take a short look at the issue of causes and responsibility in a larger perspective. First of all, it should be noted that the word *αἰτία*, which Polybius uses, has both a causal and a moral sense – *aitia* means both 'cause' and

‘blame’. Moreover, this ambiguity is already present at the roots of Greek historiography. When Herodotus asks why the Greeks and the Persians fought each other, he means ‘who was responsible’ – as shown by the kind of answers that he gives (I 1–5).<sup>18</sup> In Thucydides, too, even though he tries to abstract from any moral evaluation of the conflict, the question of the causes of the war is in fact the question of Sparta’s motives to start it.<sup>19</sup> Such a notion of cause is characteristic of ancient historiography and essential to understanding Polybius.

The close relation of the notion of causes of a war with a decision to start it and, what follows, with the question of responsibility, is essential to the present interpretation. The question of responsibility naturally provokes unambiguous answers that blame one, and not the other, side for starting the war. A historian who tries to investigate causes understood in such a way must therefore study not only facts, but also reasons. Balancing opposing reasons is his most important task. As I will try to show, this is exactly what Polybius does in the parts of book 3 analyzed here, especially in the passages 6–12 and 28–30.

The Roman version of the causes of the Hannibalic War, shared by Fabius and the anonymous historians mentioned in 6.1, unambiguously implies that the Carthaginians are the only ones to blame. Let us recall that according to this version the conflict was caused by Hannibal’s actions in Spain: taking Saguntum and crossing Ebro. This was a clear violation of Roman-Carthaginian treaties and therefore a just cause for war by the traditional *ius gentium*. Fabius added another cause – Hasdrubal’s ambition, which the rest of the Carthaginians did not share – thus shifting the greatest part of responsibility from the Carthaginian state onto the Barcid family.

This latter version can be seen as a conjunction of three claims: a) there was a conflict between the Barcids and the rest of the Carthaginians; b) Hannibal’s actions in Spain constituted a violation of the treaties; c) those actions were the direct cause of the war. Claims b) and c) (shared by the anonymous historians of 6.1) together imply that the Carthaginian side was responsible for the war and thus Romans justly undertook it. Claim a) leads to the conclusion that the most part of the blame falls on the Barcid family. Polybius does not explicitly discuss neither of the two conclusions; but he does analyze in detail the three claims that are their premises.

Let me start with the last one. Polybius rejects it straightforwardly (6.3): Hannibal’s actions were not the cause of the war, but only its beginning. One

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Luce, *The Greek Historians*, 135, where similarities between Polybius’s and Herodotus’s thinking about the causes of wars are indicated.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Derow, ‘Historical Explanation’, 79–80: Thucydides does not explain why the war broke out, but why the Spartans started it. It is the same case in Polybius (pp. 87–88).

should therefore look for causes in the preceding events. The methodological digression which follows (6.4–7.7) serves to justify that.

Polybius does accept the second claim (b), though. His discussion in 29.1–30.3 leads him to conclude that Hannibal's actions indeed constituted a violation of the treaties. However, that does not settle the question of responsibility yet. If someone takes the capture of Saguntum and the crossing of Ebro to be the causes of the war, then the blame does fall on the Carthaginian side (30.3). If, on the other hand, one sees the cause of war in Rome's taking of Sardinia and overburdening Carthage with contribution, the Carthaginians had just reasons for war (30.4). Polybius does not decide the issue here, but his interpretation of the events (presented earlier in 10.1–4) clearly implies a verdict in favor of Carthage.

The causes presented earlier in the book are as follows. First, the anger of Hamilcar, Hannibal's father, with Carthage's defeat in the war for Sicily (9.6–9). Second, Romans' taking of Sardinia and the contribution that Carthage was forced to pay (10.1–4). A third cause, which in fact followed from the second one, was the success of Carthaginians' operations in Spain, which strengthened their confidence (10.5–6). The first of the causes named by Polybius, the anger of Hamilcar, is additionally supported by an anecdote about Hannibal's oath (10.7–12.6).

The most important cause, as indicated by 30.4, was that Romans took Sardinia and imposed a contribution on Carthage. In light of this fact, the Carthaginians have justly started the conflict that was to be remembered as the Hannibalic War. This way one of the conclusions mentioned above – that the Carthaginians are to blame – is (all but explicitly) rejected.

The other conclusion, following from Fabius's version according to which the Barcids acted against the will of Carthage, is also implicitly undermined by Polybius's interpretation of the events.<sup>20</sup> Causes indicated by him – Hamilcar's anger and the embitterment of the Carthaginians over the loss of Sardinia and the contribution – suggest that both the Barcid family and the Carthaginian state were in a similar, and therefore common, situation as regards their attitude towards Rome (Polybius points to this similarity in 10.5). Thus, there was no conflict of the sort stipulated by Fabius.

It should be clear now in what way the most important discursive parts in the long preface to book III, chapters 6–12 and 28–30 (together with 21–27, which introduce the latter passage), and especially the polemical passages within them, serve the superior aim of balancing opposing reasons and deciding on the responsibility for the outbreak of the Second Punic War – a war that was to be the

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Meister, *Historische Kritik bei Polybios*, 143; K. Eisen, *Polybiosinterpretationen*, Heidelberg 1966, 122–125.

main subject of a large part of the *Histories*. As I indicated earlier, the criticism of Philinus in III 26 plays an analogous role in relation to the First Punic War.

An important conclusion follows from this interpretation of the passages in question. One can see here how complex is the manner in which Polybius builds his argument, employing a whole array of means and devices, and interweaving passages of methodological, polemical and narrative character. All this subtle and sophisticated structure serves above all to present an issue of political and moral nature in such a way as if it was simply a matter of facts (and facts can be safely established through correct methods). Polybius takes a very nuanced, but nonetheless decisive stance on the question of responsibility for the Hannibalic War; the greater part of blame falls on Rome. Even so, he never puts the issue explicitly in this way, but instead discusses the correct notion of cause, the credibility of historians, the content of ancient treaties etc., so that in the end the reader has the impression that facts themselves, pure and simple, call for such a verdict. One should not think that we are dealing here with a fraud of any kind, though. On the contrary, to this day Polybius's interpretation of the causes of Hannibalic War seems highly convincing (at least in relation to his narrow notion of cause). But he does put a lot of effort into trying to make it seem not only a convincing interpretation, but undeniable truth. And one cannot deny that he does it with great skill.

Let me now turn to the polemic with Fabius and Philinus in I 14–15. It has a slightly different function than the polemics in book III, but there is an important analogy between the two.

First, however, I have to point to an aspect of the composition of the first five books of the *Histories*, which I have not mentioned so far, that distinguishes them from the rest of the work. In contrast to the following books, in the first five – and especially in the first three – Polybius's narrative is based completely or almost completely on written sources: already existing historical works. In the case of the First Punic War these are the works of Fabius and Philinus, in the case of the Second War – Fabius and most probably some Carthaginian sources.<sup>21</sup> In the part of book II devoted to the affairs of Greece Polybius uses Aratus and possibly Phylarchus. In the remaining part of the *Histories* he certainly also uses written sources – Rhodian historians seem particularly important in this respect – but for the most part his work is based on the relation of participants and eyewitnesses of

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<sup>21</sup> Since Polybius rejects Fabius's version of the causes of the war, he most probably had access to another source, which pointed to the embitterment of the Carthaginians over Rome's taking of Sardinia. This source must have therefore been sympathetic to the Carthaginians. There exists ample literature on Polybius's sources, but there is no need to discuss these issues here. For an overview of the most important problems and literature on this topic, see Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, 26–35; particular sources and passages are discussed in the respective parts of the commentary.

the events, to whom he had easy access in virtue of his position first in Achaea, and then in Rome. Most probably there were no such relations at his disposal for the First Punic War and the beginning years of the Second War (at least those related in book III), so he had no other choice but to rely on the work of his predecessors.

Writing about events that were already described by other authors and too remote to be directly known by autopsy or the relation of eyewitnesses put an ancient historian in a particular situation, which has to be adequately understood. Whenever there was a single source, or all existing sources were in agreement, the historian's task was in the first place to relate the tradition faithfully, correcting it only if it seemed inherently inconsistent or utterly implausible. He had no obligation, nor possibility, to thoroughly examine the received information – ancient historiography knew virtually no methods that would allow an author to confront literary evidence with information from other kinds of sources.<sup>22</sup>

If, however, the sources were in conflict, the historian could relate two (or more) versions, in the manner of Herodotus, or choose the one which seemed more reliable to him (an extreme example of this method is the strategy of the compiler Diodorus) – often according to criteria that modern historiography would not accept. The latter method was probably much more often employed, usually without any indication which source, and why, has been chosen.<sup>23</sup>

It is easy to see that we are dealing here with a situation quite analogous to the one that concerned the issue of responsibility for a war. The question which source to choose, just as the question whom to blame, naturally tends to evoke one-sided answers. It is to Polybius's merit that, as shown above, he does not fall easily to this temptation and instead tries to weigh opposing reasons. The long discussion of causes of the Hannibalic War in book III, together with the polemical passages within it, served this very aim. The criticism of Fabius and Philinus in book I serves an analogous purpose.<sup>24</sup>

This purpose is clearly implied by the structure of the digression in I 14–15. It begins with an explanation that one of the main reasons to describe the war for

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<sup>22</sup> Thucydides is an obvious exception, as in his *Archaeology* he invokes evidence of material and ethnographic character. Polybius, too, can sometimes confront a written source with information obtained through empirical research, but this is almost exclusively limited to questions of geography, where it is, of course, easiest (see, for instance, his criticism of Zeno of Rhodes, XVI 16–17). It should also be stressed that both Thucydides and Polybius stand out, with regard to the methods they employ, among other ancient historians (cf. E. Gabba 'True History and False History in Classical Antiquity', *JRS* 71 [1981], 50–52).

<sup>23</sup> I follow here mostly the analyses of Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography*, esp. 106–107 and 280–286.

<sup>24</sup> See D. Musti 'Polibio e la storiografia Romana arcaica', in E. Gabba (ed.), *Polybe*, Vandoeuvres-Genève 1974, 115.

Sicily in somewhat more detail is the fact that the existing relations of respected historians are unsatisfying (14.1). It ends with a promise that the following narrative will present the truth about the events (15.13). What is significant, Polybius in no way suggests that because of Fabius's and Philinus's mistakes he will use another source – on the contrary, he seems to imply that those are the two best relations after all.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the only way to establish the truth about the events of the First Punic War is to adequately balance the two opposing versions (both of which are biased). A more detailed criticism of Philinus in 15.1–10 serves as an illustration of this strategy. The events in question have already been presented, in Fabius's version, in 11.9–12.4. Here Polybius shows only why in this particular case he decided to resolve the contradiction in favor of the latter historian's relation. He suggests also that he will decide otherwise, whenever it seems justified.<sup>26</sup>

To sum up the results of this section, I have tried to show that polemical digressions in the long prefaces to books I and III serve the main purpose of balancing between opposing relations that were known to Polybius and – most probably – his intended readers. In book III the central issue is the question of responsibility for the Hannibalic War; in book I the problem of deciding between contradictory sources. In this way the polemical digressions realize a very specific, and very important, function in the composition and logical structure of the first five books of the *Histories*.

#### 4. The polemic with Phylarchus; II 56–63

I will now turn to the last polemical passage that should be discussed here: the criticism of Phylarchus in book II. This polemic does not play as significant a role in the composition of the *Histories* as the digressions analyzed above, but its function in Polybius's economy of sources is partly similar to the polemic with Fabius and Phylarchus in I 14–15.

Let me start with the place where this digression appears. In contrast to previous cases, it is not a place of any significance in the compositional scheme of book II. Quite the contrary, it has the form of a mere insertion in a narrative part devoted to the Cleomenean War (II 46–70). It does not even appear at the beginning or at the end of the narrative, but in the middle of it. On the other hand,

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Walbank, *Polybius*, 77–78. The most recent discussion of Polybius's use of Fabius and Philinus can be found in D. Ambaglio, 'Fabio e Filino: Polibio sugli storici della prima Guerra punica', in G. Schepens, J. Bollansée, (eds), *The Shadow of Polybius. Intertextuality as a Research Tool in Greek Historiography*, Leuven 2005, 205–222.

<sup>26</sup> The extensive use of Philinus in book I, even if it is difficult to pinpoint particular passages, proves that Polybius's intentions in this matter are honest.

however, it is disproportionally long, comprising one third of the whole passage devoted to this conflict.<sup>27</sup> The only compositional justification for its appearing in this particular place and not another is the direct occasion which provokes the digression, i.e. the story of Cleomenes's capture of Megalopolis (55,6–8). Polybius's narrative here is based on Aratus (56.1 = *FGrH* 231 T 4),<sup>28</sup> whose version is contradicted by Philinus.

I shall not go into the details of the content of this polemic, since an analysis of it is beyond the scope of my investigation here, which is concerned solely with compositional and structural matters (it is an important polemic, however, mainly because of its methodological content). The reason that Polybius himself gives for making this digression is clear (56.1): Phylarchus is a well-respected historian of the period, but his account is frequently at odds with that of Aratus. Therefore, Polybius feels obliged to demonstrate that Phylarchus is not altogether worthy of the reader's trust. His main fault is that he sacrifices historical truth on the altar of sensation and drama (56.7–8). The better part of the digression (57–63) consists of examples of Phylarchus's sensational tendency. Before that, Polybius devotes several sentences (56.9–16) to a methodological question: the nature and purpose of history. Here again we see Polybius introducing methodological deliberations as arguments in a discussion of factual issues.

Regarding its primary aim, this polemic plays a similar role to the criticism of Fabius and Philinus in I 14–15. Its purpose is to dissolve a contradiction between two opposing accounts of the events that Polybius relates here. There are, however, important differences between the two passages.

First, there is no balancing of the two sources in the narrative of the Cleomenean War. Polybius clearly decides in favor of Aratus's relation, whose memoirs he finds very valuable (40.4). Phylarchus's version, on the other hand, is altogether rejected. Polybius's criticism aims, in fact, at excluding Phylarchus from the company of respected historians.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> In Loeb's edition, which is well-suited for such comparisons due to the equal amount of text on every page, the whole narrative of the Cleomenean War comprises 32 pages; the polemic with Phylarchus – 11 of them.

<sup>28</sup> While it is beyond doubt that Polybius's narrative in II 41–70 is based principally on Aratus (cf. K. Haegemans, E. Kosmetatou, 'Aratus and the Achaean Background of Polybius', in Schepens, Bollansée [eds], *The Shadow of Polybius*, 123–139), it is far from certain what source he used for the events that were omitted by Aratus in his work (see II 47.11). It seems natural to suppose that it was Phylarchus, despite the harsh criticism (see Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, 79). Gelzer 'Die Achaica im Geschichtswerk des Polybios', 51, however, suggests that it could be another Megalopolitan source, perhaps even Polybius's grandfather, Thearidas, who was a prominent politician in Achaia in Aratus's time.

<sup>29</sup> See Schepens, 'Polybius' Criticism of Phylarchus', in Schepens, Bollansée, (eds), *The Shadow of Polybius*, esp. 141–143.

Second, this time Polybius's arguments do not concern the partiality of one or the other historian. It is significant, since a close analysis of the accounts reveals that Phylarchus's version is much more favorable to Cleomenes, as is Aratus's version to the Achaeans (the partiality of both relations is confirmed by modern scholarship; it is worth noting that in the case of Aratus, an author of 'memoirs' and not of a historical monograph, his partiality can be at least partially justified – the justification does not extend to Polybius however, when he uses him as his source). Nevertheless, Polybius makes no mention of a potential bias and attacks Phylarchus with different ammunition: by criticizing his method of writing history. It is easy enough to guess why he chose this line of attack: any accusation of Phylarchus on the grounds of partiality would have to bring the reader's attention to the political engagement of both authors and thus make Aratus's account equally suspect.

Similar motives stood most probably behind the decision to put this digression in a seemingly accidental place, and not, for instance, at the beginning of the narrative about the Cleomenean War (just as the criticism of Fabius and Philinus is placed at the beginning of the narrative of the First Punic War). If the digression had been placed at a more prominent place, it could suggest to the reader that the question of choosing between Phylarchus and Aratus is an important and difficult one. Polybius, on the contrary, wanted to create the impression that the choice is obvious and that – despite Phylarchus's reputation – there are no reasons to treat his version as an alternative to Aratus's relation at all. The latter's memoirs should be thought of as the only legitimate source about the events of the Cleomenean War. And, as indicated earlier, it is a characteristic feature of ancient historiography not to question the tradition about the past if there is only one version of it (apart from some extreme cases). Polybius, then, should seem fully justified in his decision to follow Aratus's version.

To sum up, the criticism of Phylarchus plays a complex role in the economy of sources in book II – one that is in a way the reverse of the role played by the criticism of Fabius and Philinus in book I. On the one hand, it justifies the unqualified rejection of Phylarchus's account of the events and the decision to follow Aratus's memoirs. On the other hand, by placing the digression in a seemingly unimportant place and concealing the real motives behind it, Polybius tries to create the impression that his choice was as obvious as the difference between truth and falsehood. Thus, similarly to what he does in the discussion of the causes of the Hannibalic War, he tries to present his opinion on an issue of political nature in such a way, as if it followed directly and undeniably from the simplest facts. This time, however, his opinion is much more one-sided, his argument much less convincing, and the whole play rather unseemly.

## 5. Conclusion

Two conclusions that follow from the interpretations presented here deserve emphasis. First, most of the polemical digressions in books I–V, including the longest and most important ones, are strictly related to the compositional and structural features of this part of the *Histories*, in particular with its introductory and expository character. The essential role of these digressions can be analyzed in three aspects: their relation to the question of the composition of universal history (III 32; V 33), the problem of beginnings and causes (I 14–15; III 6–12; III 26) and the problem of choosing between alternative sources (I 14–15; II 56–63). If the impression that polemical digressions in books I–V are more frequent than in the rest of the work – apart from book XII of course – is correct (we will never know that for sure, but it seems probable), then one explanation could be provided by the particular function that these books have in the compositional and logical plan of the *Histories*.

Second, polemical passages are strictly connected, both in structure and function, to methodological digressions, which deal with the partiality of historians, the investigation of beginnings and causes, true aims of historiography, the chronological scheme of the work. Relations between both categories of digressions are complex. To a large extent methodological reflections are subordinated to polemical aims (that is the case in the discussion of causes of the Hannibalic War in III 6–7, in the criticism of Phylarchus in II 56 and Fabius in III 9). In other cases their functions are parallel, but closely related (III 31–32; V 31–33). What is most significant, however, is that both categories primarily serve the realization of Polybius's priorities in the composition and logical structure of his work.

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