

Oratio Recta and *Oratio Obliqua* in Polybius

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Polybius on the Speeches in his History

POLYBIUS is the only major Greek historian after Hecataeus of Miletus¹ who is known to have participated actively in political deliberation and decision-making. In 28.7.8–14 he tells how he delivered “a long speech” to the Achaean confederation, supporting the restoration of honours to King Eumenes II of Pergamum. He had recently been appointed hipparch of the Confederation, at the age of thirty (170–169 B.C.), and no doubt added to his authority with this speech, which swayed the debate.² When he came to write his *Histories* in Rome, where he, along with a thousand other leading Achaeans, was interned after the Battle of Pydna (168 B.C.), he decided that his work should aim at the most rigorous standards of authenticity, with truth as its leading principle. He was trenchantly critical of other historians for falling short of his standards, accusing some of them of slipshod research or no research at all, and of a generally amateurish approach to their exacting task. But this self-imposed obligation created a strong tension between different requirements, which was sharpened by his own experience as a working politician. While recognizing, as had Thucydides, that “what was said” in the course of historical events needed to be recorded alongside “what was done” in order fully to rationalize his account, Polybius had to acknowledge the fact that “the truth” of what was said was not

¹ Hdt. 5.36.2–3, 126–127.1. Hecataeus’ advice against the Ionian Revolt was rejected.

² 28.6.9. He had also been appointed as one of three ambassadors to the court of Ptolemy V ten years earlier (24.6.5–7), but the embassy was cancelled on the death of the King.

recoverable in most cases, because neither the historian nor a reliable reporter (with a knowledge of shorthand) was present to hear it. This is the background against which we must consider his statements about speeches in history.

The first of these statements forms part of a polemic against his chief rival, Timaeus of Tauromenium,³ of whom he complains (12.25a.5): “He has not written what was said, nor the actual words used, but has imagined how they ought to have been said (ὡς δεῖ ῥηθῆναι) and enumerated all the arguments that correspond to the circumstances, like a schoolboy declaiming on a set theme, ... as though his purpose was to display his own ability, not to report what was actually said.” The first part of this charge would have been admitted by Thucydides, who, like Timaeus, did not hear what was actually said by speakers, and stated his solution to the problem in notoriously ambiguous terms (1.22.1): “I have recorded the arguments which the several speakers ought to have used (τὰ δέοντα), while adhering as closely as possible to what was actually said.” But Polybius does not even allow Timaeus the credit of being a responsible reporter, and adds the further insult of representing him as no better than a callow student of rhetoric. He goes on (25b) to insist that “the historian who omits the words actually used, and gives us fictitious rhetorical compositions (ἐπιχειρήματα), destroys the special character of history.” Yet in practice Polybius, no less than the other two historians, had to cope with a constant dearth of direct source-material for speeches. It is a dilemma which he never resolves. The nearest he comes to confessing to fictitious composition is in 29.12.10 where, after criticizing other historians for compiling their descriptions from commonplaces, he asks for indulgence for himself when he uses “the same style or the same disposition and treatment, or even

³ The custom among historians of roundly criticizing their predecessors for inaccuracy, literary shortcomings, and political bias was well established by Polybius' time. F. W. Walbank, “Polemic in Polybius,” *JRS* 52 (1962) 1–12, argues that Polybius singles out Timaeus for censure for two main reasons: that he was himself censorious of other historians, and, more significantly, because he was “a serious opponent” (10), who was popularly regarded as “the first historian of Rome” (11). Walbank further suggests that Polybius' criticisms of Timaeus are not always just (5–8).

the same words as on a previous occasion.” This would have been his only possible recourse when reporting, for example, pre-battle harangues and semi-secret meetings. As to the authenticity of other speeches, we have to engage in educated guesswork based on our limited knowledge of where Polybius was when they were made and in whose company, and what sources he could draw upon for those speeches.⁴

When he returns to the subject of speeches in 36.1.1–7, the history being narrated is especially susceptible to dramatic presentation: the Third Punic War, which culminated in the destruction of Carthage. Now he introduces a personal note: “No form of composition would have been easier for me to write” (5)—an obvious allusion to his own experience as a political speaker. Both the particular historical episode and the historian’s peculiar talent seem tailor-made for rhetorical display; and indeed Polybius’ argument is itself rhetorical in character. But the words with which the passage ends (7) define the limits which he has imposed on himself in his recourse to live speech:

historians should apply all their energies and abilities to elucidating what was really and truly said, and even of those words only those that are most suited to the occasion and the matter in hand (τὰ καιριώτατα καὶ πραγματικώτατα).

This final limitation establishes clear editorial intention for the reporting of speeches. *kairos* in its present context connotes the

⁴ P. Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe* (Paris 1964) 259–276, carefully evaluates the claims of all the speeches to authenticity. C. W. Wooten, “The Speeches in Polybius: An Insight into the Nature of Hellenistic Oratory,” *AJP* 95 (1974) 235–251, begins with the statement that Polybius had good sources for speeches delivered either to or by the Achaeans (the *Memoirs* Aratus and the Library of Perseus), and before the Roman Senate. But his discussion excludes “speeches delivered by Romans or Carthaginians” (236); while uncertainty about the provenance of some of the speeches he examines makes him resort to conjecture, as when he suggests (240) that a speech’s possession of distinctive characteristics, such as vividness or liveliness, may “reflect the tone of the original.” We can at least agree that Polybius probably fulfilled his undertaking to use the good sources when they were available to him, engaging in the free composition of speeches only when these sources were lacking.

idea of a speech which, by being made at the right time and by containing arguments which shaped decision-making, influenced or even decided the course of events. In the present study I shall try to show how Polybius applies this editorial principle in his choice and handling of speeches; and further, how he shows restraint in his presentation of material which could appear susceptible to rhetorical treatment.

The Speeches

The main characteristic of the spoken word as Polybius reports it is his technique of beginning in indirect speech (*oratio obliqua*), and concluding with a passage of direct speech (*oratio recta*). The first specimen of this transition, in 3.108–109, reveals significant differences in the rhetorical materials in the two types of discourse. Polybius is reporting the speech which the consul Aemilius Paulus made to his troops before the Battle of Cannae (216 B.C.). He refers to past defeats and their causes in *oratio obliqua* (108.6–9), using the Third Person. Here the speaker's purpose is to alter his audience's mental attitude from its present despair to positive thinking. Hence the initial emphasis is upon summary explanation. Earlier defeats have been due to identifiable causes: Rome's soldiers had been inexperienced, their consuls not engaged together (6); and at specific battles, the army had suffered initial disadvantages: at Trebia they had been hastily assembled (8), and at Trasimene they did not even have sight of the enemy until he was upon them (9). Polybius marks these last two disasters by rendering them in the aorist indicative and direct speech (παρετάξαντο ... ἐξεγένετο), thereby acknowledging that they would be fresh in the men's minds. But they must be made to think constructively, and the stylistic transition assists this conversion.

As soon as Aemilius turns to the present situation and future prospects (νῦν γε, 10) his address comes alive, with First, and mainly Second Person Plural, governing finite verbs as he describes the favourably changed situation. He also deploys probability argument reinforced by *a fortiori* paradox, both devices commonly found in fourth-century Attic oratory (109.3–4):⁵

⁵ S. Usher, *Greek Oratory: Tradition and Originality* (Oxford 1999); see Index,

Since all the conditions affecting the earlier battles differed from those of the present struggle, it was likely (εἰκός) that the outcome would be different too. For it would be absurd (ἄτοπον), or rather impossible, that those who in various skirmishes, where numbers on the two sides were equal, had for the most part prevailed,⁶ should, when drawn up all together, doubling the enemy's numbers, be defeated.

The transformation into oratory that could move men to action is completed in the full-blooded exhortation which follows, and culminates in a stirring call to a battle in which everything is at stake (7–10) :

Men who, like you, are fighting not for others, but themselves—for country, wives, and children—and for whom the outcome has far greater consequences than the immediate dangers themselves, need no more than reminding, no further exhortation ... Therefore, men, apart from any words of mine, set before your eyes the difference between victory and defeat, and all their consequences, and so face this battle in the realization that your country is risking not just her several legions, but her whole existence.

Hannibal's *hortatio* to his troops differs from that of Aemilius in ways which contribute to our understanding of the events which subsequently unfold. The corresponding introduction in *Oratio Obliqua* (3.111.2), in which he tells his men that they should thank the gods for their good fortune in the enemy's choice of the site for the battle, is greeted by them with acclamation. They are thus portrayed as being actively supportive of his leadership. In the passage of direct speech he amplifies this with self-congratulation: "[First give thanks to the gods] ... and then to me, for compelling the enemy to fight (3–4) ... my prediction that you would prevail and all my other promises to you have been fulfilled" (8). After the speech we read that his words were greeted with enthusiastic shouts (11), whereas Polybius has reported, of Aemilius, only that he "dismissed his

381, 386. F. W. Walbank, *Speeches in Greek Historians* (Oxford 1965) 13, notes ruefully that this argument was "to be refuted so ironically by events."

⁶ These were the minor encounters that had taken place since the Battle of Lake Trasimene.

troops” (109.13). Polybius has skilfully used live speech to characterize Hannibal as a supremely self-confident, even egotistical leader who could inspire his men to share his belief in his invincibility. This portrayal underlines an important difference between the two leaderships. On the Roman side, the dual consulship has led to the wrong choice of the battle site being made by the less experienced consul, Varro (110.2–4). Hannibal, battle-hardened and continuously in control of his forces, faces no such challenge to his command.⁷

Polybius uses brief passages of direct speech to give voice to the personal opinions and exchange of views between the characters in his story. These are sometimes sandwiched within indirect speech, as in 4.84.7–85.6 (at 85.3), and do no more than add momentary graduated colour to a narrative. A more dramatic purpose seems to be behind the live speech in 5.36.4–5. Here the fear of Sosibius that his designs in Egypt might fail is dispelled by the verbal assurance of his ally Cleomenes:

Do you not see that there are three thousand mercenaries here from the Peloponnese, and a thousand from Crete? I have only to give these men the nod, and they will do what I want at once. With this combined force deployed, whom do you fear? Surely not mere Syrians and Carians?

Polybius goes on to say that Cleomenes’ words stayed in Sosibius’ mind, and caused him to contrast Cleomenes’ boldness with the listlessness (ᾠθυμία) of Ptolemy Philopator, whom he had been plotting to supplant. What Cleomenes said had a decisive influence on Sosibius’ plans by convincing him that Cleomenes represented a greater threat to his ambitions than did Ptolemy; and soon afterwards he used another remark by Cleomenes, disparaging Ptolemy (5.37.10), to undermine him and finally to have him arrested.

In 5.58.4–8 Polybius reports, in *Oratio Obliqua*, strategic advice which Apollophanes of Seleucia gave to Antiochus III in a small council of the king’s friends. The advice, against march-

⁷ Cf. Dem. 1.4, describing how Philip II’s autocracy gives him a free hand as a military commander (though it alarms potential allies or victims). Wooten, *AJP* 95 (1974) 248–251, convincingly argues for Demosthenic rather than Thucydidean influence on the speeches in Polybius.

ing on Coele-Syria while Seleucia remained in Egyptian hands, made logical sense and was adopted: a negative decision recommended to a small audience of responsible men. Polybius seems to have chosen indirect speech to report this because a more dramatic or rhetorical presentation was unnecessary and inappropriate. On a lower level, when no thematic purpose is to be served by reporting them in detail, Polybius is content to give only the “sense” (νοῦς) of the *hortationes* addressed by the kings Antiochus and Ptolemy Philopator to their men before the important Battle of Raphia (5.83.4–7).

The conference at Naupactus which brought the Social War to an end in 217 B.C. marked a defining point in Greek history. The Aetolians, weakened by the incursions of Philip V, were ready to take part in a peaceful settlement of Hellenic affairs. There was much of moment to discuss, and no doubt much was said, but Polybius chooses to report the speech of only one man, the Aetolian Agelaus of Naupactus; and he does so in *Oratio Obliqua*. Now two countervailing considerations are at work here. He wants to articulate only a summary of the debate, because this is the starkest way of outlining the central theme which links it to his subsequent narrative. That theme is the need to present a united front to a growing external danger. But his source(s) had transmitted one or two memorable utterances which gave extra colour, and perhaps impetus, to the debate. These should be part of the record: hence the rendering of some of the actual words used. Agelaus opens by saying that Greeks should not go to war with one another, but, “joining hands like people crossing a river, be able to repel the attacks of barbarians and save themselves and their cities” (5.104.1). The “barbarians” threatening them are not from the East, as in the past, but from the West. Their identity was as yet uncertain (3):

Whether the Carthaginians conquer the Romans or the Romans the Carthaginians, it is in no way likely that the victors will rest content with their empire in Sicily and Italy. They will advance, and extend their designs, and their armaments, farther than we would wish.

Speaking to Philip as well as to the other Greeks, Agelaus ends by digging deep into the literature of the past with the metaphor which may have secured the survival of the whole speech

(10):⁸

If once you allow the clouds which are now gathering in the West to settle over Greece, I greatly fear that the power of making peace or war, and indeed all these games that we are now playing against each other, will be so completely wrenched from all our hands that we shall be praying [in vain] to the gods to leave us only with the power to make peace or war on one another at will, and to resolve our own disputes.

Agelaus' speech is the only one reported by Polybius from what must have been a vociferous meeting. Agelaus may well have been the author of the *bons mots* that it contains, and it was this that induced Polybius to attach his name to a composite view of the political situation to which a number of speakers had contributed.⁹

The Speeches of Chlaeneas and Lyciscus

A decisive step towards the involvement of Rome in Greek affairs came in 211, when the Roman consul designate M. Valerius Laevinus persuaded the Aetolians to join an alliance against Philip V. When it is recalled that Polybius had set himself the task of explaining the process by which Rome had conquered "almost the whole of the inhabited world within a period of fifty-three years" (1.1.5), it is wholly understandable that he should want his readers to examine the actual discussions and arguments that swayed the participants in the crucial early stages of that process. The live speeches that have been preserved concern steps taken to enlarge the anti-Philip alliance by the inclusion of Sparta and her dependents. As usual, the Greek leadership is divided, with the Acarnanians adopting a pro-Philip position. The consequent polarity invites presen-

⁸ Homer *Il.* 4.275–278, 17.243; Archil. fr.130 West; Ar. *Pax* 1090. Cf. Dem. 18.188.

⁹ Walbank, *Speeches* 15–16, and Pédech, *La méthode* 264, regard Agelaus as the speech's sole author. But the speech's central message could have been conceived at this critical time by a number of those attending this meeting. The speech's "condensed" form (so Pédech 264) suggests another authorial hand; and this may seem to commend the argument of O. Mørholm, "The Speech of Agelaus at Naupactus 217 B.C.," *ClMed* 28 (1967) 240–253, that our speech is a fictitious composition.

tation in a rhetorical form, with the antilogies devised by Thucydides on the subject of the outset of the Peloponnesian War as possible models for Polybius. But his handling of his material is different from that of his predecessor, and reflects his experience as a practical politician. Whereas Thucydides deals mainly in abstract ideas, Polybius makes his speakers use more or less recent history to support their arguments.¹⁰

The first speaker, Chlaeneas of Aetolia, is trying to persuade the Spartans to join an alliance with them against Philip V. He uses strong language to describe Philip II's expansion into Northern Greece and Thrace between 348 and 338 B.C.: "the beginning of the servitude (δουλείας) of the Greeks" (9.28.1); "having enslaved (ἐξανδραποδισάμενος) that city [Olynthus]¹¹ ... he subdued Thessaly by terror (διὰ τὸν φόβον)" (4). But he is also careful to represent him as two-dimensional, adept at diplomacy, when he "used his victory [at Chaeronea] with magnanimity, not from any wish to benefit the Athenians—far from it—but in order that his generous treatment of them might induce the rest to follow his lead voluntarily" (4).¹² Only Sparta, still a leading power in Greece, stood in his way (5). Polybius makes Chlaeneas represent Philip's invasion of Laconia as swift and devastating (the latter effect being achieved by its anaphoric form, κατέφθειρε μὲν ... κατέφθειρε

¹⁰ The topicality of both speeches strongly suggests that Polybius drew on contemporary sources, which, in view of the importance of the subject, may have been abundant. But the different scale and styles of the two speeches are the work of the historian. He must therefore have used his sources selectively, and to this extent they cannot both be "authentic" (Walbank's word, *Speeches* 17).

¹¹ Olynthus had become the first city of Chalcidice by 432 B.C. (Thuc. 1.58.2) because it occupied the most defensible site on the peninsula.

¹² It was natural for Chlaeneas to deny Philip any disinterested magnanimity. Polybius reports him faithfully here, in spite of the view he has expressed elsewhere (5.10.1–5) that Philip's magnanimity was both genuine and effective. On this diplomacy, see C. Roebuck, "The Settlement of Philip II with the Greek States in 338 B.C.," *CP* 43 (1948) 73–92; on his settlement with Athens, 80 ff., and esp. 81–82; on Polybius as an historical source in these speeches, 86. Philip's practical reasons for offering acceptable terms to Athens are discussed by R. Sealey, *Demosthenes and his Time* (Oxford 1993) 198–199.

δέ), omitting any negotiations that might have preceded it.¹³ Indeed, Chlaeneas' account of Philip's advance (28.2–8) is notably economical, and this feature is marked stylistically by asyndeton. Perhaps his Spartan audience did not need a detailed reminder of this unhappy episode of their history. More likely, Polybius, who is going to attribute a much more favourable account of Philip to Chlaeneas' opponent, Lyciscus, does not want to make Lyciscus use up his time in answering charges against the king. It is when he turns to more recent times that Chlaeneas seeks to arouse his audience's anger with overtly rhetorical devices. He uses rhetorical question (*Why need I speak in detail...?* 29.1; *Surely no one alive is so out of touch with politics...?* 2; *Who again is unaware of the deeds of Cassander, Demetrius, and Antigonus Gonatas...?* 5); and hypostasis (*Antipater ... went so far in violence and brutality as to institute man-hunts* 3: some listeners might recall that his victims included Demosthenes and Hyperides). But again Chlaeneas wishes to move on in time (*Leaving these matters behind me I shall come to the last Antigonus* 7); and with good reason. He needs to convince the Spartans that Antigonus Doso's campaigns against Cleomenes III were not altruistically motivated, but designed to secure his own power-base in the Peloponnese (*Such a view of things is simple-minded, if indeed any of you holds it* 9). Having swiftly demolished any arguments that Philip II or any of his Macedonian successors had harboured any feelings of friendship towards Sparta, the Aetolian delegate ends his historical review abruptly with a *paraleipsis* (*What more do I need to say about Philip's career of crime?* 30.1), giving only two instances of it.¹⁴ The events he has recounted have established the *justice* (δικαίον) of the case for Sparta's acceptance of alliance with Aetolia rather than with Philip V. As he turns to deliberation about the present, the second conventional deliberative topos, *possibility*, comes into play, as does Thucydidean influence. The *a fortiori* force behind the argument that Philip, who had failed to subdue the Aetolians on their own, would find the combined strength of

¹³ See Walbank, *Comm.* II 166.

¹⁴ These crimes of Philip are described in more detail in 5.9.1–7, 11.3–6; 7.12.1; 13.6.7.

Aetolians, Romans, and King Attalus impossible to withstand (30.7–9), is reminiscent of Athenagoras the Sicilian, who in Thucydides 6.37.2 argues even more forcefully, saying that an army twice the size of the Athenian expeditionary force would fail against Syracuse on her own, let alone against a united Sicily. Thucydides is again recalled in the following argument (31.1–4), as the speech draws towards its conclusion on the subject of *justice* (δικαιον).¹⁵ Here Chlaeneas reassures the Spartans that they can deliberate in moral freedom on the question of alliance. Thucydides has made the Corcyraeans reassure the Athenians that they would not be breaking any existing alliance if they entered into one with them (1.35.1–2). Both speakers then reinforce their positions with rhetorical arguments stressing the paradox or unreasonableness of an opposite view. In Polybius this is done using hypothetical inversion (*For if you had made... But since it was after this that...* 3–4); in Thucydides by the more powerful pathetic paradox (*What will be really shocking is if they... while we... 3*). Chlaeneas' position is slightly more complicated than that of Thucydides' Corcyraeans because the Spartans had previously treated with both Macedonians and Aetolians, but had subsequently gone to war against the former. In his concluding argument (6) he drives this point home, relying on moral argument in the end:

It now rests with you to show some subsequent wrong done to you by the Aetolians, or subsequent favour done to you by the Macedonians; or, if neither of these has occurred, on what grounds you are now turning anew to the very men whose overtures you rightly rejected before, and are intending to make fresh treaties, oaths, and the most momentous undertakings possible for men.

The speech of Lyciscus of Acarnania (9.32.3–39.7) is conceived on a much broader scale, as to both its style and its subject-matter.¹⁶ By contrast with Chlaeneas' clipped asyndetic

¹⁵ See M. Heath, "Justice in Thucydides' Athenian Speeches," *Historia* 39 (1990) 385–400.

¹⁶ Polybius writes: "[Lyciscus] began speaking along the following lines (οὕτως πως)," prompting Walbank (*Comm.* II 170) reasonably to comment: "i.e. the speech is not a literal transcript." Indeed, it is full of polished

sentences, those of Lyciscus consist mainly of coordinated antithetical clauses, often with corresponding elements, so that parts of his speech read like an epideictic discourse (32.3–4, 9–12; 33.6–7). 33.10–12 δυνάμενος ... κριτήριον is a complex Isocratean period, containing initial participial suspense, followed by μὲν ... δὲ antithesis and οὐκ ... ἀλλὰ pleonasm. No less complex is the opening sentence of 34, where the prolongation of the period through participial clauses takes place after the main verb ἔλυσε (3), again following Isocratean practice. Lyciscus wants to highlight the subject here—Alexander—by calling attention to the great benefit he conferred on Greece through the destruction of the hated Persian Empire. This had been passed over by Chlaeneas. Further as to subject-matter, Lyciscus has to spend some of his time on rebuttal of Chlaeneas' arguments, and he begins with an edited restatement of them (32.7–8). In promoting his own favourable interpretation of the actions of Philip II that Chlaeneas has condemned, he introduces rhetorical flourishes (*Who of you does not know...?* 33.4), striking phrases (*Philip personally volunteered his assistance* 5), and emphatic word order (*hyperbaton*) (Ἑλλάδος ... πάσης 5, πάντες 7). His account of Philip II ends in what almost amounts to an encomium (33.10–12), and is enlivened by *apostrophe* as it describes how the king unselfishly used his military success “to the common benefit of all” (11).¹⁷ Equally biased and selective is his rebuttal of Chlaeneas' criticism of Alexander, whom he portrays idealistically as the vindicator of Greek freedom from the barbarian who had done so much to embroil them in internecine strife. Next, recognizing that the actions of Alexander's successors were fresher in his audience's memory, he passes over them and taxes the Aetolians themselves apostrophically with a succession of anaphoric questions about their misdeeds: *Who was it that... Who was it that... Was it not you?* (34.6–8). This is followed by a catalogue of those who had led them to commit acts of sacrilege “worthy of Scythians

rhetoric, of which the historian himself is the author. He has chosen to display his talents for political oratory on a theme that is close to his heart as an Achaean leader.

¹⁷ See n.12 above.

and Gauls" (11). Lyciscus then rounds off his attack on the Aetolians' record (still addressing them, 35.1–4) with a neat *a fortiori* argument: the Aetolians claim one success in repelling the barbarians from Greece, whereas the Macedonians wage constant war against all of them, and have been Greece's bulwark (πρόφραγμα, 3; cf. Dem. 18.71, 299, 301).

Lyciscus' task of persuading his Spartan audience to embrace Macedon (Philip V) rather than the Aetolians has been complicated by recent history. In 222 B.C. Antigonos Doson defeated their king Cleomenes III at the Battle of Sellasia and restored their ancestral constitution, but a defeat in battle would have been something that many Spartans would not have wanted to recall, however beneficial its sequel may have been. Hence the emphasis Lyciscus places on Antigonos' humane treatment of his defeated enemies (36.4). He uses it to support the following difficult moral argument, saying that Spartan membership of the Hellenic Symmachy should supersede any treaty obligations that they had contracted with the Aetolians, who had done them no favours comparable with the very preservation of the freedom that the Macedonians (in the person of Antigonos) had conferred on them. Lyciscus presents this *dikaion*-argument in three successive forms (7–10), perhaps because he recognized that its moral basis was tenuous.

Up to this point (the end of 36, about two thirds of the way through his speech), Lyciscus has given only amplified replies to the arguments propounded by Chlaeneas, and these have all been concerned solely with the troubled relationships between Greeks. Polybius' readers, with the benefit of hindsight, will have noted this insular outlook, and perhaps even have seen in it an explanation of their slowness to react to the external danger. Polybius shares with Thucydides this ability to use speeches to reflect the prevailing mood of a people.¹⁸ But now

¹⁸ This ability is exemplified by the Athenians' reactions, as reported by Thucydides, to the speeches of the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians. Initially they favoured the Corinthians' arguments based on justice, but changed their minds on considering that war with Corinth was inevitable (1.44.2). Here, paradoxically, the failure of good rhetoric showed the depth of the people's fatalism. Similarly, he tells how their current mood of irrational optimism induced them to accept the bellicose arguments of

he makes Lyciscus bring his audience back to reality by returning them to the main subject, which is the prospect of non-Greeks becoming involved in Greek affairs, creating an entirely new situation, for which past precedents and policies do not provide guidance. He sharpens the rhetoric of his argument by upbraiding his Aetolian opponents (37.5–8):

I ask you, therefore, Cleonicus and Chlaeneas, who were your allies on the former occasion when you invited this people [the Spartans] to join you? Were they not all Greeks? But with whom are you now allied, or to what federation are you now inviting this people? Is it not to one with a barbarian?¹⁹ I suppose (*γῆ* ironic) you think the situation to be the same now as it was formerly, and not the precise opposite? In the past your struggles for dominion and glory have been with Achaeans and Macedonians with Philip their leader, men of your own race. Today a war is in prospect for the Greeks, against a foreign enemy, whom you think you are bringing against Philip, but have unconsciously brought against yourselves and the whole of Greece.

At this point (37.9 ff.) Lyciscus examines the implications of “the great cloud approaching from the West,” which, when portended by Agelaus in 217 B.C., meant the prevailing power in the war between Carthage and Rome. Now, in 211, the Romans occupy the international stage on their own. Lyciscus urges the Spartans to react to them as their ancestors had to that earlier barbarian enemy, the King of Persia (38.1–4), because they had then seen themselves as the champions of Greek freedom (5):

It would indeed be a worthy action (ironic *γῆ* again) for descendants of such men to ally themselves with the barbarians now, to campaign with them and make war upon Epirotes,

Alcibiades rather than the cautious counsel of Nicias (6.9–14), who sought to dampen their enthusiasm by giving a measured assessment of the extra resources needed, but this produced the opposite reaction (6.24.1–3).

¹⁹ An instance of faithful record. Polybius would probably not have described the Romans as “barbarians” (so Walbank, *Comm.* II 176), but the word would naturally have occurred to Lyciscus. Polybius allows him to develop the theme by reference to the Persian Wars. Pédech, *La méthode* 297, rightly sees Greek solidarity against all barbarians (i.e. non-Greeks) as Lyciscus’ main theme.

Achaean, Acarnanians, Boeotians, Thessalians, and in fact against all the Greeks except the Aetolians.

This general idea that the Aetolians are hostile to the Greeks at large is meant to suggest to the Spartans that they are really included in that hostility, and that alliance with Rome would only help the Aetolians realize their own ambitions of conquest, and benefit nobody else. Lyciscus reserves his most cutting irony for a final short visit to the past (39.4–5):

Surely this would be a fine alliance to join by choice (καλὸν γε ταύτης τῆς συμμαχίας μετασχεῖν κατὰ προαίρεσιν). Especially for Spartans; who, after conquering the barbarians, decreed that the Thebans, for being the only Greeks who decided to remain neutral during the Persian invasion, should have a tenth (δεκατεύσειν) of their goods dedicated to the gods.

A severe penalty for a lesser crime (of neutrality) than the one they are contemplating (even severer if δεκατεύσειν is shorthand for “be destroyed after having a tenth of their property dedicated to the gods”).²⁰ Lyciscus’ rhetoric may have lost some of its effect if his audience remembered that the punishment of the Thebans was not carried out; but the contrast he has drawn with the present temper at Sparta is compelling enough. It only remains for him to say once again that the twin dangers are from the ambitions of the Romans and the treachery of the Aetolians; and that salvation was to be found only from Achaean and Macedonia (39.6–7). He has depended heavily on moral argument throughout, appealing to what was honourable and decorous (καλὸν ... καὶ πρέπον, 39.6) in the Spartan character. But it is hatred of the Aetolians, manifested in the frequent *apostrophai* to which they are subjected, that unifies the speech, and is probably the main characteristic which supports the view that Lyciscus is for the most part conveying the opinions of the historian himself,²¹ while oc-

²⁰ See Walbank, *Comm.* II 180–182; also G. E. Underhill, *A Commentary on the Hellenica of Xenophon* (Oxford 1900) 242, on *Hell.* 6.3.20, where, however, the verb is passive (δεκατευθήναι).

²¹ As an Achaean, Polybius hated the Aetolians even to the extent of regarding Philip V as an acceptable ally against them. As to the Spartans, they were the ancestral enemies of his people, so that, again, he could see

asionally expressing prejudices which were natural to him as an Acarnanian. In the event, however, the Spartans did not share them, since they joined the Aetolians in Laevinius' coalition because they saw the need to frustrate Philip's plans as more pressing than the theoretical danger of the "cloud in the West." So we see again how the better rhetoric can fail to influence a prevailing mood, while at the same time serving to highlight that mood.

Greek Debates in the Changing World

The danger posed by Rome came closer with the defeat and death of Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal at the Metaurus river in 207, but the Greeks remained preoccupied with their internal differences. As if to reflect the greater urgency of the changed situation,²² Polybius records another speech on this same subject (11.4–6). The speaker, one Thrasycrates, is from Rhodes, a state which at this time often played the role of mediator in Greek affairs.²³ He is addressing an Aetolian assembly in autumn 207, and pleading with them to adopt a peaceful policy towards all the other Greeks, including Philip, rather than introduce the Romans, who would enslave or destroy all of them. It is a simple message, devoid of the recrimination which had characterized the exchanges between Chlaeneas and Lyciscus. But it is conveyed with great vehemence, and with the deployment of a wealth of rhetorical devices. Early in the speech, Thrasycrates portrays the uncertainties of war through a parable (4.4–5):

Just as in the case of fire, when a man has set the kindling alight, what happens next is out of his control, but the fire spreads in any direction that chance directs, guided mainly by the winds and the combustible nature of the material, and often confounds

the earlier Philip (II) as a potential guarantor of the freedom of his own people and their other Peloponnesian neighbours, and even criticized Demosthenes for labelling as traitors some of the men who enjoyed his friendship (18.14.15, cf. Dem.18.43, 48, 295).

²² But see Pédech, *La methode* 297 n.205, dating the speech to winter 208/7, hence before the Battle of the Metaurus.

²³ See Pédech, *La methode* 268. The name of the speaker appears only in the margin of **F**², but is accepted by the majority of commentators.

the man who lit it by turning its attack first on him; in the same way does war, once it has been ignited by one side, sometimes pursue an indiscriminate path, destroying everything that stands in its way, constantly renewing itself and adding to its intensity, as if fanned by the wind and by the folly of those confronting it.

He then prefaces his main argument with an antithesis between an unreal idea, that of the war being just, and that of the true situation, that the war proposed would be unjust and indeed utterly abominable (7–8). He follows this with an equally strong statement, that he intended to pull no punches in his presentation of his case (9–10), as he sets out to show the Aetolians’ “folly” (ἄγνοιαν, 11.5.1). This folly takes the form of confusion between words and deeds, the written covenant and the practical reality, an ancient antithesis in deliberative oratory (λόγος ... ἔργον). Claiming to be at war with Philip on behalf of the Greeks, the Aetolians are paradoxically bringing enslavement to them (5.1). The treaty with the Romans “says” one thing, but means another in operation; Philip is the pretext (πρόσχημα), but his allies are the victims, of the impending Roman occupation (5.4), and hence of the Greeks’ exposure to the cruellest abuse by “barbarians” (5.7). Thrasycrates describes this dramatically, with specific examples (5.8):

And now the fate of the people of Oreus and of the pitiable Aeginetans has exposed your folly to everyone, as if Fortune herself had deliberately brought your folly on to the stage.

In addition to the *prosopopoiia* of Fortune as an impresario, it may be suggested that the qualification “as if” signifies the speaker’s (or the historian’s) concession to popular understanding of the role of Fortune as a capricious agent in human affairs. Thrasycrates maintains his elevated tone with the portentous pronouncement, reminiscent of Herodotus’ famously grim observation (5.93.1), when he asks the Aetolians whether they realized that their alliance with Rome would be “the beginning of great evils for all the Greeks” (5.9).

In a final effort to inject urgency into his argument, Thrasycrates takes certain liberties with the historical facts, as any deliberating politician might be expected to do. Anticipating events, he speaks anachronistically of Hannibal, in the middle of 207 B.C., as already “shut up” (συγκλειμένον) in Bruttium, leaving the Romans free to direct the whole of their power on

Greece (11.6.2). Rhetorical resource continues to be applied, first in the antithesis “nominally to aid the Aetolians, but in reality to subject the whole of Greece to herself” (λόγῳ μὲν ... τῆ δ’ ἀληθείᾳ), then in a *dilemma* representing a win-win situation for the Romans (3):

If the Romans propose to treat them [sc. the Greeks] well theirs will be the gratitude and the credit; while if they treat them badly, they will enjoy the same benefits from those they destroy, and the same power over those they preserve.

In the next sentence (4), the delay of the subject μηδεὶς to final position in its sentence draws a decisive line under the argument. Thrasyrates then ends his speech on a more contemplative note, conceding that the future is hard to foresee, but advising his audience to accept good counsel that has been given frankly and in good faith. It is perhaps the most accomplished of the orations preserved by Polybius. That it was delivered by a Rhodian accords with the tradition that the island became one of the centres of rhetorical teaching when Aeschines founded a school there after his exile ([Plut.] *Vit. X Or.* 840D). The fact that four names of its subsequent heads have survived—Artamenes, Aristocles, Philagrios, and Molon, (Dion. Hal. *Dinarch.* 8)—suggests that the school may have existed continuously from its inception to the time of Cicero.

The ambassadorial speeches which Polybius assigns to King Eumenes of Pergamum and to the Rhodian delegates in 21.19–23 show the latter’s superior ability to suit their rhetoric to a particular occasion. The two parties are seeking to enhance their own status in the Roman settlement of Asiatic Greece after the defeat of Antiochus in the First Syrian War (189 B.C.). Eumenes’ speech is in two parts. In the first, Polybius summarizes the main themes attributed by Eumenes to the Rhodians in *Oratio Obliqua* (19.1–5), ending with the now hackneyed contrast between the professed aims of the Rhodians and their real agenda (ὀνόματι μὲν ... τῆ δ’ ἀληθείᾳ, 10), which is to increase their own power over the “liberated” Greek cities. He ends this section with an appeal in *Oratio Recta* (11–12: ἀξιοῦμεν...) not to allow the Rhodians to take the credit for securing the freedom of the other Greek states. Then (20) he stakes his own claim for preferment by listing his father’s (2–5) and his own (6–10) services to Rome, in a passage

which reads like one of the lists of their public duties (λειτουργία) which defendants in Athenian lawsuits routinely introduced into their speeches as “biographical proof” (πίστις ἐκ βίου). He notes that his own times “exposed him to the greater test of fire” (a striking metaphor from the process of assaying coins), and goes on to explain that Antiochus tempted him by offering him his daughter’s hand and a share of his kingdom. But, he says (9), “so far from accepting any of these offers” (cf. Isoc. *Arch.* 70, *Bus.* 32), he chose to fight on the Roman side, devoting his largest resources to their cause, and risking his life in the process. Thus his theme is justice (δίκαιον, 21.1), and the material for this topos is straightforward and conventional. He rounds it off with an *a fortiori* argument (2) combined, as often, with pathetic paradox: all of which makes a powerful ending to his speech, with the theme of justice constantly in play (9–11).

Polybius’ presentation of the Rhodians’ speech has greater complexity, arising from its greater rhetorical variety. He merely reports that they recounted their services to Rome as a short preamble (βραχέα προενεγκάμενοι, 22.6), and expressed embarrassment at finding themselves in opposition to a king with whom they were on friendly terms. But then there is a change of mood, as a more hostile assessment of their neighbour’s motives follows (8):

It is in the nature of every monarchy to hate equality, and to seek to have everybody, or failing that, as many as possible subject and obedient to them.

This bleak generalization seeks, in one sudden stroke, to rule out Eumenes and his successors as allies of the republican Romans, who had an ancestral hatred of kings. Not content, however, with this, the Rhodians rely not on *justice* alone, but also on the argument of *expediency* (συμφέρον, here συμφερότερα), the other major theme of deliberative oratory (9).²⁴ Polybius now deploys style and rhetoric as agents in the development of the theme of expediency. 10–11: “If it were not possible ... it would have been reasonable for them to despair ...” is the first limb of a hypothetical inversion, and is in Oratio

²⁴ Arist. *Rh.* 1358b–1359c, *Rh.Al.* 1421b–1422a.

Obliqua. But for the second limb (12–13, “But if it is possible to provide for both these contingencies at the same time, who could have any further doubt on this matter?”), Polybius switches into *Oratio Recta*, a remarkable change in the middle of a rhetorical figure. The effect is that, whereas the first (indirect) limb is concerned with the Romans discharging their obligations to Eumenes (the theme of *justice*), a subtler and more complex mixture of themes—*advantage*, *possibility*, and *justice*—is broached in the second limb, and subsequently developed, all in direct speech. The Rhodians flatter the Romans by praising their power and also their generosity, saying that, “as in a sumptuous banquet” (13), they had made conquests which could be liberally shared with their allies. They then expand on this by both expressing confidence that the Romans will use their conquests constructively (23.1–9), and at the same time quietly warning them that honour would be earned only if they completed their work of liberating the Greeks (10). They end on a lofty, idealistic note, with a touch of altruism (which some of Polybius’ readers will have read with a feeling of irony), saying (11–12): “We have not deserted our part as your friends, and have not hesitated to say freely what we think to be honourable and expedient for you to do, with no ulterior motive or any priority other than our own duty.”

The reasons for Polybius’ choice of *Oratio Obliqua* for the first part of the Rhodians’ speech seem clear: he did not wish to repeat in full the arguments from services rendered, which he had assigned to Eumenes; while he wanted to give prominence to the rhetorical ingenuity of the Rhodians’ speech, and used *Oratio Recta* in order to display their virtuosity to the greatest advantage. Unfortunately for them, in the real diplomatic world, it appears that the Romans decided to favour neither of the petitioners disproportionately.²⁵

War with their erstwhile allies the Aetolians (190–189 B.C.) was concluded by the Romans in a series of negotiations involving other Greek states, notably the Rhodians and Athenians. Polybius’ rendering of a speech by the Athenian Leon

²⁵ For details of the adjudication, see 21.24.6–9, with Walbank, *Comm.* III 117–118.

(21.31.7–15)²⁶ tells us something specific about his criteria for the choice and form of this material. In introducing the speech he says that it had earned admiration for Leon's use of a particularly apt simile, that of the common people being "like the sea, which left to its own nature was ever calm and unmoved, and not in the least likely to trouble any of those who approached or used it; but as soon as violent winds blew on it and stirred it up, and forced it against its nature to become agitated, then indeed nothing could be more more terrible or frightening than the sea." This simile had a very long history²⁷ (though Leon could have been thinking of a passage from his fellow-Athenian Demosthenes, 19.136); but it was clearly the feature of his speech that most people remembered. Polybius, however, consigns it to *Oratio Obliqua*, keeping *Oratio Recta* for the practical proposal (12–15) that the Romans should treat the politicians who had stirred up the Aetolian people "implacably" (ἀπαραιτήτως, 15). But this is no more than an excerpt; which probably establishes that Polybius did not have the access to a full text of the speech²⁸ that he may have had to those of, say, Chlaeneas and Lyciscus.

The known facts about Polybius' career place him firmly on the stage of Achaean politics by 180 B.C., the time of the next group of speeches which have been preserved from his *History*. The chroniclers, excerptors, and anthologists who are responsible both for the choice of the speeches preserved and for the form in which they have been transmitted either failed to find Polybius' original text of any of them, or decided, for a possible variety of reasons, to present them in summary form. Their content may partly explain their choice. The speeches concern only slightly differing approaches by Achaean politicians towards Rome, but their interest lies in the contrasting characters of the speakers. Lycortas, Polybius' father, emerges as a scrupulous politician, able to see the points of view of other parties in

²⁶ This identification of the speaker by Livy (38.10.4) is accepted by Walbank, *Comm.* III 130–131, and Pédech, *La méthode* 267, 275, 280.

²⁷ Solon fr.12 West, Hdt. 7.16α. Polybius has already used the simile in a speech by Scipio (11.29.9–10).

²⁸ So Pédech, *La méthode* 267.

the negotiations (24.8.2–4); whereas Callicrates goes off and denounces his own Achaean colleagues to the Romans (9). The speech which he delivered to the Senate is reported in some detail, but not given in direct speech, by Polybius (9.1–15). We cannot know for certain whether the historian would have given the actual text of the speech if he had approved of Callicrates and his policies; but we can have our suspicions. In 24.12–14, a straightforward comparison of two characters is presented partly in direct speech (12.1), with First Person Plural and finite verbs, the subjects being the Achaean leaders Philopoemen and Aristaenus. Polybius' choice of direct speech is almost certainly dictated by his desire to dramatize an important disagreement over the league's policy towards Rome at a critical time. Aristaenus is a cautious and realistic statesman, who argues (2–4):

There should be only two targets of every policy—honour and expediency. Those who are able to attain honour should cleave to that, if they are sensible. Those who cannot should take refuge in expediency. To miss both targets is the greatest possible proof of ill counsel. Therefore we must either show that we are strong enough to refuse obedience, or, if we dare not even to suggest this, we must give ready submission to orders.

Philopoemen, by contrast,²⁹ is a soldier before he is a politician. In a short sentence in indirect speech (13.1) he seems to be sensitive to the contrast when he says that “people should not suppose him so stupid as not to be able to estimate the difference between the Achaean and the Roman states, or the superior power of the latter.” But his instinctive forcefulness meets the needs of the present situation: he argues that willingness to offer physical resistance might convince the Romans that the Achaeans would not behave “like prisoners of war (δοριάλωτοι), offering unquestioning submission to every com-

²⁹ This extract may owe its preservation in Suidas to the fact that it centres on a comparison of the two Achaean leaders. Such comparison (σύγκρισις) of characters was one of the exercises (*progymnasmata*) with which teachers of rhetoric trained their pupils (Quint. 2.4.21; Theon *Progymn.* 9; Nicolaus Soph. *Progymn.* 10). When used by biographers, notably Plutarch, *synkrisis* served to sharpen characterization.

mand” (4). The soldier thus speaks (in *Oratio Recta*) with feeling and to good effect, reminding his audience of the treatment meted out to previous victims of Roman conquest.

The debate in the Achaean Assembly about its relationship with Rome reached even greater intensity ten years later (170 B.C.), two years before her final showdown with King Perseus of Macedon. The arrival of an embassy from Attalus of Pergamum, a firm ally of Rome, with a request for the restoration of the honours formerly granted to his brother Eumenes, coincided with this debate, and must inevitably have been coloured by it. Polybius’ father Lycortas had argued for neutrality, saying that the Achaeans “should send no help either to Perseus or to Rome, nor act against either” (28.6.3). But the time for equivocation had passed, and the new generation of Achaean politicians saw that their answer to the Pergamene embassy would be seen as a clear indication of their affinity. Fully conscious of this, their new *strategos* Archon advocated accession to the Pergamenes’ request, but found opinion sharply divided and seems to have lost confidence. Polybius, recently appointed hipparch, followed him with the decisive contribution to the discussion. This alone should lead us to expect him to give the full text of his speech: why does he give only a summary of it, and in indirect speech? The answer may be that he wishes to portray himself not as a dexterous rhetorician, adept at manipulating his audience’s emotions, but a principled statesman interested only in advocating the right policy, which in this case was in step with popular sentiment (7.8). In the version of the speech that he gives he tries to give a balanced account of both sides of the argument before coming down on the side which most strongly supported “justice and right” (τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ καλῶς ἔχον, 7.10). Even in its summary form, the speech shows Polybius’ special powers of definition and analysis of motivation (8–10):

The original decree of the Achaeans concerning these honours enacted that such honours as were inappropriate and illegal should be withdrawn, but not all honours by any means. The Rhodians Sosigenes and Diopēithes and their colleagues, however, who were arbitrators at that time, and were for personal reasons hostile to Eumenes, seized the opportunity to withdraw all the honours that had been bestowed on the king. In doing

this they had decided contrary to the decree of the Achaeans and the powers entrusted to them, and, what was worst of all, contrary to what was just and right.

Polybius goes on to explain that Eumenes had made demands beyond what his services to the Achaeans merited, and it was this that prompted them “to remove everything that seemed excessive.” He then states simply the required course of action (12–13):

So the Achaeans must make duty and honour their ruling consideration, correct the arbitrators’ error, and thereby also cancel the insult to Eumenes; especially as, in doing so, they would be bestowing this favour not on Eumenes only, but on his brother Attalus also.

This neat and logical recommendation brings the whole measured argument to a clear and seemingly inevitable conclusion. No wonder the assembly was convinced by it, without the need for histrionics or hyperbole.³⁰

The war against Perseus did not inspire general enthusiasm at Rome. In a speech to the people before setting forth on the final campaign, the consul L. Aemilius Paullus answered those who opposed it. The forthright spirit in which he confronted those critics drew the attention of excerptors and biographers, who would also have enjoyed the generalization about the deleterious effect of slander (*διαβολή*) which it contains (29.1.3). The fragment which has been preserved from Polybius’ version of his speech is in *Oratio Obliqua*, which is the appropriate medium for the highlighting of memorable sentiments, such as would have been passed on to him by an eyewitness, who would not necessarily reproduce the rhetoric of the speech as a whole. Polybius reports another of Aemilius’ *bons mots* after Perseus had been defeated at Pydna and was brought before the Senate (29.20.1–3).³¹ There the victorious consul warns his

³⁰ Pédech, *La méthode* 283, rightly draws greater attention to the political astuteness that Polybius displays in this speech than to the moral emphasis or the rhetorical force that he applies to the subject.

³¹ Polybius’ source for these speeches may have been the speaker’s descendant Scipio Aemilianus, who befriended the historian. See Pédech, *La méthode* 352; Walbank, *Comm.* III 392.

colleagues against triumphalism and vindictiveness, and adds the warning that “it is precisely at the time of greatest success, either private or public, that a man should be most sensible of the possibility of a reversal of fortune; for the difference between the foolish and the wise is that the former learn from their own misfortunes, the latter from those of others.” A commonplace sentiment, to be sure, but arresting in this historical context.

Polybius’ version of the substantial speech delivered by the Rhodian Astymedes (30.31.1–18) before the Senate in 165 B.C., reverts to the standard pattern of *Oratio Obliqua* switching to *Oratio Recta*. Polybius, or his source,³² surrounds the opening with an emotional atmosphere by saying that Astymedes “assumed the humble tone of men who are being flogged, begging to be forgiven, and declaring that his country had suffered sufficient punishment, more severe than their crime deserved” (3). The following general factual statement of his country’s losses is also in *Oratio Obliqua* (4). But this changes to *Oratio Recta* when reasoned argument begins (5):

But perhaps this makes sense. You gave them [sc. Lycia and Caria] to our people freely through good will, and now in cancelling that gift because of suspicion and disagreement with us, your behaviour would seem reasonable enough.

Direct speech remains the chosen medium in the sequel, when the speaker quantifies the losses to its sources of revenue that Rhodes has sustained (7–8): his rhetoric is strengthened by his recital of facts and figures (9–12); and they enable him to argue that Rhodes has been singled out for particularly harsh treatment (13–15, hypothetical inversion). The unifying topos of the whole speech is that of *justice*, in this case *justice denied*. The final plea is powerfully reconciliatory (16). Its emotional content matches Polybius’ description of the fear and dismay which the Rhodian ambassadors felt at the prospect of war with Rome (16–17):

Therefore, senators, as our people have lost their revenues, their freedom of speech, their equal diplomatic representation (100-

³² “A good, but unidentified source” (Walbank, *Comm.* III 456).

λογίαν), and their independence, for which in the past we have been willing to make any sacrifices, now, after our punishment, we beg and beseech you all to relax your anger and cement this alliance with us, so that it may be made clear to the whole world that you have put away your anger with the Rhodians, and returned to your old policy of friendship with them.

As a deliberative speech with strong elements of protest and pleading,³³ Astymedes' oration could have been a model for students. But the honest historian feels bound to add that the Senate were less influenced by it than by the evidence of Rhodian loyalty provided by Tiberius Gracchus on his return from an embassy from the island (19–20).

Conclusions

It is now possible to summarize our findings. On the general question of the function of the spoken word in Polybius' *History*, little difference is to be found between him and his predecessors, except the claim of selectivity which he appears to make through his use of the word *καιρώτατα*. *καιρός* embraces several concepts, being concerned not only with time, but also with the idea of appropriateness (*τὸ πρέπον*), which could achronously be applied to style.³⁴ With two forms of speech available to him, Polybius had a wide range of achievable stylistic effects. It remains to try to identify these from our readings of the speeches.

Where both forms occur, Indirect Speech (*Oratio Obliqua*) always precedes Direct Speech (*Oratio Recta*). This arrangement naturally produces a crescendo effect, but it may also arise from the self-imposed economy in direct discourse which can lead Polybius to prefer giving only a summary of a debate, and this can comfortably be rendered in *Oratio Obliqua*. That form is also suited to a report of the preliminary exchanges that lead to a full debate. It may also be preferred where the speaker is merely commending a course of action which has

³³ Polybius criticizes an earlier display of emotional oratory by this Astymedes in 30.4.10–17, noting that Astymedes later published that speech (11). See Walbank, *Comm.* III 420–421.

³⁴ See S. Usher, “*Kairos* in Fourth-Century Greek Oratory,” in M. Edwards and C. Reid (eds.), *Oratory in Action* (Manchester 2004) 52–61.

already been decided. By extension, advice recommending negative decisions is also consigned to *Oratio Obliqua*. Again, in cases where his source has recorded not the whole speech, but mainly strikingly memorable words, phrases, or images, these are conveyed in *Oratio Obliqua*. But *Oratio Recta*, with its broader canvas, is the better medium in which to characterize a speaker. Counsel with which one leader persuaded another to act decisively is also best delivered in direct speech. Again, in order fully to apply the standard *topoi* of justice, expediency, and possibility to particular cases, Polybius often thought it necessary to give them the full rhetorical treatment. Some of the more complex arguments, especially those which needed to include detailed information, benefited materially from being presented in rhetoricized form. *Oratio Recta* was also obviously the right form to use when special dramatic effects were required or an emotional atmosphere was historically a part of the scene. Finally, it is probable that the fulsome-ness of certain speeches in *Oratio Recta* is to be ascribed to their bearing on themes which interested Polybius personally. The two most important of these were the relationships between his own political base of Achaea and the rest of Greece, and the decisive interaction between the Greek and Roman worlds.

Polybius' style seems to have found no admirers among ancient critics, unlike those of his predecessors Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon;³⁵ and it has fared little better at the hands of modern commentators.³⁶ Yet I hope to have

³⁵ Absence of comment on Polybius' style by Cicero probably indicates dislike of it specifically, since he uses Polybius as a major source in *De Republica* and makes his characters speak respectfully of him (1.34, 2.27, 4.3); and as an active politician who turned to writing history, Polybius had one of the main qualifications which Cicero desiderated in a historian. See E. Fantham, *The Roman World of Cicero's De Oratore* (Oxford 2004) 150. The Atticist critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus is summarily dismissive of Polybius' style, listing him among the unreadable Hellenistic historians (*Comp. Verb.* 4).

³⁶ Since the thorough studies of L. Gozeler, *De Polybii elocutione* (Würzburg 1887), C. Wunderer, *Polybios-Forschung III* (Leipzig 1909), and R. Lacqueur, *Polybios* (Leipzig 1913), little attention has been paid to Polybius' style by commentators, whose main concern has been with historical ques-

shown at least that he deployed a high degree of skill, invention, and taste in the composition of his speeches, some of which must owe their preservation to excerptors' and anthologists' favourable opinion of them.

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tions, and who take at its face value the historian's frequent statements that he is writing for his readers' benefit rather than for their entertainment (1.4.11, 7.7.8, 9.2.6, 15.36.3, 31.30.1).