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Incomplete and Disconnected: Polybius, Digression, and its Historiographical Afterlife

Second consequence: the notion of discontinuity assumes a major role in the historical disciplines. For history in its classical form, the discontinuous was both the given and the unthinkable: the raw material of history, which presented itself in the form of dispersed events—decisions, accidents, initiatives, discoveries; the material, which, through analysis, had to be rearranged, reduced, effaced in order to reveal the continuity of events. Discontinuity was the stigma of temporal dislocation that it was the historian’s task to remove from history. It has now become one of the basic elements of historical analysis ... The notion of discontinuity is a paradoxical one: because it is both an instrument and an object of research; because it divides up the field of which it is the effect; because it enables the historian to individualize different domains but can be established only by comparing those domains. And because, in the final analysis, perhaps, it is not simply a concept present in the discourse of the historian, but something that the historian secretly supposes to be present: on what basis, in fact, could he speak without this discontinuity that offers him history—and his own history—as an object?

Michel Foucault,

The Archaeology of Knowledge, 8–9

Early in his genealogical account of the utterance (*énoncé*) as the basic constitutive element of human epistemology, Michel Foucault makes a striking claim regarding the role of discontinuity in early modern historical thought.¹ He claims that the discontinuous was both the raw material (*le donné*) which presented itself to the historian and the unimaginable consequence (*l’impensable*) of disparate events (*des événements dispersés*); the very substance of history, which required narration by the historian to trace out a linearity of affairs. Foucault goes on to claim that, traditionally, “the historian’s task was to remove” this discontinuity “from history”, even though this dislocation was the very thing which offered the historian the object of his inquiry (*cette rupture qui lui offre comme objet l’histoire—et sa propre histoire*).

When Foucault spoke of “history in its classical form” (*l’histoire dans sa forme classique*), he was not referring to the classical world per se, but rather to

¹ I wish to thank Ann Hanson, Christina S. Kraus, and Jeffrey Rusten for reading earlier versions of this paper, as well as the editors for their invitation to contribute and their wonderful *xenia* in Thessaloniki. Any remaining errors or omissions are entirely my own.

early modern Europe after the Renaissance.² Moreover, apart from the classical world's frustration with Foucault's own readings of antiquity,³ he appears to have gotten many things right regarding historical discontinuity: historians—not the least so Polybius—regularly strive to organize their various domains of inquiry (geographical and spatial separation; temporal discontinuity; political difference) in order to construct coherent narratives that unite some of these dislocations, and to create a history from otherwise inherent discontinuities. Foucault's only oversight, I would suggest, was viewing the digressive form of historical analysis as a recent phenomenon based on postmodern criticism.

If anything, our ancient sources amply demonstrate that historical disunity, as well as its role in shaping historiographical investigations, originated well over two millennia earlier. From the Homeric catalogues and embedded battle genealogies to the innately expansive model of Herodotean inquiry (*historiē*), thematic and narratological unity was merely a secondary consequence of *poēsis* (“literary production”) and *sungraphē* (“prose narrative composition” and “organization”—literally, a “writing together”). Moreover, digression continued in Greek historiography from the fifth century BCE into the Hellenistic Era, as is clear from the significant extant portions of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, and later testimonia on fragmentary historians such as Ephorus of Cyme and Theopompus of Chios, many of these recorded by Polybius himself.⁴

However, the recognition of the digression as a fundamental historiographical tradition—and one that was openly discussed by historians and rhetoricians alike—did not emerge until a slightly later date. In this paper, I argue that this development can be situated precisely in the *Histories* of Polybius; that it was only as a result of Polybius' legacy—specifically, the subsequent recognition of his innovations to digressive narratology and the need to create an “interweaving” of events (*symplokē*) from distinct corners of the Mediterranean—that a consensus around this historical convention finally emerged; and that its afterlife, in both the imperial Roman annalists and the Roman rhetoricians who commented on the historiographical tradition, shows a pervasive Polybian influence. Indeed, if Roman antiquarianism is any guide, it was Polybius who provoked one of the

² See, for example, Foucault 1970, 136–79 and Foucault 1972, 157–65.

³ Larmour, Miller, and Platter 1998, 4: “What may be most important, however, is the success Foucault has had as a catalyst. The reaction to and debate over *The History of Sexuality* is ongoing and rich”.

⁴ Thucydides' digressions have been explicated in detail by Pothou 2009. For the moralizing tendency of digressions in classical and hellenistic historiography—and a useful schema of the motivations for such discursions—see Hau 2016, 9–11. For an analysis of the digression in Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, see Spada 2008.

most significant shifts in the genre's narratology, discursive self-awareness, and understanding of how best to situate the paratextual past.

1 Early Historical Discursiveness: Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides

Historical digression certainly did not begin with Polybius. In fact, we can readily discern as early as Homer's *Iliad* a tendency to situate historiographic modes of discourse in narrative discontinuities: in catalogues, such as the Catalogue of Ships and Trojan heroes (*Il.* 2.484–760 and 2.816–877) and the Catalogue of the Myrmidon leaders (*Il.* 16.168–97), both of which make extensive usage of geography, genealogy, accounts set in the plupast, and counterfactual histories, all within a constellation of Panhellenic origins;⁵ in the genealogies of lesser heroes (or *kleine Kämpfer*) embedded in battle sequences,⁶ which Charles Rowan Beye has also labeled as catalogues, and which contain many of the same historiographic tendencies; and in the ekphrastic histories begun from material objects, such as armor and helmets, which Jonas Grethlein has recently analyzed on such terms.⁷

Narrative discursiveness also began as what seems like a natural reflex in Herodotus' *Histories*. It was likely a response to Ionian intellectual models, which led our inquirer to create a generic sponge that would lead many subsequent readers to label Herodotus' work as digressive, even if he himself only viewed this

5 Beye 1964, 346: "In the Catalogue each item provides the same facts, that is, the names of towns, the names of leaders, and the number of ships. The order in which these facts are presented is variable, but every item contains each of these facts". See also Sammons 2010, 136, n. 3, who labels these various "elaborations" as being "sometimes genealogical ... sometimes pertaining to the leader's special qualities ... sometimes the leader's personal history". That these details are historical in nature can be corroborated by the fact that they were subsequently viewed as evidence by Thucydides for his claims about the comparative greatness of his own subject matter (1.10), by the second century BCE historian Apollodorus of Athens, and by the geographers Strabo and Pausanias.

6 The term originates from the title of a 1954 dissertation by Strasburger, *Die kleinen Kämpfer der Ilias*.

7 For a recent study, see Grethlein 2008. My list of categories does not include the speeches, such as those of Nestor (1.254–84), Antenor (3.205–24), Glaucus and Diomedes (6.119–236), and Phoenix (9.434–605), which offer extensive backstories to pre-Iliadic events. An excellent start has been made on this topic by Austin 1966, who treats such speeches that open the narrative to earlier time periods as narratological digressions.

as the expected outcome of an expansive “inquiry” (*historiē*).⁸ History, as we know, was the name Herodotus gave his “display of inquiry” (or the *ἱστορίας ἀπόδειξις*, *praef.*),⁹ which for him entailed extensive exploration based upon the presumption that great accomplishments were displayed by both Greeks and barbarians, that human fortunes were mutable, and that change was inevitably wrought upon all civilizations, great cities and small towns alike.¹⁰ As Katherine Clarke explains, “This provided the basis for the structuring of his work. Because history brings to the fore one region after another, Herodotus’ readers move around accordingly.”¹¹ If Herodotean history is unreservedly mobile, then the digression becomes a natural consequence of viewing the past on peripatetic terms.¹²

By contrast, Thucydides avows from the outset to compose a history focused specifically on the Peloponnesian War: “Thucydides the Athenian has written into historical narrative *the Peloponnesian War*”—Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων, 1.1.1).¹³ Thus, even though Thucydides’ narrative is geographically synoptic and presents a broad imperial setting, the history nonetheless tries to limit its scope of inquiry. Indeed, Thucydides’ view that the Peloponnesian War is the singular event most worthy of a historical account (ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων, 1.1.1) has an impact on how both the historian *constructs* and the reader *construes* narratives that seem either temporally or geographically to move away from this topical focus. Unlike Herodotus, who from the outset allows

⁸ For a detailed study of Herodotus’ Ionian epistemology, see Thomas 2000.

⁹ All translations of Greek and Latin texts are my own.

¹⁰ The verbs Herodotus employs in his preface emphasize this mobility and sense of historical becoming, and often include verbs of motion for his own historical inquiry. A recent detailed analysis is given by Wood 2016, 14–23. For an earlier exploration of the way in which Herodotus creates a path (*hodos*) of discourse, see Lang 1984, 4. Cf. Jacoby 1909, who considers the Herodotean *logoi* as acts of *periēgeisthai* emerging out the historian’s usage of the earlier generic model of the *Periodos Gēs*, 89.

¹¹ Clarke 1999a, 15–16.

¹² De Jong 2002, 255–58, gives an extensive summary of the debate surrounding the question of the Herodotean digression and its long history.

¹³ Marincola 2001, 65–66: “Thucydides defined his topic narrowly: he ‘wrote up (ξυνέγραψε) the war of the Athenians and Peloponnesians, how they fought with each other’. He chose a single conflict that lasted many decades, but unlike Herodotus he did not use the conflict as a starting-point for wide-reaching investigations”. For a different perspective, see Greenwood 2006, 11–12, 43, 47–48.

himself the freedom to wander wherever his “inquiry” (*historiē*) takes him, Thucydides straightway limits the scope of his history in response to his predecessor.¹⁴

We see this again quite clearly when Thucydides labels his extensive *Pentekontaetia* backstory (1.89–117) as a digression that he feels the need to justify in light of his overall historical endeavor:¹⁵

ἡγούμενοι δὲ αὐτονόμων τὸ πρῶτον τῶν ξυμμάχων καὶ ἀπὸ κοινῶν ξυνόδων βουλευόντων τοσάδε ἐπήλθον πολέμῳ τε καὶ διαχειρίσει πραγμάτων μεταξύ τοῦδε τοῦ πολέμου καὶ τοῦ Μηδικοῦ, ἃ ἐγένετο πρὸς τε τὸν βάρβαρον αὐτοῖς καὶ πρὸς τοὺς σφετέρους ξυμμάχους νεωτερίζοντας καὶ Πελοποννησίων τοὺς αἰεὶ προστυγχάνοντας ἐν ἐκάστω. ἔγραψα δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ τὴν ἐκβολὴν τοῦ λόγου ἐποίησάμην διὰ τὸδε, ὅτι τοῖς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἄπασιν ἐκλιπὲς τοῦτο ἦν τὸ χωρίον καὶ ἢ τὰ πρὸ τῶν Μηδικῶν Ἑλληνικὰ ξυνετίθεσαν ἢ αὐτὰ τὰ Μηδικά: τούτων δὲ ὅσπερ καὶ ἦψατο ἐν τῇ Ἀττικῇ ξυγγραφῇ Ἑλλάνικος, βραχέως τε καὶ τοῖς χρόνοις οὐκ ἀκριβῶς ἐπεμνήσθη. ἅμα δὲ καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀπόδειξιν ἔχει τῆς τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἐν οἴῳ τρόπῳ κατέστη.

As leaders of initially autonomous allies who made policy that originated from common assemblies, they accomplished so many things in both war and administration of affairs during the period of time which came between this war and the Persian War, which matters came to pass for them in their dealings with the barbarian, with their rebellious allies, and with whichever of the Peloponnesian states they happened to encounter on any given occasion. Yet I have recorded these matters and have made an excursus from my main narrative for the following reason, because this space of time was omitted by all those before me who narrated in writing either Hellenic affairs before the Persian Wars or the Persian Wars themselves. Granted, a certain one among them, Hellenicus, touched upon these affairs in his Attic History, yet his recollections were of few words and inaccurate with respect to chronology. Furthermore, it contains an elucidation of the Athenian Empire, specifically in what manner it came into being (Thuc. 1.97).

Thucydides’ statements are extremely illuminating for how we ought to understand the development of the digression in subsequent historical writing, especially that of Polybius. First, Thucydides gives his narratological act of digression an explicit title. The use of a nominal term ἐκβολή for a narrative action or function, literally a “throwing out from” (ἐκ + βάλλω) the main storyline (τοῦ λόγου),

¹⁴ Pothou 2009, 119–20: “In Herodotus, as a result of his insertion of diverse narrative elements—especially his long ethnographic digressions—we cannot possibly consider his primary subject matter in terms of uniformity. In this respect, the narrative structure in the work of Thucydides is characterized by singularity and unity, whereas in the work of Herodotus it displays a certain plurality and multiplicity” (my translation).

¹⁵ The *Pentekontaetia* refers to the so-called “fifty-year” period that began with the end of the Persian War (479 BCE) and concluded with the outset of the Archidamian War (431 BCE).

has almost no prior instantiation, and represents the only such semantic intervention for the entirety of the work.¹⁶ The sense of the digression as a movement outside of, rather than as an insertion, may not be an entirely novel way of conceiving of the digression (given at least one statement in Herodotus of returning to the main narrative from which one departed), yet it is different from the previous “insertion” label (πρός + τίθημι, or παρά + ἐν + τίθημι) which had been given to the digression twice by Thucydides’ predecessor (προσθήκη, Hdt. 4.30.1 and παρενθήκη, Hdt. 7.171).¹⁷ In fact, many terms employed by Polybius for narrative digressions consist of similar formulations: compound forms of βαίνω, such as παρέκβασις (“a going aside from”—3.2.7, 12.28.10, 38.6.1) and μεταβαίνω (“pass from one subject to another”—38.5.2, 38.6.1); of ῥίπτω, such as ἀπορρίπτω (“throw away, cast out”—8.11.3); and of λείπω, such as ἀπολείπω (“leave” or “depart from”—38.5.2, 38.6.6). Moreover, the shared spatial language for narrative disjunction is also evident in Thucydides’ usage of the term (χωρίον) for a historical period that had been omitted by his predecessors as a rationale for his digression,¹⁸ as well as Polybius’ emphasis on the need for narrative “interweaving” (*symplokē*) amidst the widening world of Hellenistic Mediterranean imperialism.

A closer look at the passage confirms the extent to which Thucydides was keenly aware of his “constructive” narrative process when he made use of this digression. On the one hand, he sees this as the form which his writing has taken: whereas the phrase ἔγραψα δὲ αὐτὰ refers to the historian textualizing (ἔγραψα) his content (αὐτὰ)—much like the very first statement in his work (Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον, 1.1.1)—the accompanying phrase καὶ τὴν ἐκβολὴν τοῦ λόγου ἐποίησάμην διὰ τὸδε provides his reader with the narrative form this subject matter has taken (τὴν ἐκβολὴν τοῦ λόγου),¹⁹ as well as a first

¹⁶ Greenwood 2006, 62: “Although there are other digressions in Thucydides’ text, this is the only passage where he uses an explicit term for the digression”. Cf. Spada 2008, 59. Rhodes 2014, 246, noting its pivotal role, rightly labels this phrase as a “second introduction” to the *Pentekontaetia* narrative, just as Rood 1998, 229, refers to it as “the ‘second preface’”. Before Thucydides, this specific verbal noun had remained limited to literal acts of jettisoning (*i.e.* ballots into an urn at Aesch. *Eu.* 748), or to acts of political expulsion and banishment (Aesch. *Supp.* 421).

¹⁷ For a discussion of these terms as justification for using the term digression or *Exkurs* for a Herodotean diegetic shift, see de Jong 2002, 255.

¹⁸ Greenwood 2006, 47–48, noting this quality, offers an excellent analysis of this passage in light of Herodotean precedent.

¹⁹ Jeffrey Rusten has brought to my attention the fact the Thucydides regularly uses *logos* to refer to an “argument” (cf. LSJ VI 3—“discussion, debate, deliberation”, citing Thuc. 1.140). Such an overdetermined usage of the word in this context would make a great deal of sense, given that, from a narratological perspective, several crucial “debates” and “deliberations” leading up to the outbreak of the war quite literally surround the *Pentekontaetia* digression (the Corinthian

person verb of physical construction and literary *poēsis* (ἐποησιάμην) that seems to reflect the topics found within the *Pentekontaetia* narrative which our historian is composing—*building* the long walls, *constructing* ships for a navy, *assembling* the foundations of an empire.²⁰ In many respects, these prefigure the central concern that drives Polybian historiography—the conquest of the Mediterranean and its various powers by Rome.²¹

This brings us to a second novelty in the Thucydidean digression: the need for an explanation. Whereas Herodotus envisions his *Histories* as mirroring his expansive “inquiry” (*historiē*) in both narrative form and the motivations for such discursiveness (often little more than a *thauma megiston*)²²—and explicitly declares within his Scythian ethnography, “For, as you know, my narrative has been seeking out supplements from the start” (προσθήκας γὰρ δὴ μοι ὁ λόγος ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐδίζητο, 4.30.1)—Thucydides, by contrast, and perhaps as the result of his

and Athenian debate followed by the speech of Archidamus at 1.67–87 immediately precede it; the speech of the Corinthians to their allies at 1.119–25 immediately follows it). In many respects, this separation of the digression (*ekbolē*), which is aimed at rooting out the true causes (*prophaseis*) of the war, from the various allegations and pretexts put forward in these debates (*logoi*) found within the main narrative (*logos*), might be read as a digressive reformulation of the famous *logos/ergon* dichotomy in Thucydides, discussed extensively by Parry 1981 and Price 2001. Nonetheless, we ought to note a similar usage of the expression by Arrian to mark the conclusion of the ethnographic section of his *Indica* (ταῦτα δὲ ἐκβολή μοι ἔστω τοῦ λόγου, 17.7), as well as LSJ V (“continuous statement, narrative”), which lists Thuc. 1.97 as an example under this sub-heading.

20 See Rood 1998, 230–31, who explains the belated justification for the excursus and Athenian hegemony as emerging only after the necessary preconditions have been met, in particular the construction of the long walls as a guarantee against Spartan political interference. See also Stadter 1993, 45: “Again, as at 93.2, details of the construction of the walls reinforce the account. In both cases the circumstantial account of construction serves as a rhetorical *auxesis* of the achievement”.

21 For this as Polybius’ primary motivation, see Plb. 1.1–1.6, noting in particular the emphasis on explaining Rome’s universal dominion at 1.1.5 (“how nearly the entirety of the inhabited world fell under the sole imperial rule of the Romans”—πῶς ... σχεδὸν ἅπαντα τὰ κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην ... ὑπὸ μίαν ἀρχὴν ἔπεσε τὴν Ῥωμαίων), 1.2.7, and 1.3.10 (“to their full realization of empire and power over the whole world”—πρὸς τὴν συντέλειαν ... τῆς τῶν ὅλων ἀρχῆς καὶ δυναστείας).

22 The central role of *thauma* (Ion. *thōma*) in shaping Herodotean metanarrative is explained in depth by Munson 2001.

oblique criticisms of Herodotus and his self-imposed historiographical limitations, shows a strong need to defend his narrative turn.²³ He does so by emphasizing how important the *Pentekontaetia* was to the creation of the Athenian empire and her resultant conflict with the Peloponnesian League (ἄμα δὲ καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀπόδειξιν ἔχει τῆς τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἐν οἷῳ τρόπῳ κατέστη).²⁴ For elsewhere in his digression, he emphasizes Themistocles' role in securing power for Athens through the construction of her walls, both the reconstruction of the city walls after the Persian War (1.89–93.2) and the erecting of the long walls (1.93.3–93.8; 1.107.1), as well as the expansion of her navy which he links explicitly to her acquisition of empire (1.93.3–4; 1.99.3)²⁵—all linked to the Spartan fear of the burgeoning Athenian Empire as the true cause of the Peloponnesian War (1.88).²⁶ Thus, what prompts a digression from the main narrative is essentially a much fuller contextualization (*logos*) for the war's outbreak: the “beginning” (*archē*) of an “empire” (*archē*)— or, simply put, a double *archéologie*.²⁷

23 Marincola 2001, 68: “Unlike Herodotus, Thucydides was chary of digressions, and he tended to avoid material that did not fall under the category of ‘the things done in the war’ (τὰ ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ, 1.22.2); for that very reason, the few places where he does allow himself to move from his stated subject matter are all the more noticeable. Earlier scholarship, in accord with its view of Thucydides as a historian with a passion for accuracy, had seen these incidents mainly as occasions for the author’s correction of error on the part of others. More recently, however, scholars have suggested that these digressions are closely related to the thematic concerns of the history”.

24 See also Walker 1957, 33, Stadter 1993, 38–52, Spada 2008, 70, and Pothou 2009, 120, 126–28.

25 Cf. Westlake 1955, 59–60, Rood 1998, 232, and Stadter 1993, 43–47, esp. 45.

26 Rood 1998, 226, examining Thuc. 1.88: “The passages that frame the *Pentekontaetia* suggest that it is designed as an explanation of Sparta’s decision to make war, and of the perceptions that explain that decision”. Similarly, Hornblower 1991, 148, writes on the reasoning for Thucydides’ inclusion of 1.97 that “his motive is to amplify his statement about Athenian power at 88. This is a first-order reason for treating the period”. The first to put forth such an explanation for the excursus through a connection with ἡ ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις (1.23.6) were Westlake 1955, 66 and Walker 1957, 31. Cf. Stadter 1993, 42 and Spada 2008, 67–68.

27 Interestingly, Polybius is also quite keen to link narratology with imperial motivation. Consider, for example, the use of the similar term *epibolē* (“design”) by Polybius, to refer to both the “designs” on acquiring empire (πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὅλων ἐπιβολήν, 1.3.6) and the literary “enterprise” of writing history (πρὸς τὴν ἐπιβολήν τῆς ἱστορίας, 1.4.2). See also Hartog 2010, 38, who declares that “Polybius is the new Thucydides, or a post-Aristotelian Thucydides”.

2 From Tangent to Tradition: Polybius and the Historiographical Convention of Digression

Thucydides' history as an act of historiographical reception and reconception—namely as a response to and a rejection of the expansive, more universalizing, and inherently digressive *Histories* of Herodotus—presents us with our first reformulation in the evolution of the historical digression. Indeed, the decision to limit its usage to etiologically motivated flashbacks necessitated by conflicts, either in the narrative proper or in the historiographical tradition, follows Thucydides' redefinition of history as the narrative of one substantial event in the form of the war monograph.²⁸ Yet, by the time Thucydides finished what he could of his *History of the Peloponnesian War* at the outset of the fourth century BCE, the digression was still not an established tradition in historical writing.²⁹ It was not until Polybius' employment of the digression several centuries later, and his recognition that it constituted a fundamental feature of historiography in response to his more immediate predecessors Ephorus of Cyme, Theopompus of Chios, and Timaeus of Tauromenium, that it would come to see far greater usage in a range of Roman historical subgenres.

Although Polybius had a range of historical precedents on which to model his *Histories*,³⁰ his avowed aim was to track Rome's steady imperial expansion

28 Here, I limit my use of the label digression in Thucydides to four such excursions: the *Pentekontaetia* narrative (Thuc. 1.89–117), the biographical backstories of Pausanias and Themistocles (1.126–138), the Sicilian ethnography (6.2–5), and the digression on the tyrant slayers Harmodius and Aristogeiton (6.54–59). For a more inclusive classification of the Thucydidean digression, see Pothou 2009.

29 In fact, a quick glance at Xenophon's two main historical works, the *Hellenica* (generally considered a continuation of Thucydides' narrative) and the *Anabasis*, feature almost none of the digressions seen in his two canonical predecessors. Nonetheless, for an analysis of digression in Xenophon, see Spada 2008, 85–111, 173–83, and Hau 2016, 241.

30 Not only Herodotus and Thucydides, but also, based upon his own statements, the memoirs of Aratus of Sicyon, Phylarchus, Fabius Pictor, Philinus of Agrigentum, Ephorus of Cyme, Theopompus of Chios, Timaeus of Tauromenium, and likely a range of other historians and geographers. For a useful summary of these and other citations, see Walbank 1957, 2–16, and Walbank 1972, 32–46. Although Polybius never mentions Herodotus as a historical source, recent work by McGing has shown that Herodotus likely served as a model for some of his accounts (see McGing 2010, 52–58 and McGing 2012). Similarly, Thucydides is barely mentioned by name, yet arguments in favor of Thucydides' influence on Polybius abound: Ziegler 1952, 1522–24, Walbank 1972, 40–43, McGing 2010, 58–61, Hartog 2010, Rood 2012, and Longley 2012. It is worth emphasizing the strong tendency by ancient historians to cite sources only for knowledge of particular events, and to omit citations of rhetorical, stylistic, and topical influence. Excellent case studies

over several centuries, and so he opted for a more universal history which included numerous geographical settings, a temporal predilection for the *longue durée*, and plenty of digressions and backstories set in the plupast.³¹ Not surprisingly, it was Polybius who first identified the digression as a necessary element in the historiographical tradition; who saw reason to define what constituted an appropriate usage of the narratological device; and who was the first writer to suggest that he perfected this historical practice that had previously been used irregularly.³² Moreover, as *Quellenforschung* (“source criticism”) and more recent developments of this comparative process have made clear, Polybius’ influence on later Roman historians such as Livy was immense. Thus, his position in the development of the historiographical digression is absolutely decisive.

More than any other ancient historian, it was Polybius who made the digression a defining feature of historiography.³³ The historian himself is noted for countless, often extensive narratological excursions: his extensive Celtic backstory (2.14–35), his lengthy criticisms of Timaeus of Tauromenium (alongside praise for Aristotle, Ephorus of Cyme, and even Theopompus of Chios on occasion), which occupy almost the entirety of the fragments from a surviving book (12.3–15, 12.23–28), the similar comments on Callisthenes of Olynthus (12.17–22), his digression on the decline of Boeotia (20.4–7), and his tripartite discursion on constitutions of government (6.1–18), the Roman army (6.19–42), and further constitutional and civic ideals (6.43–57)—essentially making Book 6 in its entirety a collection of digressions.³⁴

Just as important, Polybius identifies an emerging historical tradition at a pivotal moment in the historiographic corpus. The Hellenistic historians, including Polybius at the tail end, serve as a key nexus point for the canonical histories

in historiographical intertextuality without overt citation are given by O’Gorman 2009, Martin and Woodman 1989, Clauss 1997, and Moles 1998.

31 By “plupast”, I am adopting a term developed by Grethlein and Krebs 2012, which is used to refer to the anterior, pluperfect, or more remote past when it is presented within a historical narrative that is, by default, always-already set in the past.

32 Plb. 38.6.3, discussed at length below.

33 For an overview of the Polybian digression with some ideas for classification, see Walbank 1972, 46–48.

34 Polybius, in a second preface early in Book 3, labels a number of these upcoming discussions as digressions. These include the major excursus in Book 6 on the Roman constitution—“Pausing my narrative at the point of these affairs (στήσαντες δ’ ἐπὶ τούτων τὴν διήγησιν) I shall introduce an account (συστησόμεθα λόγον) concerning the constitution of the Romans (ὕπερ τῆς Ῥωμαίων πολιτείας)”, 3.2.6—as well as his laying out (δηλώσομεν) the narrative about the fall of the dominion of Hieron of Syracuse (τὴν κατάλυσιν τῆς Ἱέρωνος τοῦ Συρακοσίου δυναστείας) “in the course of a digression (κατὰ παρέκβασιν)”, 3.2.7.

of Greece and Rome. Aside from Polybius and Livy, Felix Jacoby's landmark compilation, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (*FGrHist*), has made amply clear the high frequency with which the now fragmentary Hellenistic historians recur in Roman imperial ethnographers, geographers, historians, and encyclopedists such as Pomponius Mela, Pliny the Elder, Strabo, and Arrian—including such historians as Megasthenes (*BNJ* 715), Nearchus (*BNJ* 133), Onesicritus (*BNJ* 134), Berossus of Babylon (*BNJ* 680), and Daimachus (*BNJ* 716), to name only a few.³⁵ It is therefore of great significance that a Hellenistic historian is explicating digression in such detail given the frequent usage of historical texts from this period as source material for Roman imperial writings.

Consider Polybius' praise of Ephorus' usage of such asides to show the disparity with Timaeus in his extremely long criticism of the latter in his extended discussion:

ὁ γὰρ Ἐφορος παρ' ὅλην τὴν πραγματείαν θαυμάσιος ὦν καὶ κατὰ τὴν φράσιν καὶ κατὰ τὸν χειρισμὸν καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐπίνοιαν τῶν λημμάτων, δεινότατός ἐστιν ἐν ταῖς παρεκβάσει καὶ ταῖς ἀφ' αὐτοῦ γνωμολογίαις, καὶ συλλήβδην ὅταν ποῦ τὸν ἐπιμετροῦντα λόγον διατίθεται.

For Ephorus, although he is admirable across the entirety of his work with respect to his diction, his literary treatment, and the inventiveness of his arguments, is most skillful in his digressions and in the collections of his maxims, and whenever, in short, he is inclined to supplement his primary narrative in some way (Plb. 12.28.10, *BNJ* 70 T 23).

What we see emerging in Polybius' praise of Ephorus is an awareness of the digression as a feature of historiography that merits discussion, just as much as literary style, treatment of subject matter, inventiveness, and personal opinion.³⁶ The fact that Polybius goes out of his way to stress, among other authorial and rhetorical qualities, the superlative skillfulness (δεινότατος) of the universal historian when it comes to his excursions (ἐν ταῖς παρεκβάσει), that is, in the supplementation of his primary narrative (τὸν ἐπιμετροῦντα λόγον), certainly marks

³⁵ Much of Jacoby's work has been translated in the development of the online *Brill's New Jacoby* (*BNJ*) edited by Ian Worthington, whose numbering I follow in the citations provided above.

³⁶ In terms of literary poetics, we hear mention of φράσις by the character Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (*Ar. Ran.* 1122), as well as in Longinus' *On the Sublime* (*Subl.* 8.1, 30.1); of χειρισμός in Philodemus' *On Rhetoric* (in Sudhaus 1892, Vol. 1, 371); and of ἐπίνοια, notably, in a passage in Longinus that deals with φράσις as its companion, noting that the two are "closely interlinked with one another" (Ἐπειδὴ μέντοι ἢ τοῦ λόγου νόησις ἢ τε φράσις τὰ πλεῖω δι' ἑκατέρου διέπτυκται, *Subl.* 30.1).

our earliest commentary on, and therefore recognition of, the digression as a specific feature of historiography.³⁷

Even more striking, Polybius' praise of Ephorus' digressions falls in a lengthy discussion of Timaeus' failures as historian, in particular his overreliance on hearsay and his lack of experiential autopsy, in contrast to Ephorus, whom the former is said by Polybius to have criticized (12.27.4–11).³⁸

ὦν Τιμαῖος οὐδὲ τὴν ἐλαχίστην πρόνοιαν θέμενος, ἀλλὰ καταβιώσας ἐν ἐνὶ τόπῳ ξενιτεύων, καὶ σχεδὸν ὡς εἰ κατὰ πρόθεσιν ἀπειτάμενος καὶ τὴν ἐνεργητικὴν τὴν περὶ τὰς πολεμικὰς καὶ πολιτικὰς πράξεις καὶ τὴν ἐκ τῆς πλάνης καὶ θέας αὐτοπάθειαν, οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως ἐκφέρεται δόξαν ὡς ἔλκων τὴν τοῦ συγγραφέως προστασίαν.

Of which Timaeus instilled not the least bit of concern, but spent his life in one place even though he was in exile. And so, generally speaking, even if he purposely renounced active experience in military and political affairs, as well as in wandering and sightseeing, I know not how he has eked out and amassed for himself the reputation of an expert in historiography (Plb. 12.28.6–7).

Such praise of Herodotean ideals in Ephorus (notably the wandering and sight-seeing—τὴν ἐκ τῆς πλάνης καὶ θέας αὐτοπάθειαν) demonstrates a commitment to universal history, with all of its discursive implications, in a greatly expanding Roman imperial world. However, in making such a statement, Polybius also reminds readers of the Thucydidean historian—the military and political man of action (τὴν ἐνεργητικὴν τὴν περὶ τὰς πολεμικὰς καὶ πολιτικὰς πράξεις)—a model, he claims, that was also taken up by Theopompus. The idea is further complicated by Polybius' criticism of the paradox of Timaeus spending his life in one location even though he was forced into exile (ἀλλὰ καταβιώσας ἐν ἐνὶ τόπῳ ξενιτεύων).³⁹ After all, we know firsthand that Thucydides was ostracized for his military failures at Amphipolis (Thuc. 5.26.5), and, quite telling in this respect, the word he chooses for his *Pentekontaetia* “digression”, *ekbolē*, originally had a

³⁷ Elsewhere Polybius uses the same expression in a digression about the Sicilian tyrants Hieronymus, Hieron, and Gelon, in order to emphasize that previous historians who treated the subject devoted too much of their narrative to Hieronymus, and that any writer could have done a better narratological job (εὐλογώτερον) if he had supplemented that narrative with more about Hieron and Gelon (τὸν ἐπιμετροῦντα λόγον τῆς διηγήσεως εἰς Ἱέρωνα καὶ Γέλωνα διάθαιτο, 7.7.7).

³⁸ For Polybius' polemical mischaracterization of Timaeus as a historian, see Baron 2013, 58–88.

³⁹ For a summary of the historical debates regarding the dating of Timaeus departure and exile at Athens following the rise of Agathocles to power in his native city of Tauromenium, see Baron 2013, 18–22.

political denotation of exile and banishment.⁴⁰ Similarly, Polybius himself was forced to leave his own native city of Megalopolis, and it was only as a result of this that he saw much of Mediterranean world as an eyewitness to Roman geopolitics. In this respect, Timaeus' historical failures become linked to the very idea of history/*historiē* as travel-based inquiry driven by political exigency,⁴¹ in which the digression serves as an expression of that mobile inquest.

The sea change that resulted from Philip of Macedon's conquest of the Aegean and Alexander's campaigns as far east as India lent themselves nicely to a revisiting of the digressive model of historiography. Narratives needed to travel with their far-roaming subjects, as Polybius' extensive comments in a lengthy digression make clear:⁴²

οὐ γὰρ ἀγνοῶ διότι τινὲς ἐπιλήφονται τῆς πραγματείας, φάσκοντες ἀτελεῖν καὶ διερριμμένην ἡμᾶς πεποιῆσθαι τὴν ἐξήγησιν τῶν πραγμάτων, <εἰγ'> ἐπιβαλλόμενοι λόγου χάριν διεξιέμεναι τὴν Καρχηδόνος πολιορκίαν, κᾶπειτα μεταξὺ ταύτην ἀπολιπόντες καὶ μεσολαβήσαντες σφᾶς αὐτοὺς μεταβαίνομεν ἐπὶ τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς κἀντεῦθεν ἐπὶ τὰς Μακεδονικὰς ἢ Συριακὰς ἢ τινὰς ἐτέρας πράξεις· ζητεῖν δὲ τοὺς φιλομαθοῦντας τὸ συνεχὲς καὶ τὸ τέλος ἱμεῖρην ἀκούσαι τῆς προθέσεως· καὶ γὰρ τὴν ψυχαγωγίαν καὶ τὴν ὠφέλειαν οὕτω μᾶλλον συνεκτρέχειν τοῖς προσέχουσιν. ἐμοὶ δ' οὐχ οὕτως δοκεῖ, τὸ δ' ἐναντίον. μάρτυρα δὲ τούτων ἐπικαλεσαίμην ἂν αὐτὴν τὴν φύσιν, ἣτις κατ' οὐδ' ὅποιαν τῶν αἰσθήσεων εὐδοκεῖ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐπιμένειν κατὰ τὸ συνεχὲς, ἀλλ' αἰεὶ μεταβολῆς ἐστὶν οἰκεία, τοῖς δ' αὐτοῖς ἐγκυρεῖν ἐκ διαστήματος βούλεται καὶ διαφορᾶς. εἴη δ' ἂν τὸ λεγόμενον ἐναργὲς πρῶτον μὲν ἐκ τῆς ἀκοῆς, ἣτις οὐτε κατὰ τὰς μελωδίας οὐτε κατὰ τὰς λεκτικὰς ὑποκρίσεις εὐδοκεῖ συνεχῶς ταῖς αὐταῖς ἐπιμένειν στάσεσιν, ὃ δὲ μεταβολικὸς τρόπος καὶ καθόλου πᾶν τὸ διερριμμένον καὶ μεγίστας ἔχον ἀλλαγὰς καὶ πυκνοτάτας αὐτὴν κινεῖ. παραπλησίως καὶ τὴν γεῦσιν εὖροι τις ἂν οὐδὲ τοῖς πολυτελεστάτοις βρώμασιν ἐπιμένειν δυναμένην, ἀλλὰ σικχαίνουσαν καὶ χαίρουσαν ταῖς μεταβολαῖς καὶ προσηνεστέρας ἀποδεχομένην πολλάκις καὶ τὰ λιτὰ τῶν ἐδεσμάτων ἢ τὰ πολυτελεῖα διὰ τὸν ξενισμὸν. τὸ δ' αὐτὸ καὶ περὶ τὴν ὄρασιν ἴδοι τις ἂν γινόμενον· ἥκιστα γὰρ δύναται πρὸς ἓν μένειν ἀτενίζουσα, κινεῖ δ' αὐτὴν ἢ ποικιλία καὶ μεταβολὴ τῶν ὁρωμένων. μάλιστα δὲ περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦτο τις ἂν ἴδοι συμβαῖνον· αἱ γὰρ μεταλήψεις τῶν ἀτενισμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐπιστάσεων οἷον ἀναπαύσεις εἰσὶ τοῖς φιλοπόνους τῶν ἀνδρῶν.

⁴⁰ Aesch. *Supp.* 421. Cf. Aesch. *Eu.* 748 for another political usage.

⁴¹ Here, we might even extend the idea to Herodotus' exemplar Solon, who, although claiming to leave Athens for sightseeing reasons (κατὰ θεωρίας πρόφασιν ἐκπλώσας, *Hdt.* 1.29.1), in fact does so that he might not be politically compelled to repeal the laws he had made (ἵνα δὴ μή τινα τῶν νόμων ἀναγκασθῆι λύσαι τῶν ἔθετο, 1.29.1). Indeed, Redfield 1985, 102, views Solon "as a kind of alter ego of the narrator himself".

⁴² For the role of geography in shaping this universalizing paradigm in Polybius, see Clarke 1999a, 114–28. For its role in earlier fourth century historiography, especially Theopompus, see Vattuone 2014, 15.

διὸ καὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων συγγραφέων οἱ λογιώτατοι δοκοῦσιν μοι προσαναπεπαύσθαι τῷ τρόπῳ τούτῳ, τινὲς μὲν μυθικαῖς καὶ διηγηματικαῖς κεχρημένοι παρεκβάσει, τινὲς δὲ καὶ πραγματικαῖς, ὥστε μὴ μόνον ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδα τόποις ποιεῖσθαι τὰς μεταβάσεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἐκτὸς περιλαμβάνειν. λέγω δ' οἷον ἐπειδὴν τὰ κατὰ τὴν Θετταλίαν ἐξηγούμενοι καὶ τὰς Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Φεραίου πράξεις μεταξύ τὰς κατὰ Πελοπόννησον Λακεδαιμονίων ἐπιβολὰς διηγῶνται, καὶ πάλιν τὰς παρὰ Θηβαίων, ἔτι δὲ τὰς κατὰ Μακεδονίαν ἢ τὴν Ἰλλυρίδα, κἄπειτα διατρίψαντες λέγωσιν τὴν Ἰφικράτους εἰς Αἴγυπτον στρατείαν καὶ τὰ Κλεάρχῳ πραχθέντα παρανομήματα κατὰ τὸν Πόντον. ἐξ ὧν κεχρημένους μὲν ἅπαντας εὖροι τις ἂν τῷ τοιοῦτῳ χειρισμῷ, κεχρημένους γε μὴν ἀτάκτως, ἡμᾶς δὲ τεταγμένως, ἐκεῖνοι μὲν γὰρ μνησθέντες πῶς Βάρδουλλις ὁ τῶν Ἰλλυριῶν βασιλεὺς καὶ Κερσοβλέπτης ὁ τῶν Θρακῶν κατεκτήσαντο τὰς δυναστείας, οὐκέτι προστιθέασιν τὸ συνεχές, οὐδ' ἀνατρέχουσιν ἐπὶ τὰκόλουθον ἐκ διαστήματος, ἀλλὰ καθάπερ ἐν ποιήματι χρῆσάμενοι πάλιν ἐπανάγουσιν ἐπὶ τὰς ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑποθέσεις. ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντας διηρημένοι τοὺς ἐπιφανεστάτους τόπους τῆς οἰκουμένης καὶ τὰς ἐν τούτοις πράξεις καὶ μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔφοδον αἰεὶ ποιούμενοι κατὰ τὴν τάξιν τῆς διαλήψεως, ἔτι δὲ καθ' ἕκαστον ἔτος ὠρισμένως ἐξηγούμενοι τὰς καταλλήλους πράξεις ἐνεσηκνικίας, ἀπολείπομεν πρόδηλον τοῖς φιλομαθοῦσι τὴν ἐπαναγωγὴν ἐπὶ τὸν συνεχῆ λόγον καὶ τὰς μεσολαβηθείσας αἰεὶ τῶν πράξεων, ὥστε μὴδὲν ἀτελὲς μὴδ' ἔλλιπές γίνεσθαι τοῖς φιληκκοῖς τῶν προειρημένων. καὶ περὶ μὲν τούτων ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον.

I am not ignorant of the fact that some people will criticize this treatise, endlessly prattling that I have made an incomplete and disconnected narrative of events, and, although attempting for the sake of my narrative to go through in detail the siege of Carthage, thereupon I leave off from that in the midst of it, and, interrupting those very subjects, I pass over to Hellenic affairs and then to Macedonian affairs, Syrian affairs, and those of other countries. I also know that fellow scholars seek continuity and desire to hear the end of my thesis; for they desire that gratification and benefit fall readily to the lot of those who turn their attention to it. I do not think it so, but rather believe the opposite to be true. Moreover, I would call human nature as my witness to these matters, who, with respect to any of the senses, is not content to remain continuously in the same matters, but is always fond of change, and wishes to meet with the same things following an interval of time or a dislocation.

That which I speak of may first be made clear from the act of hearing, which sort of thing neither with respect to melody nor with respect to spoken tone is pleased to remain in the same positions, but rather is moved by a mutable character and, on the whole, by everything that is scattered all about and possesses the greatest and most frequent changes. One can find nearly the same thing with the sense of taste which is also incapable of sticking to the most costly of foods, but rather loathes them and delights in changes and oftentimes receives inexpensive foods more smoothly than expensive ones owing to their novelty. One can see the same thing again with vision: it is least able to remain gazing intently upon one object, whereas variety and change in what is seen stimulates it. Yet one can discern this attribute most of all with respect to the mind. For changes in the objects of one's attention and concern form a kind of reprieve for workaholics.

For which reason I suspect that the most erudite and eloquent of the ancient historians made a habit of taking a rest in advance in a manner such as this, some establishing the tradition of employing mythical and narratival digressions, while others doing so with political discursions, with the result that not only do they create shifts in their topographical

settings within the Greek world, but also include events from abroad. For example, midway while recounting in detail the affairs in Thessaly and the deeds of Alexander of Pherae, they set out to recount the enterprises of the Lacedaemonians in the Peloponnese, and then those of the Thebans, and next those in Macedonia or Illyria, and after going on at length they recount the expedition of Iphicrates to Egypt and the transgressions committed by Clearchus in Pontus. From which one can deduce that all historians have employed this very literary device, but they have employed it in an irregular manner, whereas I have fixed it into a regular usage.

For those to whom I refer, after recalling how Bardyllis, the king of the Illyrians, and Cersobleptes, the king of the Thracians, acquired their dominions, no longer continue what ensues, nor do they revert to what follows after an interval, but rather, after making use of them as one would a patch,⁴³ lead their readers back to their initial starting point. Yet I, keeping distinct all the most notable places throughout the inhabited world and the events which took place therein, and always making one and the same approach with respect to the arrangement of my division, and moreover regularly expounding according to each year the present affairs in succession, I leave manifest in advance for fellow scholars the point of return to the continuous narrative and the interruptions of affairs at any given moment, such that nothing incomplete nor wanting results for those who were attentive to my remarks made in advance. So much, then, concerning these matters (Plb. 38.5–6).

A number of important notions stand out. First, the historian imagines that he will receive criticism for the discontinuity in his narration of events, offering as an example his abrupt shift from Punic to Illyrian narratives (μεταξὺ ταύτην ἀπολιπόντες καὶ μεσολαβήσαντες σφᾶς αὐτοὺς μεταβαίνομεν). Such a shift in geographic locale becomes a characteristic of numerous Roman annalistic historians, including Livy and Tacitus, in their moving between *res internae* (affairs at Rome) and *res externae* (foreign affairs).⁴⁴ In fact, we should not discount the significant impact Polybius had on the subsequent writing of annalistic history at Rome, especially in light of the significant parallels that have been drawn between Polybius and Livy, which David Levene has recently demonstrated to be highly nuanced in their Livian iterations.⁴⁵ Moreover, this narratological movement may function as a literary reflection of the sea change in the Hellenistic world: numerous, large empires forcing concessions from smaller, no longer autonomous city-states whose local histories could no longer stand on their own, with Rome emerging as the great unifier among them.

⁴³ The translation of “patch” for ποίημα is that of Paton 1927.

⁴⁴ In Tacitus these *res externae* (which, owing to circumstances in the governing of empire under the principate, have become rare indeed) take on the characteristics of digressions, in many instances offering dialogic and carnivalesque perspectives on the state of affairs in the Roman Empire. Moreover, Ginsburg 1981 has shown that Tacitus deliberately alters the annalistic framework in such a way as to suit his own thematic and political purposes.

⁴⁵ Nissen 1863, Witte 1910, Klotz 1940–41, Tränkle 1977, and Levene 2010, 82–163.

In Polybius' time, however, the inclusion of separate narratives into one's primary historical sequence was still a matter of debate, as is evinced in the fact that Polybius finds even greater need than Thucydides to defend his digressive method. He begins, "I am not ignorant of the fact that some people will criticize this treatise (τινές ἐπιλήψονται τῆς πραγματείας), endlessly prattling that we have made an incomplete and disconnected narrative of events," before going on to explain the various geographic domains in his narrative (Καρχηδόνος ... ἐπὶ τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς ... ἐπὶ τὰς Μακεδονικὰς ἢ Συριακὰς ἢ τινὰς ἑτέρας πράξεις) and the regular narratological movement between them (κᾶπειτα μεταξὺ ταύτην ἀπολιπόντες καὶ μεσολαβήσαντες σφᾶς αὐτοὺς μεταβαίνομεν ἐπὶ ... κἀντεῦθεν ἐπὶ).

In many ways, this seems to be not only an Ephoran but also a Theopompan thing to avow.⁴⁶ After all, Polybius at times sounds as though he is reframing his earlier rebuke of this overly digressive historian.

Καὶ μὴν οὐδὲ περὶ τὰς ὀλοσχερεῖς διαλήψεις οὐδεὶς ἂν εὐδοκῆσειε τῷ προειρημένῳ συγγραφεῖ· ὅς γ' ἐπιβαλόμενος γράφειν τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς πράξεις ἀφ' ὧν Θουκυδίδης ἀπέλιπε, καὶ συνεγγίσας τοῖς Λευκτρικοῖς καιροῖς καὶ τοῖς ἐπιφανεστάτοις τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν ἔργων, τὴν μὲν Ἑλλάδα μεταξὺ καὶ τὰς ταύτης ἐπιβολὰς ἀπέρριψε, μεταλαβὼν δὲ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν τὰς Φιλίππου πράξεις προὔθετο γράφειν. καίτοι γε πολλῶ σεμνότερον ἦν καὶ δικαιότερον ἐν τῇ περὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὑποθέσει τὰ πεπραγμένα Φιλίππου συμπεριλαβεῖν ἢ ἐν τῇ Φιλίππου τὰ τῆς Ἑλλάδος. οὐδὲ γὰρ προκαταληφθεὶς ὑπὸ βασιλικῆς δυναστείας, καὶ τυχῶν ἔξουσίας, οὐδεὶς ἂν ἐπέσχε σὺν καιρῷ ποιήσασθαι μετὰβασιν ἐπὶ τὸ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὄνομα καὶ πρόσωπον: ἀπὸ δὲ ταύτης ἀρξάμενος καὶ προβάς ἐπὶ ποσὸν οὐδ' ὄλως οὐδεὶς ἂν ἠλλάξατο μονάρχου πρόσημα καὶ βίον, ἀκέραιῳ χρώμενος γνώμῃ.

To be sure, no one could admire the aforementioned writer when it comes to his widespread digressions. He, after setting out to write a history of Greek affairs from those events at which Thucydides left off, and as he neared the period which included the Battle of Leuctra and the most notable of Greek accomplishments, threw aside Greece and his narrative designs for it *in mediis rebus*, and altering his proposed subject matter, he set out to write about the exploits of Philip. However, it would have been far more respectable and proper to include the accomplishments of Philip within his proposed narrative about Greece than to situate those of Greece within the life of Philip. For nobody, not even one so captivated

⁴⁶ For Ephorus as a "universal historian", see Plb. 5.33.2 ("Ephorus, the first and only writer who succeeded in his attempt to write a universal history"—"Ἐφορον τὸν πρῶτον καὶ μόνον ἐπιβεβλημένον τὰ καθόλου γράφειν), Diod. Sic. 5.1.4 ("Ephorus, who wrote up a universal history"—"Ἐφορος δὲ τὰς κοινὰς πράξεις ἀναγράφων), and Barber 1993, 17–48. A different perspective on Ephorus' universal history and Polybius' assessment is given by Tully 2014. For Theopompus as a historian who combined in his history of one individual, Philip II, "nearly every variety of historical research that was then in existence", including "extensive use of digressions", see Flower 1994, 148, and also 153–60.

by kingly power, if he had obtained the authority to do so, would have in time held back from changing his work's name and title to that Greece; and no one, generally speaking, if he had an unprejudiced mind, having begun from Greek history and having proceeded so far in his narrative would have replaced it with the pomp and biography of a monarch (Plb. 8.11.3–5, *BNJ* 115 T 19).

We ought to note that Polybius, in this earlier discursion, uses the same phraseology and language that appears once more in his lengthy digression in Book 38. For example, compare the usage of the phrase *μεταξύ καὶ τὰς ταύτης ἐπιβολὰς ἀπέρριψε* (8.11.3) with *μεταξύ ταύτην ἀπολιπόντες* (38.5.2), and *μεταξύ τὰς ... ἐπιβολὰς διηγῶνται* (38.6.2); as well as *μεταλαβὼν δὲ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν* (8.11.3) and *ποιήσασθαι μετὰβασιν* (8.11.5) with *καὶ μεσολαβήσαντες σφᾶς αὐτοὺς μεταβαίνομεν* (38.5.2). Given the parallels between this earlier criticism, where Polybius censures Theopompus (for a similar narratological act of shifting narrative subjects), and the Book 38 digression, where he defends his own changing narratives, Polybius might in the latter instantiation be making an essential backpedal—highlighting a mobile narrative process that was, at least to some degree, forced to evolve over so lengthy and geographically expansive a historiographical endeavor, and likely motivated by contemporary historical events.⁴⁷

Indeed, Polybius himself tells us that he altered his initial plan to conclude his work with Rome's conquest of Macedonia in 168 BCE by Aemilius Paullus, noting at the outset of his third book that he was “writing another beginning” (*προήχθην οἶον ἀρχὴν ποιησάμενος ἄλλην γράφειν*, 3.4.13). Even so, this modification need not alter Polybius' wide-ranging geographic history with Rome at its center, as he himself basically confirms (3.4.5–6, 12–13). He did not, after all, end up (as per his rebuke of Theopompus' *Philippica*) dropping his universal Mediterranean subject matter altogether and writing an “*Aemilia-Paullica*”. In this respect, he followed through with his broader *hypothesis*, even noting in advance where some of his major digressions would occur as part of that broader historical fabric.⁴⁸

47 In this respect, it is worth noting the reply of *Cicero Pater* to an inquiry by *Cicero Filius* regarding the need to follow a preplanned narrative order. When asked by his son, “Therefore, should we always keep to the order of narration which we desire?” (*Semperne igitur ordinem collocandi quem volumus tenere possumus*), Cicero replies, “Of course not—for the ears of his audience members govern the prudent and attentive orator, and he must always alter that which they reject” (*Non sane; nam auditorum aures moderantur oratori prudenti et provido, et quod respuunt immutandum est*, *Cic. Part.* 15).

48 See n. 34 above. It is well worth noting that Polybius' account of Ephorus as a model at 5.33 is part of a broader digression on the construction of his *Histories* (5.30.8–33) in which the historian explains that, notwithstanding his goal “not to write a history of one man, but rather an

Polybius seems to find fault with Theopompus for two interrelated reasons. First, from a narratological perspective, Theopompus did not, like Polybius, follow the general plan he had formulated for his history (μεταλαβών δὲ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν), and, at a superlative moment in Hellenic history, leaves off midway in his narrative (μεταξὺ ... ἀπέριψε)—with the implication that he never returned to that original Grecian focus. Second, from a thematic perspective that touches on innovations to the genre of historiography, Theopompus abandoned what was essentially a *Hellenica* in favor of a *Philippica*, nothing short of a betrayal of Hellas and her collective past (i.e. a kind of Panhellenic universal history) in favor of a one-man biography of the Macedonian who conquered Greece.⁴⁹ To follow Craige Champion’s model of cultural alienation—that is, to view variations in the genre of historiography in terms of cultural politics—Polybius could hardly espouse a biographical history of one Greek behaving this badly towards the collective of Hellas.⁵⁰ In fact Polybius specifically criticizes the title given by Theopompus to his work, arguing that Philip’s life belonged within the broader category of Hellenic history and not the other way around. As we shall see, Polybius’ double-edged criticisms of Theopompus prompted a noteworthy response in the Roman digressive receptions of his *Histories*.

Yet, more noteworthy still in the lengthy Book 38 excursus are the statements in which Polybius situates his digressions not only as part of the larger historiographical tradition, but also as innovating and standardizing the position and role of the digression within that broader canon. For example, in a rather lengthy

account of what happened everywhere” (οὐ τινά, τὰ δὲ παρὰ πᾶσι γεγονότα γράφειν, 5.31.6), he still has to be aware of his initial plan for the work and not deviate from it until the proper time. For the use of “weaving” language as a feature of universal history, see Clarke 1999b, 265–76.

49 This question has been analyzed in depth by Vattuone 2014, 19–27, who draws a number of interesting conclusions. Two stand out in particular: first (p. 10) “the choice of embedding his Greek history into the events of Philip’s times, a choice that would displease Polybius ... was a profound statement about the autonomy of the *polis* and the new era that had begun”; second (p. 26) “Polybius grants Ephorus a primacy that he denies, in order to confer it on himself, Theopompus, Timaeus, and even ... Herodotus and Thucydides, who had been epitomized or resumed by Theopompus”. Indeed, we might extend this argument to note that Polybius himself, for all his criticism of Theopompus, gave a similar centrality to Rome just as Theopompus did to Philip II, in that both played a key role in unifying, through conquest, previously unconnected parts of the world.

50 Champion 2004, 34, 40–46. See also Vattuone 2014, 20, who rightly views Polybius’ polemic against Theopompus’ “Philippizing” to be linked to the brutal capture of Messene by his descendent, Philip V, in 213 BCE, given the close proximity of this criticism (8.11.3) to his prior rebuke of historians for their mishandling the account of the sack of Messene (8.8).

statement at the outset of chapter 6 which seems to respond to the imagined critics at the outset of chapter 5 (in fact, the latter chapter echoes many phrases in the former), our historian indicates that his actions follow those of “the most thoughtful of ancient historians” (τῶν ἀρχαίων συγγραφέων οἱ λογιώτατοι),⁵¹ “some of whom employ mythical and narrative digressions (τινὲς μὲν μυθικαῖς καὶ διηγηματικαῖς κεχηρημένοι παρεκβάσεσι), and others pragmatic digressions (τινὲς δὲ καὶ πραγματικαῖς)”. Such a statement shows Polybius not only placing himself in the broader tradition of historiography, but also beginning the process of categorizing historiographical digressions into types—mythical, narrative (or descriptive; the meaning of διηγηματικός is uncertain), and factual (based on politics and having a strong didactic function)—suggesting that by the time of his *Histories* he already sees certain digressive patterns emerging in his predecessors.⁵²

Polybius then illustrates how these earlier historians “shift the scene from one part of Greece to another” (κατὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδα τόποις ποιεῖσθαι τὰς μεταβάσεις), and also “include doings abroad” (τῶν ἐκτὸς περιλαμβάνειν), no doubt referring to his more recent predecessors Ephorus and Theopompus.⁵³ He provides a specific example of this process, noting that “midway (μεταξὺ) while recounting in detail the affairs in Thessaly ... they set out to recount the enterprises of the Lacedaemonians in the Peloponnese, and then those of the Thebans, and next those in Macedonia or Illyria (τὰς κατὰ Πελοπόννησον Λακεδαιμονίων ἐπιβολὰς διηγῶνται, καὶ πάλιν τὰς παρὰ Θηβαίων, ἔτι δὲ τὰς κατὰ Μακεδονίαν ἢ τὴν Ἰλλυρίδα, κάπειτα διατρίψαντες). In this way, Polybius justifies his own avowedly similar process which he lays out at the beginning of his excursus: “and thereupon I leave off from that in the midst of it (κάπειτα μεταξὺ ταύτην ἀπολιπόντες), and, interrupting those very subjects (καὶ μεσολαβήσαντες σφᾶς αὐτοῦς), I pass over to Hellenic affairs and then to Macedonian affairs, Syrian affairs, and those of other countries (μεταβαίνομεν ἐπὶ τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς κἀντεῦθεν ἐπὶ τὰς Μακεδονικὰς ἢ Συριακὰς ἢ τινὰς ἑτέρας πράξεις). Thus, Polybius explicitly

⁵¹ Given the derivation of the adjective *logios* from *logos*, we might also read the adjective *logiōtatos*—paired as it is with *sungrapheus*—as having a connection to narratology, as in, “the most skilled at narrative construction of the ancient historians who wrote them into narrative sequence”.

⁵² Citing Plb. 38.6, Marincola 1997, 118, writes, “Eventually—we cannot pinpoint exactly when—mythical material was seen as a suitable element in digressions, where the reader might be diverted in *loci amoeni* from the more serious material of history”.

⁵³ For the argument that at the outset of 38.6 Polybius is referring exclusively to Ephorus and Theopompus, see Walbank 1979, 692.

justifies his action by claiming, with specific parallels to earlier historians, to be following existing paradigms in the historiographic tradition.

In declaring that “even the most well versed of the ancient historians” turned off the narrative highway and made rest stops (διὸ καὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων συγγραφέων οἱ λογιώτατοι δοκοῦσί μοι προσαναπεπαῦσθαι τῷ τρόπῳ τούτῳ) Polybius, I would contend, is implying that even Thucydides—the historical συγγραφεὺς par excellence (Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον—“Thucydides the Athenian wrote into record the war”, 1.1.1)—made a habit of digressing, a fact that Thucydides himself would be hard pressed to disavow (1.97.2). Yet Polybius does not stop with the most erudite and eloquent (οἱ λογιώτατοι) of Greek chroniclers, which could encompass any number of his forebears. He goes on to declare that *all* historians have resorted to digressions (ἐξ ὧν κεκρημένους μὲν ἅπαντας εὖροι τις ἂν τῷ τοιούτῳ χειρισμῷ).⁵⁴ Yet where others have done so without a strong organizing principle (κεκρημένους γε μὴν ἀτάκτως), he himself has arranged his narrative excursions carefully (ἡμᾶς δὲ τεταγμένως).

This is a bold claim, for not only does it describe the act of perfecting a historiographical tradition, but it also places such an act in a stative verbal tense. Such a use of the perfect tense is telling, for it suggests present fixity through a state of past becoming, given the manner in which the Greek perfect can link a completed past action with a lasting future permanence through its stative present⁵⁵—in the case of Polybian historiography, the reformulation of an established, already somewhat perfected usage shared by all historians, *albeit with irregularity* (ὧν κεκρημένους μὲν ἅπαντας ... κεκρημένους γε μὴν ἀτάκτως), by way of his own adverbial “perfective orderly arrangement” (ἡμᾶς δὲ τεταγμένως) of discursiveness.⁵⁶ All of this underscores the idea of Polybius leaving behind an addition to the perfected legacy of historiography, especially given the force of the stative

⁵⁴ Miltisios 2013, 63: “Yet the fact that the target is not specified ... clearly indicates that even if Polybius, when writing these lines, had Ephorus and Theopompus in mind ... he was not seeking to castigate these two historians in particular but certain quite widespread practices”.

⁵⁵ The clearest overview to this phenomenon is given in Jacob Wackernagel’s Lecture I, 29 on the Greek Perfect Tense, in Wackernagel 2009, 215–20, esp. 216–17.

⁵⁶ Miltisios 2013, 63, sees this as an indication of Polybius’ method whereby he “turns *variatio* into a structural principle of the narrative, without affecting the cohesion of the text or its reception by the reader”. He then adds: “It has the further advantage of enabling Polybius to convey the process of *συμπλοκή*, that interweaving of geopolitical affairs throughout the Mediterranean region which ultimately led to its domination by Rome”. Sacks 1981, 114–17, makes a similar claim, linking this digression to the challenge faced by Polybius in his aim of writing a universal history of events as *σωματοειδής* (1.3.4).

perfect on the subject (ἡμᾶς δὲ).⁵⁷ After all, this is exactly what Polybius is highlighting—the prior existence of the digression as a universal practice among historians, yet one that has until now needed standardization, which his own historical excursions as part of a carefully arranged universal history have brought to fulfillment.

3 Polybius' Discursive Legacy: Rhetoricians on Historical Narrative and Livian Counterfactuals

That Polybius was so uniquely successful in fixing the digression into a historiographical, and perhaps even a rhetorical tradition, is demonstrated by the extent to which later rhetoricians and historians sought these digressions as models for their own discursiveness and to highlight its ideal usage. Several historical figures in particular appear to have resumed the interrogation of Theopompus' digressive narratology begun by Polybius, doing so in a variety of new forms: the Roman historian Livy, the Roman statesman and man of letters Cicero, the rhetorician and antiquarian Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and the Alexandrian sophist Aelius Theon.⁵⁸

For example, we see traces of such condemnation of “Philippizing” taken up by the Roman historian Livy in his famous Alexander Digression (9.17–19). Apart from Livy's strong signposting of his upcoming discursion (*ab rerum ordine declinare*, 9.17.1), including references to key rhetorical ideas concerning digression—especially the central notion of giving both audience and writer a respite from the primary narrative of events (*varietatibusque distinguendo opere et legendibus velut deverticula amoena et requiem animo meo quaererem*, 9.17.1)—the opening statement to his excursus also draws from Polybius' notion of having to make an unwilling, but necessary break from the original narrative plan given the greatness of the subject matter (*tamen tanti regis ac ducis mentio*, 9.17.2).

More important still, Livy's digression takes Polybius' criticisms leveled against Theopompus for abandoning Hellas in favor of Philip and reworks them

⁵⁷ Wackernagel 2009, 216: “A second inherited feature is the use of the perfect to denote the state resulting from the performance of the action of the verb, *a state in which the effect of the performance of the action applies to the subject*” (emphasis my own).

⁵⁸ Here, for the sake of brevity, I am not including the Roman historian Tacitus or the Byzantine patriarch and commentator Photius of Constantinople, even though both can be seen as engaging with these same issues in a variety of post-Polybian political and historical contexts.

by resurrecting Philip's own son in a counterfactual, discursive, historical-rhetorical exercise: imagining one great individual competing with Rome's collective history.⁵⁹ Alexander the Great, of course, far exceeded his father Philip in imperial conquests. In many ways, he was the originary cause of the globalized world of competing empires—inherited and carved out by his own generals, the Diadochi—that Polybius was to experience and historicize.⁶⁰ Yet, as Livy is keen to point out, Alexander never quite reached Italy, a fact which renders the counterfactual exercise all the more potent.⁶¹

Moreover, even as Livy is tempted, like Theopompus, by “mention of so great a king and general” in Alexander the Great, the Roman historian remains true to his Polybian paradigm of viewing universal history as triumphing over the histories of individual men, no matter how legendary. Early in his digression, he writes of Alexander, “Yet, the very fact that he was one man made him nonetheless more famous” (*sed clarior tamen eum facit quod unus fuit*, 9.17.5), thereby suggesting that Alexander's accomplishments are exaggerated by the very fact that they are linked to his name.⁶² Later in the course of his comparisons, he declares once

59 A somewhat dismissive reading of the rhetorical nature of the passage and its stylistic elements is given by Anderson 1908, 94, who refers to the Alexander Digression as “a youthful dissertation, an exercise composed by Livy about the age of eighteen, when he was a pupil in the school of a *rhetor* at Patavium”. For the prevalent usage of counterfactuals in the digression—itsself a sign of a highly complex type of historiography—see Morello 2002.

60 In this respect, we might also note that at least one earlier Alexander historian, Anticleides of Athens, wrote a history that supposedly contained within it a lengthy digression on Egyptian antiquities. See *OCD* s.v. Anticleides, *FGrH* 140, and Pearson 1960, 252. For ancient testimonia on this history, see also D.L. 8.11, *FGrHist* 140 F 1 and Pliny, *Nat.* 7.193, *FGrHist* 140 F 11.

61 For this reason Livy seems particularly interested in the figure of Alexander of Epirus, the maternal uncle of Alexander the Great, whose campaigns in Southern Italy are documented extensively at 8.3, 8.17, and 8.24; whose death is dated to the same year as the founding of Alexandria in 331 BCE by Alexander the Great (8.24.1); and who is subsequently mentioned in the Alexander Digression as having compared, as he lay dying, his own challenging campaigns against the Italians to Alexander the Great's more favorable battles against feminine Eastern peoples (9.19.10–11).

62 In light of the “*synkrisis*” of Alexander the Great and Alexander of Epirus, as well as the argument that Alexander receives too much credit owing to his fame, Livy likely has in mind Polybius' account of Philip V and his campaigns in Sicily, which alternates between Philip V (8.8, 8.12–14) and his digression on Philip II (8.9–11), in which emerges his critique of Theopompus' “Philippizing”. Furthermore, these passages in Book 8 contain praise of the imperial achievements of Philip II, Alexander the Great, and the Diadochi, including the statement that Alexander alone does not deserve all the credit, but that “no less (credit is owed) to his collaborators and friends, who conquered their opponents in numerous extraordinary battles, and also endured many perilous toils, ventures, and hardships” (οὐκ ἐλάττω μέντοι γε τοῖς συνεργοῖς καὶ

more, “However great the magnitude of the man, even so will this magnitude be that of one man” (*Quantalibet magnitudo hominis ... unius tamen ea magnitudo hominis erit*, 9.18.8), and again, “The Macedonians had one Alexander” (*Macedones unum Alexandrum habuissent*, 9.18.18), contrasting, “There were many Romans equal to Alexander either in glory or in the greatness of their deeds” (*Romani multi fuissent Alexandro vel gloria vel rerum magnitudine pares*, 9.18.19).

By employing what Ruth Morello rightly sees as a *synkrisis* “between Alexander and Rome”, denying Alexander a fair comparison to Rome’s advantage,⁶³ Livy subtly shows himself beyond traditional *Quellenforschung* to be a very nuanced respondent to Polybian concerns about Theopompan digression. Not only does the comparison further weaken the image of Alexander as conqueror by introducing the tragic Italian fate of his uncle Alexander of Epirus and subtly conflating this with the myths surrounding Alexander the Great—both in the Alexander Digression and in repeated historical narrative—but it also does so through reference to different historiographical subgenres by intelligently reworking a Polybian criticism of Theopompan “great man” biographical history into a counterfactual excursus involving his nephew. Through such rhetorical positioning, Livy is able to bring a kind of counterfactual genealogy as was seen in the Homeric narratives once again into the realm of the digression.

Quite notably, this very idea of a great man historiography subsuming the broader set of contemporary events—so highly criticized by Polybius—is strongly encouraged by Cicero as the ideal form for Lucius Lucceius’ history of his consulship. In Cicero’s letter to Lucceius (*Fam.* 5.12), dating from well after his return from exile (12 April of 55 BCE), he discusses his hopes and ambitions regarding Lucceius’ composition of a history about his triumphant defense of the Roman Republic against the Catilinarian conspiracy. Particularly notable is Cicero’s deliberation regarding the best possible manner in which Lucceius ought to include him in his historiography—whether interwoven as part of a larger, more universal history following the completion of the century of the Social Wars in Italy (*sed quia videbam Italici belli et civilis historiam iam a te paene esse perfectam*, 5.12.2) and his plan to begin writing about subsequent events (*dixeras autem mihi te reliquas res ordiri*, 5.12.2); or as the subject of his own, distinct historical monograph.

φίλοις, οἱ πολλαῖς μὲν καὶ παραδόξοις μάχαις ἐνίκησαν τοὺς ὑπεναντίους, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ παραβόλους ὑπέμειναν πόνους καὶ κινδύνους καὶ ταλαιπωρίας, 8.10.8–9). Polybius then adds: “Moreover, after the death of Alexander, when they quarreled over the greater part of the known world, they created such a distinguished, well transmitted historical record of themselves” (μετὰ δὲ τὸν Ἀλεξάνδρου θάνατον οὕτω περὶ τῶν πλείστων μερῶν τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀμφισβητήσαντες παραδόσιμον ἐποίησαν τὴν ἑαυτῶν δόξαν ἐν πλείστοις ὑπομνήμασιν, 8.10.11).

63 Morello 2002, 77.

In many ways, Cicero turns the idea of universal history on its head in his carefully chosen exempla and argumentation regarding how Lucceius should write a Ciceronian history. On the one hand, Cicero suggests that the historian might intertwine the events of Cicero's consulship with his account of the subsequent period (*coniunctene malles cum reliquis rebus nostra contexere*, 5.12.2). Based upon our readings of certain statements made by Polybius, this would seem to match those ideas concerning the inclusion of events into the larger narrative fabric of history. Yet, quite paradoxically given our extant Polybian corpus, Cicero cites Polybius alongside Callisthenes and Timaeus as an example of a historian who created separate histories for noteworthy subjects—what we might have earlier labeled as Theopompan and avowedly anti-Polybian.

coniunctene malles cum reliquis rebus nostra contexere an, ut multi Graeci fecerunt, Callisthenes Phocicum bellum, Timaeus Pyrrhi, Polybius Numantinum, qui omnes a perpetuis suis historiis ea, quae dixi, bella separaverunt, tu quoque item civilem coniurationem ab hostilibus externisque bellis seiungeres.

Whether you might prefer to weave together in a connected manner my affairs with later events. Or, you might also do as many Greek writers have done—Callisthenes for the Phocian War, Timaeus for the War of Pyrrhus, Polybius for the Numantine War, all of whom separated these wars that I have mentioned from their own continuous histories—and in a similar manner isolate the Catilinarian conspiracy from foreign enemies and external wars (*Fam.* 5.12.2).

To the reader of extant ancient histories, Cicero's choices for writers of separate historical war monographs (*qui omnes a perpetuis suis historiis ea, quae dixi, bella separaverunt*) hardly seem conventional, given that all three historians were known for some form of universal history—a *Hellenica* (Callisthenes), *Histories* that spanned Sicily and the wider Greek world (Timaeus), and *Histories* of the broader Mediterranean world (Polybius)—rather than their respective *Bellum Phocicum* (Callisthenes), *Bellum Pyrrhi* (Timaeus), and *Bellum Numantinum* (Polybius). Moreover, of the three examples, Polybius stands out especially for Cicero's citation of his other historical work. Although one need not discount Cicero's testimonium regarding Polybius having written a separate *Bellum Numantinum*,⁶⁴ Polybius' legacy nonetheless remains that of our universal annalistic historian par excellence (especially in light of his own statements on the topic vis-à-vis Theopompus).

For this very reason, Cicero's usage of Polybius as a model in his letter to Lucceius appears all the more noteworthy: in order to rhetorically justify being

⁶⁴ For a brief discussion of its possible date of composition, see Walbank 1972, 22.

the subject of his own “*Ciceronica*”—or perhaps the protagonist of his own *Bellum Catilinae* (*tu quoque item civilem coniurationem ab hostilibus externisque bellis seiungeres*), given that only one of the three titles focuses on a historical figure (Pyrrhus)—he cites three known universal Greek historians, who conveniently wrote war monographs *in addition to* these universal histories.⁶⁵

In this respect, Cicero can be understood as attempting to redefine the known historiographical qualities of certain paradigmatic ancient historians. In fact, beyond recasting Polybius, the universal historian par excellence, into a paradigmatic writer of monographs, Cicero suggests that Lucceius not follow the strict chronology in his histories and wait until the proper time to write about Cicero (*non te exspectare dum ad locum venias*), but rather that he set about recording his accomplishments right away (*ac statim causam illam totam et tempus arripere*, 5.12.2). In an even stronger push for a “*Ciceronica*”, Cicero claims that writing a monograph about only himself and his achievements will make for a richer and more praiseworthy history: “If you turn all of your attention to a single theme and to one individual (*si uno in argumento unaque in persona mens tua tota versabitur*), I can already picture in my mind how much greater will be all the richness and the brilliance (*quanto omnia uberiora atque ornatiores futura sint*, 5.12.2)”. If this were not enough, Cicero basically renounces Polybian historical aims when he subsequently demands a biased treatment from the historian: “In this thing, would that you ignore the laws of history and do not spurn that favorable partiality, and would that you yield to our affection even a little more than the truth will allow” (*in eo leges historiae neglegas gratiamque illam ... ne aspernere amorique nostro plusculum etiam quam concedet veritas largiare*, 5.12.3).⁶⁶

65 That being said, we know that Callisthenes wrote firsthand accounts of Alexander’s military campaigns, and in many respects might be viewed, in terms of his own historical developments, as the reverse of Theopompus—beginning in the tradition of an official court historian of a great man (writing the *Deeds of Alexander*), and transitioning to a historian of the wider Greek world (writing his own *Hellenica*).

66 Although Woodman 1988, 70–75, discusses this passage at length and cites it as part of his argument that (p. 74) “truth and falsehood were seen in terms of prejudice and bias”—namely that Cicero was addressing an implied concern on the part of Lucceius about appearing too favorable in his treatment of the orator and statesman—we cannot discount the fact that Cicero quite explicitly states that showing greater bias “even a little more than the truth will allow” (*plusculum etiam quam concedet veritas*) constitutes an act of “ignoring the laws of history” (*leges historiae neglegas*). Polybius, too, in his early polemic about Philinus and Fabius Pictor (1.14), notes a degree of difference between their unintentional misrepresentation of the truth (μη δεόντως ... ἀπηγγελέκναι τὴν ἀλήθειαν, 1.14.1) and intentional deceit (ἐψεῦσθαι, 1.14.2). Nev-

Nevertheless, later rhetoricians took an active interest in the digressive narratology employed by Polybius, and in some instances encouraged his historical methods quite closely. For instance, Aelius Theon in his *Progymnasmata* takes a particularly keen interest in Polybian discursive ideals, using many of the specific terms employed by Polybius in his accounts of Ephorus and Theopompus:

παραιτητέον δὲ καὶ τὸ παρεκβάσεις ἐπεμβάλλεσθαι μεταξύ διηγήσεως μακράς. οὐ γὰρ ἀπλῶς χρῆ πᾶσαν παρατεῖσθαι, καθάπερ ὁ Φίλιστος· ἀναπαύει γὰρ τὴν διάνοιαν τῶν ἀκροατῶν, ἀλλὰ τὴν τηλικαύτην τὸ μῆκος, ἥτις ἀπαλλοτριοῖ τὴν διάνοιαν τῶν ἀκροαμένων, ὥστε δεῖσθαι πάλιν ὑπομνήσεως τῶν προειρημένων, ὡς Θεόπομπος ἐν ταῖς Φιλιππικαῖς· δύο γὰρ πού καὶ τρεῖς καὶ πλείους ἱστορίας ὅλας κατὰ παρέκβασιν εὐρίσκομεν, ἐν αἷς οὐχ ὅπως Φιλίππου, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ Μακεδόνας τινὸς ὄνομά ἐστιν.

There is a need to avoid the insertion of long digressions midway through one's narrative. For one need not entirely shun every instance, as Philistus does. For it provides a rest to the thought process of one's audience. However, one must avoid one of such great length that it interferes with the comprehension by one's audience, with the result that one must remind it of matters mentioned previously, as Theopompus does in his *Philippica*. For there we encounter two and three and more entire histories within digressions, in which there is nothing whatsoever about Philip, nor the name of a single Macedonian (*Prog.* 2.80.27–81.4, *BNJ* 115 T 30).

On the one hand, citing the common rhetorical quality of digressions noted by Polybius and Livy, that of providing respite to the mind of one's listeners (ἀναπαύει γὰρ τὴν διάνοιαν τῶν ἀκροατῶν), Aelius Theon rebukes Philistus of Syracuse for his failure to employ digressions altogether. In fact, Philistus' *Sicelica* was highly regarded by ancient readers: by Alexander the Great, Cicero (who, in *Letter to his Brother Quintus* 2.11.4, called him “nearly a miniature Thucydides”, or *paene pusillus Thucydides*), Ephorus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Quintilian.⁶⁷ This suggests that in the wake of Polybian historiography, digression had come to be seen as an essential element of the genre, so much so that not even Philistus was exempt from criticism for having omitted it in his *Sicelica*.

ertheless, he stresses that historiography demands impartiality, concluding: “If the truth is removed from history, what is left becomes a useless tale” (ἐξ ἱστορίας ἀνααιρεθείσης τῆς ἀληθείας τὸ καταλειπόμενον αὐτῆς ἀνωφελὲς γίνεται διήγημα, 1.14.6).

⁶⁷ See Plut. *Alex.* 8.3 and *Dio* 36.2; Dion. Hal. *Pomp.* 5; Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.74. It is worth noting that Philistus was also criticized by some of these writers for his support of tyrants, including by Plutarch (*Dio.* 36.1) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Pomp.* 5).

On the other hand, it would also seem that Aelius Theon criticizes the length of Theopompus' excursions—that is, for taking the digression to the other extreme. He reasons that one must avoid, midway through one's narrative (μεταξὺ διηγήσεως), the act of adding on overly lengthy discursions (τὸ παρεκβάσεις ἐπεμβάλλεσθαι ... μακράς). Such language clearly follows in the footsteps of Polybius' own rhetoric about digression—both his criticisms of Theopompus (μεταξὺ καὶ τὰς ταύτης ἐπιβολὰς ἀπέρριψε, 8.11.3) and his defense of his own detours (μεταξὺ ταύτην ἀπολιπόντες, 38.5.1, and μεταξὺ τὰς ... ἐπιβολὰς διηγῶνται, 38.6.2). Moreover, one of Aelius Theon's criticisms—"with the result that it becomes necessary to recall once more what was said beforehand" (ὥστε δεῖσθαι πάλιν ὑπομνήσεως τῶν προειρημένων)—supplies τῶν προειρημένων as a verbal echo of Polybius' own censure of Theopompus in that same earlier passage (οὐδεὶς ἂν εὐδοκῆσειε τῷ προειρημένῳ, 8.11.3), and also likely reflects the complaints by Polybius' fellow scholars regarding the seemingly "incomplete and disconnected" nature of his *Histories*, and Polybius' response regarding the careful placement of markers to indicate in advance where the breaks and narrative returns occur.⁶⁸

Furthermore, Aelius Theon picks up on the Polybian concern about Philippic subject matter, only in this case it is a concern for entire books of digressions that lack their eponymous leader, combined with an issue regarding the extreme length of these digressions: "For there we find two and three and more entire histories (ἱστορίας ὅλας) within the digressions (κατὰ παρέκβασιν), in which there is nothing about Philip, nor the name of any Macedonian".⁶⁹ Here, I would suggest that Aelius Theon's emphasis on Theopompus' digressions lacking the name of any Macedonian (οὐδὲ Μακεδόνοσ τινὸς ὄνομά ἐστίν) is meant to recall Polybius' disappointment in the work's transformation from a *Hellenica* to a *Philippica*. Furthermore, an editorializing Philip V, a descendant of the Antigonids who traced their descent back to the *Diadochi* (Antigonus I Monophthalmus and Antigonus II Gonatas, as well as Demetrius I Poliorcetes)—and the same historical figure

68 Plb. 38.6.6: "I leave manifest in advance for fellow scholars the point of return to the continuous narrative and the interruptions of affairs at any given moment, such that nothing incomplete nor wanting results for those who were attentive to my remarks made in advance" (ἀπολείπομεν πρόδηλον τοῖς φιλομαθοῦσι τὴν ἐπαναγωγὴν ἐπὶ τὸν συνεχῆ λόγον καὶ τὰς μεσολαβηθείσας ἀεὶ τῶν πράξεων, ὥστε μηδὲν ἀτελὲς μηδ' ἔλλιπες γίνεσθαι τοῖς φιληκκόις τῶν προειρημένων).

69 Photius likewise notes, "Theopompus therefore extends his historical narratives with the largest and most frequent digressions concerning every sort of historical topic of inquiry" (πλείσταίς μὲν οὖν παρεκβάσεσι παντοδαπῆς ἱστορίας τοὺς ἱστορικοὺς αὐτοῦ λόγουσ Θεόπομπος παρατείνει, *Bibl.* 176, *BNJ* 115 T31).

who appears in the narrative prompting Polybius' digression on Theopompus' "Philippizing" (8.8–14)—appears to have shared that same opinion. According to Photius of Constantinople, Philip V removed substantial chunks of Theopompus' *Philippica*, including all the digressions (τῶν παρεκτροπῶν, τὰς πάσας ἀπήρτισε), preserving in sixteen books only those narratives that featured the accomplishments of Philip II (ἐξελὼν ταύτας καὶ τὰς Φιλίππου συνταξάμενος πράξεις, αἱ σκοπὸς εἰσι Θεοπόμπῳ εἰς ἰς βίβλους μόνας, *Bibl.* 176, *BNJ* 115 T31).

Finally, in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Letter to Pompey*, we witness instead a great deal of praise for Theopompus of Chios, and in the process see a number of digressive forms—in particular those picked up by Polybius—once again classified alongside other fundamental features of rhetoric:

γνοιή δ' ἄν τις αὐτοῦ τὸν πόνον ἐνθυμηθεῖς τὸ πολύμορφον τῆς γραφῆς. καὶ γὰρ ἐθνῶν εἴρηκεν οἰκισμοὺς καὶ πόλεων κτίσεις ἐπελήλυθε, βασιλέων τε βίους καὶ τρόπων ιδιώματα δεδήλωκε, καὶ εἴ τι θαυμαστόν ἢ παράδοξον ἐκάστη γῆ καὶ θάλασσα φέρει, συμπεριειληφεν τῇ πραγματείᾳ. καὶ μηδεὶς ὑπολάβῃ ψυχαγωγίαν ταυτ' εἶναι μόνον—οὐ γὰρ οὕτως ἔχει—ἀλλὰ πᾶσαν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ὠφέλειαν περιέχει. ἵνα δὲ πάντ' ἀφῶ τᾶλλα, τίς οὐχ ὁμολογήσει τοῖς ἀσκούσι τὴν φιλόσοφον ῥητορικὴν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πολλὰ μὲν ἔθνη καὶ βαρβάρων καὶ Ἑλλήνων ἐκμαθεῖν, πολλοὺς δὲ νόμους ἀκοῦσαι πολιτειῶν τε σχήματα, καὶ βίους ἀνδρῶν καὶ πράξεις καὶ τέλη καὶ τύχας; τούτοις τοίνυν ἅπασαν ἀφθονίαν δέδωκεν οὐκ ἀπεσπασμένην τῶν πραγμάτων, ἀλλὰ συμπαροῦσαν. πάντα <τε> δὴ ταῦτα ζηλωτὰ τοῦ συγγραφέως ... ἔστι δὲ ἃ καὶ κατὰ τὸν πραγματικὸν τόπον ἀμαρτάνει, καὶ μάλιστα κατὰ τὰς παρεμβολάς· οὔτε γὰρ ἀναγκαῖαί τινας αὐτῶν οὐτ' ἐν κερῶν γενόμεναι, πολὺ δὲ τὸ παιδιῶδες ἐμφαίνουσαι· ἐν αἷς ἔστι καὶ τὰ περὶ Σιληνοῦ τοῦ φανέντος ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ τὰ περὶ τοῦ δράκοντος τοῦ διαναυμαχίσαντος πρὸς τὴν τριήρη καὶ ἄλλα τούτοις οὐκ ὀλίγα ὅμοια.

Yet one might also understand his hard work if one takes into account the multiform nature of his writing. For he describes the settlements of peoples and proceeds to recount the foundations of cities, and relates the lives of kings and the peculiarities of their ways, and if any particular land or sea possesses something wondrous or bizarre, he has come to include it in his work. And let no one consider these to be merely a matter of entertainment—for it is not so—since they encompass almost every source of intellectual profit. All other topics notwithstanding, who would not agree with those practicing philosophical rhetoric that one ought to learn as much as possible about the customs of both the barbarians and the Greeks, and ought to hear about their many legal practices and constitutional forms of government, as well as the lives of their individual men, and their deeds, ends, and ultimate fates? Moreover, he provides them with all of these topics in abundance, and not separated but present together in the same narrative. To be sure, all of these things are enviable for a historian ... Yet there also those areas in which he errs in his subject matter, especially in his narrative insertions. For some of these are neither necessary nor pertinent at that given moment, but come across as jejune. Among these are the account of the Silenus that was seen in Macedonia and the legend of the sea serpent that engaged in a naval battle with a trireme, and a great many others like these (*Dion. Hal. Pomp.* 6, *BNJ* 115 T 20a).

Referring to a kind of discursive historiography that would come to be pursued by Polybius, Dionysius praises Theopompus for the “multifaceted character of his writing” (τὸ πολύμορφον τῆς γραφῆς), and for his integration of a number of additional features into the narrative proper, rather than in separate sections or different works (οὐκ ἀπεσπασμένην τῶν πραγμάτων, ἀλλὰ συμπαροῦσαν). In this respect, we see what were previously labeled as digressive elements in Polybius’ *Histories*, such as legal constitutions (πολιτειῶν ... σχήματα), now viewed as material that should constitute part of (συμπαροῦσαν) the main narrative. In addition, we see a range of historical topics praised that, by the time of Roman Republican history, often feature within digressions. For example, “the settlements of peoples” and “the foundations of cities”, both of which Theopompus features (καὶ γὰρ ἔθνῶν εἶρηκεν οἰκισμοὺς καὶ πόλεων κτίσεις ἐπελήλυθε), often recur in ethnographic discursions as well as digressions set in the plupast in order to explain how peoples came to inhabit particular places, came into contact with one another, and came into eventual conflict: these include Thucydides’ Sicilian ethnography (6.2–5), Polybius’ Celtic ethnography (2.14–35), Sallust’s African ethnography (*Jug.* 17–19), the British ethnographies of Caesar (*Gal.* 5.12–14) and Tacitus (*Ag.* 10–12), and Livy’s Gallo-Etruscan and Galatian digressions (5.33–35 and 38.16).⁷⁰ Likewise, his inclusion of the wondrous and paradoxographical within his narrative (καὶ εἴ τι θαυμαστὸν ἢ παράδοξον ἐκάστη γῆ καὶ θάλασσα φέρει, συμπεριεῖληφεν τῇ πραγματείᾳ) is in many respects what led to Herodotean *historiē* being labeled as digressive, and will eventually form the basis for numerous excursions containing dialogic subject matter in Tacitus’ writings.⁷¹

“All of these things”, writes Dionysius, “are enviable in the historian” (πάντα <τε> δὴ ταῦτα ζηλωτὰ τοῦ συγγραφέως), suggesting that the very title inherited from Thucydides and developed by Polybius (ὁ συγγραφεύς), has become transformed by discursive developments to reflect its true meaning—“one who writes what is essentially separate material into a coherent narrative unity”. That this discursive narrative fusion finds much stimulus in oratory becomes even more

⁷⁰ The phrase ἔθνῶν ... οἰκισμοὺς seems to be a Greek equivalent of the Latin *situs gentium*, a phrase which functions as a kind of lexical marker for ethnography, often appearing at the outset of an ethnographic digression in a historical work. See Thomas 1982, 3 and Woodman and Kraus 2014, 127–28.

⁷¹ These include the mutiny of the Usipi (*Ag.* 28), the report of the Neronian impersonator (*Hist.* 2.8–9), Mariccus’ uprising (*Hist.* 2.61), Geta’s masquerade (*Hist.* 2.72), the attempted assassination of Tettius Julianus (*Hist.* 2.85), Venutius’ rebellion (*Hist.* 3.45), the revolt in Pontus (*Hist.* 3.47–48), the mutiny of the fleet at Misenum (*Hist.* 3.57), the account of the false Agrippa Postumus (*Ann.* 2.39–40), the Brundisian slave insurrection (*Ann.* 4.27), and the gladiatorial skirmish at Pompeii (*Ann.* 14.17).

explicit when Dionysius tells us that the “practitioners of philosophical rhetoric” (τοῖς ἀσκούσι τὴν φιλόσοφον ῥητορικὴν) are correct to see a benefit in learning about “the many customs of the barbarians and the Greeks” (πολλὰ μὲν ἔθη καὶ βαρβάρων καὶ Ἑλλήνων) and “their many laws and forms of government” (πολλοὺς δὲ νόμους ... πολιτειῶν τε σχήματα),⁷² which not only had their origins in the Herodotean interspersing of *ethnē* and *nomoi* accounts with his Persian War *logos*, but also found a prominent place in virtually all subsequent historians.

Dionysius’ only criticism leveled against Theopompus is for the one area in which he errs in his narrative (κατὰ τὸν πραγματικὸν τόπον ἀμαρτάνει),⁷³ “particularly in his narrative insertions” (μάλιστα κατὰ τὰς παρεμβολάς), which he labels as both untimely and infantile (οὔτ’ ἐν καιρῷ γενόμεναι, πολὺ δὲ τὸ παιδιῶδες).⁷⁴ Yet these are a far cry from the features Polybius labels as digressive in his own work. First, they are once more labeled in the Herodotean manner as “insertions” rather than “digressions”, perhaps suggesting a different kind of discursiveness, one that is overly paradoxographical in its outlandishness and too focused on entertainment rather than intellectual profit—“the account of the Silenus that was seen in Macedonia and the legend of the sea serpent that engaged in a naval battle with a trireme” (καὶ τὰ περὶ Σιληνοῦ τοῦ φανέντος ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ τὰ περὶ τοῦ δράκοντος τοῦ διαναυμαχῆσαντος πρὸς τὴν τριήρη). Second, they

72 Given the mention of rhetoric, it is worth noting that the passage in full mentions both Demosthenes and Isocrates. The latter’s relation to historiography of the fourth century BCE is analyzed most recently by Marincola 2014, who cites as models of a more balanced approach Parmeggiani 2011, 34–36 (for Ephorus) and Flower 1994, 42–62 (for Theopompus).

73 Given the narratological subject of criticism, it is likely that the usage of the word *topos* and its pairing with *hamartanō* have connotations of narrative place and misdirected movement therein.

74 Ann Hanson has suggested to me that Polybius’ earlier narrative terminology for the proper usage of digression—particularly his parrying of the charge that his history is “incomplete” (ἀτελῆ and ἀτελής) and “defective” or “wanting” (ἐλλιπές)—suggests, in light of his lengthy comparison with various senses that form a part of “human nature” (αὐτὴν τὴν φύσιν, 38.5.4), that Polybius has in mind a biological model of narrative. In this respect, he stresses that his digressions are not “abortive”—no doubt having in mind Thucydides’ usage of ἐκβολή as a term for his *Pentekontaetia* digression (using the Greek term for both “abortion”, LSJ IV, and “casting” of an infant left exposed to die, LSJ VIII). Moreover, the term ἀτελής can also mean “imperfect” of growth or “poorly developed” in reference to a child or minor (LSJ I 3). For Polybius, then, and Aelius Theon and Dionysius of Halicarnassus who looked to him as a model, it is important that digressions—whether due to “excessive gestation” (Aelius Theon on Theopompus) or poorly timed arrival, a narrative “miscarriage” of sorts (Dionysius on Theopompus)—do not prevent their “maternal narratives” from reaching their ultimate teleological aim of a ripe old age. Cf. Walbank 1972, 142–44 and Clarke 1999a, 124–28.

are also criticized for their lack of pertinence at that particular moment in the narrative chronology (οὐτ' ἐν καιρῷ γενόμεναι), suggesting that the placement of digressions within their respective historical narratives was just as important as the subject matter they encompassed.

This combination of praise and blame for Theopompus illustrates a number of important developments in the tradition of historical discursiveness. For example, what actually constitutes a digression versus an essential feature of historical narrative was not a static definition, and it developed with the genre over time, often preserving hints of its original discursiveness. For example, although ethnographies came to be viewed as fundamental features of historiographic narratives, as were descriptions of political constitutions and laws, we see in the phrases marking and concluding these accounts that they were still framed as digressions.⁷⁵ Moreover, as a result of universal histories and the broadening geographical scope of their inquiries, an annalistic narrative could now be inherently multifarious in both subject matter and narratological sequence—that is, “incomplete and disconnected”, whether the original Polybian formulation (ἀτελῆ καὶ διερριμμένην) or an antithetical iteration by the first century BCE politician and historian Lucius Cornelius Sisenna (*ne vellicatim aut saltuatim*).⁷⁶

Even in far more pessimistic appraisals of later historiography, Polybius' discursive legacy would continue to be reexamined. Most notably, the Roman historian Tacitus, in his lengthy digression about writing history under the principate (*Ann.* 4.32–33), would call into question Polybian and Livian annalistic models of discursivity—those writers “who composed the more distant affairs of the Roman people (*qui veteres populi Romani res composuere*, 4.32.1), and who “memorialized with substantial digression” (*libero egressu memorabant*, 4.32.1). Although Tacitus follows the Polybian model of using the digression as a space to describe one's historiographical practices, Tacitus is unable to employ the full Polybian framework inherited from Theopompus—that digressive subject matter, “the ge-

⁷⁵ In addition to the use of ethnographic phraseology of the *situs gentium* type mentioned above at n. 70, historians from Herodotus to Ammianus Marcellinus regularly labeled their ethnographic excursions with phrases denoting a departure from and a return to the primary narrative.

⁷⁶ *Item alio in loco: nos una aestate in Asia et Graecia gesta litteris idcirco continentia mandavimus, ne vellicatim aut saltuatim scribendo lectorum animos impediremus* (“Again in another place: ‘We have recorded the events from one summer waged in Asia and Greece in unbroken verbal succession, lest we impede the thought processes of the readers by writing in a piecemeal and leapfrog manner’”, *hist.* 127, *Gell.* 12.15.2), F130 in Cornell 2013, Vol. 2, 662. I wish here to acknowledge Dennis Pausch, whose paper drew my attention to the parallels between these two historians.

ographic locations of peoples” (*nam situs gentium*, 4.33.3), which serves to “retain and renew the mind of readers” (*retinent ac redintegrant legentium animum*, 4.33.3).⁷⁷ In the now limited space for writing history under the emperors (*nobis in arto et inglorius labor*, 4.32.2), with its “unmoved peace” (*immota quippe ... pax*, 4.32.2),⁷⁸ all that remains is “the repetitiveness and superfluity” (*rerum similitudine et satietate*, 4.33.3) of affairs at Rome, which Tacitus has convincingly transformed into a topic worthy of *historia pragmatikē*.⁷⁹

As gloomy and pessimistic as historiography became in the time of Tacitus, the Polybian tradition of digression in historiography and innovating the practice did not end with him. Historians in Late Antiquity continued to make use of this device: Ammianus Marcellinus employs a variety of discursions in his *Res Gestae*, and Procopius and Orosius make notable changes of their own. In fact, digressive innovation did not end in antiquity, but continued in the postclassical histories of the Old English and Byzantine traditions.⁸⁰ Suffice to say that the historiographical digression had a long afterlife. Foucault, no doubt, points us in the right direction when he asks of the classical historian, “On what basis, in fact, could he speak without this discontinuity that offers him history—and his own history—as an object?”⁸¹ Our answer—on almost no basis whatsoever.

77 Woodman 1998, 134: “We know from Quintilian and Pliny that by Tacitus’ time digressions were particularly associated with the genre of historiography. Thus, by using a digression specifically to *deny* that his work contains any of the pleasurable elements of which conventional historiography was thought to consist, Tacitus could hardly have chosen a more ironically appropriate medium in which to emphasize the changed nature of his work”.

78 Tacitus’ use of the word *immota* (“unmoved”) to describe a time with a lack of suitable material for writing discursive annalistic history underscores his emphasis on the unfortunate shift to a post-Polybian, that is, the *post-mobile*, state of Roman affairs.

79 For a discussion of the ironies and inconsistencies in this digression, see Clarke 2002. For its clear political motivations, see Moles 1998, 131–80 and Clarke 2002, 93–97. For a similar digression about the didactic value of annalistic history, see Tac. *Ann.* 3.65, with a discussion by Luce 1991 and Woodman 1998, 86–103.

80 In Old English, we see these in translations of Orosius and in the historical digressions in *Beowulf*. In the Byzantine tradition, we find numerous instances of the excursus, such as in Anna Komnene’s *Alexiad*; in Symeon the Logothete’s accounts of the reigns of Michael III, Basil I, and Leo VI; in Michael Psellos’ *Chronographia*; and in Niketas Choniates’ *History*, to name only a few examples.

81 Foucault 1972, 9.

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