

BATTLE EXHORTATIONS IN POLYBIUS

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Summary: This paper begins with considering the authenticity of Polybius' battle exhortations in the light of Hansen's well-known arguments for the impossibility of delivering speeches to a large body of deployed soldiers. For this purpose, the battle exhortations in Polybius are divided into categories depending on their delivery situation. This leads to the conclusion that many of the speeches must be fictional, but that battle exhortations are important for Polybius, and so begs the question of what function they fulfil in his *Histories*. In order to answer this question, the battle exhortations are divided into a different set of categories, depending on Polybius' reporting style, i.e. whether the speech is reported in *oratio recta*, *oratio obliqua*, a combination of the two, is just briefly summarised, or is simply mentioned. The battle exhortations which are reported in *oratio recta*, *oratio obliqua*, or 'combination mode' are discussed in some detail before facing the question of why Polybius thought such speeches sufficiently important to include brief summaries or even briefer mentions of them even when he did not report them.

These dispositions made, he [Scipio Africanus the Elder] traversed the battle line (ἐπεπορεύετο) exhorting the troops (παρακαλῶν τὰς δυνάμεις), briefly, but in a manner fitting to the situation at hand (βραχέως μὲν, οἰκείως δὲ τῆς ὑποκειμένης περιστάσεως). He called upon them to show themselves brave men in remembrance of their former battles, worthy of themselves and their country, and to place before their eyes that the effect of their victory would be not only to make them complete masters of Libya, but to give them and their country the supremacy and undisputed lordship of the world. But if the battle fell out differently, those who fell bravely in the fighting would have the fact that they had died for their country as the most glorious burial sheet whereas those who had fled would have the most shameful and pitiable end to their lives. For there was no place in Libya which could guarantee safety for those who had fled, and if they fell into the hands of the Carthaginians, no one in their right mind could be in doubt what would happen to them. "May none of you," he said, "learn that by experience! (ὦν" ἔφη "μηδενὶ γένοιτο πεῖραν

ύμῶν λαβεῖν.) Since, then, Fortune has placed before us the most glorious of rewards, in whichever way the battle is decided, should we not be at once the stupidest and most cowardly of mankind if, with the most glorious of prizes being within reach we choose the greatest of evils through love of life?" (τῆς δ' οὖν τύχης ἡμῖν τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἄθλων εἰς ἑκάτερον τὸ μέρος ἐκτεθεικυίας, πῶς οὐκ ἂν εἴημεν ἀγεννέστατοι καὶ συλλήβδην ἀφρονέστατοι πάντων, εἰ παρέντες τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐλοίμεθα τὰ μέγιστα τῶν κακῶν διὰ φιλοζωΐαν;) Therefore he called upon them to fix their minds on only two possibilities: to conquer or die, and in this mindset advance against the enemy (διόπερ ἡξίου δύο προθεμένους, ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶν ἢ νικᾶν ἢ θνήσκειν, ὁμόσε χωρεῖν εἰς τοὺς πολεμίους). For men with such a mindset march to battle without hoping to stay alive and so always by necessity conquer their enemies (τοὺς γὰρ τοιαύτας ἔχοντας διαλήψεις κατ' ἀνάγκην ἀεὶ κρατεῖν τῶν ἀντιταττομένων, ἐπειδὴν ἀπελπίσαντες τοῦ ζῆν ἴωσιν εἰς τὴν μάχην). Polybius 15.10¹

More than 20 years ago, Mogen Hansen showed decisively that speeches such as this one, which Polybius presents Scipio Africanus the Elder delivering before leading the Roman troops to victory at Zama, are fictional.² By practical experiments, he proved that it is impossible for a general to be heard by thousands of troops lined up in battle order and, if, as Polybius says, Scipio 'traversed the battle line' while speaking, each column of troops would have heard a different part of his speech, and none would have caught all of it. If we want to believe that Polybius is aiming for authenticity, we can at most assume that he has collated the various encouraging phrases used by Scipio in front of each column or unit of troops into a (short and) coherent speech. It is, of course, also entirely possible that Polybius had no sources for what Scipio said to his men and made up the speech himself based on those commonplaces generally employed by generals speaking to their armies (cf. Thuc. 7.69.2).

1 All translations in this paper are the author's own.

2 Hansen 1993 and 1998 *pace* Pritchett 1994. For an overview of literature on ancient battle exhortations in reality, literature, and art, see Lendon 2017: 149-50 n. 21.

Hansen's arguments (reinforced by the physics calculations of Anson)³ have been accepted by the majority of scholars, and it is now common to consider battle exhortations in historiography fictitious, particularly when ostensibly delivered in front of a large army, and especially when that army is said already to be deployed in battle order.⁴

Scholarship on speeches in Polybius has generally focused not on battle exhortations, but on ambassadorial speeches and speeches delivered in political assemblies, which are much more numerous in his work. The aim has been partly to investigate how far Polybius lives up to his own programmatic statements about speeches in historiography (especially at 12.25 and 36.1.1-7) and partly what lies behind his habit of reporting most speeches in *oratio obliqua* which some brief remarks in *oratio recta*.⁵ The *communis opinio* is that Polybius seems to have made an effort to find out what was said on each occasion (as he claims explicitly in 36.1.7), with varying degrees of success, and tried to reproduce the arguments, but, importantly, not the words of the historical speaker.⁶ With regard to the preponderance of *oratio obliqua*, it may well be that he preferred to summarise the arguments (whether authentic or merely, in his view, appropriate) in *oratio obliqua* rather than write up more or less fictionalised speeches. When he then added particularly striking metaphors or phrases in *oratio recta*, it might be because these were phrases that had stuck in the audience's mind and been reported to him verbatim, or because he felt justified in composing small snippets of direct speech in order to dramatize the moment or characterise the speaker.⁷ With regard

3 Anson 2010.

4 See e.g. Zoido 2007, McGing 2010: 88-89, Nicolai 2010, Wiater 2010, Lendon 2017.

5 See especially Wooten 1974, Marincola 2007: 123-29, Usher 2009, McGing 2010: 86-91, Pitcher 2021. Thornton 2013 takes a different approach, aiming to establish the deciding power of oratory in Polybius and the extent to which his own experiences as a political orator influenced his work. Duncan 2023 discusses the role of oratory in the work with a focus on its effect on the internal audience. Pédech (1964: 259-76) and Walbank (1957-1979) represent the historicist tradition of focusing on possible sources for the speeches. Comprehensive overviews of scholarship on Polybius' speeches can be found in Wiater 2010 and Duncan 2023.

6 Wooten 1974, Marincola 2007, Pitcher 2021, Duncan 2023.

7 Usher 2009, Nicolai 2010, Pitcher 2021.

to his criticisms of other historiographers' (principally Timaeus') approach to speeches, it is not the inclusion of speeches in itself to which he objects, but the number and length of speeches and the inappropriateness of many of their arguments: Polybius believed that only select speeches should be included in a work of history, namely those that had made a real difference historically, and that their arguments should be appropriate both to the speaker and the situation.⁸

In most of this scholarship on oratory in Polybius, battle exhortations are mentioned only briefly, sometimes in order to note that, considering Hansen's arguments for the fictitiousness of battlefield speeches, these must be less authentic than the other speeches in the *Histories*.⁹ This surely begs the question: why did Polybius, who is so explicit about the duty of the historian to find out the 'true words' that were actually spoken (36.1.7) divert from this principle in order to make up battle exhortations? What function do these speeches fulfil in his work?¹⁰ Even more puzzlingly, why did he, as we shall see below, include information that such exhortations were given even when he did not feel the need to tell the reader much, or anything, about what the general said? Those are the questions faced by this paper.

Battle exhortations categorised by delivery situation

Thinking in terms of Hansen's arguments about the practicalities of speaking to large bodies of troops, Polybius' battle exhortations can be divided into five groups depending on their delivery situation:

1. Speeches delivered to an entire deployed army immediately before battle, like Scipio's speech quoted above, which are certainly fictional. There are, in fact only four instances of these in the surviving text of the

8 Marincola 2007: 123-29, McGing 2010: 86-91, Pitcher 2021.

9 E.g. Marincola 2007: 123-29, McGing 2010: 88-89. Nicolai 2010 and Wiater 2010 are exceptions, which focus on battle exhortations; see below.

10 The same question is asked by Nicolai (2010) and answered in terms of brief rhetorical analyses of the speeches before the battles of Ticinus, Cannae, and Zama. In a more sophisticated vein, Wiater (2010) analyses the battle exhortations of book 3 as illustrating the juxtaposition of words and events as part of Polybius' didactic project. The present paper complements rather than replicates both of these pieces.

Histories: Antiochus III and Ptolemy Philopator before the Battle of Raphia (5.83), Philopoemen before the battle with the Spartans under Machanidas (11.12.1-3), Scipio Africanus the Elder before the Battle of Zama (15.10, quoted above), and Flamininus before the Battle of Cynoscephalae (18.23). Of these, the speeches of Antiochus and Ptolemy are summarised extremely briefly, and that of Philopomen is a bare mention that it occurred, and, interestingly, that the soldiers could not hear his words because they were making too much noise. Only the speeches of Scipio at Zama and Flamininus at Cynoscephalae are fully-fledged battle exhortations, the former presented in a combination of *oratio obliqua* and *oratio recta*, the latter exclusively in *oratio recta*. As for opposing speeches, the speech of Scipio is countered by a speech by Hannibal, explicitly delivered to his officers the night before the battle, with instructions for each of them to encourage his own men. There is no speech by Philip V to counter the one by Flamininus.

2. Speeches delivered to the assembled army at some point before the battle, typically the night before in the case of land armies or directly before embarkation in the case of naval armies. These are much more numerous and, since their delivery situation is more realistic, they have a better claim to being potentially authentic. Examples are: Himilco to troops in Lilybaeum (1.45), Adherbal to fleet at Drepana (1.49.10), Hannibal three times during his march across the Alps (3.34.7-8, 3.44.10-12, 3.54.2-3), Hannibal before Ticinus (3.62-63), Publius Scipio before Ticinus (3.64), Lucius Aemilius before Cannae (3.108-109), Hannibal before Cannae (3.111), Scipio the Elder twice in front of New Carthage (10.6.1-6, 10.11.5-8), and before setting out in pursuit of the rebel Andobales (11.31). All of these speeches are either entirely or primarily in *oratio obliqua*, and many are explicitly said to have been delivered by the general 'after having assembled the troops' (e.g. συναγαγὼν 3.62.3 and 3.64.1; συναθροίσαντες 3.108.2; συνῆγε 3.111.1). It is possible to quibble over how close to the moment of battle a speech must be delivered in order to count as a battle exhortation: some of the speeches listed here are delivered before leading an army or fleet into hostile territory or waters where a battle can be expected, but in fact a battle in many cases does not immediately occur (e.g. 1.45, 3.44, 3.54, 10.6). It is, however, impossible to see a difference, in form or content, between these speeches

and the ones being delivered before a battle, and it is worth noting that the exhortations by Hannibal and Publius Scipio delivered before the Battle of Ticinus, which are commonly considered battle exhortations,¹¹ take place two days before that battle (3.65.1-2), and the exhortation of Lucius Aemilius before the Battle of Cannae no less than four days before that battle is fought (3.110-115). It is only the narrative presentation of these speeches in close proximity to the narrative of the two battles that mark them out as *battle* exhortations by contrast with, say, Scipio's speech before marching out against Andobales.

3. Speeches delivered to a group of officers only, who are then expected to pass on the salient points to their men. This delivery situation is entirely realistic and believable, but that does not, of course, mean that the speech found in the *Histories* necessarily replicates what the general actually said. There are not many explicit examples of this in the extant text of the *Histories*, and one wonders if we are often meant to assume that the speeches in group 2, delivered 'after assembling the troops' are, in fact, delivered by the individual officers under the instructions of the commander-in-chief. The most explicit examples in the text are the Roman general speaking to his officers before the siege of Pharos (3.18.4), Hannibal speaking to officers while hiding with them in a ravine before his surprise attack on Tarentum (8.26.7-10), and Hannibal speaking to his officers before the Battle of Zama (15.11). It is also possible that a commander-in-chief instructing his generals what to say lies behind the two instances of a collective of Carthaginian *strategoi* speaking to the fleet and army respectively during the First Punic War (1.27.1-2 and 1.32.8).

4. Speeches delivered to a small, select body of soldiers. Like group 3, this represents a realistic, but rarely explicitly described, delivery situation. The only examples I have come across are Hannibal addressing the troops selected for the ambush at the Battle of Trebia (3.71.8) and Hannibal speaking to his own troops after instructing his officers what to say to theirs before the Battle of Zama (15.11).

5. Speeches delivered in an unspecified situation shortly before a battle. This is by far the largest group of battle exhortations in Polybius. However, these speeches are generally not reproduced, but just noted, in almost formulaic phrases with the sense of 'having exhorted the troops

11 E.g. Nicolai 2010, Wiater 2010.

with words fitting for the occasion' (παρακαλέσαντες τοῖς ἀρμόζουσι λόγοις τῆς πράξεως 1.44.1, παρακαλέσας τὰ πρέποντα τῷ καιρῷ 1.60.5, παρακαλέσας τὰ πρέποντα τοῖς καιροῖς 2.64), or simply παρακαλέσας (Demetrius of Pharos before Battle of Pharos 3.19.4, Philip V before siege of Palus 5.4.6).

This overview shows that Polybius found battle exhortations important events which deserved to be recorded. However, it also shows that it was often not the content of the exhortation that was important, but simply the fact that it had occurred. The large number of speeches in group 5, which are mentioned without any indication of their contents, begs the question: what is so important about battle exhortations? What function(s) do they fulfil in Polybius' *Histories*, even when they are merely mentioned in passing? The rest of this paper will attempt to answer that question.

Battle exhortations categorised by mode of presentation

In order to answer the question of the function of battle exhortations in Polybius, it is useful to categorise the speeches in a different way from what we have just done above. Categories 1-5 above are based on the speeches' delivery situation, a classification that aims at gauging the degree of potential for authenticity in the reproduction of the speech, or, by contrast, the extent of necessary fictionalisation in each situation. When our focus switches to the question of narrative or historiographical function of the speeches in Polybius' text, it makes more sense to categorise them according to degree of (re)production of their contents. In order of decreasing amount of information about the contents of the speech, the categories are then:

A. Exhortations delivered entirely in *oratio recta*. There is only one such battle exhortation in the surviving text of the *Histories*, namely the one attributed to Flamininus before the Battle of Cynoscephalae (18.23).¹²

B. Exhortations in 'combined mode', i.e. beginning in *oratio obliqua* and moving into *oratio recta* for their most striking passages. There are four of these, all before important battles of the Second Punic War: Publius

12 Pitcher 2021 has a helpful appendix listing all instances of *oratio recta* in Polybius.

Scipio before Ticinus (3.64), Lucius Aemilius before Cannae (3.108-109), Hannibal before Cannae (3.111), and Scipio the Elder before Zama (15.10, quoted above).

C. Exhortations entirely in *oratio obliqua*. If one includes speeches to assembled troops which take place before movement into hostile territory as well as speeches (in narrative terms) immediately before a battle as I suggested above, there are 10 of these in the extant text: Hannibal in the Alps (3.34.7-8, 3.44.10-12, 3.54.2-3), Hannibal before Ticinus 3.62-63, Hannibal at Tarentum (8.26.7-10), Scipio the Elder before New Carthage (10.6.1-6 and 10.11.5-8), Philopoimen after taking over the Achaean army, but perhaps not before a particular battle (11.9), Scipio the Elder before setting out to fight Andobales (11.31), and Hannibal before Zama (15.11). Most of these speeches are found at less momentous junctures than the ones that include some phrases in *oratio recta*, but that is not true for all of them: Hannibal's speeches and Ticinus and Zama, which are entirely in *oratio obliqua*, correspond to the speeches of Publius Scipio and Scipio Africanus the Elder respectively, both of which have elements of *oratio recta*. For this reason it seems sensible largely to treat groups A, B, and C together while keeping in mind that the presence of *oratio recta* gives the speeches in group A and B a little more oomph.¹³

D. Speeches summarised in a sentence or two, such as the ones said to have been delivered by Carthaginian *strategoï* to their fleet 1.27.1.-2, Adherbal to troops at Drepana 1.49.10, Himilco at 1.45.3 and Antiochus and Ptolemy before the Battle of Raphia (5.83).

E. Speeches mentioned in passing, usually with a form of παρακαλεῖν (most often in the past participle), with no or minimal indication of what was said. This is by far the most numerous category as well as, perhaps, the most puzzling.

We shall look at each of these groups in turn, beginning with the fully developed speeches in groups A, B and C.

13 The interplay between *oratio obliqua* and *oratio recta* in Polybius' speeches has been well discussed by Usher (2009) and Pitcher (2021) although neither spends much time on the battle exhortations.

**Exhortations in *oratio recta* (A), *oratio obliqua* (B),
and combined mode (C)**

The overall purpose of these speeches seems to be to make the narrative more vivid and engaging, or, with a narratological expression, immersive. Narrative scholars working on both modern and ancient texts generally agree that direct speech contributes to the effect of ‘temporal immersion’, i.e. to making the reader feel as if she is experiencing events at the same time as the characters in the story, often leading to feelings of suspense and excitement about the outcome. Direct speech may also contribute to ‘emotional immersion’ if it touches on emotional issues and expresses the speaker’s own emotions.¹⁴ Polybius’ fully developed battle exhortations, despite most of them being in a combination of *oratio recta* and *oratio obliqua*, seem to share this purpose. Indeed, Polybius expresses his desire for the reader to become immersed just before two of these speeches, in the lead-up to the Battle of Zama:

ἐφ’ ἃ τίς οὐκ ἂν ἐπιστήσας συμπαθῆς γένοιτο κατὰ τὴν ἐξήγησιν;
[4] οὔτε γὰρ δυνάμεις πολεμικωτέρας οὔθ’ ἡγεμόνας ἐπιτυχεστέρους
τούτων καὶ μᾶλλον ἀθλητὰς γεγονότας τῶν κατὰ πόλεμον ἔργων
εὖροι τις ἂν ἐτέρους, οὐδὲ μὴν ἄθλα μείζω τὴν τύχην ἐκτεθεικυῖαν
τοῖς ἀγωνιζομένοις τῶν τότε προκειμένων· [5] οὐ γὰρ τῆς Λιβύης
αὐτῆς οὐδὲ τῆς Εὐρώπης ἔμελλον κυριεύειν οἱ τῇ μάχῃ κρατήσαντες,
ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων μερῶν τῆς οἰκουμένης, ὅσα νῦν πέπτωκεν ὑπὸ
τὴν ἱστορίαν. ὃ καὶ συνέβη γενέσθαι μετ’ ὀλίγον.

What person who turns his attention to these events could fail to become emotionally engaged/immersed (συμπαθῆς)? For it would be impossible to find armies that were better prepared for war or generals who were more successful or had been better trained for the operations of war than these ones, or indeed bigger prizes offered to the combatants by fortune than those which were then for the winning.

14 For the concept of immersion and the various techniques used to bring it about, see Hau 2020 or 2025: 11-16 with references to previous scholarship. For direct speech as a technique of immersion, see additionally Ryan 2001, 134-35 and Allan 2020 and 2022, the latter with references to cognitive-psychological evidence.

For it was not merely of Libya or Europe that the victors in this battle were destined to become masters, but also of the other parts of the known world which now became part of the same history.

Polybius 15.9.3-6

The rhetorical question and passionate description of the momentousness of the coming battle are meant to capture the reader's imagination and make him (for Polybius' intended reader was surely male) excited to read the following narrative, despite, no doubt, already knowing who would be victorious.¹⁵ That he was also supposed to become emotionally immersed is expressed by the adjective συμπαθής: the reader will 'suffer/experience with' the characters. This is the effect for which Polybius elsewhere sneeringly says that his historiographical predecessor Phylarchus 'always' strives in his narrative (Plb. 2.56);¹⁶ but Polybius clearly believes that the effect is warranted when the events narrated are sufficiently momentous.¹⁷ The battles of Cannae, Zama, and Cynoscephalae, which are all introduced by one or more speeches fully or partly in *oratio recta*, were certainly such momentous events. The Battle of Ticinus, introduced by one speech in a combination of *oratio recta* and one in *oratio obliqua*, might be thought to hold equally momentous significance, even if it was less decisive, since it was the first battle fought between Romans and Carthaginians on Italian soil.

It is striking that Polybius, despite his expressed desire for the reader to become *sympathes* at an important juncture, has decided to report speeches primarily in *oratio obliqua* with only a sprinkling of *oratio recta*. This is probably a sign that his desire to immerse the reader in the his-

15 On the well-known phenomenon of feeling suspense even when one knows how the story is going to end, see Ryan 2001: 146.

16 For a thorough analysis of Polybius' criticism of Phylarchus with references to previous scholarship, see Hau 2025: 69-80.

17 Wiedemann (1990) has argued persuasively that Polybius was in line with ancient literary theory in his belief that emotional *oratio recta* as part of the 'grand' style is fitting when writing historiography about grand themes. He does not, however, discuss what role Polybius thought was played by *oratio obliqua*.

torical narrative came second to his desire for a ‘practical’ historical account (ἱστορίη πραγματική),¹⁸ i.e. an account which foregrounded didactic usefulness (practical and moral) and avoided the most elaborate techniques of immersion, including the vivid, harrowing scenes for which he criticises Phylarchus (2.56) and the overlong, overly rhetorically wrought speeches for which he criticises Timaeus (12.25b).¹⁹ It is surely no coincidence that the moment in each speech in combined mode where Polybius switches from *oratio obliqua* to *oratio recta* is the rhetorical highpoint, marked by such effects as rhetorical questions, 2nd-person verbs, or striking metaphors.²⁰ Thus, in Scipio’s speech quoted at the beginning of this paper, Polybius switches to *oratio recta* in order to express Scipio’s wish (in optative) and a rhetorical question. Oddly, perhaps, for modern tastes, he then switches back into *oratio obliqua* for the final exhortation: “Therefore he called upon them to fix their minds on only two possibilities: to conquer or die, and in this mindset advance against the enemy”.

In addition to the purpose of immersion of the reader, however, each of the developed battle exhortations fulfils an individual function in the wider narrative. The speeches delivered by the opposing generals at Ticinus, Cannae, and Zama all contribute to the characterisation of the two generals and the situation they face, helping to show – in an exciting, immersive way – why one side was victorious and the other defeated.

At Ticinus, we are first told that at this juncture, when Hannibal and Scipio were now approaching each other, they set about encouraging their troops, each saying what was fitting to the situation at hand (κατὰ δὲ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἤδη συνεγγίζοντες ἀλλήλοις Ἀννίβας καὶ Πόπλιος ἐπεβάλλοντο παρακαλεῖν τὰς ἑαυτῶν δυνάμεις, ἕκαστος προθέμενος τὰ πρέποντα τοῖς παροῦσι καιροῖς, 3.62.1), but it takes another two chapters before we get to Scipio’s speech. Instead, the narrative focuses on Hannibal and the display he makes of two captured Gauls, making them fight

18 E.g. Plb. 1.2.8, 3.47.9, 6.5.2, 12.25e1.

19 For Polybius’ *Histories* as a didactic work, see Hau 2016, 23–72.

20 Usher (2009: 513–14) concludes his survey of Polybius’ use of *oratio obliqua* and *oratio recta* by stating that the switch from one mode to the other towards the end of a reported speech ‘produces a crescendo effect’, which can be used for dramatic or characterising purposes.

each other and promising death to the defeated and riches and freedom to the victor. Only after narrating this spectacle in detail, as well as the effect it has on the minds of the Carthaginians, does Polybius turn to Hannibal's speech, stating explicitly that the general only spoke after making sure that his troops were now in the right frame of mind (Ἀννίβας δὲ διὰ τῶν προειρημένων τὴν προκειμένην διάθεσιν ἐνεργασάμενος ταῖς τῶν δυνάμεων ψυχαῖς, 3.63.1). Hannibal's speech – entirely in *oratio obliqua* – then takes the staged fight as an *exemplum* (which the troops have 'seen clearly', ἐναργῶς θεασάμενοι) of the situation facing the Carthaginians: they must either fight and win rewards or die and be set free. After the end of the speech, Polybius states explicitly that the combination of the *exemplum* and the speech (τό τε παράδειγμα καὶ τοὺς λόγους) whipped up 'ecstatic fighting fury' (ὄρμην καὶ παράστασιν) in the troops. In this way, Hannibal is portrayed as a ruthless, but effective commander with a very shrewd understanding of his troops' psychology.

Publius Scipio's speech, which follows in the next chapter (3.64), by contrast, begins with a summary, making it clear that Polybius does not find the first part of the Roman's speech worth reporting, even in *oratio obliqua*: 'Most of what he said related to the exalted position of their country and the achievements of their ancestors; what concerned the present situation was as follows (τὰ μὲν οὖν πολλὰ τῶν λεγομένων ἦν περί τε τοῦ τῆς πατρίδος ἀξιώματος καὶ τῶν προγονικῶν πράξεων, τὰ δὲ τοῦ παρῆστώτος καιροῦ τοιάδε, 3.64.2)'. Then follows a couple of statements in *oratio obliqua* to the effect that Romans are superior to Carthaginians (3.64.3-4) before a brief switch to *oratio recta* for a rhetorical question and a return to *oratio obliqua* for more thoughts on Roman superiority, this time based on recent skirmishes. At the end of the speech, the troops respond to 'their trust in the speaker and the truth of his words (διὰ τὴν τοῦ λέγοντος πίστιν καὶ διὰ τὴν τῶν λεγομένων ἀλήθειαν)' with 'enthusiasm for battle' (ἐκθύμως ἐχόντων πρὸς τὸ κινδυνεύειν, 3.64.11). This is a more tempered response than the 'ecstatic fighting fury' of the Carthaginians, and, when Scipio recommends them for their 'ὄρμην', he has clearly misread the mood. Moreover, in the ensuing battle (3.65.3-11), it becomes clear that the assessment of Romans versus Carthaginians

offered in the speech underestimates the latter.²¹ This makes Polybius' narratorial remark about the Roman troops responding to 'their trust in the speaker and the truth of his words' read oddly. We are probably meant to see not only the trust, but also the 'truth' as focalised through the Roman soldiers: they believe that Scipio is trustworthy and a capable general, and they believe that he speaks the truth about the superiority of Romans to Carthaginians. The subsequent narrative will show that they are mistaken.

In the speeches before Cannae, a similar situation is depicted. Aemilius is first exhorted by the Senate (*παρακαλέσαντες* – the same word as the one used for delivering a battle exhortation, 3.108.1) and he assembles his troops to exhort them in turn. Interestingly, Polybius says that Aemilius speaks ἐξ αὐτοπαθείας, 'from personal experience' (the kind he elsewhere criticises Timaeus for lacking, 12.25h-i) or, perhaps, since we have not heard anything about Aemilius' deeds before this point, 'from personal feeling' (the Loeb translation sensitively renders 'with words that evidently sprang from his heart').²² Before presenting the speech itself, Polybius offers a summary of it (it was about the various causes for the Romans' previous defeats and why they would now be victorious, 3.108.3-5), giving the impression that he might skip over part of it as he did with Publius Scipio's at Ticinus. At the end of the summary, however, he slides into *oratio obliqua* of Aemilius' actual arguments (3.108.6-7), and then into *oratio recta*, in order to give specific examples of how the inexperience of the Roman troops who have so far met the Carthaginians in

21 Walbank's comment (1957 *ad loc.*) that Scipio's speech is 'unhistorical' because he did not expect a major battle at this point, and so is included in order to create a parallel to Hannibal's speech, ignores the fact that generals probably addressed their troops also before minor engagements, but is no doubt right about the basic function of the speech in Polybius. Nicolai (2010: 124-25) offers a brief rhetorical analysis of the two speeches at Ticinus and likewise concludes that Hannibal's is more effective. He is wrong, though, to see the troops' enthusiastic response to Scipio's speech as a sign of Polybius' approval. Wiater (2010) persuasively reads the two speeches as programmatic for book 3 in the way they show Hannibal responding to events while Scipio and other Romans do not look reality in the eyes, and (in thought and speech) present versions of events that correspond to their own preconceptions, desires, or ambitions.

22 Translation by Paton, revised by Walbank and Habicht.

battle have brought about defeat (3.108.8-109.5). The speech continues in *oratio recta* on the topic of how men who fight for their homes and families fight better than mercenaries, with the peroration encouraging the troops, with imperative verbs, to prove that it was inexperience and special circumstances that resulted in the previous defeats (3.109.12). Polybius does not say anything about how the soldiers received this speech but just notes that Aemilius dismissed them afterwards.

Hannibal's speech is very different. As at Ticinus, he begins with a visual cue, albeit not quite as elaborately staged.²³ He points to the country around the army and asks the soldiers if they could imagine a better place for a battle (3.111.2). The troops respond positively, applauding "because of the obviousness/clarity" (διὰ τὴν ἐνάργειαν, corresponding to the adverb ἐναργῶς which described how they saw the staged *exemplum* of the captured Gauls).²⁴ The speech then picks up in *oratio recta*, telling the soldiers to thank the gods for the opportunity the battle affords, stressing that they no longer need exhortations after their many victories, and promising them all the wealth of Italy and freedom from hardship as reward for their coming victory (3.111.3-10). In its supreme confidence the speech stands in stark contrast to the apologetic tone of Aemilius' exhortation. And by contrast with Polybius' silence regarding the response of the Roman troops, here we are told that the Carthaginians applaud enthusiastically (προθύμως αὐτὸν ἐπισημαινομένου τοῦ πλήθους). Hannibal then, like Publius Scipio at Ticinus, but with better reason, praises the men for their fighting fury (δεξάμενος αὐτῶν τὴν ὁρμήν) and dismisses them.

Again, the two speeches characterise the commanders in ways that are brought out by the subsequent battle: Aemilius is heartfelt and courageous in a bad situation that is not of his own making but is ultimately

23 Hannibal's tendency to use visual pointers in his speeches has also been noted by Wiedemann 1990 and Wiater 2010.

24 For Polybius' use of the word ἐνάργεια and its cognates, see Hau forthcoming. On the use of 'epideictic proofs' in Polybius' speeches, see Pitcher 2021: 278-80.

ineffective. Hannibal is supremely confident in himself and his troops, whom he knows and understands, and his confidence is warranted.²⁵

At Zama, the situation is reversed. The battle narrative is introduced by the passage quoted above on the importance and intrinsic interest of the battle, encouraging the reader to become immersed, συμπαθής (15.9.1-5). Then follows an overview of Scipio's battle order (15.9.6-10). Scipio then traverses the battle line addressing the troops (on the unreality of this situation and the rareness of it in Polybius, see above), "briefly, but in a manner fitting to the situation at hand" (ἐπεπορεύετο παρακαλῶν τὰς δυνάμεις βραχέως μὲν, οἰκείως δὲ τῆς ὑποκειμένης περιστάσεως, 15.10.1). The speech has been quoted at the opening of this paper. It begins in *oratio obliqua*, confidently reminding the Roman soldiers of their past successes (15.10.2), promising them glory in death should they fall, and then threatening them with a dire fate if they flee and try to find refuge in Africa (15.10.3-4). When it switches to *oratio recta*, it is in order to voice a wish which reinforces the threat: 'May none of you learn that by experience! ("ὧν" ἔφη "μηδενὶ γένοιτο πείραν ὑμῶν λαβεῖν", 15.10.4).²⁶ The speech then, oddly, switches to *oratio obliqua* for its peroration, encouraging the soldiers to go into battle with a mindset of 'conquer or die' (15.10.7).²⁷ There is no indication of the troops' response. A reader who did not know better might be forgiven for thinking that this is a sign that the speech is ineffectual.

25 Walbank (1957 *ad loc.*) believes the two speeches unhistorical but does not speculate about their purpose within Polybius' work. Nicolai (2010: 125-26) offers a brief rhetorical analysis of the two speeches and also considers Hannibal's the more effective. Wiater's argument (Wiater 2010), that Aemilius' speech presents previous events accurately, and that the subsequent defeat is caused by the other Roman commander repeating the mistakes he mentions, ignores the fact that the speech is overwhelmingly focused on the inexperience of the previously defeated soldiers rather than the mistakes made by their commanders.

26 Danzig (2024) has argued, on the basis of a pair of speeches in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, that battle exhortations based on threats are meant to be considered ill suited to the soldiers' psychology and a sign of a bad general. That may be the case in Xenophon, but it does not seem to be the case in Polybius.

27 Walbank (1967 *ad loc.*) only comments on Scipio's remark about the victors becoming masters of the known world and expresses doubt about its historicity. Nicolai (2010: 126) does not analyse the speeches at Zama, but simply states that 'From these speeches, too, one may foresee the result of the battle' without explaining how.

An overview of Hannibal's battle order follows (15.11.1-3), making the reader expect a battle exhortation to match Scipio's, perhaps with some of the Carthaginian commander's trademark visual cues. Instead, we are given something much more subdued: Hannibal assembles not his troops, but only his officers, and asks them to relay a message to their men: the mercenaries are told to trust to the presence of Hannibal and his troops for victory (15.11.4), and the Carthaginians, more ominously, to remember that they are fighting for their homes and families (15.11.5). Hannibal then addresses his own troops in *oratio obliqua*, reminding them not only of their former victories, but also, on a for him unusually emotional note, of their long comradeship (τῆς πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἑπτακαίδεκάετους συνηθείας, 15.11.6). Only then does he bring in his customary visual cue, asking them to look at the Roman troops (ἀναβλέπειν αὐτοὺς ἐκέλευε) and realise how few they are, and that they are the descendants of men already defeated by the Carthaginians (15.11.10-11).

Like in the case of Scipio, we are not told what effect Hannibal's speech has on its audience. The effect on the reader, however, is profound. Compared with Hannibal's earlier speeches, this one is subdued and lacking in confidence, even slightly emotional, and the talk of former victories only serves to bring home to the reader how much has changed since they happened. If Scipio is pushing his soldiers to victory by threats of their fates in defeat, Hannibal is using commonplaces and the bond between comrades to mask the fact that he believes they will be defeated. Even his customary reference to visual evidence feels lacklustre, and is not credited as ἐναργῶς or ἐνάργεια by the Polybian narrator.

The last fully developed battle exhortation in the extant text of the *Histories*, Flamininus' speech at Cynoscephalae (18.23), stands alone, without a counter-speech by Philip V. Like Scipio's speech at Zama, it is said to be delivered by the general as he traverses the battle line (παρεκάλει τὰς τάξεις ἐπιπορευόμενος, 18.23.1). Polybius introduces the speech by saying that it was 'brief, but impactful and easily intelligible by the audience' (βραχεῖα μὲν, ἐμφαντικὴ δὲ καὶ γνώριμος τοῖς ἀκούουσιν). It is common for him to call a speech 'short' (e.g. 1.27.1, 15.10.1), but the reference to its impact and intelligibility is unique. This evaluation seems to be based on the fact that Flamininus, like Hannibal at his most effective, uses a visual cue: "For showing them clearly [the

troops] in front of their eyes he spoke to the soldiers (ἐναργῶς γὰρ ὑπὸ τὴν ὄψιν ἐνδεικνύμενος ἔλεγε τοῖς αὐτοῦ στρατιώταις, 18.23.2). The speech then launches into *oratio recta* from the very beginning with a series of rhetorical questions. It is the only battle exhortation in the extant text of the *Histories* to be presented entirely in *oratio recta*, and it is tempting to think that Polybius had information about what Flaminius had said – perhaps addressing individual rhetorical questions to individual parts of the battle line as he moved along – and decided to reproduce it in the punchiest form possible.²⁸ Regardless of the authenticity or fictitiousness of the speech, however, its function is clearly to characterise Flaminius as a decisive and effective general, almost a second Hannibal, about to be spectacularly victorious. Another striking feature of Flaminius' speech is that it stands alone, unopposed by a speech by the enemy general. This adds to the effective impression of the speech and also reinforces the impression that Philip is caught unprepared, "forced to bring help [to struggling troops] and decide the battle on the spur of a moment although the main part of the phalanx was still on the march and approaching the hills (ἡναγκάζετο βοηθεῖν καὶ κρίνειν ἐκ τοῦ καιροῦ τὰ ὅλα, καίπερ ἔτι τῶν πλείστων μερῶν τῆς φάλαγγος κατὰ πορείαν ὄντων καὶ προσβαινόντων πρὸς τοὺς βουνούς, 18.14.7)" as Polybius says in the account of the battle in the next chapter.

From this overview, it is clear that the fully-developed battle exhortations before the battles of Ticinus, Cannae, Zama, and Cynoscephalae contribute to the excitement and immersiveness of his narrative at important junctures and also characterise the generals who deliver them. They do not, like Thucydides' battle exhortations, give the reader overviews of strategy or tactics or offer philosophical thoughts on what constitutes true courage.²⁹ In an insightful discussion of speech (direct, indi-

28 Walbank (1967 *ad loc.*) comments that the speech consists of commonplaces, but notes that they may well have been used by Flaminius in reality.

29 Much scholarship exists on Thucydides' battle exhortations (as on his other speeches). For a convenient overview, see Lendon (2017) p. 146-8 with footnotes. Lendon comments that 'most pre-battle speeches after Thucydides are entirely conventional in their sentiments (...) It is as if the only Thucydidean speeches that most

rect, and reported) in Polybius, Luke Pitcher has recently argued that Polybius' main reason for including speeches of all types is to show the reasons for their success or failure in terms of achieving the speaker's goal.³⁰ This may well be true of political speeches in the *Histories*, but it does not seem always to be true of battle exhortations since, as we have seen, the effect of the speech is sometimes not mentioned (as with the speeches delivered before Zama as well as Flaminius' speech). Throughout, and in these cases particularly, Polybius' focus is overwhelmingly on the general, and the speech forms part of his portrait, with its effect on the soldiers often being taken for granted.³¹

The exhortations in *oratio obliqua* which occur at other junctures in the work seem to share this double purpose of immersiveness and characterisation: Hannibal is further characterised as ruthless, efficient, and in tune with his soldiers through his three speeches in the Alps (3.34.7-8, 3.44.10-12, 3.54.2-3) and his speech at Tarentum (8.26.7-10); Scipio Africanus the Elder is characterised as acutely intelligent, well-informed, and adept at manipulating people in his speeches at New Carthage (10.6.1-6 and 10.11.5-8), and Philopoemen is characterised as a great leader of men with a keen eye for detail in his speech after taking over the Achaean army (11.9).³² At the same time, the speeches enliven the moment and make the narrative immersive, keeping the reader interested.

later authors remembered were those before Delium, Nicias before the Anapus river, and Brasidas in Lyncestis, and that they then relentlessly rehearsed the *topoi* in those speeches for nine hundred years' (148). He ignores the possibility that not every historiographer was always imitating Thucydides. Polybius seems to have preferred to report the sentiments that were, or could plausibly have been, spoken rather than offer grand overviews of tactics or philosophical musings; he used his narratorial voice for such purposes.

30 This is echoed by Duncan 2023. See also Marincola 2007: 123-26, and McGing 2010: 88.

31 Polybius is (by contrast with Xenophon) not particularly interested in the relationship between general and soldiers. He comments on Hannibal's unusual ability to keep an ethnically varied body of soldiers loyal for years in enemy territory at 11.19, but it does not form part of his didactic advice in any of his digressions on good and bad generalship (3.81, 9.12-20).

32 For a perceptive analysis of this speech, see Wiater 2010.

It is, of course, possible to achieve these two purposes in other ways and, in fact, not all of the momentous battles in the *Histories* are introduced by exhortations from the generals. For battles in the fragmentary books, such as the Battle of Pydna, it may be argued that the orations have been lost in transmission. In the case of the Battle of Lake Trasumene, however, which is narrated in great detail in book 3, that is clearly not the case. Rather, in this case, Polybius replaces the characterisation of the two generals through battle exhortations with indirect characterisation through their reported thoughts and conversations and direct characterisations in his narratorial voice. He begins with Hannibal, picking up just after the dramatic account of his crossing of the Po Marshes (3.79). Hannibal's thoughts are then offered in *oratio obliqua* introduced by the participle *πυνθανόμενος*, which makes it clear that they are based on facts: he had learned that the country promises rich booty, and that Flaminius is a demagogue and worthless general, and on this he bases his plan of action (3.80.3-5). Polybius then switches to addressing the reader at length in his own narratorial voice to confirm Hannibal's opinion of Flaminius and use this as a springboard to deliver a moral-didactic lecture on what vices are particularly damaging in a general (3.81.1-11). When he continues his narrative, it is explicitly in order to confirm the views expressed in the lecture (ἃ δὴ καὶ τότε προιδόμενος καὶ συλλογισάμενος Ἀννίβας ... 3.81.12). The focus then moves to Flaminius, whose character, already surmised by Hannibal and confirmed by the narrator, is now demonstrated by his behaviour, including an exchange of opinions with his officers in *oratio obliqua* (3.82.4-6). These various means of characterising Hannibal and Flaminius take the place of battle exhortations, making the narrative varied, and driving home Polybius' moral-didactic message. We are even told, like after (some) battle exhortations, what effect Flaminius' personality has on 'the masses' (τοῖς ὄχλοις, 3.82.7-8). The battle itself follows (3.82.9-84.14).

Group D: Summarised Exhortations

After this discussion of battle exhortations presented in *oratio recta* (group A), *oratio obliqua* (group C) or a combination of the two (group B) – or, indeed, being absent, as in the case of Trasumene – we turn now,

more briefly, to exhortations which are merely summarised by Polybius in a sentence or two (group D). In this group we find three battle exhortations from book 1 and the exhortations of Antiochus III and Ptolemy Philopator before the Battle of Raphia in book 5.³³

The three exhortations in book 1 are all delivered by Carthaginians: some unnamed *strategoi* (1.27.1.-2), Himilco (1.45.3), and Adherbal, commander at Drepana (1.49.10). Pitcher has argued persuasively that the higher frequency of short battle exhortations in book 1 than in the later books has an iterative function, i.e. that Polybius is here showing what a typical battle exhortation is like and the circumstances under which it is delivered so that he can take that information as read for battles narrated in the latter books.³⁴ I am happy to agree with this, but Polybius' choice of speakers surely warrants attention. Why are they all Carthaginian, not Roman? Why is Adherbal – not to mention a bunch of unnamed *strategoi* – sufficiently important to be honoured with a speech? The answer, I think, taking my inspiration from Pitcher, lies in the speeches' typicality or exemplarity.

The brief summaries of the three Carthaginian speeches presents each of them as focusing on a different *topos* of a typical battle exhortation:³⁵ the speech of the Carthaginian commanders (1.27.1-2) uses a *topos* common for generals of troops fighting away from their own country and trying to hold back the enemy from progressing: if victorious, the troops will win the benefit of keeping war away from their own country; if defeated, they will bring war to their own country. The speech by Himilco (1.45.3) employs a *topos* suitable for a commander of troops who are already enthusiastic and full of confidence (1.45.1-2): he promises personal rewards to those who distinguish themselves in the battle and collective rewards to all if victorious. Finally, the speech by Adherbal (1.49.10) is typical for commanders who decide to risk a battle in order to avoid a siege, holding up the prospect of victory versus the hardships of a besieged city. In this way, each of the speeches shows what Polybius

33 This is not necessarily an exhaustive list. These exhortations are by nature easy to miss in Polybius' narrative.

34 Pitcher 2021.

35 For a list of such *topoi*, see Pritchett 1994: 101-5.

means when he says that a general addresses his troops with ‘words appropriate to the circumstances’ (e.g. παρακαλέσας δὲ τῷ καιρῷ τὰ πρέποντα 1.45.3), a shorthand used numerous times throughout the *Histories* (see below). The reason each of these speeches is given by a Carthaginian rather than a Roman may be that a battle exhortation is indicative of a commander’s relationship with his soldiers, a topic which comes up repeatedly in the portrayal of the Carthaginians in book 1, culminating in the complete break-down of their relationship with their mercenaries and the Mercenary War. On the Roman side, by contrast, Polybius is in book 1 more interested in the relationship between Senate and commanders and the resilience they show in the face of repeated naval setbacks.

The situation with the speeches before the Battle of Raphia is different. This certainly was a momentous battle if ever there was one. Nonetheless, Polybius does not give us extended exhortations by the opposing general-kings, but only a brief summary, iterative in that one summary covers two speeches:

ἦν δὲ παραπλήσιος ὁ νοῦς τῶν ὑφ’ ἐκατέρου παρακαλουμένων. ἴδιον μὲν γὰρ ἔργον ἐπιφανὲς καὶ κατηξιωμένον προφέρεσθαι τοῖς παρακαλουμένοις οὐδέτερος αὐτῶν εἶχε διὰ τὸ προσφάτως παρειληφέναι τὰς ἀρχάς, [5] τῆς δὲ τῶν προγόνων δόξης καὶ τῶν ἐκείνοις πεπραγμένων ἀναμιμνήσκοντες φρόνημα καὶ θάρσος τοῖς φαλαγγίταις ἐπειρῶντο παριστάναι. [6] μάλιστα δὲ τὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν εἰς τὸ μέλλον ἐλπίδας ἐπιδεικνύντες, καὶ κατ’ ἰδίαν τοὺς ἡγουμένους καὶ κοινῇ πάντας τοὺς ἀγωνίζεσθαι μέλλοντας ἠξίουσιν καὶ παρεκάλουν ἀνδρωδῶς καὶ γενναίως χρήσασθαι τῷ παρόντι κινδύνῳ. [7] ταῦτα δὲ καὶ τούτοις παραπλήσια λέγοντες, τὰ μὲν δι’ αὐτῶν, τὰ δὲ καὶ διὰ τῶν ἐρμηνέων, ἀρίππευον.

The essence of the exhortations by each [of the kings] was very similar. For neither of them had any personal brilliant or famous deed to exhibit to those being exhorted because they had only recently taken over their kingdoms, so instead they reminded the troops of the glory of their ancestors and their ancestors’ deeds and tried to instil courage and high spirit into the phalanx. But especially they held out

hopes for future rewards from themselves, both individually to the officers and collectively to all those who were about to go into battle, and they exhorted them to face the present danger nobly and bravely. Saying such similar things, partly themselves and partly through interpreters, they rode along the battle line.

Polybius 5.83.4-7

Here, the point seems to be partly the similarity of the two speeches, stressing the similar lack of experience of the two kings, and partly the rhetorical emptiness: both kings employ standard *topoi*, such as the glory and great deeds of the soldiers' ancestors and the promises of rewards. Apparently, neither said anything which any of the survivors remembered later, or which Polybius felt deserved to be mentioned in a didactic work of history.

Group E, Battle exhortations mentioned in passing

With extraordinary frequency, Polybius mentions in passing that a general (or other officer) exhorts his troops, often in a phrase such as 'having exhorted the troops with words fitting the situation ... (παρακαλέσας τὰ πρέποντα τῷ καιρῷ)': Carthaginian generals (1.32.8 and 1.44.1), Hanno (1.60.5), Cleomenes (2.64.1), Philopoemen as a young man (2.67.5), Hannibal at Saguntum (3.17.8), Roman general (3.18.4), Demetrius of Pharos (3.19.4), Philip V (5.4.6), Molon (5.48.16), Antiochus III (5.60.3 and 5.62.3), Greek generals training Ptolemy Philopator's army (5.64.7), Philip V (8.13.5), Epaminondas (9.8.9), Scipio Africanus the Elder (10.4.3), Antiochus III (10.47.7), Machanidas (11.11.2), Philopoemen as general (11.12.1), Scipio Africanus the Elder (14.4.3 and 14.6.1), Philip V (16.6.9), the consul Opimius (33.10.7).³⁶ It seems that it is the very act of giving an exhortation (before battle or before leading the army/navy into hostile territory) that is important in these cases rather than the words that were spoken, and it is legitimate to ask why Polybius thought it so.

36 This may well not be an exhaustive list, but it includes every instance where the verb παρακαλεῖν is used.

The answer seems to be that, even without the exact contents of the speech, the act of giving it adds to the characterisation of the various commanders. In many of the cases listed here, the exhortation is mentioned alongside other actions of an effective general: pressing the siege and throwing himself into danger with the soldiers (Hannibal 3.17.8), taking care of the army in between fighting (Molon 5.48.16), marching at night to surprise the enemy (Epaminondas 9.8.9), rallying scattered ships during a sea battle (Philip 16.6.9). In almost all cases, the act of delivering an exhortation seems to be the mark of an energetic, effective general (Machanidas being the one possible exception). It is simply something that a good general does, and it merits mention alongside his other actions.

The fact that battle exhortations are important even without any information about what sort of encouragement they contain throws the exhortations which are presented in *oratio obliqua*, *oratio recta*, or combination mode into relief. In those cases, it is not just the fact that a battle exhortation was delivered that is important, but the actual words of the speech, however commonplace they may seem. We have looked at some of the ways in which that is the case above.

Conclusion

All these different ways in which battle exhortations appear in Polybius' *Histories* show two things. Firstly, the frequent mentions show that exhortations before and during battle, as well as before leading the army into hostile territory, were a staple of military leadership. Secondly, the fact that Polybius so often found them worth recording – their contents or just the fact of their delivery – shows that he found them an important ingredient of 'practical historiography',³⁷ no doubt because they were one of the actions a reader aspiring to military leadership must learn to perform.

From the mentions and brief summaries of such speeches in Polybius' *Histories*, such a reader could learn how to exhort his men – briefly, with

37 See above, n. 17.

words suitable to the moment – and he could even learn some of the classic *topoi* useful in such situations. From the speeches developed in *oratio obliqua*, *oratio recta*, or combination mode, he could learn more than that, namely that the most effective speeches are the ones which correspond to reality and which uses evident, visual cues – but also that it is not the general's speech alone, no matter how fiery, that makes an army victorious. Unless he has trained them right and planned his strategy and battle tactics wisely, all the fine words in the world will not make a difference.

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