



FRANK WALBANK

Frank William Walbank 1909–2008

I

FRANK WALBANK was born on 10 December 1909 into a family of tradesmen, schoolteachers and millworkers in Bingley, a small industrial town in the West Riding of Yorkshire which nearly fifty years afterwards provided the background for John Braine's novel *Room at the Top*. His father, Albert Walbank (1879–1967), was an elementary school teacher and his mother was Clarice, née Fletcher (1880–1965); Albert was a cobbler's son who won a scholarship to Yorkshire College (later the University of Leeds) but a serious train accident put an end to his university career. The autobiographical memoir which Frank compiled in much later life,¹ showing an enviable capacity for detailed recall, contains lengthy and entertaining descriptions of family members, some of whom (like his father) were elementary school teachers. It portrays their network as 'a kind of lower middle class provincial version of Galsworthy's Forsytes' but also describes a wider milieu which allowed a degree of social and geographical mobility within the region and had some opportunities for self-education beyond the very basic levels. In part that was provided by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), in which his father was active and to which he was

¹Details of source-material, information, and acknowledgements are set out in the *Note on sources* at the end. Abbreviations used are: *CP* for his *Collected Papers* (Cambridge, 1985), *HCP* I–III for the three volumes of his *Historical Commentary on Polybius* (Oxford, 1967), and *PRHW* for Walbank's *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World* (Cambridge, 2002). For reviewed publications, I have listed reviews known to me, at first or second hand: others may still lurk unreported, and a few which are known but are incomplete or unlocated have been omitted.

later to devote much effort and commitment himself. In part, too, there were routes which a clever boy might be able to follow, as when his primary school headmaster encouraged him at the age of ten to apply for admission to Bradford Grammar School (BGS) and when he was awarded one of the few scholarships which were available to boys living outside the city.

His years at BGS (1920–8) were the first and crucial stage in his social and intellectual transformation. Even before he took up his scholarship he was conscious of ‘living simultaneously in several different worlds’, a sense which exposure to the much larger and wider society of Bradford served to intensify. He records, for example, how through a socially better placed school-friend he encountered that friend’s sister Barbara Betts, then a schoolgirl at Bradford Grammar School for Girls, who as Barbara Castle was to have a distinguished career in Labour Party politics and governments. Even more significant was the choice which he faced, after a year in the school, between ‘the classical side’ and ‘the modern side’. He and his parents, persuaded (quite wrongly) that the modern side was an academic dead-end, and also over-persuaded by a domineering head of classics, chose the classical side, a decision with life-long consequences. Though, as he acknowledged, ‘I do not regret at all that my parents’ ignorance turned me into a classical scholar,’ it was not the only decision of his life which was taken on wholly inadequate grounds.

A second decision was also not his, namely a sudden remove, instigated by a teacher who spotted his exceptional ability, half-way through the school year in February 1924, up into the cohort which was preparing for the School Certificate in five months’ time. The expenditure of much unexpected and unwelcome effort enabled him to pass with credit and to ‘fit into the BGS pattern of pressurised promotion into the scholarship machinery’. A whole chapter of his *Hypomnemata* (see the *Note on sources*, below) is devoted to his years in the Sixth Form, to the tuition in classics which he received, and to the personalities of his teachers. It was intensive, barely relieved by anything which lay outwith the purview of a university’s Faculty of Arts, and yet from his account enjoyable. Three consequences followed. One was that ‘when we went up to the university we had already read far more than classics students today have read even when they take their final degree examinations’. A second was to be asked by one of his teachers to translate, précis, and duplicate for the class ‘a small, rather grubby German school edition’ of Polybios: from such casual seeds can great oaks grow. The third was the efficacy of the ‘scholarship machinery’ in training him well enough to apply to both Oxford and Cambridge and to gain a Minor Scholarship at Peterhouse, a college which he had chosen

himself simply because he knew from his collection of cigarette cards that it was the oldest Cambridge college but which proved to be a true *alma mater* in later life. Together with grants from other sources, he had the necessary resources (about £220 a year) to enter Cambridge.

His transformation now entered its second stage. Though initially locked into the language-and-literature grind of Part I of the Tripos, and though gladly taking some of the wider cultural opportunities which Cambridge offered, he had seen himself as a historian from the outset, and began to shape his life accordingly, by choosing the Second Punic War option in Part II, by learning enough Italian to read De Sanctis' *Storia dei Romani*, by attending a course in modern Greek, and crucially by responding when the Hellenic Travellers' Club offered a prize for an essay on 'Federalism in the Greek world'. Winning the prize, as he did, gave him a free place on a three-week Club cruise round Greece and Eastern Sicily in 1930: his first trip abroad, and 'very important for me'. Initial plans to become a schoolmaster were trumped by gaining a clear First in Part II in 1931 and by a consequential invitation to stay on for a year of research. Stimulated by his earlier essay on federalism, a rapid decision to focus on Aratos, coupled with the need to learn German, took him to Jena for two months in summer 1931, an experience which gave him an impressively fluent command of the language throughout his life. Back in Cambridge as a 'post-graduate' before such beings were properly recognised, he worked intensively enough to complete a 50,000-word essay before he had the good fortune to be appointed to a teaching post in north Manchester in September 1932. However, the award of the Thirlwall Prize soon afterwards for that essay, and its publication by Cambridge University Press in September 1933 as *Aratos of Sicyon*, helped to take him to the University of Liverpool as an Assistant Lecturer in Latin from January 1934.

Aratos is a remarkable book: an apprentice work of a 24-year-old (which occasionally shows), but already displaying the maturity of a lucid unadorned prose style of which he was to remain a master for the next seventy-five years. Stylistically, it is a hybrid. On the one hand it reflects an older historiographical fashion by offering a largely unreferenced narrative while presenting the sources in an initial chapter and confining discussion of the intractable chronological problems to a lengthy Appendix and chronological table. On the other hand, as reviewers influenced by Croce noted with some puzzlement,² it eluded convention by eschewing all

² Major reviews: W. H. P[orter], *Hermathena*, 48 (1933), 266–71; P. Treves, *Athenaeum*, 12 (1934), 324–9. Others: B. S. P., *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 54 (1934), 99; M. Cary, *Classical Review*, 48

identification of Aratos as the figurehead of this or that programmatic but nebulous ideal, seeing him instead as a pragmatic conservative diplomat whose actions came to be driven primarily by fear of Spartan populism. Moreover, it provides a core analytical clue to understanding mainland Greek affairs in the 240s, 230s, and 220s BCE by portraying seemingly arbitrary Achaian, Aitolian, and Spartan military movements within Peloponnese as rational attempts to split real or potential opposing alliances: as reviewers said, more maps were needed.

II

The various threads of the next period of his life are best traced separately. Scholarly work and publication in the 1930s present the easiest task, for apart from the start of a lifetime's energetic activity as a reliable, judicious and punctual reviewer they were dominated by work on what became his second book, *Philip V of Macedon*.³ Like *Aratos*, it was written to be submitted for a Cambridge prize, the Hare Prize, which it was awarded in 1939, and like *Aratos* it continued the unplanned but convergent twentieth-century process, in which many European scholars have participated, of providing accessible scholarly biographies of the major political figures of the Hellenistic period. Like *Aratos*, too, it segregated narrative and analysis from Appendices which reviewed sources, chronological problems, and dates. There the similarities end, for it represented a huge advance, revealing Walbank's third transformation into a scholar of maturity and international authority: as I write, seventy years later, even though our knowledge of Hellenistic Macedonia has improved greatly since 1940, his book has dated very little and is still the standard work, recognised as such from the start even though there were many disagreements on details.⁴ That advance is visible not just at the level of

(1934), 36–7; J. Hatzfeld, *Revue des Études Grecques*, 48 (1935), 331; M. Segre, *Mondo Classico*, 5 (1935), 33–4; T. A. Brady, *Classical Journal*, 31 (1936), 513–14. Here and in the following footnotes, reviews are listed in chronological order of publication.

³ Cambridge, 1940: repr. with a new foreword, Hamden, CT, 1967.

⁴ Major reviews: J. A. O. Larsen, *Classical Philology*, 38 (1943), 56–8; P. Treves, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 63 (1943), 117–20; J. V. A. Fine, *American Journal of Philology*, 64 (1943), 461–5; A. Aymard, *Revue des Études Anciennes*, 48 (1946), 107–14. Others: M. Cary, *History*, 26 (1941), 141; P. Treves, *Contemporary Review*, 159 (March 1941), 357–8; W. W. Tarn, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 31 (1941), 172–3; D. E. W. Wormell, *Hermathena*, 57 (1941), 141–2; C. Edson, *American Historical Review*, 47 (1942), 826–7; A. H. McDonald, *Classical Review*, 56 (1942), 123–5; A. Momigliano, *Oxford Magazine*, 12 Feb. 1942, 188–9 (bibliography no. 220: not repr. in

presentation, with ten maps and full footnotes, or even because he adopted a style which ‘shows his working’ outwards from the primary evidence, but fundamentally in two kinds of independence. One was unavoidable, for he could not depict the elusive and contradictory personality of Philip himself without confronting Polybios head-on and going against the grain of the latter’s prejudiced and simplistic portrayal. The other was a matter of choice: whether to follow widespread convention by depicting Philip’s life in inevitablist terms of Greek disunity and Roman expansion (which was to abuse the historian’s knowledge of the future), or to trace the complex interactions of power within Greece, within the eastern Mediterranean, and with Rome during Philip’s lifetime in purely contingent year-by-year terms. Walbank chose the latter, and by avoiding simplicity provided clarity and (in his ‘Conclusion’) a balanced final judgement.

Productive scholarship notwithstanding, personal and political matters dominate his account of the 1930s. Fundamental was the progress of his relationship with Mary Woodward Fox, some three years his junior and herself from near Bingley, elder daughter of a businessman in the textile industry, Oswald Charles Fox. They first met in summer 1931 and married in July 1935, setting up house in rented accommodation in Liverpool. Both being liberal-radical by temperament in any case, they came to be heavily caught up in the contemporary politics of the Left, not just by being influenced by much left-wing literature (not least the Left Book Club) or of reacting to the Nazification of Germany, seen at first hand during holidays, but in terms of much dedicated activity for the Communist Party, the Labour Party, and various action groups. To describe and contextualise that activity in detail would cut across the tenor of this memoir, but four consequences are highly relevant.

The first stemmed from their work on behalf of refugees, since in August 1938 they felt themselves morally obliged to give house-room to a Sudeten German who had fought with the International Brigade in Spain and was now an illegal immigrant in Britain. Not only did this cause much domestic stress, but after rather over a year, in October–November 1939, those who had harboured and supported him until war was declared were prosecuted. Strong moral support from university colleagues helped to

his *Contributi*); J. W. Swain, *Classical Journal*, 38 (1942), 175 (the only sour note); P. N. Tarkov, *Vestnik Drevnej Istorii*, 4 (1947), 97–101; J. H. Thiel, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 62 (1949), 281. Reviews of the 1967 repr.: S. I. Oost, *Gnomon*, 40 (1968), 314–15; E. R. A. Sewter, *Greece and Rome*, 15 (1968), 99.

confine the penalty to a fine of £5 on Walbank (Mary was not indicted).⁵ However, in conjunction with his then membership of the Communist Party it caused him to be told to resign from the Home Guard, which he had joined, and probably influenced the *repulsae* which he encountered on applying for work with the Ministry of Trade or (even after a positive interview) at Bletchley Park. Thereafter it was agreed with the university that he would remain in his post, would be registered as being in a reserved occupation, and would continue in the National Fire Service. In consequence he saw the horrors of the Liverpool Blitz (even more lethal in proportion to population than London's) at first hand from his observation post at the top of the Victoria Tower.

The second consequence affected Mary directly and him indirectly but substantially, for the birth of their first child, Dorothy Joan, in May 1939 combined with the stresses of the time to trigger a bipolar affliction which remained with her thereafter and periodically became acute. That, plus a frightening near miss on the house during the Blitz, led them to seek the comparative safety of Lytham St Anne's on the Fylde coast, to which her parents had moved on retirement: commuting the forty-five miles to and from Liverpool in wartime conditions was no fun. Two further children were born there, Elizabeth Mary ('Mitzi') in June 1942 and Christopher John in June 1944. The family did not move back to Liverpool until after the war. By then Walbank, now acting head of department for 1945/46, was seeking election to a chair. He had no initial success, but was elected in May 1946 to fill the Liverpool Chair of Latin: his long, detailed, and learned paper of 1940 explicating a much misunderstood passage of Virgil on the technicalities of weaving had evidently helped to reassure the committee that he was not just a historian.⁶

The third consequence was the composition of his third book, *The Decline of the Roman Empire in the West*.⁷ Commissioned as a volume for a Marxist series, brief (92 pp.), virtually unannotated, and very stridently a Tract for the Times, it paints the entire trajectory of the Roman state over some 1,200 years with a very broad and very red brush, following Gibbon in seeking a naturalistic explanation but tracing its decay to the stagnation which was intrinsic to a class society dominated by a minority

⁵ Press reports of the court case, published in the *Liverpool Daily Post* for 28 and 30 Nov. and 19 Dec. 1939, are held in the university's Special Collections and Archives (see *Note on sources*, below).

⁶ 'Licia telae addere (Virgil, *Georg.* 1.284–6)', *Classical Quarterly*, 34 (1940), 93–104. Its creation owed much to Mary's family background in the textile industry.

⁷ London, 1946; repr. New York, 1953. Expanded version in Japanese, Tokyo, 1963.

culture. To put it plainly, it was not a good book: though reviewers were courteous, they made their reservations very clear indeed.⁸ Even so, Walbank records that it made his name in non-Classical scholarly fields as no other of his books did. Moreover, it has an unexpected historiographical interest, precisely because it derives so transparently from Rostovtzeff, Heichelheim, and Oertel's chapters in Volumes X and XII of the *Cambridge Ancient History*, but uses 'straight' the Marxist language of class and bourgeoisie which Rostovtzeff had used but inverted. Detailed assessment of it attaches more appropriately to the second edition of 1969 (see below), but it is right to record the surmise (it is no more) that its content and thrust to some degree reflected the lectures which he gave throughout the war to serving soldiers, more on current affairs of all kinds than on professional themes.

Linked in subject-matter to that third book, but very different in tone and purview, was another major publication which also had its roots in the 1930s.⁹ This, a long chapter on trade and industry during the Later Roman Empire,¹⁰ passes unmentioned in his memoirs, perhaps because the unfortunate publication history of *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe* allowed its appearance only in 1952. Though he revised it in 1966 and added a few later amendments in the 1970s, it was so far out-of-date by the time that that revision itself emerged in 1987, in the equally unfortunate second edition,¹¹ that it is more appropriately reported here. Clearly planned editorially to complement both C. E. Stevens's chapter in volume I,¹² and V. G. Childe's chapter on trade and industry in barbarian Europe in volume II, it offered a very summary reading of the theme as a

⁸Reviews: A. Aymard, *Revue des Études Anciennes*, 49 (1947), 345–8; Forbes, *Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences*, 2 (1948), 215–18; A. H. M. Jones, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 38 (1948), 149–50; E. A. Thompson, *Classical Review*, 63 (1949), 65–6; A. Momigliano, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 62 (1950), 112–17 at 114, repr. in *6° Contributo* (Roma 1980), II, 716–22; D. Atkinson, *History*, 36 (1951), 251; R. Goossens, *Latomus*, 10 (1951), 106–7; Asaka, *Journal of Classical Studies*, 2 (1954), 139–44; G. Faider-Feytmans, *L'Antiquité Classique*, 23 (1954), 239; C. D. Gordon, *Phoenix*, 8 (1954), 74; A. Balil, *Zephyrus*, 6 (1955), 325; W. den Boer, *Mnemosyne*, 11 (1958), 90.

⁹I do not know how and when he came to be approached for this major chapter when his track record did not suggest expertise in the economic history of the Later Roman Empire.

¹⁰'Trade and industry under the Later Roman Empire in the West', in M. M. Postan and E. E. Rich (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, II: *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 33–85.

¹¹M. M. Postan and E. Miller, with C. Postan (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, II: *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, second edn. (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 71–131.

¹²'Agriculture and rural life in the Later Roman Empire', in J. Clapham and E. Power (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, I: *the Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1941), pp. 89–117 (pp. 92–124 in the second edn.).

three-act drama, where at first ‘The prosperity of the early Empire was a triumph for the principles of economic *laissez-faire*’ in ‘a single economic system’ (pp. 49, 48). Thereafter the obscure and calamitous third century CE showed currency debasement, loss of population, and the disintegration of the large inter-provincial trading blocs. Finally, the transformation of the *collegia* into ‘a hybrid form of controlled private enterprise’, together with the partial encroachment of domain-economy and of taxes levied in kind onto a monetary economy, yielded a ‘semi-planned economy’ (pp. 62, 63). That this portrayal too derived directly and uncritically from the same scholarship as *Decline* is patent, and for that and other reasons has to be seen as wholly superseded by more recent work. Yet it is also fair to remember the unhelpful constraints within which Walbank was working. An evidently enforced footnote-free format made direct connection between evidence and argument impracticable, while the split between agrarian and non-agrarian activity made it impossible to follow the processes of production and transformation of primary materials as a continuum. Worst of all was the inability, forced on him by the concentration on ‘Europe’, to take the activities of the eastern Mediterranean into his purview *pari passu* with Italy and the west. For the Roman Empire that was an absurdity, at once descriptive, intellectual, and cultural, which the volume shared with another more recent compilation,¹³ and which contributors could counter only marginally. That is not of course to deny the reality of the core component of his argument, the ‘third century crisis’ (though it is now seen in far more complex and nuanced terms),¹⁴ and at least one reviewer called Walbank’s contribution ‘one of the best chapters in the volume, very concrete, balanced and careful’.¹⁵

It remains to return to the 1930s and to record a much happier fourth consequence of contact and collaboration with refugees. A trip to Greece and Albania in 1936 began an involvement with Albania and with Albanian refugees which continued thereafter, making Walbank one of the few ‘Western’ scholars who were *persona grata* there during the Hoxha regime and stimulating a number of reviews, letters to newspapers, and published papers on the history and topography of the region. Besides other scholar-refugee friends—his memoirs cite Victor Ehrenberg and the

¹³F. Vittinghoff (ed.), *Europäische Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart, 1990).

¹⁴For example, in W. Scheidel, I. Morris and R. Saller (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge, 2007), especially its final chapter, ‘The transition to late antiquity’.

¹⁵E. B. Fryde, *History*, 40 (1955), 327–8 at 327.

brothers Paolo and Piero Treves—there was also collaboration, as with Momigliano on a stupefyingly detailed assemblage of references to work on Greek history during the war,¹⁶ with Isobel F. Brash on a parallel assemblage with a much wider remit,¹⁷ and later with his Liverpool colleague Charles Brink on the construction of Polybios' Book VI.¹⁸

III

For Walbank, now at 37 a professor and head of department, and once more fully resident (in Birkenhead) as a householder with a growing family, 1946 was a turning point, offering him a stable base on which to build largely as he wished. His achievement was indeed a tribute both to his energy, intelligence, and dedication and to Mary's support, but it is right also to note the contribution of two *patroni*. The first was Bertrand Hallward,¹⁹ his mentor and tutor in Peterhouse, who had made possible that first crucial postgraduate year of research and had himself published in Hellenistic history: their combined longevity allowed Hallward to attend Walbank's ninetieth birthday party and Walbank to attend Hallward's hundredth. The second, much more influential, was J. F. (colloquially 'Fred', later Sir James) Mountford, Professor of Latin at Liverpool 1932–45 and Vice-Chancellor 1945–63.²⁰ Reading between the lines of Walbank's memoir, one senses clearly that Mountford viewed him with much favour from early on, giving him not merely much scholarly help (as various footnotes gratefully acknowledge) but also much valuable career advice and assistance. In return, Walbank clearly respected him, admired

¹⁶ *Year's Work in Classical Studies*, 33 (1939–45 [1948]), 43–75, with p. 69. Momigliano also contributed to a follow-up report of publications in 1945–7 (*Year's Work in Classical Studies*, 34 (1950), 43–59, with p. 56).

¹⁷ 'Les études classiques en Grande-Bretagne pendant la guerre', *Bulletin Association Guillaume Budé*, 1 (1946), 73–110. His co-author was a notable local headmistress from 1941 till 1963: S. Harrop, *The Merchant Taylors' School for Girls, Crosby: One Hundred Years of Achievement, 1888–1988* (Liverpool, 1988), pp. 114–39.

¹⁸ However, a paper on the origins of the Second Macedonian War (*Journal of Roman Studies*, 27 (1937), 180–207), published as a collaboration, was an end-to-end join of two independently written papers.

¹⁹ Later a notable Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nottingham. He survived, remarkably, until the age of 102, and received an affectionate obituary from Owen Chadwick (*The Independent*, 20 Nov. 2003). As with Walbank himself, Hallward's exceptionally long life precluded entries for them in R. B. Todd (ed.), *The Dictionary of British Classicists*, I–III (Bristol, 2004).

²⁰ For whom see *The Dictionary of British Classicists*, II. 683–4, and T. Kelly, *For Advancement of Learning: The University of Liverpool 1881–1981* (Liverpool, 1981), *passim*, esp. pp. 290–3.

his diplomatic and administrative skills, and in those and other respects took after him throughout his career.

Indeed, but for Mountford Walbank might never have become ‘Mr Polybios’. When in 1943 Walbank began to ponder his next major project, Mountford suggested a commentary on Tacitus’ *Histories*, a suggestion which got some way with colleagues but encountered the news, from correspondence with Oxford University Press, that the project was already bespoken for Ronald Syme. The invitation to consider something else instead prompted recall both of Walbank’s work at BGS on Polybios and of the intense engagement with him which his biographies of Aratos and Philip V had already required. He therefore offered the Press the project of a commentary on Polybios, and though eventually Syme (then in Turkey) relinquished the *Histories* project, by then (April 1944) Walbank was immersed in his second choice and was soon to have a letter of encouragement from the Press (June 1944)—though even so he seriously underestimated the magnitude of what he was taking on.

It may help the non-specialist reader of this memoir if I explain why. Basically, he had to surmount five distinct challenges.²¹ The first was that which Polybios himself had encountered when, as a Greek politician held as a respected internee in Rome after 167 BCE, he set himself to narrate and to explain to the Greek-reading audience of the eastern Mediterranean how the Roman Republic had come so rapidly to dominate the Mediterranean. His initial plan was to cover the core period of that transformation, the ‘not quite fifty-three years’ (1. 1. 5) from 220 to 167 BCE, but a later enlargement of the design brought the narrative down to 146, the year of the destructions of Corinth and of Carthage. Polybios had argued forcefully that from *c.*220 onwards the affairs of the various powers of the Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean had become so intertwined with each other that narratives centred on a single polity or single region were no longer adequate: in order to accomplish such a task one had to weave together a number of separate but interacting narratives focused on varying theatres. His solution was two-fold: first, to emulate, or rather to surpass, his fourth-century predecessors Ephoros and Theopompos by embracing a geographically gigantic purview of activity and interaction, ranging as need arose from the Iranian plateau to Portugal; and secondly, to keep track of events by adopting a rigid annalistic format, using Olympiads and Olympiad years as his framework and offering within each year-block a

²¹ ‘Commentary theory’ (for which see below, n. 44) would have been a sixth, but was not yet on the horizon in the 1940s.

number of regional narratives, short or long according to the material he could acquire and the importance he felt it merited. So far so good: indeed, as the format of many a modern book reveals, his view of the late 220s BCE as a crucial *Wende* in the history of the Mediterranean is recognised to be as valid now as when he formulated it. However, the consequence for the potential commentator is that he or she has both to follow and to assess the accuracy and appropriateness of all the components of so polycentric a narrative, and in order to do that needs to know everything relevant which can be known not just about one region (as with Greece and Macedonia for Philip V) but about the entire Mediterranean and its deep hinterland, including the whole Nile valley, the Balkans, the Alps, Mesopotamia and Afghanistan—and not just the geography: the preface to *HCP* III thanks a Liverpool colleague ‘for dispelling a little of my almost total ignorance about seaweeds’. The task needs a polymath, even a panmath: and that is before one tackles the actual operational task of deciding what it is that the reader of Polybios needs to know.

That is just the start. The second challenge was that Polybios was writing within a mature and quarrelsome Greek historiographical tradition, wherein one began where a predecessor had left off,²² criticised him and other predecessors and competitors *eundo*, and interspersed the narrative with cadenzas which showed off one’s erudition, personal experience, rhetorical skills, and specialist knowledge. True, his critiques and cadenzas are skilfully placed so as to rest and to contrast with the narrative,²³ but they also impose upon the commentator the necessity of explaining who he is criticising and why. That is no easy matter, when the writings of the victims are themselves known only from fragments. However, that necessity paid off in the longer term, for it gave Walbank an unrivalled knowledge of the lost Hellenistic historians, on which he was able to build in paper after paper in later life.

The third challenge is presented by the state of the text. Of Polybios’ forty books, we have a complete text for books I–V, and most of VI. The rest is a mass of fragments: mostly excerpts (some very lengthy) on various themes made by Byzantine compilers, together with paraphrases and summaries of varying reliability surviving from later authors such as Strabo and Plutarch, and citations of words or geographical names in

²² As Polybios himself did by beginning his narrative in 264/3, where Timaios had left off (P1b. 1. 5. 1 and 39. 8. 4–5).

²³ Three are entire books (VI on constitutions; XII, a critique of his predecessors; XXXIV on geography). For a systematic review of his critiques, see K. Meister, *Historische Kritik bei Polybios (Palingenesia, IX)* (Wiesbaden, 1972).

lexicographers. Though much work was done long ago on putting the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle together in the right order, there was still some work for Walbank to do, as his *Commentary* attests,²⁴ and in any case there remain large sections of narrative which we know existed but are now wholly unrepresented: Books XVII and XL, indeed, have no extant fragments at all. Since the question how far one should try to fill the gaps by reconstructing Polybios' narrative from derivative sources is deeply intractable, for the reader's sake a balance had to be offered between unhelpful taciturnity and unreliable guesses.

Previous scholarship presented a fourth challenge. For the Greek text itself Theodore Büttner-Wobst's five-volume Teubner edition, though old-fashioned in its layout, provided an acceptable text, and Mauersberger's *Polybios-Lexikon* had begun to appear in 1956. Commentary was another matter. Only once before had a genuine commentary on the text been attempted, by Johannes Schweighäuser of Strasbourg in 1789–95, and though exemplary for its time, and saluted with warm appreciation for 'its thoroughness and sound common sense' by Walbank himself in the Preface to *HCP* I, editorial notes were on a strictly limited scale, were largely philological, and in any case had been rendered wholly out of date by the accretion of knowledge. In consequence, when Walbank began work scholarship on Polybios largely comprised a shelf-full of specialised monographs, mostly in German or Italian. Consistently enough, Guy Griffith, who provided a useful list of them in 1954 in anticipation of the publication of *HCP*, summed up what was probably a current consensus—a mixture of respect and exasperation—by reporting that '[h]is work became authoritative in a way which recalls the authority of Thucydides for the history of his age. . . . The one thing which no interpretation yet . . . has been able to supply for Polybios is one single spark of genius. With all his virtues, worthy, diligent, shrewd and comprehending as he was, he has remained *par excellence* the scholar's historian, because he lacked the skill or the touch to set the mind alight in the common reader.'²⁵

Lurking within that judgement, debatable though it is, lay the final challenge: how could 'the scholar's historian' be brought out of the back-

²⁴For full exposition, see *HCP*, II. 1–28 (for books VII–XVIII) and *HCP*, III. 1–50 for books XIX–XL, with a summary table for books VII–XXXIX at *HCP*, III. 51–62.

²⁵G. T. Griffith, 'The Greek historians', in M. Platnauer (ed.), *Fifty Years of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 150–92: quotation on p. 171; bibliographical references in notes 87–100. In the rev. version, *Fifty Years (and Twelve) of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford, 1968), an Appendix to Griffith's chapter adds much new material on Polybios (pp. 235–6) but merely cites *HCP* I in a footnote (p. 240, n. 1).

waters of scholarship into the mainstream? By good fortune, a solution was available, in the form of the 'historical commentary'. Naturalised in Britain from German scholarship by the 1880s at latest, first for Latin texts and then for Greek texts, not least with Frazer's giant edition of Pausanias of 1896, it has been predominantly an Anglophone art-form for over a century, for reasons which would bear further investigation. The first canonical 'historical' model, How and Wells's commentary on Herodotos, emerged in 1912.²⁶ This was overwhelmingly 'historical' rather than 'literary' in its contents, and was targeted at undergraduates (as the Preface announces), no doubt primarily those reading Greats at Oxford or congener courses. Both because it treated the entire text of Herodotos, and because it valiantly attempted to use current archaeological and anthropological research in order to contextualise the text within the politics and cultures which Herodotos touched on, it represented a major generic advance for its time. It was itself followed, in 1945, by the first volume of what became the second canonical 'historical commentary' on a Classical author, that of A. W. Gomme on Thucydides. This was much larger than that of How and Wells, having been planned as three volumes (though it eventually became five) and emerging in crown octavo format rather than octavo. It too paid attention overwhelmingly to the events narrated rather than to text or style, and though such has been the intensity of subsequent work on Thucydides and the period he covers that Gomme's commentary has itself now in large measure been replaced by a worthy successor, it set the standard by which subsequent work in the genre would be judged.

Walbank's own *Commentary* unquestionably met that test.²⁷ By the date of the publication of volume I in 1957, he had already published some sixteen papers on aspects of Polybios and his period, so that review editors of periodicals knew what to expect and trained their heavy guns on it accordingly.²⁸ From that bombardment Walbank emerged not merely

²⁶ W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus, with Introduction and Appendixes*, I–II (Oxford, 1912).

²⁷ *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, I (*Commentary on Books I–VI*) (Oxford, 1957, corr. repr. 1970); II (*Commentary on Books VII–XVIII*) (Oxford, 1967); III (*Commentary on Books XIX–XL*) (Oxford, 1979).

²⁸ Major reviews: Anon., *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 July 1957, 440; M. Gelzer, *Gnomon*, 29 (1957), 401–11, repr. in his *Kleine Schriften*, III (Wiesbaden, 1964), 201–15; J. A. O. Larsen, *Classical Philology*, 53 (1958), 246–51; A. H. McDonald, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 48 (1958), 179–83; P. Pédech, *Revue des Études Grecques*, 71 (1958), 438–43; H. H. Scullard, *Classical Review*, ns 8 (1958), 243–5; E. T. Salmon, *American Journal of Philology*, 79 (1958), 191–4; K.-E. Petzold, *Historia*, 9 (1960), 247–54. Other reviews: M. Chambers, *Classical World*, 51 (1957), 80;

intact but with his reputation significantly enhanced. Though of course many individual points of dispute and disagreement were raised, the general but not quite universal reaction was to salute it as a magnificent piece of scholarship (Salmon, p. 191) and to express grateful relief that after over 150 years scholars had ‘a worthy successor to Schweighaeuser’ (McDonald) and ‘the foundation of a new approach to Polybian studies’ (Cole), a set of judgements which the three other *pezzi grossi* of such studies in the 1950s, Matthias Gelzer, Paul Pédech, and Karl-Ernst Petzold, clearly endorsed: its detailed scholarship, balanced judgements, and avoidance of extreme interpretative positions were widely admired. However, a dissenting note is worth recording. It came anonymously in the *Times Literary Supplement*,²⁹ where the reviewer lamented that ‘its aims no less than its achievement are conditioned by the old, limited view of what such a work should be’, in particular because, notwithstanding the appearance of von Fritz’s *The Theory of the Mixed Constitution in Antiquity* three years before in 1954, ‘students of political theory or the philosophy of history will find it somewhat barren sustenance’. The point was fair, but was out of generic focus: history as observed, the concatenation of events and processes, is not history as created and shaped.

Rather, one is minded to offer a very different criticism, for despite its quality and admirable lucidity, it is not an easy read: to move from Gomme on Thucydides to Walbank on Polybios, as I did as an undergraduate in the late 1950s, was to move from the discursive to the distilled—from Telemann to Brahms. After a brief preface and fifteen pages of abbreviations, comes an Introduction which sketches Polybios’ life and journeys, his views on history, his use of the term for ‘chance’ (*Tyche*), his sources, and his chronology, all in thirty-seven pages, and then we are straight into the dense forest of notes, references, corrections to the Loeb translation, citations of other relevant texts in Greek or Latin, geography, historiography, and general *explications du texte*, for over 700 pages. And even then, long though it is, it could have been longer with advantage. Yet it is

P. Pédech, *Erasmus*, 10 (1957), 301–2; E. J. Bickerman, *American Historical Review*, 63 (1957–8), 167–8; J. H. Thiel, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 70 (1957), 393; J. F. Gilliam, *Philosophical Quarterly*, 38 (1958), 511–12; R. M. Haywood, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 62 (1958), 242–3; J. H. Thiel, *Mnemosyne*, 11 (1958), 366–8; R. Till, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 185 (1958), 367; J. W. Cole, *Phoenix*, 13 (1959), 83–5; T. B. Jones, *Classical Journal*, 54 (1959), 331; I. Matos, *Romanitas*, 2 (1959), 260; F. Hampl, *Anzeiger für die Altertumswissenschaft*, 13 (1960), 31–4; W. Schmitthenner, *Gymnasium*, 67 (1960), 245. Most surprisingly, I can find no review in an Italian periodical.

²⁹ See above, n. 28: it is not recorded in *L’Année Philologique*, but made known to me via the dry comment which it provoked in Larsen’s review (p. 247).

all carefully composed, with breathers in the form of excursuses of three to five pages at appropriate points, which describe topography or sketch the structure of certain intractable problems and controversies. The larger examples of these excursuses are invaluable summaries, terse, judicious, and impartial, which nearly always give the reader what s/he needs to know and have been the core of many a lecture or essay: Hellenistic history in its landscape, from Alps to Caucasus, was at last becoming accessible.

IV

HCP I was far from being his only activity in the 1940s and 1950s. Very soon after taking up his appointment at Liverpool, and throughout his career thereafter, he was continuously active in outside work and administration. To focus on such matters in a memoir of scholarly achievement would not normally warrant extended notice, but for Walbank they came to be an integral and important part of his life. Various reasons converged. Initially, indeed, his work as examiner in the Higher School Certificate for the Joint Matriculation Board and later for the Oxford and Cambridge Board was simply a means of earning extra income to pay for holidays, but already by 1943 he was also acting as a scrutineer for the JMB, visiting schools during examinations to ensure that they were being properly conducted.³⁰ By 1951–2 he had graduated to awarding for the Oxford and Cambridge Board, a role which continued till at least 1957–8, and also served as an examiner for the Civil Service in 1960–1. Lecturing to non-academic audiences and occasions also began in the 1930s, first on a course for the unemployed in County Durham and then widely in wartime to groups of troops—an experience which he vouched for as ‘good practice for lecturing anywhere’—and to Rotary Clubs, army courses, and WEA classes all over north Lancashire and beyond, until the family returned to the Liverpool area: involvement with the WEA centre at Langdale in the Lake District continued for years thereafter. To this list, and in anticipation, one must add active participation in the local Association of University Teachers’ branch, of which he later became president, service on the Liverpool Playhouse Committee in 1961–2, and even involvement with the Oxton Leaseholders’ Association.

³⁰One of his last published utterances *in vivo*, a brief letter in *The Independent* (29 March 2005), recalls a conversation with a Liverpool headmaster on one such occasion.

However, long before then, university administration had claimed his attention. That he became acting head of department in 1945–6, instead of his formally senior colleague Stanley Bonner, must have reflected an observed aptitude, one which blossomed greatly thereafter. A trivial role on a hall of residence subcommittee in 1946–7 led to service on the much heavier-weight Staffing Committee from November 1947 and on the Birkenhead Education Committee in and long after 1948–9, presumably as university nominee. From then on he became one of the pillars of university administration, while from 1951 onwards, on Ormerod's retirement, occupying a far more appropriate chair as Rathbone Professor of Ancient History and Classical Archaeology. Then 1956–7 saw him on the Institute of Education, on the Halls Committee, on Staffing Committee, on a building committee for a student residence, on the Extra-Mural Finance Policy Committee, on the City's Museums Committee, on the Education Studies Committee, and on the Development Committee; the following year Finance Committee and the Governing Body of the Technical College joined the portfolio. And so it went on, for 1962–3 saw him on Council, on Committees for the Arts Building, for the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor, Chairs, the Institute of Education, Layout, Extra-mural work, Development, the Chair of Spanish, Staff House, Education Studies, and the City Museum. Though the annual list tapered off a little in the 1970s, to it one must add the chairmanship of several of these committees (and of others), five years as Public Orator (1955–60), and his three years as Dean of Faculty (1974–7), a final major administrative task which he much enjoyed and wherein he left behind golden opinions.

This was to go far beyond the necessary minimum expected of a professor, even beyond a high norm: for years he seems to have been First Pro-Vice-Chancellor in all but name. There may have been a strong element of patronage by Mountford; there certainly came to be a certain zest in shaping decisions via discussion round a table and via close working relationships with administrative colleagues; but there was also a personal and darker reason. His younger daughter's memoir reveals how chaotic and disruptive domestic life could be during Mary's frequent bouts of illness and spells in hospital, and portrays Walbank as a loving and caring husband and parent indeed, but also as a male of his generation, with his generation's view of priorities and of differentiated gender roles.³¹ Just as at home, if the study door was shut, he was not to be disturbed, so too, to a degree which it is hard now to estimate justly, the acceptance of such

³¹ Full reference in *Note on sources*, below.

extra external activity served as an escape from situations and from strains which on occasion were intolerable.

Nor was Walbank's activity confined to Liverpool. Even aside from the normal round of external examining for BA and Ph.D. degrees, wherein he was continuously active until his retirement at least, his diary summaries are full of references to external lectures at this or that university, to Classical Association or Triennial meetings, and to the annual meetings of selected male British ancient historians at Wellingborough. By 1947–8 he was on the Classical Journals Board, and by 1958–9 on the Council of the Roman Society. Well before then he had already attracted national recognition and preferment: elected FBA in 1953, by invitation he delivered the Gray Lectures in Cambridge in March 1957, the J. L. Myres Memorial Lecture in Oxford in 1965, and the Sather Lectures in Berkeley in 1970–1,³² having served as Reviews Editor of the *Journal of Roman Studies* from 1959 till 1969, as President of the Roman Society in 1961–5, and as President of the Classical Association in 1970. The further recognition which followed after retirement is noted below.

V

Ten years after *HCP* I, its successor appeared. It was not, as originally intended, the second of two volumes, but the second of three, containing the commentary for books VII–XVIII.³³ Walbank's letter of April 1962 to the Press, setting out the detailed case for three volumes, is quoted and discussed by John Henderson elsewhere.³⁴ It was clearly an inescapable

³² See below, nn. 40–2. The Gray lectures seem not to have been published, for unknown reasons.

³³ Major reviews: A. H. McDonald, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 58 (1968), 232–5; P. Pédech, *Gnomon*, 40 (1968), 829–31; P. Pédech, *Revue des Études Grecques*, 81 (1968), 617–19; J. A. O. Larsen, *Classical Philology*, 64 (1969), 42–7; J. E. A. Crake, *Phoenix*, 23 (1969), 213–20; R. M. Errington, *Classical Review*, ns 19 (1969), 165–8; W. Peremans, *Revue Belge de Philologie*, 47 (1969), 1051–3. Other reviews: Anon., *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 25 (1968), 277–8; R. Foray, *Latomus*, 27 (1968), 975–6; F. Hampl, *Anzeiger für die Altertumswissenschaft*, 21 (1968), 230–2; J.-C. Richard, *Revue des Études Latines*, 46 (1968), 464; A. E. Astin, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 89 (1969), 136–7; A. Díaz Tejera, *Emerita*, 37 (1969), 418; A. H. McDonald, *Antiquaries' Journal*, 49 (1969), 151; H. W. Parke, *Hermathena*, 109 (1969), 68; P. Pédech, *Les Études Classiques*, 37 (1969), 78–9; R. Till, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 209 (1969), 641–2; É. Will, *Revue Historique*, 95/246 (1971), 91–2.

³⁴ In '“A piece of work which would occupy some years . . .”': Oxford University Press archive files 814152, 814173, 814011', forthcoming in Gibson and Harrison (see *Note on sources*, below). See also Henderson's earlier essays: (a) 'Polybius/Walbank', in J. Birchall and S. Harrison (eds.), *Texts, Ideas, and the Classics: Scholarship, Theory and Classical Literature* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 220–41; (b) 'From Megalopolis to Cosmopolis: Polybius, or there and back again', in S. Goldhill (ed.),

change, for the commentary is no less dense and meaty, the excursuses are if anything on a smaller scale and more linearly attached to the text, and no attempt was made to turn a commentary on disjointed fragments into an intelligible stand-alone overview of events. Two reviewers, Pédech and Díaz Tejera, did indeed lament the absence of those passages of Livy which derive from Polybios, but Walbank's decision to focus only on those passages which are directly attested as Polybios' was the only way of avoiding discussion of the credentials of attributions and indirect attestations, discussion which more properly belongs in commentaries on Livy, Plutarch, or Appian or in a specific monograph. Indeed, it might well be said that only with the volumes of *HCP* ready to hand can such a monograph be contemplated.

Disjointed though the fragments are, Walbank was still able to offer unitary studies of major issues and events such as the reasons for assigning fragments to their books and positions (1–28), the treaty of 215 between Philip V and Hannibal (42–56), the character of Scipio Africanus (191–6), the topography of New Carthage (205–20), the battle of Zama in 202 (445–63), or the battle of Kynoskephalai in 197 (572–92). Equally salient and admirable was his clear-eyed view of Polybios' inaccuracies, for example by showing how he was poor on geography but good on topography, and he had no illusions about the dismal impression created by Polybios' tetchy portrayal of his predecessor historians in book XII: as Walbank commented all too justly on 12. 17–22, 'this criticism of Callisthenes shows P. at his worst' (364). In contrast Walbank was himself ready to revisit his own earlier views and arguments, as on the date of the Roman-Aitolian alliance,³⁵ on the date of the death of Ptolemaios Philopator (434–7) or on the chronology of Aegean events in 201 (497–500), not to mention the extensive Addenda and Corrigenda (628–50). The denseness of the *Commentary* did arouse some resistance, Paul Pédech in his *Revue des Études Grecques* review commenting that with the accumulation of detail the trees were hiding the forest, but one may prefer to agree with Malcolm Errington's judgement that '[w]hat matters ultimately is that the reader seeking information is given discussion and direction to the literature, from which he will be able to make up his own mind—even though in practice, with Polybios, he will usually end up agreeing with Walbank's own discreetly presented view'.

Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 29–49.

³⁵ pp. 162–80, with a lengthy critique in Crake's review in *Phoenix*.

Two other stand-alone publications of the decade need notice. The lesser one, his Myres lecture in Oxford in 1965,³⁶ employing a wide-ranging title but focusing very largely on Polybios and on the debt which Walbank claimed (not altogether convincingly) he owed to Thucydides, exemplified what became a pattern, that of using lecture or article format to expand on themes which arose from the *Commentary* but required a greater length of exposition and argument than could be accommodated within it. The larger one was a new version of his 1946 book *Decline* (see above, pp. 330–1), retitled (in homage to Gibbon) as *The Awful Revolution*.³⁷ It was considerably enlarged, with two additional chapters which reviewed the cultural background of the Late Empire more fully, and the strident immediacy of the original gave way to a more scholarly tone. Its most important feature, however, was unchanged, viz. its status as a serious essay in historiographical theory, offering a fully worked-out Marxist analysis of the ‘Decline and Fall’. Though translations into Swedish and Spanish followed, and though its interim enlarged version of 1963 in Japanese sold—astonishingly—over 13,000 copies, retrospect suggests that interpretative success eluded it. The two main questions (neither of which was really addressed either by Walbank or by reviewers) were, first, whether a Marxist analysis couched in terms of a stasis of internal political and economic forces could adequately acknowledge and accommodate the sheer impact of invasion, on the part of peoples who had benefitted for several centuries from the unplanned transfer of military technology, without marginalising the importance of such a stasis; and secondly, whether the survival of the eastern Empire, at least until the 620s CE if not until 1204, did not fatally undermine any Empire-wide explanation. Subsequent scholarship has more and more inclined to the view that ‘it is no longer possible to maintain a simple and unitary explanation of expansion and decline which will apply to the whole of the Mediterranean world under Roman rule’.³⁸

³⁶ Published as *Speeches in Greek Historians* (Oxford, 1965). Reviews: P. Pédech, *Revue des Études Anciennes*, 68 (1966), 421–3; S. Usher, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 87 (1967), 216; S. I. Oost, *Classical Philology*, 62 (1967), 139.

³⁷ *The Awful Revolution: the Decline of the Roman Empire in the West* (Liverpool, 1969). Reviews: Anon., *Times Literary Supplement*, 69 (1970), 38; R. Browning, *Classical Review*, ns 21 (1971), 101–3; A. Chastagnol, *Revue de Philologie*, 45 (1971), 186; G. Clemente, *Rivista di Filologia e Istruzione Classica*, 99 (1971), 99–104; L. Cracco Ruggini, *Athenaeum*, 49 (1971), 196–9; É. Demougeot, *Revue des Études Anciennes*, 42 (1970), 229–34; W. Friend, *History*, 55 (1970), 96; D. Kagan, *Classical World*, 64 (1970), 30; O. Murray, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 60 (1970), 264; E. R. A. Sewter, *Greece and Rome*, 16 (1969), 229. Translations into Japanese (1963), Swedish (1973), and Spanish (1978, repr. 1981, 1984, 1987, 1993, 1997).

³⁸ I thank Alan Bowman for permission to cite this summary formulation of the current Oxford Roman Economy Project.

VI

As Walbank entered his sixties, in December 1969, an invitation to deliver the Sather Lectures at Berkeley in winter 1971 released him temporarily from the 'straitjacket' (his own word) of commentary by offering the opportunity to present Polybios in a single connected exposition. The six lectures, published with commendable speed in late 1972,³⁹ became at once the basic book on the historian, and have remained so ever since.⁴⁰ A detailed sketch of the man and his work comes first, followed by chapter 2, a review of the historiographical traditions within which Polybios was working, and, by chapter 3, an explanation of Polybios' own term '*Pragmatike historia*' as a description of his would-be dispassionate, didactic, and factual history of his own times. Chapter 4 reviews the architectural structure of the *Histories* and the degree of change of attitude and approach which can be detected. The two final chapters focus more specifically on Polybios' response to Rome as a politico-military entity, chapter 5 analysing his flawed but fascinating attempt in Book VI to use the terminology of Greek political theory in order to describe the society and polity of Rome, and chapter 6 attempting to assess the impact on Polybios of living within (but not a part of) that society while detained at Rome after 167.

Reviewers gave the book a warm and grateful welcome, noting its lucidity and caution, its common sense and insight, its lack of special pleading, its brevity, and its command of specialist scholarship.⁴¹ True, there were pleas for a more descriptive account (Pearson), for more on Polybios' style and use of Greek (Wormell), or for more on his strengths and less on his failures (Oates). However, I single out two of the major reviews because the responses which they encapsulate reflect two very different tendencies

³⁹ *Polybios* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, and London, 1972). Unchanged pb. repr. 1990.

⁴⁰ Though B. McGing, *Polybios' Histories* (Oxford, 2010), now offers an alternative reading for the English-reading student

⁴¹ Major reviews: J. de Romilly, *History & Theory*, 14 (1975), 226–33; P. S. Derow, *Phoenix*, 30 (1976), 308–11; K.-E. Petzold, *Gnomon*, 50 (1978), 37–78. Other reviews: Anon., *Times Literary Supplement*, 3723 (13 July 1973), 812; M. Delaunoy, *Les Études Classiques*, 25 (1973), 464; Landberg, *Lychnos* (1973–4), 341; F. Lasserre, *Erasmus*, 25 (1973), 885–6; D. E. W. Wormell, *Hermathena*, 115 (1973), 118; A. E. Astin, *History*, 59 (1974), 447–8; M. Errington, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 64 (1974), 262–3; E. Gabba, *Athenaeum*, 52 (1974), 371–3; A. Momigliano, *New York Review of Books*, 21/12 (18 July 1974), 33–5, repr. in his *6^o Contributo* (Roma 1980), II, 77–85; D. Musti, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 94 (1974), 195–6; L. Pearson, *American Historical Review*, 79 (1974), 121–2; D. Roussel, *Revue des Études Grecques*, 87 (1974), 468; O. Taplin, *Greece and Rome*, 21 (1974), 88; R. Till, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 218 (1974), 649–51; A. H. Bernstein, *Classical World*, 68 (1975), 447–8; J. F. Oates, *American Journal of Philology*, 96 (1975), 77–8; Orosio, *Augustinus*, 20 (1975), 204; S. I. Oost, *Classical Philology*, 71 (1976), 194–5.

in the modern reception of ancient historiography. Petzold's immensely detailed, scrupulous, and sympathetic scrutiny of each chapter seeks to elucidate Polybios through Polybios, arguing that his thought was more consistent than Walbank allowed. In contrast, de Romilly's luminous essay (for it is that) showed how Polybios derived his interpretative categories of reality from the Greek historiographical tradition, whether Thucydidean format and approach or Isocratean precepts on the legitimation of power, but by that token also showed how he could neither fully grasp the bold originality (*sc.* ruthlessness) of Roman policy nor apply Greek political theory seamlessly to a polity which it did not fit.

The third wave remained, in the form of the final volume of *HCT*. The task took longer than Walbank intended, achieving publication only in 1979.⁴² Format, size, and style were unchanged, and again a massive Introduction (1–62) reviewed in detail the case for assigning fragments to Books XIX–XL. Since those twenty-two Books covered Mediterranean-wide events over the fifty years from 196 till 146, there was less scope for excursuses,⁴³ though the geographical Book XXXIV on its own required some seventy-six pages (563–639) which are a *tour de force* of encyclopaedic information. Again, too, reviews were warmly appreciative, though, since all concerned knew by now what to expect, the focus lay largely on minutiae and Walbank's partial re-ordering to the fragments rather than on the history of the second century BCE as a whole. Yet, behind the comments lay the recognition of the exceptional excellence of the *Commentary* as a whole, a recognition best and most sensitively expressed by Domenico Musti:

Il sentimento fondamentale del lettore di questo commento è di gratitudine: l'opera di Polibio è diventata ormai, per merito della più che ventennale fatica di Walbank, accessibile e leggibile per intero; il commento ne illumina tutti i *Realien* e ne scandiglia tutti i problemi; l'interpretazione dell'autore non prevarica mai; introdotta con mano leggera, lascia sempre libero il lettore; talvolta poi, con l'umiltà del vero atteggiamento scientifico, lo mette addirittura a confronto con un onesto ripensamento. In quest'opera c'è più che una lezione mirabile di tecnica espositiva e organizzativa (che non è l'ultima delle qualità di un commento); vi spira un senso di etica professionale, che suscita il rispetto e costituisce un modello.⁴⁴

⁴² He had submitted the MS timeously for a 1977 publication, but the typesetters, faced with what was literally a *manu scriptum*, and a not very legible one at that, needed it to be either typed or recopied: in the event much of it had to be 'carefully written over' (information from Dorothy Thompson). His 1932 Olivetti portable presumably did not do Greek.

⁴³ The major one revisited the problem of the Achaian assemblies (406–14); later republished as chapter 10 in *PRHW*.

⁴⁴ The reader's basic reaction to this *Commentary* is one of gratitude: thanks to Walbank's labours of over twenty years, the work of Polybios has now become accessible and readable in its

VII

The publication of *HCP* III saw the Walbanks already well established in Cambridge, where they had moved on his retirement in 1977. Release from administration, Mary's much improved health, closer proximity to their daughters, an enviable level of health and energy, and access to college and university facilities all combined to bestow upon him a spectacularly active and productive retirement. Contact with students was not lost, for he taught for the University of the Third Age in Cambridge and continued to participate (as he had done for years) in Barry Dobson's annual course on the Roman army in Durham. Work on Polybios continued too, not least with a thirty-page 'Introduction' to Ian Scott-Kilvert's translation of the bulk of the text in the Penguin Classics series in 1979,⁴⁵ but release from the straitjacket of commentary offered new and wider opportunities. One, his first 'normal' book for forty years, was *The Hellenistic World*,⁴⁶ published in 1981 as his contribution to the Fontana History of the Ancient World. This had been a formidable assignment, for it needed to weave together at least four narratives. One was that of the post-Alexander reversion of the macro-region previously controlled by the Achaemenid Persian Empire to its earlier format as a competitive concert of regional powers. A second was that of the shifting multidimensional balance of power among them. A third was that of the intricate cross-penetration and development of cultural practices, institutions, and beliefs across a huge landscape extending from the Western Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf and beyond. A fourth was that of the step-by-step encroach-

entirety. The *Commentary* throws light on all its Realien and measures the depth of all its problems: the author's interpretation, delicately introduced, never equivocates and always leaves the reader at liberty: sometimes, even, with the modesty of a truly scholarly attitude, he actually confronts the reader with his own second thoughts. Within this work there is more than just a marvellous exemplar of explanatory and organisational skill (which is not the least of the qualities of a Commentary): there breathes in it a sense of professional integrity, which arouses our respect and offers a model.' *Rivista di Filologia e Istruzione Classica*, 109 (1981), 322. 'Modello' indeed, so that it comes as a surprise to find no reference to Walbank or to the *HCP* in the literature about 'commentary theory' which has emerged in recent years: for example, G. W. Most (ed.), *Commentaries—Kommentare (Aporemata)*, 4 (Göttingen, 1999); R. K. Gibson and C. S. Kraus (eds.), *The Classical Commentary. Histories, Practices, Theory (Mnemosyne, Suppl. 232)* (Leiden-Boston-Köln, 2002).

⁴⁵ *Polybios: the Rise of the Roman Empire* (Harmondsworth, 1979, and repr.).

⁴⁶ London (hb. version Brighton and Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1981). Second imp. with amendments, 1986; third imp. with further amendments, 1992. Translations into Italian (1983, new rev. edn. 1996), German (1983), Spanish (1985), Japanese (1988), Greek (1993), Korean (2002), Polish (2002), and Arabic (2009). Folio Society edn. with new illustrations as *The Hellenistic Age* (2002).

ment of Roman hard power at the expense of that dynamic balance, growing even as Graeco-Levantine soft power gradually enveloped Italy and began to extend further. Worse, the creation of any overarching meta-narrative had to compensate for the fact that written evidence survives largely from Egypt (thereby posing the problem of how far *sui generis* its culture and polity were) or from Greece and western Asia Minor. The latter regions were tangential to events unfolding in the core areas of the Levant and Mesopotamia, but were central to the processes of partial convergence and assimilation which created the 'Classical World'. Though the book was largely welcomed at the time for its lucid style and clear organisation, and though it has enjoyed wider translation than its stable mates, it did not satisfy everyone, some critics seeing it as dry, over-focused on Greece itself, thin on the physical evidence, and silent or inadequate on many salient themes.⁴⁷

Fortunately, Walbank could also address the task on a much larger scale, for he became the senior editor of three volumes of the new edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History*. The first to emerge, VII² 1, *The Hellenistic World*, achieved publication in 1984, the two others, VII² 2, *The Rise of Rome to 220 B.C.*, and VIII², *Rome and the Mediterranean to 133 B.C.*, in 1989. Here, though he contributed four excellent chapters himself to volume VII² 1, it was primarily efficient planning and the collaboration of numerous contributors from Britain, mainland Europe, and North America that allowed a far more detailed and wide-ranging approach to the meta-narrative. Yet in many ways the reception of these volumes (of which VII² 1 attracted the most attention⁴⁸) was more important than their contents. Though individual chapters naturally prompted comments of very various kinds, evaluation and criticism (some of it quite fierce) mainly comprised a debate about objective, format, and method, which had as its target not so much the 'Hellenistic World' in general *qua* interpretative

⁴⁷ Major reviews: S. M. Burstein, *Classical Journal*, 78 (1983), 262–4; H. I. MacAdam, *Berytus*, 30 (1982), 117–21 (strongly critical); G. Casanova, *Aegyptus*, 65 (1985), 235–40. Others: N. R. E. Fisher, *Greece and Rome*, 29 (1982), 94; P. Green, *Times Literary Supplement*, 81 (1982), 206; P. M. Fraser, *History*, 67 (1982), 299–300; D. S. Potter, *Classical Review*, NS 33 (1983), 347–8; R. S. Bagnall, *Classical Outlook*, 61 (1983), 28; W. Huss, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 237 (1983), 667–8; A. Basson, *Apollonia*, 2 (1983), 88–91; P. Oliva, *Eirene*, 21 (1984), 130–1; H. Leclercq, *Les Études Classiques*, 54 (1986), 424–5. Of the Italian translation: C. Bearzot, *Aevum*, 58 (1984), 122–3. Of the German translation: M. Clauss, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 105 (1985), 227–8.

⁴⁸ P. Green, *Times Literary Supplement*, 84 (1985), 891–3; N. R. E. Fisher, *Greece and Rome*, 32 (1985), 216–17; M. Errington, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 241 (1985), 659–61; S. Hornblower, *Classical Review*, NS 36 (1986), 85–9; F. G. B. Millar, *Antiquaries' Journal*, 66 (1986), 163–4; K. J. Sacks, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 90 (1986), 118–20; R. J. Rowland, *Classical World*, 79 (1986), 351; H. Leclercq, *Les Études Classiques*, 54 (1986), 424–5.

concept as the pros and cons of using multi-author collaboration and of concentrating on diachronic, politico-militarily defined components. Especially now with the availability of alternative formats, whether magisterial monographs⁴⁹ or multi-volume productions planned on wholly different lines,⁵⁰ that debate needs to be pursued—but not here.

Though by now well into his seventies, Walbank was not done yet. His *Selected Papers* of 1985 republished twenty-one of his earlier publications with minimal changes.⁵¹ Nearly all were Hellenistic, and nine carried the name ‘Polybius’ in their titles, but their range—Greek, Roman, and historiographical—was far wider. Even then, and over and above a continuing flow of papers and reviews which continued until his death and beyond, two substantial original publications were yet to come—both from well within his comfort zone of scholarship, it is true, but containing much new material nonetheless. The first was his collaboration, after Guy Griffith’s withdrawal, with Nicholas Hammond on the third volume of the Oxford *History of Macedonia* (Oxford, 1988). Walbank’s 165-page contribution, narrating Macedonian history and its interaction with the Greek states from 301 to 221 BCE, was, as always, lucid, balanced, and fully documented, gratefully using the advances in epigraphic and archaeological knowledge which Greek scholarship had achieved in the previous forty years. Being almost wholly politico-military, and being written from (as it were) within the kingdom, it provided an invaluable, because consistently oriented, narrative of guidance: hardly surprisingly, reviewers fell upon it with gratitude and relief.⁵²

The second major piece was a twenty-seven-page report on Polybian studies from c.1970 till c.2000, which carried on a format established by Musti⁵³ and showed how closely and systematically Walbank continued to pursue all relevant publications that related to ‘his’ author. He gave it the place of honour as the first chapter in a second volume of collected papers which appeared in 2002.⁵⁴ That volume reflected an even more concen-

⁴⁹ For example, M. Sartre, *D’Alexandre à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique, IV^e siècle av. J.-C.—III^e siècle ap. J.-C.* (Paris, 2001).

⁵⁰ For example, Salvatore Settis (ed.), *I Greci*, I–IV (Torino, 1996–2002).

⁵¹ Reviews: J. L. Ferrary, *Revue des Études Latines*, 63 (1985), 447; J. Briscoe, *Classical Review*, ns 37 (1987), 123; E. Gabba, *Athenaeum*, 65 (1987), 252; K. Kinzl, *Gymnasium*, 95 (1986), 87–8.

⁵² Reviews: H.-J. Gehrke, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 252 (1991), 669–70; A. M. Devine, *Classical Bulletin*, 66 (1990), 129–34; D. Engels, *American Historical Review*, 96 (1991), 1172–3; M. Zahrnt, *Gnomon*, 65 (1993), 307–12; P. Cabanes, *Revue des Études Grecques*, 106 (1993), 238–9.

⁵³ *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römische Welt*, I, 2 (1972), 1114–81.

⁵⁴ *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World* (Cambridge, 2002). Reviews: B. Rochette, *L’Antiquité Classique*, 72 (2003), 364–5; D. W. Baronowski, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2003.03.07;

trated focus on Polybios than the first, only five of the twenty papers not having the word 'Polybios' in their titles; even more, too, they explored historical, geographical, or historiographical themes which ran throughout Polybios' text and did not readily lend themselves to appropriate full-scale treatment in the *Commentary*. Though most were therefore 'traditional' in theme and approach, the two final papers joined the fashion for reception studies by exploring the readings of Polybios offered by John Dryden and Gaetano de Sanctis. That a paper written in 2001, a copy of which he sent to me in January 2006 as 'probably my last offprint', could appear in a volume on intertextuality admirably illustrated how new bottles could accommodate his vintage wine.⁵⁵

By then, however, as his handwriting revealed, health and energy were beginning to falter. The death of Mary in 1987 lay nearly twenty years in the past, and the flood of public and academic honours which he had received had mostly come in the 1990s.⁵⁶ To his and to general regret, he felt unable to attend in person a colloquium held on Polybios in his honour in Liverpool in July 2007—though happily a video which he made to serve as a brief introductory discourse survives as a visual record, the text of which will appear in *Polybios and his World* (see *Note on Sources*). Yet his spirit survived to the end: a mere twenty days before his death on 23 October 2008, as an email sent by his daughter Dorothy reports, he spent 'a most enjoyable morning' being interviewed as part of a project to do with organ donation for clinical research.

Three achievements stand out. First, of course, though at considerable human cost, *HCP I–III*, for few scholars have been so closely associated with a single predecessor as he came to be with Polybios. Just as Nadia Boulanger did much to restore Monteverdi to his rightful stature in the history of music, so too Walbank, by bringing Polybios out of the specialist

R. M. Errington, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 277 (2003), 157–8; J.-C. Richard, *Revue des Études Latines*, 81 (2003), 419–20; A. Erskine, *Classical Review*, ns 54 (2004), 166–7; R. J. Penella, *New England Classical Journal*, 31 (2004), 56–8; É. Foulon, *Phoenix*, 59 (2005), 179–81; M. Dubuisson, *Latomus*, 65 (2006), 831.

⁵⁵ 'The two-way shadow: Polybios among the fragments', in G. Schepens and Jan Bollansée (eds.), *The Shadow of Polybios: Intertextuality as a Research Tool in Greek Historiography. Proceedings of the International Colloquium, Leuven, 21–22 September 2001* (Leuven, 2006), pp. 1–18.

⁵⁶ Silver Jubilee Medal, British Academy, 1977; Corresponding Member, Deutsche Archäologische Institut, 1987; Honorary Fellow, Peterhouse, Cambridge, 1984; Honorary D.Litt., University of Exeter, 1988; Kenyon Medal, British Academy, 1989; CBE 1993; Honorary Member, Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies, 1994; Commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel, 1995 (an unexpected accolade which gave him great pleasure); Honorary D.H.L., University of Louisville, KY, 1996; Honorary Foreign Member, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2002; Corresponding Member, Royal Netherlands Academy.

side-channels into the mainstream of historiography, helped to make his theme and period, the rapid rise of Rome to Mediterranean predominance, into one of the central stories of Classical Antiquity, and simultaneously set the gold standard for a historical commentary on a Classical text. Secondly, one should cite his work on Polybios' wider milieu, for Walbank knew the text so well that he could use it as a window through which to obtain a much clearer vision, repeatedly and lucidly brought to scholarly notice, of Hellenistic history, historiography, geography, and society: a technique which others now imitate. Thirdly, and crucially, he was the last surviving member of a small group of outstanding scholars—Finley, Fraser, Jones, Momigliano, Syme, and others—which crystallised in the 1940s and 1950s and raised the standard of British-based Graeco-Roman history from respectability to the top level of international distinction. His death ends an era which the Academy, and scholarship in general, can look back on with admiration and gratitude.

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Fellow of the Academy

Note on sources. Walbank's life and work are unusually well documented, to the point indeed where a book-length portrayal of the scholar in his epoch and contexts would be both practicable and valuable. For that circumstance he himself is primarily responsible, first and foremost by having composed by 1992 a 195-page memoir of his life up to his appointment to the Liverpool Chair of Latin in 1946. This memoir, entitled *Hypomnemata* as homage to the title of the memoirs of Aratos, was intended for private family circulation, as it remains. Twenty-five pages of detailed notes, scribbled down in three sequences in a barely decipherable holograph, summarise his diary for the years 1945/6 until 1978, and were clearly intended at one stage to form the basis of a second instalment of *Hypomnemata*, which was never written. In addition, an almost complete list of his publications up to 1984 was published in 1985 in *Selected Papers*, pp. 344–60: an emended and updated list, including posthumously published titles, has been compiled. I am most grateful to his daughter, Dorothy Thompson, FBA, for making these materials available at an early stage. In addition, he lodged an extensive archive (33 boxes) of scholarly and administrative papers with the Special Collections and Archives section of the Sydney Jones Library at the University of Liverpool (reference number D 1037). They include diaries, lecture notes, personal and professional papers, MSS of publications, reports and photographs: detailed cataloguing is currently (spring 2011) in progress. Other papers remain with Dorothy Thompson as literary executor.

Obituaries were published in *The Guardian*, 19 Nov. 2008 (R. J. Seager), *The Independent*, 28 Oct. 2008 (P. D. Garnsey), *The Times*, 13 Nov. 2008 ([JKD]), *Scripta Classica Israelitica*, 28 (2009) 182–3 (G. Herman), *Levensberichten en Herdenkingen*

(Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Amsterdam, 2010), pp. 120–3 (H. W. Pleket), and *Gnomon* (P. Franke). The *Journal of Roman Studies*, 74 (1984), a volume inscribed in honour of his seventy-fifth birthday, was prefaced by an appreciation of him by Arnaldo Momigliano (reprinted in *8° Contributo* (Roma 1981) pp. 424–6: bibliography no. 671). The papers from a colloquium held at Liverpool on Polybios in July 2007, ed. B. Gibson and T. Harrison as *Polybios and his World. Essays in Memory of F. W. Walbank* (Oxford, forthcoming, 2012), include a personal portrayal ‘Growing up with Polybios: a daughter’s memoir’, by Mitzi Walbank, and a detailed account by John Henderson, based on Oxford University Press archives, of the gestation of *HCP*. The papers of a second colloquium, held in Athens on 18–20 September 2009, will include a short memoir by Chr. Habicht: publication details are not yet firm. A third colloquium to mark what would have been Walbank’s centenary was held at Kazan in December 2009. A number of Russian evaluations of his work are listed by V. I. Kascheev in *Vestnik Drevnej Istorii* (2010), 3, 225–33 at 233. A draft entry for him for the *Dictionary of National Biography* has been prepared by Peter Garnsey: publication or access details are not yet known.

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