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HISTORY AND TEXT: TWO KINDS OF ANCIENT HISTORY*

MICHAEL C. ALEXANDER

A panel at the annual meeting of the American Philological Association entitled, “Graduate Training for the Ancient Historian: Or How Best to Study Ancient History in the 21st Century?,” gave rise to reflections from the speakers on the proper departmental home for the subject of ancient history: in a classics department or a history department?¹ Although the majority favored the latter location, and some panelists wanted more training in the discipline of history and also in the social sciences, others believed that traditional language study and the reading of a range of classical works provided the tools most necessary for the ancient historian. This debate would find less resonance in most English-speaking countries—where ancient history has traditionally been assumed to belong to the discipline of classics—than in the United States, where ancient

* I have presented versions of this paper before the Department of History of the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Indiana Classical Conference, and the Department of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies at Penn State University. I thank the members of these audiences for their comments, as well as Gerald Danzer and Stephen Wiberley of the University of Illinois at Chicago, Carolyn Dewald of Bard College, and Nicholas Rauh of Purdue University for their suggestions on much earlier versions of this article, and Rachel Havrelock of the University of Illinois at Chicago and Richard R. John of Columbia University for their assistance. I also wish to thank the journal’s anonymous referees for their comments. I am very grateful to the Department of Classics of the University of Pittsburgh for graciously extending to me privileges that allow me to make use of the University of Pittsburgh Libraries. I also wish to acknowledge the support that I have received from the Daley Library of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

1 The panel was held on Jan. 4, 2008 (p. 22 at <http://apaclassics.org/images/uploads/documents/2008program.pdf>), and was organized by Prof. Michele Salzman of the Department of History, University of California at Riverside, under the sponsorship of the APA Committee on Ancient History.

historians can be found in either department, although state universities tend to put them in history and private universities and colleges in classics.² This article is a reaction to the fundamental intellectual issue raised by this panel: is ancient history part of classics or history? As for the institutional location of the study of ancient history within a university, it is not the goal of this article to provide a recommendation and it does not do so. However, it does provide a conceptual framework within which that issue should be discussed.

An observation from a member of the audience crystallized the issue: if a graduate student wants to study ancient history, why not enroll in a classics program and write a dissertation on, for example, a decade of Livy? My own immediate reaction to that comment was that some ancient historians in training might prefer not to write about an ancient work of history, but rather about “what happened”: the events, long-term developments, or institutions of some period and place that fall into what we call “ancient history.”³ In fact, as Kurt Raaflaub points out, graduate students who are starting their careers in ancient history would be ill-advised to think that a dissertation on a historical author by itself qualifies them as ancient historians.⁴ My own reaction might seem to reflect the trajectory of my own career in which I made a voluntary transfer from a department of classics to a department of history within the same university, but that assumption would not only be (from my point of view) unwarranted, but would also reflect a serious distortion of the latitudinarian point of view that I will present here.⁵

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- 2 An exception is the location of ancient history within the Department of History at University College London instead of the Department of Greek and Latin. A separate status for ancient history, but related to classics, is implied by the label “Classics and Ancient History” adopted by several departments at universities in the United Kingdom (e.g., Bristol, Durham, Exeter, and Manchester), as well as by the University of Sydney in Australia. Outside the English-speaking world, other institutional arrangements are found, such as institutes for ancient history in many German universities.
 - 3 The chronological and geographical scope of “ancient history” is not a subject that this article will treat, although much could be said about changes in that scope. See below, p. 516. I will use the phrase “ancient history” to refer to the Greek and Roman worlds from ca. 1000 B.C.E. to ca. 500 C.E. The limits of the scope attached to the phrase have little bearing on the thesis presented here.
 - 4 Raaflaub 2003.420: “Yet not all classics departments realize that an ancient historian must be much more than a philologist who happens to have written a dissertation on a historical or historiographical subject.”
 - 5 My *curriculum vitae* can be found at <http://history.las.uic.edu/history/people/emeriti/michael-alexander>.

This article seeks to explain why historians outside the field of ancient history can be puzzled by some manifestations of the discipline. Raaflaub provides an example of this bewilderment, relating that he was called to mediate between two well-intentioned departments, a history and a classics department, that were engaged in a search for a joint appointment in ancient history and were experiencing great difficulty in agreeing on their expectations of the candidates—and therefore in agreeing on a choice (Raaflaub 2003.415). This article will offer one possible cause for such miscommunication.

My thesis is that two different kinds of ancient history exist, modeled on the disciplines of classics and history. My purpose is therefore descriptive, not prescriptive. Nevertheless, although this article does not directly address pedagogical and institutional issues and is not about whether ancient history should be located in a classics or history department, readers may find that the distinction that it offers facilitates clarity in thinking about these issues, and they may conclude on the basis of this distinction that two different kinds of training are appropriate for ancient historians and that at least two possible departmental homes might be suitable for ancient historians.

I. ANCIENT HISTORY/CONVENTIONAL AND ANCIENT HISTORY/CLASSICAL

A dichotomy exists within ancient history between one kind that uses texts in order to understand history (what I will call “ancient history/conventional,” that is, it is similar to the way history is practiced by most historians), and one kind that uses history (that is, “what happened”) in order to understand a text, which I will term “ancient history/classical.”⁶ In other words, for the first kind of ancient history, a certain historical event, development, institution, or problem, such as the causes of a war, a shift in political power from one person to another, or the rise of a new class within a society, sets the agenda.⁷ For the second kind of ancient history, a problem posed by

6 “History” is used here as “history-as-actuality”—what happened—rather than as “history-as-record”—writing about the past; see Himmelfarb 2004b.17.

7 This list is intended simply for the sake of illustration: a list of the ways that historians typically view the past. I acknowledge that this list is based on the idea of history as diachronic and oriented toward the study of change. However, if history can also include a synchronic, static understanding of the past, then while some items might be added to the list, the point being made would remain the same.

a text or texts—for example, an obviously corrupt reading, or two texts in contradiction with each other on a certain point, or a passage that seems historically improbable—sets the agenda, and the historian resolves the problem. Neither kind of ancient history is more correct, more scholarly, or more “hard-core” than the other.

To give one example: the ancient historian/conventional writes a book or article on the Sicilian Expedition of 415–13 B.C.E. She provides a narrative of events, reconstructs the thinking of the main actors, and explains the reasons for the defeat of the Athenians. To do this, she uses the relevant section of Thucydides’ history of the Peloponnesian Wars, but she also makes use of the historical tradition that comes from Ephoros as it survives in Diodorus of Sicily and Plutarch, as well as inscriptions, coins, other non-literary evidence, and possibly material remains. Understanding the events and/or developments is the goal, and understanding the texts is the means. This historian poses a problem to be solved, such as the motives of the Athenians, or the reasons for their failure to take Syracuse, or the consequences of Athenian failure for the later history of Sicily, and solves it. The ancient historian/classical, on the other hand, writes an analysis of the account of the Sicilian Expedition provided by Thucydides in Books VI and VII: explaining, for example, Thucydides’ view of naval power. That historian makes use not only of the words of Thucydides and possibly of other ancient authors, but also what we know about Greek warships, or Athenian admirals, or naval tactics in siege warfare, or the logistical support required by Athenian soldiers in order to understand what Thucydides writes about the role navies played in this conflict. Understanding the text of Thucydides is the goal, understanding the events about which Thucydides wrote is one means.

Is this distinction novel? Although, as far as I know, it is articulated here more clearly than has been done before, suggestions of it have been voiced by critics of ancient history/classical, and I suspect that practitioners of ancient history/conventional nurse a frustration that my dichotomy brings out into the open. B. D. Shaw describes ancient history as “grown to a stunted maturity under the paternalistic aegis of classical philology,” and W. Scheidel refers to “ancient history, conventionally chained to literary criticism” (Shaw 1982.17 and Scheidel 2009.258). Moses Finley makes a point similar to mine:⁸

8 Finley 1975.71–72. Clark 2004.166 applies Finley’s perception to historians of early Christianity.

Ancient history is unique in western history (but has parallels in Middle and Far Eastern history) in that its professional practitioners are by long tradition often men who are not in the first instance historians but men trained in language and literature who call themselves classicists (or Hellenists) and classical philologists, epigraphists and papyrologists.

He finds two implications in this phenomenon:

First, there is an unmistakable tendency for classicists, steeped as they are in the literature of Greece and Rome, to follow the lead of ancient writers, and particularly of ancient historical writers . . . Second, classicists by definition do not have the habit of thinking about history and historical problems other than those on which they happen to be working, do not, by and large, even read history in a serious way outside the ancient field. Their general historical views, like their economic ideas, are in a sense fixed in their schooldays, and those make up their basic assumptions, their subsurface generalizations, from which they proceed to classify and order events and institutions of the ancient world.

Averil Cameron also expresses a distinction that is related to, but not the same as, the one made in this article: “But in their approach to literary material, and in their conception of their task as historians, ancient historians still mostly tend to divide into two groups—those who like to think they concern themselves with ‘hard data’ and those who are overtly interested in the literary side of things.”⁹

Ian Morris writes in this introduction to the 1999 edition of Finley’s *The Ancient Economy* (Finley 1999.xxiv–xxv):

Ancient historians are still found chiefly outside university history departments, in classics departments in North

9 Cameron 1989b.1. On Cameron’s view of texts as “cultural products” rather than as “sources,” see Dench 2009.400.

America, or in ancient history departments in Europe. They tend to go to different conferences than the ones attended by modern historians, to publish in different journals, and almost to speak a different language. As late as the 1970's, the vision of historiography as the handmaiden of philology still dominated the field.

H.-J. Gehrke describes ancient history as a subject located between two stools and goes on to analyze the directions taken by it at the end of the twentieth century, first as part of classics, and then as part of history.¹⁰

Arnaldo Momigliano makes a distinction similar, though not identical, to the one that I have outlined when he contrasts the historian with the antiquary in the following manner (1950.286 = 1955.69):

I assume that to many of us the word "antiquary" suggests the notion of a student of the past who is not quite a historian because: (1) historians write in a chronological order; antiquaries write in a systematic order: (2) historians produce those facts which serve to illustrate or explain a certain situation; antiquaries collect all the items that are connected with a certain subject, whether they help to solve a problem or not.

Or as he writes elsewhere:¹¹

One feature, not of all, but of many of these works must be underlined particularly because it was bound to determine the future of what we call antiquarian studies. It is their systematic treatment. Ordinary history is chronologically ordered. The whole sense of the historical narration depends on the time factor, on the correct succession of events. Much of the research we are now examining was not true to this chronological principle of organization. It was systematic and covered the whole subject section

10 Gehrke 1995.160: "Die Alte Geschichte ist ein Fach zwischen zwei Stühlen."

11 Momigliano 1990.61. This volume is the publication of his Sather Lectures of 1962. For an assessment of this work, see Cornell 1995.

by section: it was descriptive in a systematic form, not explanatory in a chronological order.

Although Momigliano stresses the interest of antiquaries in archaeological, inscriptional, and other non-literary forms of evidence and their importance in interpreting these sources, his term “antiquary” can be applied to some classicists, and thereby to some ancient historians/classical, even when they deal with literary sources, including historians such as Herodotus or Tacitus, because the scholar who examines a work “section by section” rather than inserting citations of relevant passages into a chronologically structured narrative is functioning more like Momigliano’s antiquary than a historian, at least as most historians understand what a historian is. (Thus all historical commentaries on texts are by their nature works of ancient history/classical according to my definition.) It should be noted, however, that whereas Momigliano classifies the collection of facts devoid of interpretation as the activity of the antiquary rather than the historian,¹² according to my definition the collection of historical facts falls within ancient history/conventional rather than ancient history/classical. That is not to say that by some definition a valid distinction cannot be drawn between historians and antiquaries. Another difference between ancient historians/classical, as I define them, and antiquaries is that the former may well present a sustained argument aimed at solving a scholarly problem such as the unity of a Homeric epic or the criteria implied in the works of Tacitus for judging an emperor.

The history/text dichotomy described by this article is somewhat different from that made in D. M. Schaps’s introduction to the discipline of classics in a section entitled, “History as Facts or History as Text.” Schaps is making a distinction that is different from the one made here because he distinguishes between history as past events and history as the written narrative produced at some time, past or present, to describe the past (Schaps 2011.163–64). In this article, ancient history/classical is both broader than Schaps’s “history as text,” since ancient history/classical is

12 Momigliano 1950.286 = 1955.69: “Reflect on the difference between collecting facts and interpreting facts.” Momigliano 1990.54: “The type of man who is interested in historical facts without being interested in history.” Nevertheless, an ancient historian who went to great pains to establish, for example, the date of the birth of Julius Caesar might well elicit from most historians the same “so what?” reaction (see below, pp. 524–25) as one who interpreted the correct meaning of a literary text.

concerned with all kinds of texts and not just with works of history, and narrower, in that it is not particularly concerned with the narratology of works about ancient history written in modern times. As is stated below (p. 515), nothing in the analysis presented here is meant to discount other categories and analysis.

Kurt Raaflaub, the commentator at the panel referenced at the beginning, was making somewhat the same distinction when he briefly described “ancient history that deserves the name of history” as “hard-core history, as I call it, issue- or problem-oriented rather than author-oriented soft-core history.”¹³ However, whereas he expresses a clear preference for one kind of ancient history over another, this article adopts a neutral stance. His article on the role of ancient history within the modern university accurately describes many of the different characteristics of historians in contrast to classicists. Most historians have a much shorter view of the past than classicists, in some cases seeing history as just two centuries long; they use archival sources rather than literary texts; and they have little experience with handling a large number of foreign languages, much less an ancient language. Raaflaub acknowledges the importance of texts for classicists, but his analysis of the role of texts within the discipline of classics is different from mine. He conjoins the concept of “text” with the concept of the canon and then goes on to describe (correctly) classics as a discipline that has broken away from these narrow confines and expanded as an area study (Raaflaub 2003.419):

Classics is a very old discipline, going back at least to the Renaissance. It is burdened with a tradition which for centuries saw it as the predominant part of an education that was limited to the ruling elites, focused on a circumscribed canon of texts, considering everything else subordinate and “auxiliary” to the primary purpose of teaching the languages in order to read and interpret these texts. In this tradition, history provided context and was not taken seriously in its own right.

13 http://apaclassics.org/images/uploads/documents/2008_Raaflaub.pdf Prof. Raaflaub has confirmed to me that he was making much the same dichotomy that I am making (private correspondence, Feb. 2, 2009). He uses the term “hard-core” in the same sense in Raaflaub 2003.426.

Raaflaub associates the textual side of classics with a narrow canon and with a view of history as a mere tool for literary criticism, whereas I see the classicists' focus on texts as essential to the discipline of classics, whether it is applied to traditional canonical texts or the broadest array of texts originating in antiquity, including literary works, inscriptions, papyri, and material remains. Therefore, in my view, the broadening of the discipline of classics to texts related to many aspects of ancient societies and outside the traditional canon—a broadening that Raaflaub (2003.419–20) cogently analyzes—has not changed the essential textual tradition of the discipline.

Some ancient historians do seem to speak a different dialect from that of other historians: dialects close enough for the two speakers to think they are speaking the same language and different enough that they fail at times to understand each other. These two dialects may explain the miscommunication that Raaflaub describes. This article aims to explain the origins of these two dialects.

II. TWO OBJECTIONS

At this point, two objections to the dichotomy that I am proposing need to be addressed.

Ends and Means

The first objection is that it is no news to be told that some ancient historians are more text-based or philological and others are more narrative- or event-based, and more historical. My formulation is, however, more accurate than this objection, because it is incorrect to say that some ancient historians care about understanding only what happened, to the exclusion of texts, and others about understanding texts, to the exclusion of history. Any ancient history that is not based on texts (allowing for a broad definition of text, which I will introduce shortly) is just bad history, and any analysis of a historical text written without regard to history is bad textual analysis. To pick just two examples as illustrations, much history lies behind Ronald Syme's *History in Ovid*, which often uses a difficulty in the text as a springboard for a solution to a historical problem such as the identity of certain individuals, and much text behind M. R. P. Pittenger's *Contested Triumphs: Politics, Pageantry, and Performance in Livy's Republican Rome* (Syme 1978 and Pittenger 2008). The better way to look at the difference is to distinguish between *means* and *end*: in Syme's

book, the end is to understand the text of Ovid; in Pittenger, the end is to understand the institution of triumphs. In one case, it is a problem in the text that establishes the purpose of the historian's research, in the other, a problem raised by a Roman institution.

Postmodernism and the “Semiotic Challenge”: All is Text

The second objection requires a more extensive discussion than the first. Postmodern theorists of history criticize what they term an empiricist, “reconstructionist” view of history: the view that the historian has the power to recreate the past on the basis of evidence that reflects an independent reality that existed at some point “out there.” These critics say that everything is a text, that is, that all history is a human construct expressed through the distorting medium of language, and historians cannot reconstruct a past reality “out there.” Neither can historians today ever stand outside themselves to describe a reality separate from themselves, nor were our sources able to do so. This is the “semiotic challenge.” As Carolyn Dewald explains:¹⁴

A(n) . . . attack on the possibility of “real” history . . . owes its intellectual origin to poststructuralists and postmodernists and entails the realization that language, as the medium we use to think about and communicate our thoughts about the past, is most intimately connected not to the articulation of non-linguistic reality but rather to a larger and persuasive interlocking web of language itself. That web is largely shaped by ideology, or the unconscious need to see the past in terms that we already know, that is, our contemporary set of intellectual assumptions.

In what is often called the “linguistic turn,” some professional historians also follow this line of reasoning and claim that the project of creating an accurate representation of the past, when carefully examined, is a chimerical one, nice to imagine but not attainable in practice . . . As Foucault and his followers have argued, the elements from the past that we do have in front of us—the written

14 Dewald 2007.90. See also Batstone 2009.

and otherwise tangible detritus from vanished times—are things we largely understand in terms of our own ideological presuppositions.

A. Munslow (2006.155) does allow for the validity of facts (“the simplest level of the individual referential statement”), but asserts “it is the constitution of historical facts as a totality that *creates* their meaning, rather than the discovery or recovery of the essential/original and intentional meaning as constituted by the original author” (emphasis in original). In other words, according to this view, historians do not reconstruct something old, they construct something new: they create new texts that reflect not just the texts that they claim to be studying, but also their (the historians’) own previously absorbed cultural codes. In Cameron’s words (1989b.4–5):

In order to write history—to generate a text—the historian must interpret existing texts (which will often be, but need not always be limited to, written materials, for ritual and social practice constitute texts too). But he will interpret, or “read,” his texts in accordance with a set of other texts, which derive from the cultural code within which he works himself; and he will go on to write his text, that is, his history, against the background of and within the matrix of this larger cultural text. Thus history-writing is not a simple matter of sorting out “primary” and “secondary” sources; it is inextricably embedded in a mesh of text.

Therefore, according to this viewpoint, the distinction between literature and history is false; all history is a story told according to literary patterns. Dewald and Marincola summarize this “linguistic turn” in the following way (2006b.4–5):

First, by 1980 history itself as a discursive rhetoric was under investigation, as postmodernist thinkers and historiographers such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Hayden White were beginning to redefine the goals, aims and nature of “history.” For them and others like them, any historian was no longer someone carefully collecting, assessing and recording facts from the past to tell us “what really happened,” but was rather viewed to be

almost in the position of a novelist, selecting and arranging material from the past that would produce a story that was by definition also an interpretation of that material. The genre of historical narrative now came to be viewed as deeply ideological, since the tacit assumptions shaping the historical text were at least as significant as the accuracy of the “facts” presented in it.

The ancient work of history with which these two editors are dealing, the *Histories* of Herodotus, is as much a potential object of this analysis as a modern work of history. If everything is a text, then the distinction introduced by me between what happened and texts dissolves, because there is nothing other than texts. As Munslow summarizes Michel Foucault’s point of view (2006.136): “History is the record not of what actually happened, but of what historians tell us happened after they have organised the data according to their own version of social reality.” Partly for this reason, I am reluctant to attempt to contrast different kinds of ancient historians on the basis of a distinction between fact and interpretation referred to by Momigliano (above, p. 505). History, in the sense of writings about the past, can be seen in the same light as a genre of literature (Schaub and Gildea 2008.112): “The expectations of historians and literary scholars may be seen to converge . . . Formal and cognitive identification techniques of analyzing fictional discourse can become crucial to a historical approach, which is concerned with both the discursive and historical nature of its sources.” This “semiotic challenge” rests on an attempted solution to an issue that goes beyond the philosophy of history to epistemology: back to Plato and his cave, and the medieval realist vs. nominalist controversy.¹⁵

The postmodern view of the discipline of history constitutes a problem for both kinds of ancient historians but for different reasons. For ancient historians/conventional, it poses the same challenge as for most other historians, namely, that they delude themselves if they claim to be able to reconstruct the past on the basis of ancient texts, whether those texts

15 For an attempted refutation of postmodern history by a traditional historian, that is, someone who believes that the historian can reconstruct the past through the study of historical texts, see Himmelfarb 2004a. Even Spiegel, who (see below, pp. 511, 512) engages with postmodernist history in a serious way, now views the discipline of history as having moved to some extent beyond the “semiotic challenge,” although she believes that it has left a valuable legacy to the discipline (Spiegel 2009).

be literary texts, such as the works of Thucydides or Tacitus, documents, such as papyri and inscriptions, or material remains. As G. M. Spiegel, who as a medievalist can be expected to approach texts in a manner that is familiar to an ancient historian,¹⁶ summarizes the postmodern understanding of history (1990.60):

What unites these varieties of pre- and post-structuralisms is their common reliance upon a language-model epistemology which views language not as a reflection of the world it captures in words, but as constitutive of that world, that is, as “generative” rather than “mimetic.” Despite considerable differences among the polemicists and practitioners of post-structuralism, all begin from the premise that language is somehow anterior to the world it shapes; that what we experience as “reality” is but a socially (i.e., linguistically) constructed artifact or “effect” of the particular language systems we inhabit. A belief in the fundamentally linguistic character of the world and our knowledge of it forms the core of what I would call the “semiotic challenge.”

For ancient historians/classical, the problem is different. While the viewpoint that everything is a text might seem to justify their focus on texts, and the refusal to distinguish between literature and historical writing might seem to accord well with the practice of classicists,¹⁷ that point of view undermines an assumption held by these historians that they can correctly interpret ancient texts in their (the texts’) ancient context, for the postmodernists would hold that the ancient historians/classical reveal themselves and their own thought when they interpret the ancient texts rather than the thought either of the ancient authors or of the ancient readers of these texts. If the postmodernists are right, then classicists of any sort maintain in vain the “old historicist” assumption that it is possible to interpret a text originating in the past from the point of view of a contemporary to that text.

16 See below, n. 38. Compared to historians of later eras, medievalists, like classicists, often deal with a relatively small corpus of texts that are fairly difficult to interpret.

17 See below, pp. 521–22. This is not to imply that the attitude of classicists as a group has been shaped by postmodernism, since the classical method antedates it by more than two thousand years.

The specific problem posed by postmodernism to the thesis of this article is that it seems to undermine and, in fact, destroy the dichotomy drawn here between “what happened” and texts. Therefore, in order to defend the dichotomy that is being proposed, I need either to rebut the postmodernist viewpoint or show that it does not invalidate my dichotomy, and it is the latter task that I will now undertake, even though I agree with Cameron’s sensible comment that practicing historians do not and probably cannot carry on their trade in full accordance with the skepticism inherent in the postmodernist viewpoint (1989b.206):

Extreme positions of scepticism, such as the view that history is *only* a mode of rhetoric, or that historical explanation is never possible even in principle, are unlikely to hold the field: historians will still go on trying to find out what “really happened,” at least in their own view, and to understand for themselves why it did. It may be logically difficult, or even strictly impossible, to prove that this or that “really happened” in the past, but it is part of the definition of a historian to be concerned not with fictional narratives in the present, but with events in the past. (emphasis in original)

I argue that the dichotomy proposed at the outset is still valid even if the postmodernist view of history as a discipline is accepted, although in that case, the dichotomy needs to be reformulated. My response is the following. Even if we accept, for the sake of argument, the fundamental postmodernist principle that a past event and a text from the past are, in fact, both texts, they are two different kinds of texts. As Spiegel expresses the distinction (1990.75):

While the text is an objective given, an existing artifact (in its material existence if not in its constitution as a specifically “literary” work), the object of historical study must be constituted by the historian long before its meaning can begin to be disengaged . . . since the historical text is not given but must be constructed, the historian of texts is a writer in his or her function of constituting the historical narrative, but a reader of the already materially extant text. The task facing the one is broadly constructive, the other broadly deconstructive.

According to this viewpoint, both kinds of texts are artifacts from the pasts that a much later modern person is creating in her or his own mind, but one is formulated and expressed by the contemporary historian in her or his words, and the other consists of words to which the contemporary historian supplies meaning and interpretation. Thus a postmodernist might say that one contemporary ancient historian creates the Sicilian Expedition in her or his mind, while another creates an account of the Sicilian Expedition as her or his eyes look at the words of Thucydides' *History* on a printed page, but the postmodernist can still grant that these two contemporary ancient historians have two different goals (constructed by each of them and quite possibly resulting from their training and assumptions): one to visualize in her or his mind what happened in Sicily in 415–13 B.C.E., and the other to hear in her or his mind the voice speaking from the text that we call "Thucydides." If the postmodernists are right, the distinction that I am drawing must be reformulated to say that ancient historians/conventional fashion their own wording to tell a story about the past, and ancient historians/classical inject their own meaning into ancient texts. The dichotomy, though recast, is still valid and important.

III. FIVE CLARIFICATIONS

Five clarifications of my thesis need to be introduced at this point to avoid misunderstandings.

Non-Literary and Non-Verbal Texts

"Text" should be understood as referring to more than the long sets of words that we call literary texts. Not only does "text" include documentary texts, such as a statute preserved on an inscription, in addition to literary texts such as works of history, but for the purposes of this discussion, it can be extended to include any human artifact, such as a vase, a wall painting, or an entire ancient city.¹⁸

In fact, the distinction that I am drawing can be extended to explain two opposing ways of dealing with material evidence. Art historians are like practitioners of ancient history/classical in that they are primarily interested in an object in a manner similar to the way that classicists are interested in

18 On the range of things that constitute "historical texts" for ancient Rome beyond Roman works of history, see Flower 2009.

a text—its date, the identity of the artist who created it, its origin, its style, and so on—whereas other scholars who deal with material remains (archaeologists, historical anthropologists, and some historians), like practitioners of ancient history/conventional, may want to make use of the object to ascertain a historical fact.¹⁹ Take, for example, the bronze helmets found in Etruscan territory in the first part of the fifth century B.C.E. The historian or art historian can explain something about a helmet on the basis of historical facts, specifically, an account of where this kind of helmet is found by pointing to the Etruscans' territorial expansion. P. Stary (1986.26) attributes the spread of the Negau-type helmet to the extension of Etruscan territory to the east and north in the second half of the sixth century B.C.E.—the characteristics of the helmet are accounted for by their historical background. Conversely, N. Spivey and S. Stoddart (1990.134) support their belief that the Etruscans were fighting in some loose formation other than a phalanx by the design of this type of helmet, since it sacrificed protection for the front and side of the head for the sake of better vision and hearing. Thus an argument about the way the Etruscans fought is supported by the design of helmets (the “text” in this case). So nothing in my argument suggests anything about whether or how literary, documentary, or material evidence should be used by ancient historians or in what proportions.²⁰

All Types of History and Classics

My thesis does not say anything about what the proper subjects and methods for the study of history and classics are. It works equally well whether by “history” we mean politics and warfare—the rise of Pericles or tactics used at a particular battle—or *Annales*-style *longue durée* questions or late twentieth-century social history.²¹ An edition of texts dealing with

19 This distinction may therefore be helpful in thinking about the issue of the proper departmental home for archaeologists—classics, art history, anthropology, or history—just as it is for ancient historians.

20 MacMullen 2011 argues that the unwarranted respect paid to classical literary sources, such as Livy, has overwhelmed modern historians' recognition of the many implausible “facts” and interpretations offered by these sources (specifically dealing with early Rome up to 264 B.C.E., the subject of his book), with the result that these sources are allowed to outweigh more reliable archaeological evidence.

21 Schaps 2011.157–63 lists seven subjects of history: political history, institutional history, national or ethnic history and regional history, military history, intellectual history, literary history, and social and economic history.

Roman *liberti* and *libertae* would be an example of ancient history/classical, and a book about emancipated slaves at Rome, substantially based on inscriptional evidence, would be an example of ancient history/conventional. Moreover, the fact that this article does not discuss methodological issues in history in no way implies that these issues are unimportant. One example of a controversy that is not touched upon here is the role of social science models in ancient history and the possible pitfalls of positivism (Shaw 1982). Similarly, my silence on issues within classics, such as the types of sources that should be studied or the relative importance that should be assigned to different kinds of sources, implies nothing about such issues.²² This article describes one fundamental division within the discipline of ancient history, but nothing in it precludes the existence of other fundamental divisions within the discipline.

Two Kinds of Ancient History, Not Ancient Historians

To anticipate a third misunderstanding, I am not saying that all ancient historians practice only one kind of ancient history or the other. Many can do both, for example Ronald Syme writing about the “Roman Revolution” but later publishing books on Ovid and the *Historia Augusta*. Raaflaub (2003.426) makes this point about himself, noting that he has written articles on Herodotus (ancient history/classical, in my terminology), although he sees himself as a “hard-core historian” (a practitioner of ancient history/conventional, in my terminology). To cite just one other example, Roger S. Bagnall has written many articles on individual papyri (ancient history/classical), but also a history of Egypt in Late Roman times, thus a synthetic work of history (Bagnall 1993, ancient history/conventional). Furthermore, ancient historians may in a given work (at least in a book-length study), practice both kinds—for example, establishing a certain reading of a text on historical grounds and then using that reading to support a historical point. However, many ancient historians feel more drawn to one kind of ancient history or the other, although it would be incorrect to claim that ancient historians have a sense of allegiance to one of these two kinds of ancient history or decide to scorn or ignore ancient historians of the other camp; how can they, when most are unaware that these two camps exist?

22 An example of such a controversy is the old one between *Wortphilologie* and *Sachphilologie*. See Gehrke 1995.160 and Ungefehr-Kortus 1999.

Geographical and Chronological Limits

This article implies nothing about the geographical limits of ancient history. The purview of ancient history has been moving eastward during the last twenty years or so, with more attention to the eastern Mediterranean and adjacent areas of the Near East. My distinction may be helpful in understanding how ancient history reacts to this “Drang nach Osten” in two ways: 1) the distinction applies also to Near-Eastern scholarship, as Finley suggests,²³ between, for example, works that use a book of the Old Testament to understand the history of the area and those that use the history of the area to explicate a book of the Old Testament.²⁴ 2) The distinction suggests why many ancient historians are reluctant to turn their attention to the eastern end of the Mediterranean before the Hellenistic period: if they conceive of ancient history as the interpretation of Greek and Latin texts, then clearly they have no business with civilizations that generated texts written in other languages. An unfamiliarity with the relevant ancient languages is a problem for either kind of ancient historian, but I think that practitioners of ancient historians/classical are more likely to feel dumbfounded by the idea that they should deal with civilizations whose language is, e.g., Hittite or Hebrew (unless they have mastered one of those languages or intend to do so) than practitioners of ancient history/conventional, who will likely attempt to do the best they can by relying on partial knowledge of the relevant ancient languages, translations, or secondary scholarship.

Likewise, my argument has nothing to do with the acceptance that the study of Late Antiquity has gained as a proper part of ancient history.

Equal Merit of Both Kinds

As the final clarification, I am not asserting that one kind of ancient history is superior to the other. The purpose of drawing the distinction that I have made is not to show that one kind of ancient history is more genuine or better in any way than the other. It seems to me self-evident that

23 Finley 1975.71 (above, p. 503).

24 In a related area, the distinction lies at the heart of the film *Footnote* (2011), whose plot revolves around a struggle between a father and son who are both experts in Talmudic studies: the father is devoted to the study of texts and scornful of his son’s claims to reconstruct historical reality from the texts.

historical commentaries on ancient texts, a quintessential product of ancient history/classical, make a major contribution to the study of ancient history, as do many articles that start from a textual crux. To pick just one specific example of a scholarly work whose value cannot be in dispute, Syme's reevaluation of the *Historia Augusta*, according less respect to that text as a historical source than was done previously, is fundamental to the study of the Roman empire (Syme 1971). To defend ancient history/conventional, one has only to think of the seminal books and articles that have shaped our understanding of the ancient world.

IV. CAUSE: TWO DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES

It is the central contention of this article that the root of the distinction between the two kinds of ancient history is disciplinary, relating to the differences between the disciplines of history and classics, even though there is no evidence that this contrast, since it has never been clearly and explicitly spelled out, is uppermost or even present in the minds of ancient historians. Ancient history/conventional models itself on the discipline of history as practiced by the majority of historians; ancient history/classical models itself upon classics.

It might be thought that since both historians and classicists deal with the past, they have much in common, and that, therefore, the two kinds of ancient history could not be all that different. In fact, however, classicists and most historians deal with the past in such dissimilar ways that their working assumptions about scholarly research are very different, and these assumptions find their way down to the two kinds of ancient history. The existence of two different disciplinary models is a more significant cause of the two approaches to ancient history than departmental affiliation, although clearly ancient historians are affected by the institutional neighborhood in which they reside. To the extent that ancient historians have a choice about where they are employed (assuming they do find academic employment), they may make an informed decision, if they are aware of the distinction described in this article, to be hired by either a history or a classics department. Conversely, the selection among candidates made by history and classics departments is likely to be influenced by the type of ancient history practiced by each of the candidates, as current faculty members react to the mode in which candidates present themselves.

Historians in general, even if they know a fair amount about ancient Greece and Rome, and even if they know Latin and/or ancient Greek, have

very little idea as to what classics as a discipline and as a profession is. What follows is primarily an attempt to identify those aspects of classics that are unfamiliar and surprising to historians; for classicists, what is novel in this discussion will not be information about the characteristics themselves, which may appear obvious, but the fact that these features of the discipline strike non-classicists as strange, and why.

History's Perception of Classics

It is probable that few historians realize how established and large in terms of the number of professors the discipline of classics is: according to my rough estimate, about one classicist for every ten to fifteen historians.²⁵ To express the size of the discipline of classics in comparative terms, the major U.S. society devoted to the study of the ancient Near East, the American Schools of Oriental Research, has a much smaller membership than the American Philological Association, even though the former covers a wide range of civilizations that existed over at least three millennia, whereas classics focuses on two civilizations and, for the most part, one and a half millennia (roughly 1000 B.C.E.–500 C.E.).²⁶

Moreover, while it might seem to sufficient to explain that classics is an area studies discipline for the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, covering language instruction, literature, history, archaeology, and possibly art history and philosophy, most historians would have very little idea what an ancient historian in a classics department does—if they ever stopped to

25 The American Historical Association has 15,055 members (June 30, 2009, <http://blog.historians.org/news/823/aha-membership-grows-modestly-as-history-of-religion-surpasses-culture>). The American Philological Association has just under 3,000 members (private correspondence from Executive Director Adam Blistein, 2/23/11). This 1:5 ratio probably understates the number of historians compared to classicists because classicists in general are much more involved in the APA than historians in the AHA, and also the APA's geographical reach includes Canada as well as the U.S., whereas the AHA's reach does not. In addition to the APA, the Archaeological Institute of America, while its mission includes archaeology around the world, focuses on the archaeology of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds and has 250,000 members (for most of whom archaeology is an avocation rather than a vocation). Ulrichsweb (search conducted May 19, 2012, the print version is *Ulrich's International Periodicals*) lists 285 active scholarly journals in classical studies and 1267 in history (2:9 ratio). According to the Survey of Earned Doctorates, in 2009, 77 doctorates were granted in Classics, and 1,045 in History, a 1:14 ratio (<http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/doctorates/>; see Doctorate Recipients from U.S. Universities: 2009, Data, Table 14).

26 According to its website (<http://www.asor.org/about/facts-figures.html>), ASOR has 1,400 members.

wonder about it. Not only would they be surprised at what classicists teach, language and literature as well as history, but at how they teach these subjects in classes where students know Latin or ancient Greek. Methods of teaching involving translation and *explication de texte* can be used for any Greek or Latin text, including non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and even documents. A course on Herodotus or Tacitus is traditionally taught in much the same way as one on Sophocles or Seneca. Moreover, the ancient historian teaching, e.g., Herodotus is expected to cover more than just history. Thus a graduate or advanced undergraduate course on Herodotus's *Histories* might contain elements that are historiographical (issues of sources, speeches, and the implied theory of causation), philological (how is the term *barbaros* used by Herodotus compared to Aeschylus in his tragedy *The Persians*), linguistic (the Ionic dialect), literary (ring composition), or philosophical (use of the verb "know"). Historians, in general, do not teach courses like this.²⁷

Classics' Perception of History

Classicists, in turn, are as unconcerned about history as a discipline and the ways historians function as are historians about classics. They do not cogitate upon their own freedom from archival research and the rigors that such research imposes on scholars who must not only travel to the archive but take notes in the knowledge that they will quite possibly never have the opportunity to re-inspect their sources. It is easy for classicists to take for granted the advantage that most (not all) of them have in working with texts that have been published, are widely available, and explicated by scholarly commentaries (Shackleton Bailey's on all the letters of Cicero, to name just one example), as well as extremely comprehensive reference works such as the *Realencyclopädie* and Broughton's *Magistrates of the Roman Republic*. Such aids are not afforded to historians in most fields.

27 I recognize that the discipline of history has become increasingly open to cultural studies, which has affinities with classics, and perhaps in the future the gulf between the two disciplines will narrow. However, while historians may assign reading to their students that is not strictly historical, e.g., the novels of Mark Twain in a course on nineteenth-century U.S. history, they usually do so as subsidiary works rather than as the central subject matter of the course. Moreover, unlike a classicist teaching, e.g., the *Aeneid*, the historian would not expect to hold the primary responsibility for teaching the works of Mark Twain within the university.

Essential Works

To illustrate the differences between the two disciplines, compare the current reading list for Classics graduate students at the University of Toronto to the reading list in Modern European History (Enlightenment to the Present) in the graduate program of the University of Illinois at Chicago. The Toronto list is divided into four parts: Greek Verse, Greek Prose, Latin Verse, Latin Prose, and in this last section, part of a novel cohabits with a speech of Cicero and sections of Livy.²⁸ The U.I.C. list of sixty-one monographs fails to contain what might seem to be analogous basic texts such as the Versailles Treaty, Keynes' *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, or Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, but rather is limited to recent scholarly monographs: the earliest from 1957 and the great majority published within the last two decades.²⁹

Ancient History and Classics

If we turn from teaching to research, ancient historians can (if they wish) function pretty much like other classicists. They make sure they are working with a well-edited text (if they cannot or do not want to edit it themselves); they write commentaries on it; they write articles on interesting problems raised by the text; and they might even write a book on the author. Practitioners of ancient history/classical find it natural to “do” texts of all sorts because *all* ancient historians, of both types, are permitted and, in fact, expected to cite any text from the period (or even physical remains) that is relevant to their subject: texts that range well beyond works of history to speeches, letters, poems, philosophic dialogues, and documents found on inscriptions and papyri. The outcome of their research could be

28 <http://classics.chass.utoronto.ca/index.php/graduate/general-information/qualifying-year-reading-lists>

The Ancient History graduate program in the department of The Classics at Harvard University also uses a list of ancient authors, though it is different from the one required of students in Classical Philology: http://www.gsas.harvard.edu/programs_of_study/the_classics_part_ii.php

29 To provide a representative sample, under the topic “Fascist Movements and the Eclipse of Democracy” are listed four books: Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (Vintage, 2000); Kevin Passmore, *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945* (Rutgers, 2003); Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (Modern Library, 2001 rev. & updated ed.); and Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (Vintage 2005).

an edition of a Greek or Latin text, a commentary, or a work about one author or one work. If they write a book, and if it contains the text of an author or is about one author, it will find itself as Greek literature or Roman literature in the PA section of a library using the Library of Congress classification rather than in DF or DG, Greek or Roman history.³⁰ If they choose to treat a text that is not a work of history, they will not be obligated to deal with it as literature in a way that modern literary critics would understand it.³¹

The history of the discipline of classics helps us understand why it is so focused on the interpretation of texts. This history is reviewed here not in order to say something new about it, but rather to make the point that the mission of classics is foreign to most contemporary historians. Classics as a discipline goes back at least as far as the Hellenistic period, when a vast area of southwest Asia and northeast Africa, from the Nile to the Indus Rivers, was brought under the sway of people who used a form of Greek as a common language. Not surprisingly, many of the people whom they now ruled wanted to learn Greek too. The method of instruction made use of what were already the classics of Greek literature, particularly the epics of Homer, which must have been a little like teaching people English today through the plays of Shakespeare. Even pupils who did not know Greek were taught the language in a purely written form through drill, a process that caused Augustine to loathe the Greek classics,³² and even if they did know Greek, the grammatical rules that they learned did not correspond to the spoken language of any period.³³ Thus when pupils had learned the alphabet and other rudiments of the language, they were then taught to recognize peculiarities of forms, vocabulary, usage, and other features of the accepted canon, or reading list, of Greek authors—much as ancient Greek is taught today.

Moreover, as part of a program of civic adornment, rulers paid money to create libraries and put erudite men in them who would generate learned lectures and writings on Greek texts. This tradition can be

30 There is some flexibility in classification, as we see in the case of two commentaries on Thucydides. Gomme 1945–81 has the call number PA 4461, whereas Hornblower 1991–2008 has DF 229.T6 (source: WorldCat).

31 Syme 1978 on Ovid is a good example of a non-literary work on a work of non-historical literature.

32 August. *Conf.* 1.14.23; see Morgan 1998.166.

33 Morgan 1998.175. Clarke 1971.14–15 points out that many Roman children would have learned Greek from the slaves who cared for them.

extended even further back than the Hellenistic period if Cicero's statement (*de Orat.* 3.137) that Pisistratus, the tyrant of Athens during part of the sixth century B.C.E., was the first to arrange the books of Homer is evidence for some kind of early ancient textual criticism.

When the Romans, in turn, had taken over the Greek world, they also needed instruction in Greek language and literature, and thus the study of Greek (and eventually by way of imitation the creation of Latin literature), adopted the Hellenistic tradition, importing many teachers from the Greek east (Morgan 1998.22–24). Classical scholars, starting in the Renaissance, attempted to purify texts of the errors that had crept in through transmission by copying and then wrote commentaries on these texts. The focus on errors, linguistic oddities, and the reconstruction of texts that characterized the tradition, as well as on the commentary as a staple in the field, continues to this day, although the scope of texts that are subjected to this treatment has been widened from a narrow canon of "classics" to all ancient literary texts and also to documentary texts.³⁴ Practitioners of ancient history/classical belong to this disciplinary tradition, into which their scholarly products fit seamlessly.

The fit is so seamless that readers of classical journals are unlikely to ask themselves whether a particular article falls under the rubric of classics or ancient history. To use an example plucked from recent issues of classical journals, Peter Van Nuffelen writes about Varro's *Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum* (*ARD*), a lost antiquarian work from the first century B.C.E. that survives only in fragments and that aimed to preserve the traditions of Roman religion. Van Nuffelen's thesis challenges the conventional view that Varro is attempting in this work to preserve tradition in preference to finding truth and to defend religion in preference to philosophy. This author, an ancient historian at the University of Ghent,³⁵ holds that, for Varro, religious tradition constituted an expression of philosophical truth in adherence to a philosophical, probably Stoic, idea that religion contains primitive wisdom; this primitive wisdom was borrowed by the Romans, according to Varro, from the mystery cult of

34 I recognize that this account of classics as a discipline emphasizes its philological side to the exclusion of other aspects such as literary criticism. I have done so not because I believe that philology constitutes the entire discipline of classics but that it permeates the entire discipline. On the role of philology within classics, see Gildenhard 2003.

35 His research interests are listed as "ancient historiography and history of religion, and Late Antiquity" (<http://www.ugent.be/lw/geschiedenis/en/contact/staff-members.htm/personal-pages/peter-van-nuffelen>).

Samothrace (Van Nuffelen 2010.176–80). Such primitive wisdom could not have been generated among the Romans, because Varro had identified a date within historical time (753 B.C.E., according to Varro’s attempt at precise dating) when Rome had been founded (Van Nuffelen 2010.181).

I have selected this example because it illustrates two aspects of the classical approach. First, the article makes no attempt to classify either itself or its subject matter (the *ARD*) within the disciplines of classics, ancient history, or, for that matter, history of religion or ancient philosophy, and classicist readers are not concerned to locate either into any one of those disciplines to the exclusion of the others. Since it makes no claim to describe the actual historical origins of Roman religion, it cannot be classified as religious history, but since it revolves around Varro’s thought at some time in the past—much later than the events described by Varro but still more than two thousand years in the past using our own time as a reference point—it might be considered as intellectual history.

However, a second characteristic of this article tells against such a reading of the *ARD* as explaining what a particular individual thought more than two thousand years ago because it expresses what the text says in the present tense rather than describing what its author thought in the past. The article does not distinguish between the thought of Varro and the reasoning expressed in the work written by him, the *ARD*. Van Nuffelen explicates the text, conveying his own “reading” of the work (162, 163 [bis], 164, 174), or “interpretation” of it (162 [bis], 163, 185), and also the thought of Varro: e.g., “he intends . . .” (162), “Varro’s view” (163), “Varro’s opinion” (185), and “Varro’s mind” (185). Employing the English convention of using the present tense to express the text written by an author, the article also uses it to describe Varro’s thought, although his thought might have been conceived of as an act in the past.³⁶ This article conforms to the expectations of the classics-oriented reader because it elucidates an ancient text, whereas it would leave historians who are not ancient historians wondering—should

36 Huddleston and Pullum 2002.129–30 classifies this usage under the rubric “the ‘timeless’ use of the present tense” and subcategory “Focus on present existence of works created in the past” (4.2.2.b). “Writing has a permanence lacking in speech, and where past writings have been preserved they can be read now, and we talk about them from the perspective of their present and potentially permanent existence rather than that of their past creation.” This usage is contrasted with a focus on a past act of writing such as, “Jane Austen wrote *Emma* in 1815.”

they read Van Nuffelen's article—why they should care about what Varro thought or care what Varro's text says.

“So What?”

The output of ancient history/classical can puzzle most other historians, if they ever encounter it. They will be tempted to call it “historiography,” but often it is not about works of history (e.g., the letters or speeches of Cicero), and even if it is based on the text of a historian, it is frequently not historiographical in the sense of discussing changes in historical thinking; rather it examines puzzles raised by individual passages in historical works. These densely reasoned solutions to the interpretations of specific texts, if presented to most historians, will cause them to ask, “So what?” If they are told what a text means, they expect an argument to follow as to how that interpretation affects our understanding of history. It does not occur to most historians that arriving at a correct reading or interpretation of an individual text can be an end in itself.

Momigliano writes:³⁷ “Throughout my life I have been fascinated by a type of man so near to my profession, so transparently sincere in his vocation, so understandable in his enthusiasms, and yet so deeply mysterious in his ultimate aims: the type of man who is interested in historical facts without being interested in history.” Momigliano is making a distinction different from that between the ancient historian/conventional and the ancient historian/classical because the scholar described by him would, by my definition, be writing ancient history/conventional as he or she is interested in historical facts. However, this scholar is similar to the ancient historian/classical in not being concerned to place these facts into what Momigliano calls “history,” which I interpret to mean a coherent, chronologically ordered historical account.

The emotion that such a person engenders in most historians is more likely to be puzzlement than fascination. Classicists may assume that this puzzlement is caused by the historians' lack of familiarity with the ancient sources, but, in fact, historians can feel quite comfortable in the presence of the output from fields of history foreign to their own, because, in general, they have little expectation that they will be familiar with the

37 Momigliano 1990.54. See above, pp. 504–05.

sources, usually archival, that any other historian uses. The cause of their puzzlement lies elsewhere.

V. USE OF TEXTS

The different way classicists and historians use texts arises from a difference of scale. Since classicists have relatively few texts at their disposal, they want to exploit each one to maximum effect. Modern historians, on the other hand, usually have vast amounts of relevant texts at their disposal and need a way to process them very quickly. Another way to make this distinction is to say that any ancient text deserves attention because it is very old and scarce, whereas modern texts, being plentiful, need some special claim on our attention; for this reason, those historians who must squeeze meaning out of a scarce supply of sources are more likely to be sympathetic to ancient history/classical than those who struggle to whittle down a large body of sources into a manageable amount.

Compare this to what modern historians do. They certainly care about textual sources. In fact, a defining characteristic of a research project may well be the archive or archives that the historian visits in order to write an article or book. However, the historian's job is to read, probably quite quickly, through that archive, which may well be as large as a substantial portion of Greek or Latin literature. That historian may be the first person to have looked at this material since it was archived. In the final publication, the archival material will be cited in such a way that other historians who wish to read it for themselves *can* find it, but very few people, if anyone, will ever read the same material again, and there is no corpus of sources that every historian in that field can be expected to have read. Therefore, there is no point in subjecting most texts to intense analysis, and certainly none to editing them for publication.

Also, the texts classicists use require a lot of massaging to get them to the point where they can be used, either because they have been corrupted by a long chain of transmission or by poor preservation. Modern historians, on the other hand, can usually cite their archival sources and assume that the curious could retrieve and read them just as they themselves did.³⁸

38 I am grateful to Dr. Stephen Wiberley, Bibliographer for the Social Sciences at the Daley Library of the University of Illinois at Chicago, for helping me formulate the causes for the two different attitudes toward texts. Other fields of history marked by a dependence

VI. BENEFITS OF THIS DISTINCTION

Finally, what use does the distinction drawn by me offer? It offers something practical both on the research side and on the side of training and curriculum.

Self-Awareness

In terms of research, it is a good idea for ancient historians to be conscious of which kind of ancient history they are practicing at any one time. To take a cautionary example, consider G. E. M. de Ste. Croix's *Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (1972). The title would suggest that it is ancient history/conventional since it promises that the book will explain to the reader the cause or causes of a particular war. However, much of the book is devoted by the author to telling us the right way to interpret Thucydides, which is ancient history/classical, and he explicitly states that a correct reading of Thucydides' text should settle the issue: "I would claim that the picture I have drawn is thoroughly based upon the evidence of our most reliable sources, Thucydides above all, and that anyone who dislikes that picture had better begin by trying to discredit Thucydides, if he can."³⁹

The burden lies instead on de Ste. Croix as a historian to explain not only what Thucydides has written, but why we should believe that his (Thucydides') history accurately portrayed reality, if that is what he is claiming. De Ste. Croix's thesis is weakened by the mesmerizing spell that the history of Thucydides has cast on him, as if he was approaching that work as an exegete encountering a canonical text within a religious tradition. The book would have been stronger if the author had distinguished between these two kinds of ancient history and thereby had maintained a clear division between statements about what Thucydides wrote about the Sicilian Expedition and the events that shaped, happened during, and resulted from the Sicilian Expedition.

Training

The second benefit relates to training ancient historians, the subject of the 2008 panel mentioned at the beginning of this paper. A response to the

on scarce texts that pose difficulties of interpretation may share some of the characteristics of Greek and Roman history.

39 De Ste. Croix 1972.290. In his review of this volume, Kagan 1975.93 critiques this passage, characterizing the author's attitude to Thucydides as "simple idolatry."

question, what kind of training is best for ancient historians, depends on which kind of ancient historian each student wants to be. An ancient historian who wants to do ancient history/conventional will need to learn to pose and answer historically important questions that do not arise from any textual crux, and an ancient historian who wants to do ancient history/classical will need to think in terms of a training that prepares him or her to elucidate texts. Both will need to know the history of the period they are studying, and both will need to know the ancient languages. On the other side of the lectern, faculty, when developing a curriculum, should consider what kind of ancient historians that curriculum is designed to produce.

Interdisciplinary Communication

The kind of miscommunication between historians and classicists described by Raaflaub is less likely to occur if practitioners of the two disciplines understand that, although they both deal with the past, they have different concepts about what they are supposed to do with the past.⁴⁰ Whether or not such an understanding provides a way of bridging that gap, it can at least provide both sides with a level of mutual understanding that allows them to perceive and understand the gap.

VII. AN ANCIENT HISTORIAN/CLASSICAL WRITES ABOUT THE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATES OF 1858

To illustrate the unusual nature of ancient history/classical, the reader is now invited to engage in a thought experiment and imagine a work on U.S. history as written in the manner of ancient history/classical.⁴¹ The point made through this exercise is that if anyone wrote modern history in the manner of ancient history/classical, the result would appear quite strange to almost all historians. The subject will be the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, chosen because this subject is amenable to a classicist's treatment: first, since it is based on published speeches and, second, because the vast literature on Lincoln makes it possible to find and collect the items needed to create a classics-style exposition. Like any subject related to Abraham Lincoln, the bibliography is vast, and within it are contained the sorts of history writing that are analogous to both kinds of ancient history. How vast is the

40 See above, p. 501.

41 Ciceronian scholars will note parallels with the scholarly literature on Cicero's speeches.

bibliography? In 2009, 378 books were published on Lincoln.⁴² Admittedly, that bumper crop was due to the fact that this was the 200th anniversary of his birth, but to take a more typical year, 2003, the number is 207.

The Lincoln-Douglas debates are seven pairs of speeches, each pair totaling three hours, delivered by the two candidates for the U.S. Senate seat from Illinois that was contested in the election of 1858: the frontrunner Democrat Stephen A. Douglas and the candidate of the new Republican Party, Abraham Lincoln. The issue was slavery: in narrow terms, whether it should be allowed to expand into U.S. territories, and, if so, who was empowered to make the decision; and more broadly, the legal and social position of Americans of African origin within the United States. Illinois voters were voting not for the senatorial candidates themselves, since there was as yet no direct election of U.S. senators, but rather for the state legislators who would choose Illinois's new senator.

First, to establish by way of contrast how a real U.S. historian would treat this subject, we have only to look at Eric Foner's recent book on Lincoln and slavery: just five pages in this 426-page book briefly cover the most interesting points in the seven pairs of speeches delivered by the two candidates.⁴³

Another *comparandum* is the coverage devoted to the debates by David Herbert Donald: sixteen pages in a 714-page biography of Lincoln (1995.211–27). Donald describes in chronological order the events leading up to the debates and then each of the seven debates, before moving on to analyze the elections for the state legislators who actually chose Illinois's next senator.

Two other important works on the debates that fall into a conventional historical mold are the monographs of D. E. Fehrenbacher and A. C. Guelzo. The latter is a chronological coverage of the conflict between Douglas and Lincoln (Guelzo 2008). Fehrenbacher's volume (1962) is more analytical than Guelzo's. It poses a typical historical problem to solve ("The relation between a man's rise to power and the historical process in which he was involved," Fehrenbacher 1962.vii), although the author demonstrates in his re-dating of what he calls the "House Divided fragment" (composed by Lincoln shortly after Douglas announced his opposition to the Lecompton constitution) that he is quite capable of close textual

42 The number is based on a subject search in WorldCat.

43 Foner 2010.104–09. This book was awarded the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for History.

analysis (Fehrenbacher 1962.89–90). These works rely on archival material and printed works from the 1850s as well as the texts of the debates themselves. For example, Fehrenbacher uses an analysis of the reaction of the Southern press to the Freeport debate and to other statements of Douglas to refute the belief that Douglas's answer to the Second Freeport Question, by alienating potential Southern supporters, severely damaged his chances for the presidency in 1860.⁴⁴

So how would our practitioner of ancient history/classical deal with this subject? The first task is to establish the text. In fact, it is very difficult to establish an accurate text: variant textual traditions abound, as one of two introductions to the latest edition shows (“Textual Introduction,” Davis and Wilson 2008.xxvii–xlvi). As with Cicero's speeches, the first editor was one of the speakers, Mr. Lincoln. The basis of our extant text is a scrapbook of the debates published in 1860 and compiled by Lincoln himself from newspaper transcriptions that were inaccurate because of party bias and also because they were taken down, transcribed, and printed in the greatest haste as newspapers attempted to bring the debates to their readers within a day or two. Lincoln used Republican newspapers friendly to himself as the main source for his own words and Democratic newspapers friendly to Douglas for his opponent's.⁴⁵ M. Burlingame has examined the practices of shorthand reporters in transcribing the speeches, and J. Monaghan has studied in detail the rather complex history of the printing of this text, published by Follett, Foster and Co., of Columbus, Ohio in 1860 (Burlingame 1996, also Monaghan 1943).

Next a commentary will be in order. This will explain references both well known, such as the Declaration of Independence and “Fred Douglass” (Davis and Wilson 2008.62), and more obscure, such as Parson Lovejoy, Father Giddings,⁴⁶ and the voting rights of African-Americans in

44 Fehrenbacher 1962.135. The Second Freeport Question can be found at Davis and Wilson 2008.50: “Can the people of a United States territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a state constitution?”

45 Holzer 1993 suggests that we reverse this method; Wilson 1994 defends Lincoln's editorial method and Holzer 2004.xii–xiii responds. According to Davis and Wilson 2008.xxxi, Lincoln used the “unfriendly” paper's rendition of the text as a check upon his primary source for the speeches of himself and Douglas; these two editors attempt to create a critical “fusion text” (xxxvii).

46 The identification of individuals and of other specific information is available in Davis and Wilson 2008 in its “Glossary: Persons, Issues, and Events,” 319–34.

the state of Maine (Davis and Wilson 2008.185). R. O. Davis and D. L. Wilson also provide annotations on textual variations (“Textual Annotation,” Davis and Wilson 2008.297–317). Using this commentary along with a standard edition, the imaginary historians following the classics model will write articles debating the reasons for the apparent inconsistencies, if not outright contradictions, between Lincoln’s differing emphases. Some might remove them by positing manuscript error, others may claim that his opinion changed during the course of the debates, and some will argue, as Lincoln’s opponents did while the debates were in progress, that he changed his tune to harmonize with the different audiences from northern down to southern Illinois to which he spoke (Foner 2010.108). Perhaps some scholar will advance the more radical explanation that some or all of the speeches were never delivered and were composed later by Lincoln as literary exercises, or perhaps forged by someone else in the next century. Next will appear books and articles analyzing the rhetorical devices, organization, and argumentation used in the speeches.

In fact, elements of this imaginary literature do exist. There is something like an *editio princeps*, or first scholarly edition, published in 1908 on the fiftieth anniversary of the debates, a centennial edition published in 1958, and three new editions published as sesquicentennial editions in 2008 (Angle 1958, Johannsen 2008, and Davis and Wilson 2008). These contain some relevant supplementary material, with a small amount of annotation, but nothing as extensive as a classical commentary. D. Zarefsky (1990) has written a rhetorical analysis of the debates. It is significant that the author is not in a history department but rather in Northwestern University’s Department of Communication Studies, and also that Guelzo (2008.xxii) dismisses Zarefsky’s book as “really a technical rhetorical analysis of the debates rather than a narrative history of the campaigns,” in spite of the fact that Zarefsky employs almost no technical rhetorical terminology (although some communication studies theory). Instead he provides in very substantive terms a readable exegesis of the arguments presented by the two speakers in different areas (the conspiracy argument, the legal argument, the historical argument, and the moral argument). While Guelzo, following chronological order, explicates the speeches from the first debate in Ottawa to the seventh in Alton, Zarefsky analyzes, one by one, common strands in all seven debates (Zarefsky 1990.67): “If one takes the seven texts as a unit rather than as discrete events, one can discover patterns of argument that build on one another and that evolve and

transform over the course of the debates.” Zarefsky’s method and aims are rather similar to those of a practitioner of ancient history/classical and involve analysis of a specific body of texts with little reference to anything other than modern books and articles.

I hope it is clear that although some of the elements of ancient history/classical do exist within the scholarship of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, in fact, almost no U.S. historian would treat these speeches along the model of ancient history/classical.

VIII. LATITUDINARIAN CONCLUSION

As stated at the outset, it is not the aim of this article to declare that one of the two types of ancient history is better than the other, and the dichotomy calls for no either/or choice, because the distinction described here poses no choice that needs to be made. Both kinds of ancient history are useful. There is value in works that describe what happened, whether “what happened” refers to specific events, or developments that took place over many centuries, or situations or practices that developed slowly or even remained static over centuries. Ancient history/classical produces equally valuable works by no means limited to trivial textual changes in printed editions. The two kinds of ancient history complement each other rather than compete with each other. To refine somewhat Gehrke’s “two stools” metaphor (above, p. 504), ancient historians can choose to sit comfortably on either of two stools or, if their abilities allow, to move from one stool to the other as they tackle different projects.

The distinction that this article has made clarifies a basis on which ancient historians can make various practical decisions: whether they should be members of a history or of a classics department; whether an undergraduate who wishes to do graduate work in ancient history should apply for admission to history departments or classics departments; what skills, abilities, and interests a department should seek in candidates for a position as an ancient historian; and in which of two ways a graduate curriculum in ancient history should be structured. With an awareness of this distinction, these decisions can then be made not simply out of personal preferences based on opinion or instinct, but rather on the basis of two distinct concepts of the nature of ancient history. Even in those countries where the institutional issue of departmental location is not in question, an understanding of the dichotomy within ancient history is valuable

because it can make ancient historians in those countries more aware of how their institutional situation may affect the intellectual content of the discipline that they practice.

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