

LEARNING GREEK HISTORY IN THE ANCIENT CLASSROOM: THE EVIDENCE OF THE TREATISES ON PROGYMNASMATA

CRAIG A. GIBSON

Therefore I have laid out these precepts, not because I believe that all of them are suitable for every beginner, but in order that we may see that the practice of exercises is very necessary not only for those who intend to become orators (ῥητορεύειν), but also if someone wishes to practice the art of poets or historians (λογοποιῶν) or any other genre. [Aelius Theon *Progymnasmata* 70]¹

IMAGINE A WORLD in which prospective historians were required by their teachers first to write historical fiction (e.g., about trials for treason set during the American Revolutionary War), to invent stories in the science-fiction genre of “alternate history” (e.g., what if Hitler had won World War II?), and to perform impersonations of historical characters for school plays and public festivals. What would be the effect of such a course of training on historians? Would they see this training as being in any way at odds with the project of writing history? If so, what would they do about it? And what about the reception of their writings by their contemporaries, many of whom would have completed the same course of instruction? Readers of historians who had been trained in this way might want some assurances that these writers had broken off their earlier dalliances with historical fiction, alternate history, and impersonations of Napoleon and Gandhi; had declared their serious intent “first, to do no historical harm”; and were now pursuing their vocation with minds clear of such juvenile pursuits. Or perhaps not.

This analogy is intended to capture something of the foreignness of Greek rhetorical education, the common heritage of elite Greek males from the fourth century B.C.E. to the end of antiquity. After learning to read and write, boys went on to study Classical literature, compose a number of different exercises in prose called *progymnasmata*² (fable, narrative, anecdote, maxim, refutation, confirmation, commonplace, encomium, invective,

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1. Text from Patillon and Bolognesi 1997. All translations in this article are my own except where otherwise noted.

2. For overviews of the *progymnasmata*, see Clark 1957, 177–212, Kennedy 1983, 52–73, Lausberg 1990, 532–46, Cichocka 1992, and Webb 2001; see also Bonner 1977, 250–76, which focuses more on Latin *progymnasmata*; Hunger 1978, 92–120, for Byzantine collections of *progymnasmata*; and Morgan 1998, 190–226, and Criboire 2001, 220–30, on examples of the exercises surviving on papyrus.

comparison, speech in character, ecphrasis, thesis, and law³), and finally to compose and deliver declamations based on mythological, comedic, or historical themes. The goal of the present article is to describe and interpret what ancient Greek students learned about history—under which rubric I would include historical persons and events, historians and their works, historiographical form, style, and method, and the cultural values associated with history—during one stage in this long process: their formal training in the progymnasmata.⁴ In order to do this, we need to ask three main questions: (1) What did students learn from the progymnasmata about historical content, the people and events of the past, and from what literary sources were they expected to derive this content knowledge? (2) What did they learn about historiographical form and style, including assumptions about the methods and goals of history writing? (3) To what extent did training in the progymnasmata prepare students to invent alternate histories for use in historical declamation? Our evidence for this investigation will come from the four surviving ancient handbooks on the composition of progymnasmata: those by Aelius Theon (first century C.E.), Pseudo-Hermogenes (second century), Aphthonius (fourth century), and Nicolaus (fifth century).⁵ Obviously one could ask these same questions of other texts associated with history and ancient education.⁶ But the four texts under discussion here deserve special scrutiny as texts whose main purpose is to teach prose composition, and which introduce their historical content and value judgments about history only incidentally to that purpose—the assumption being that *obiter dicta* are sometimes more revealing than overt recommendations.

The main reason for conducting this investigation is to throw into relief the differences between ancient and modern conceptions of history, in order to enhance our understanding of both. A reasonable point of entry is the observation that training in the progymnasmata was the prerequisite not only for history writing, but also for the composition of historical declamations.⁷

3. This is the order of the exercises in Aphthonius; see Kennedy 2003, xiii, for the order in the other treatises.

4. On history and historians in relation to progymnasmata (though focused mainly on Quintilian), see Nicolai 1992, 215–33. The closest parallels to the present investigation are a short article by J. Bompaire (1976), which gives an overview of the use of Classical Greek historians in the progymnasmata, exercise by exercise and historian by historian, and another short piece by A. Ferrill (1978) on the teaching of Roman history in Roman schools.

5. On Theon, see Reichel 1909, 20–114, Stegemann 1934, and Butts 1986; text with extensive notes and discussion in Patillon and Bolognesi 1997. Heath 2002–3 argues for a fifth-century date for Theon. On Ps.-Hermogenes, see Radermacher 1912 and Rabe 1907; text in Rabe 1913. Heath 2002–3, 158–60, tentatively suggests that the author of the treatise falsely attributed to Hermogenes may be Minucianus. On Aphthonius, see Brzoska 1884; text in Rabe 1926. On Nicolaus (hereafter, “Nicol.”), see Stegemann 1936; text in Felten 1913. All four treatises have been translated, with useful introductions and notes, in Kennedy 2003.

6. For example, one could also examine surviving examples of progymnasmata (both on papyrus and in the manuscript tradition); the scholia and commentaries to the progymnasmata treatises; the scholia to the works of ancient historians and the historical content in scholia to other Classical authors (as a way of learning about the students’ first encounters with the Classical Greek historians and the grammarians’ explanations of historical allusions in poetry); the texts of historical declamations (in order to assess the extent to which the students’ training in the progymnasmata provided the necessary historical background); and parallel discussions about the nature of history and the education of the young in such authors as Lucian, Quintilian, Plutarch, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, to name a few.

7. On historical declamation, see Russell 1983, especially chap. 6; Criamore 2001, 231–44.

Since the goals and products of historical declaimers and historians are in many ways quite different (although both are writing in some sense about history), comparison of their common training in history might shed some useful light on the attitudes, assumptions, and practices of both. Admittedly, the apparent inadequacy and contradictory nature of a training in historical declamation for someone intending to write history may not have bothered most ancient writers as much as it has me.⁸ I see historical declamation as an overtly moral fictionalizing of the past, which pursues the truth of history by first rejecting the pursuit of historical truth. It instead envisions and constructs alternate histories: a vast array of rhetorical situations populated by real historical characters positioned as speakers and actors in real historical time, but which nonetheless never happened, were never purported to have happened, and in many cases obviously and demonstrably could not have happened. Ancient historiography, on the other hand, I see as a means of relating ostensibly true and/or truthful prose accounts about past events that are understood actually to have happened.⁹ There is obviously some overlap here. Nevertheless, there is at least one key difference between historical declamation and historiography in antiquity: while historical declamation never (to my knowledge) purported to tell true stories about past events that had actually occurred,¹⁰ ancient historiography nearly always did. Thus the truth claims of historical narrative and the attitudes of the progymnasmata theorists toward them will be of particular interest to us in this investigation.

The other reason for carrying out this project is that the many valuable studies of the influence of rhetorical training on ancient historians¹¹ have generally ignored the progymnasmata—a point to which I shall return in my conclusion. But this is the stage at which students first learned to compose their own formal prose. And as imperial-era Greek literature richly attests, writers trained in the progymnasmata continued to deploy the forms of these basic exercises long after their formal education was complete.¹² This must have been true for historians, as well. Aelius Theon, in fact, acknowledges that boys sometimes grow up to write histories and explains how his program of study contributes toward that end. Orators, poets, historians, and

8. For ancient criticism of historical declamation on historical grounds, see Russell 1983, 113–14.

9. I also find useful Hayden White's definition (1973, 2) of an historical work as "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by representing them*" [emphasis his].

10. Modern scholars have, however, sometimes mistaken historical declamations for actual historical works or speeches; on which see Russell 1983, 111–12. My use of the word "purported" in this sentence and elsewhere is due to the influence of White's definition of an historical work (see previous note).

11. For insightful discussions of many issues pertaining to ancient historiography and rhetoric, see Wiseman 1979, especially chap. 3, Woodman 1988, especially chap. 5, and Nicolai 1992. Also useful are Burgess 1902, 195–214, Lichanski 1986, Kelley 1998, 65–69, and Wiseman 1993. Moles 1993, especially 116–18, discusses to what extent ancient historiography should be considered a part of rhetoric and how well ancient rhetorical theory describes historiographical practice.

12. For example, on the influence of progymnasmatic training on the novel, see Barwick 1928, Hock 1997. When boys began to compose progymnasmata, they also, as Webb (2001, 292) points out, "[made] active use of the linguistic and cultural knowledge they had acquired from the grammarian. Precisely because [the progymnasmata] are elementary, they reveal the lowest common denominator of that training and reveal the basic conceptions of language, categories of composition, and modes of thought which informed both the production and the reception of rhetorical and other texts."

writers of all kinds need to be trained in the progymnasmata, he claims (70). In particular, Theon recommends speech in character, ecphrasis, and narrative as valuable exercises for the budding historian. Speech in character, he says, is “an historical exercise” and is “most useful for the study of formal prose writings (τῶν συγγραμμάτων)” (60). Ecphrasis is a valuable exercise, he suggests, because historians use it so frequently (60). Theon’s strongest claims, however, are reserved for the exercise in narrative: “For he who has beautifully and versatily expressed narratives and fables will also be able to compose history (ἱστορίαν)¹³ well and what is specifically called a narrative in hypotheses, for history is nothing other than a combination of narratives” (60). And so even if ancient historians were not influenced by the historical content of their education (which I do not believe is possible), those beginning to write history for the first time could no more avoid thinking and writing about their subject matter in terms of the progymnasmatic forms than a typical college freshman in the United States can avoid thinking and writing in terms of the five-paragraph essay or the comparison-contrast paper.

A few words about method: There is a great potential for bias and error when one attempts to observe and describe an ancient field of inquiry through the lens of a modern discipline whose assumptions, methods, and areas of interest are not only very different from those of its presumed ancient counterpart, but are also not fully agreed upon by its modern practitioners.¹⁴ Certainly, “history” as a formal discipline or academic field of study did not exist in antiquity, and nobody was formally trained to take up a profession called “historian.” And yet, just as with any other investigation in which the terms or concepts under consideration are not precisely those of the ancient Greeks, we can usefully and reasonably employ the term “history” to evaluate certain ancient texts, practices, and categories of data and thought in ways that would largely make sense to the authors being discussed here.¹⁵ Rather, the more fundamental objection to this project is that ancient students did not study history, and even when they appeared to be doing so, they were actually doing something quite different; therefore, the quest to understand how history was taught in ancient rhetorical schools is irredeemably flawed. This objection may be addressed in two parts.

First, how can one discuss the teaching or learning of history in ancient education if history was not taught as a subject in its own right,¹⁶ but was encountered only incidentally to instruction in prose composition? To this I would respond that the existence of a formal course in history is not a prerequisite for examining how history was taught in ancient schools. All that is required is historical content, which our treatises have in abundance. Examination of content, in turn, allows us better to understand how particular

13. The word ἱστορία (adjective ἱστορικός) is the usual word for “history” in these treatises; neither word will henceforth be noted.

14. There are several excellent surveys of the history of historiography. The most useful ones to me in this project have been Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 1994, Iggers 1997, and Kelley 1998.

15. I have, however, somewhat anachronistically excluded mythological characters and “events” and the lives and sayings of philosophers from the domain of history, on the grounds that these references do not particularly help us to understand historical declamation or the bulk of ancient historiography.

16. For the modern origins of formal instruction in history, see Momigliano 1983.

compositional skills were taught. There can be no instruction in theory without content: one composition teacher assigns Milton, another Marx; one class writes about their summer vacations, another about gun control—these choices are significant, or at least are often held to be, and one may reasonably claim that the students in question would necessarily acquire some content knowledge at the same time as they gain practice in creating their own prose. In antiquity, teachers of prose composition gave their students reading assignments in Classical literature, pointed out models of good writing, and set writing assignments that asked students to draw on those readings for models, themes, and particular details. Discussion of persons and events of the past and study of passages from historiographical literature formed an integral part of this instruction. Therefore, even if graduates of this course of study did not routinely go on to write historical declamations (but many did),¹⁷ and even if ancient teachers did not assume that some students would eventually try their hand at writing histories (but at least one did), it would still be legitimate to ask how, why, and to what effect the writers of progymnasmata treatises illustrated their theories with the particular content they chose, and what the average educated man in the imperial period had been taught about the history universally assumed to be his own.¹⁸

Second, is it not misleading to speak of students in the ancient rhetorical curriculum as acquiring “historical knowledge,” when all they were actually doing was reading works of (historiographical) literature and memorizing (historical) exempla—and even this for uses other than thinking or writing about history? In other words, ancient students learned literature, and they learned how to manipulate historical exempla in creating spoken and written discourse, but they did not learn history.¹⁹ Granted, ancient teachers did not have the benefit of modern conceptions of history to inform their pedagogy, but I am not entirely convinced that rhetoric is any greater an impediment to an idealized (but nonexistent) notion of pure historical instruction

17. However, training in progymnasmata apparently existed both before and after the heyday of performative declamation, as Webb (2001, 289 and 316) reminds us. In addition, many students probably did not progress beyond the exercise in anecdote (Morgan 1998, 199–203).

18. A related objection has been raised: if it is possible to use these treatises to learn how a non-subject subject such as history was “taught” in the ancient classroom, why not use the same body of evidence to examine the supposed teaching of other non-subject subjects such as zoology or gender studies or political theory? And if it is possible to do so, does this not prove that the attempt to investigate history in the ancient classroom is flawed? I would argue that the justifications for studying history in the progymnasmata—unlike the potential justifications for studying these other subjects—derive from the goals of the curriculum itself, which aimed to prepare students to declaim, as well as from explicit statements in the treatises that the exercises are helpful to history writers, and from the sheer volume of references to historians, historiography, and historical persons and events in them. Similar internal justifications would be harder to come by for most other “subjects.” On the other hand, although these three hypothetical subjects were, like history, not taught as subjects in ancient schools, it should be possible—given a sufficient number of references to them—to imagine ways of framing an investigation that would produce a credible portrait of some of the other implicit lessons of ancient education. Assembling and studying all the passages dealing with politics, for example, might help reveal what role the Greek schools played in civic education in the imperial period and to what extent a young man’s reading and writing assignments on ancient Greek tyranny or democracy affected how he viewed political life in his own day.

19. Cf. Ferrill 1978, 4: “The reason [that scholars reject the idea that Roman history was taught in Roman schools], I suspect, is that the word ‘rhetoric’ has had an unfavorable connotation in the twentieth century. Therefore, history taught in rhetorical schools could not really be history. History as the handmaid of rhetoric is merely a bag of tricks.”

than, say, patriotism, religion, antireligious secularism, mono- or multiculturalism, or the creation of an enlightened democratic citizenry. One might as well assert that the presence of any external goal negates the possibility of authentic historical instruction. Furthermore, in addition to the bias inherent in trying to determine whether an educational system is “really” teaching history or not, this objection to my mind also holds young boys to a lofty standard that surely only very few, ancient or modern, could be expected to attain. If reading history books and memorizing historical details and then successfully completing some sort of written assessment of one’s knowledge does not constitute “really” learning history, then most teenaged students, both ancient and modern, have never done so. Granted, some modern teenaged students of history can do much more—that is, they can demonstrate in a rudimentary fashion the skills and attitudes of professional historians, and even write research papers that imitate the methods and practices of published scholarship—but it would be anachronistic and irrelevant to hold their ancient counterparts to a standard and conception of history that did not exist even in modern times before the French Revolution. In this paper, then, I endeavor to specify at every turn exactly what I mean by the historical knowledge acquired by the student, whether that be an ability (for example) to recall an account given in Herodotus, to critique that account by various methods, or to redeploy some of its details in a completely different setting.

Despite these acknowledged difficulties, it is my hope that this investigation will contribute to an improved understanding of how the (not unproblematic) categories of history and rhetoric intersected and interacted in antiquity; what students learned about history, historians, and historiography in the course of their instruction in the progymnasmata; how ancient students learned to write and think, and the content and forms they used in the process of doing so; and how we can use this knowledge to become more perceptive readers of ancient historiography.

1. HISTORICAL CONTENT OF THE PROGYMNASMATA

In order to address the question of historical content and sources in the progymnasmata, we need to ask three closely related questions: What role did histories, historians, and historical exempla play in each of the exercises? Which historians, historical writings, and other writings with historical content (such as certain passages in oratory) are recommended by the theorists? And which historical persons and events constituted the implicit historical syllabus of the rhetorical schools?

We begin by briefly examining the role of history in eleven of the fourteen exercises as they are discussed in our treatises. Since the theorists’ discussions of the exercises in *maxim* (γνώμη), *commonplace* (κοινὸς τόπος), and *law* (νόμος) make no mention of history, historical content, or historians, those three exercises are omitted here. For most of the exercises the theorists recommend specific passages in the historians to memorize and imi-

tate.²⁰ In supplying and commenting on sample themes, they also indicate the historical persons and events that their students were supposed to recognize and be able to use in their own written compositions.²¹ Examining the exercises individually in this manner—especially since most scholars are not intimately familiar with this course of instruction—will help demonstrate the integral role that history played in many of them and in the rhetorical curriculum in general, and will highlight the differing and discourse-specific purposes to which young writers were being trained or conditioned to use historical content.

Fable (μῦθος)

For good examples of fable, Theon recommends studying the fable of the flute-player from Herodotus, the fable of the horse and stag from Philistus, and the fable of war and hubris from Theopompus' *Philippica* (66).²² He also points out that one may use an historical narrative to expand a fable: "For example, when a fictional story has been related (πεπλασμένου) about how the camel, when it desired horns, had its ears cut off as well, having already said this we will go on to add a narrative to it in this way: 'Croesus the Lydian also seems to me to have experienced something similar to this camel,' and then the rest of the whole narrative about him" from Herodotus (75).²³ Composing fables helps students to learn to expound upon simple moral or ethical truths using fictional characters and settings. But Theon also recommends illustrating such universal truths with particular historical examples; this fits well with the moralizing approach often found in ancient historiography.

Narrative (διήγημα)

Theon divides narratives into mythical and factual narratives. Historians provide examples of both. For an example of a mythical narrative, he recommends studying the story of Silenus in Theopompus' *Philippica* (Theon 66).²⁴ Such mythical accounts in the historians sometimes need to be subjected to careful scrutiny, even refutation, as we shall see below. For model expositions of factual narratives, Theon recommends the story of Cylon as

20. Theon says that a good teacher will select examples of the different exercises from approved authors for his students to memorize and imitate (65–66, 72). Students should also try their hand at composing exercises on those same themes: "It seems to be much more useful to give the young the assignment of writing on some of the problems selected from those already worked out by the ancients . . . and after doing so to make them confront the authors' originals, in order that they may gain confidence if they have written something similar, but otherwise, that they may instead have the ancients themselves as their correctors" (Theon 72).

21. While most students should have arrived at this stage of education with a good knowledge of key historical persons, events, and perhaps texts from their earlier studies with the grammarian, as well as from earlier readings with the rhetoric teacher, the progymnasmata treatises suggest that study and review of important historical details did not cease when one began to write. On the grammarians' use of question-and-answer quizzes to test students' knowledge of such details, see Cribiore 2001, 208–9.

22. Hdt. 1.141; Philistus *FGrH* 556 F6; Theopomp. *FGrH* 115 F127.

23. Hdt. 1.71–91.

24. Theopomp. *FGrH* 115 F74a.

told in Herodotus and Thucydides; the story of Amphilocheus son of Amphiraus in Thucydides; the story of Cleobis and Biton in Herodotus; and the story of Daedalus' arrival at the court of Cocalus the king of the Sicani in Ephorus and Philistus. He also recommends the account of the Olympian games held by Philip after Olynthus, as related by the orator Demosthenes (66).²⁵ Comparison of two extended narratives on the same subject is also worthwhile: Theon suggests comparing Xenophon's *Hellenica* with that of Theopompus (70). As one might expect (and as we shall see in more detail below), the exercise in narrative was thought to be the most useful one for students who would eventually write histories.

Anecdote (χρεία)

Anecdotes are often associated with famous historical characters and events, but the ones given as examples in our treatises seemingly require little knowledge of historical persons or events.²⁶ Nicolaus includes an anecdote about Aristides the Just on the definition of justice (22). Of Theon's four anecdotes about Alexander the Great (98, 99, 100), one assumes familiarity with the name of his mother and the belief that Zeus was his father (99),²⁷ while another refers to the story of Croesus (100). Without seeing the elaborations of these anecdotes, it is difficult to tell how much historical context teachers expected students to bring to the exercise. For example: "Pyrrhus the king of the Epirotes, when some people were asking him over drinks which of the two flute players was better, Antigennidas or Satyrus, replied, 'To me, the general Polysperchon'" (Theon 100). Was the student expected to know something about Pyrrhus and Polysperchon, or was it sufficient to recognize that the king preferred military arts to musical ones? Only the elaboration of the anecdote (which is not given) would tell us for certain.

In classrooms in which the exercise in anecdote entailed simply declining the anecdote in all cases and numbers without elaborating on it, even less knowledge of historical details was needed.²⁸ However, a simple anecdote, in the right magisterial hands, could become a tool for reviewing with students the historical people and events deemed important in the schools. For example, given the anecdote "Isocrates said that the root of education is bitter but that its fruit is sweet," Aphthonius shows how to elaborate it by briefly discussing Demosthenes' reputation for hard work (4–6).²⁹ We should also note here that the exercise in anecdote, like the earlier exercise in fable, encouraged students to attach moral significance to the actions of historical persons.

25. Cylon: Hdt. 5.71, Thuc. 1.126; Amphilocheus: Thuc. 2.68; Cleobis and Biton: Hdt. 1.31; Daedalus: Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F57, Philistus *FGrH* 556 F1; Philip: Dem. 19.192–95. Note the inclusion of what we would call a mythological story about Daedalus under the rubric of "factual" (πραγματικῶν) narratives.

26. On the different but related question of the reliability of anecdotes as historical evidence, see the pessimistic appraisal of Hock and O'Neil 1986, 41–47.

27. This anecdote is also related by Nicolaus (21).

28. Cf. Nicolaus' criticism of his rivals' method (18).

29. Ps.-Hermogenes provides a similar example (8).

The anecdote that assumes the most knowledge of historical context is found in Theon: “Epaminondas, dying childless, said to his friends, ‘I have left behind two daughters, the victory at Leuctra and the one at Mantinea’ ” (103–4). In the elaboration he shows that he knows that the battle of Leuctra preceded the one at Mantinea; that Epaminondas was a Theban, held the position of Boeotarch, and died just after the battle of Mantinea; and that the Thebans were currently at war with the Spartans.³⁰ Reading or rereading the end of Xenophon’s *Hellenica* would suffice to produce the elaborated version, but it is still worth noting that students were sometimes expected to add something “historical” in their elaborations of anecdotes, to do something more than simply repeat or rearrange the details already provided in the assignment. Such elaborated anecdotes would have been easy for writers to incorporate in histories or biographies.

Refutation and Confirmation (ἀνασκευή and κατασκευή)

The exercises in refutation and confirmation are usually discussed together, but only the theorists’ discussions of refutation include historical examples. Theon recommends that one who is learning to refute various exercises should begin with the “refutation of anecdotes, then of Aesopic fables and historical and mythical narratives, then of theses, and finally of laws” (65). In addition to the sample refutations and confirmations that the teacher should compose himself as models for his students to imitate (70–71), Theon, as is his usual practice, recommends a number of examples from the historians (67). From Ephorus, the young man should study his refutation of earlier writers’ views about the Nile; his refutation “about the fifty daughters of Thespius, with whom they say Heracles had sex all at the same time, although they were virgins, and about Aristodemus, how he died after having been struck by lightning”; and also his refutation “about the division of the Peloponnese at the return of the Heraclidae.”³¹ Herodotus provides the teacher with two excellent examples of this exercise: his refutation of the Greek views of “how the Egyptians attempted to sacrifice Heracles to Zeus when he came to visit, but he slaughtered thousands upon thousands of them,” and his discussion of the division of the earth into three parts.³² Theon also recommends Thucydides’ discussion of the assassination of Hipparchus by Harmodius and Aristogeiton as a good model of a refutation.³³ Finally, he recommends examining Theopompus’ assertion in the *Philippica* “that the Hellenic Oath, which the Athenians say the Greeks swore before the battle at Plataea against the barbarians, is a fiction, as well as the compact of the

30. “Epaminondas, the general of the Thebans, was notably even in peacetime a noble man, but when a war with the Spartans arose for his native city, he exhibited many shining deeds of courage. As Boeotarch at Leuctra he defeated the enemy, and leading the army and striving on behalf of his native city he died at Mantinea. When, after being mortally wounded, he was about to die, while his friends were bewailing other things, including the fact that he was going to die childless, he said, smiling, ‘Stop crying, friends, for I have left behind for you two immortal daughters, two victories of our city over the Spartans: the one at Leuctra—the elder—and the younger, the one just now born to me at Mantinea’ ” (Theon 104).

31. Ephorus *FGrH* F65a, 13, 17, 18a.

32. Hdt. 2.45, 4.42–45.

33. Thuc. 1.20.

Athenians with the rest of the Greeks against king Darius; and that not everyone unanimously celebrates the battle that occurred at Marathon, ‘and other such things,’ he says, ‘about which the city of the Athenians boasts and misleads the rest of the Greeks.’”³⁴

But how does one refute an historical narrative? According to Theon, it is effective to use the topics of the false and the impossible, “which Thucydides does when he is refuting the story that Hipparchus was tyrant when he was killed by those around Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and which Herodotus does in opposing those who declare that Cambyses was Egyptian on his mother’s side” (93).³⁵ But the other examples that Theon provides suggest that students would focus mainly on refuting the historians’ credulous narratives of mythological stories. However, “not only to refute such mythological narratives, but also to declare from where such a story originated, belongs to a more accomplished intellectual ability (τελεωτέρας . . . ἕξως) than the majority of people possess” (95). Herodotus, for example, includes an insightful discussion of why two priestesses were thought to be doves (95).³⁶ The historian Ephorus also effectively refutes mythological narratives, Theon says, in his discussions of the stories of Tityus, Lycurgus, Minos, Rhadamanthys, Zeus and the Couretes, various mythological figures of Crete, and Heracles’ battle with the Giants (95–96).³⁷ The importance of this exercise to writers dealing with early, semimythical history is clear;³⁸ moreover, it would not be difficult to envision history writers applying the same method in order to evaluate competing versions of a story or criticize the work of their predecessors.

Encomium (ἐγκώμιον)

For examples of encomium, Theon recommends that students study and imitate the funeral orations in Thucydides, Lysias, and Hyperides; Theopompus’ treatment of Philip and Alexander; and Xenophon’s *Agésilas* (68).³⁹ Encomia of individuals require knowledge of the entire course of their lives, which one would have to learn from a biography or history. In an ideal encomium, one should praise the circumstances of the subject’s birth: for example, as Nicolaus explains, one could mention how Pericles’ mother dreamed that she would give birth to a lion (51–52), or how Cyrus’ mother dreamed about the vine and the flood of water (52).⁴⁰ According to Theon, it is also appropriate sometimes to praise someone using his nickname; for

34. Theopomp. *FGrH* 115 F153–54; cf. Patillon and Bolognesi 1997, p. 128, n. 71. In addition to refutation, Theon includes an exercise in contradiction (ἀντίρρησιν); he recommends studying the examples of Demosthenes’ and Aeschines’ speeches against each other, the reply of the Corinthians to the Corcyraeans in Thuc. 1.37–43, and the competing speeches of Cleon and Diodotus in Thuc. 3.37–48 (70).

35. Thuc. 1.20; Hdt. 3.2.

36. Hdt. 2.56–57.

37. Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F31, F32, F34.

38. On the exercises in confirmation and refutation, Kelley (1998, 68) observes: “It is interesting that the practice of historical criticism and exposure of myth, usually associated with philology and pure scholarship, should have its nominal source in these tropes of ancient rhetoric.”

39. Thuc. 2.35–46; Lys. 2; Hyp. 6.

40. Cf. Plut. *Per.* 3.2; Hdt. 1.107–8.

example, Pericles was known as “The Olympian” (111).⁴¹ The death of the subject is often the most important part of the encomium. Pseudo-Hermodorus says that the encomiast should mention the manner of the subject’s death, including “if there is something paradoxical there, as in the case of Callimachus, that even his corpse remained standing”⁴² (16). “It is also useful,” as Theon points out, “to conjecture about the future on the basis of past events (τὸ εἰκάζειν ἐκ τῶν παρεληλυθότων τὰ μέλλοντα), as if someone were to say about Alexander of Macedon, ‘What would he have done, having subdued so many and such great peoples, if he had lived on a bit longer?’” (110). Or take, for example, a passage in Theopompus’ encomium of Philip, in which the author says that “if Philip wanted to continue with the same practices, ‘He will rule as king over all of Europe’” (110–11).⁴³

Historical content is well represented in the sample encomia supplied by Aphthonius. He apparently alludes to the battle of Salamis in his encomium of wisdom, saying that it was wisdom that “totally destroyed the whole power of the Persians, accomplishing it through a single plan” (27). Aphthonius also recommends that students compose encomia of Thucydides and Demosthenes (21), and he gives a full example of the former. In it he praises various details of the author’s life and then extols the value of his account of thirteen events of the Peloponnesian War, an account that he says has fortunately been preserved for posterity (23–24):

The capture of Plataea has become known from it, and the laying waste of the countryside of Attica was recognized, and the circumnavigation of the Peloponnese by the Athenians was made clear. Naupactus saw naval battles; Thucydides in recording these things did not allow them to be forgotten. Lesbos was taken, and it is proclaimed right up to the present day. Battle was joined with the Ambraciotes, and time has not destroyed what happened. The illegal trial conducted by the Spartans is not unknown; Sphacteria and Pylos, the great achievement of the Athenians, did not escape notice in his work. For what reasons the Corcyraeans appear in the assembly at Athens, and the Corinthians reply to them; the Aeginetans come to Sparta with accusations, and Archidamus shows self-control in the assembly while Sthenelaidas stirs them up for battle; and furthermore, Pericles slights the Spartan embassy and does not allow the Athenians to become angry when they are sick with the plague—these things once and for all are protected for all time by Thucydides’ history.⁴⁴

The exercise in encomium would have helped students think systematically about the lives of praiseworthy historical characters, a skill useful in writing biography and history.

Invective (ψόγος)

The exercise in invective is similar in structure but opposite in emphasis to the exercise in encomium. Aphthonius provides a full example of an invective against Philip that gives a good sense of the level of historical knowledge

41. Cf. Ar. *Ach.* 530; Plut. *Per.* 8.2, 39.2; and Heath 1995, 132.

42. Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 305C.

43. Theopomp. *FGrH* 115 F256.

44. Thuc. 2.2–5, 2.19–23, 2.23, 2.90–92, 3.27–28, 3.107–8, 3.68, 4.8–14, 1.32–43, 1.67, 1.79–85, 1.86, 1.139–44, 2.59–64. It is interesting that all the praiseworthy events are found in the first four books.

expected in his classroom. After a brief introduction on the value of composing invectives against the wicked, Aphthonius inveighs against Philip for having been born in Macedonia from cowardly, greedy, nomadic barbarians, and specifically from a disreputable family line. The middle section of the invective is devoted to matters of greater historical import (29–30):

And first he enslaved his kinsmen, making a display of his faithlessness to those on whom he advanced. From there, attacking his neighbors he destroyed them, and having taken the Paeonians he added to himself the Illyrians and attacked and defeated the land of the Triballoi, taking all those peoples who had the misfortune to lie near him. And he conquered the bodies of the barbarians by fighting, but he did not capture their minds along with their bodies, but rather those who served as his slaves in arms dreamed of revolt, and though serving as slaves in their actions they were independent in their plans. And having forced the neighbors of the barbarians over to his side, advancing along this path he marched against the Greeks. And he first subdued the cities of the Greeks in Thrace, sacking Amphipolis, subduing Pydna, and getting Potidaea for himself along with these, regarding neither Pherae as separate from Pagasae nor Magnesia as separate from Pherae, but rather entire cities of the Thessalians were conquered, and they bore slavery as the trademark of their race.

Invective against specific persons (which is only one type of invective), like encomia of specific persons, would often concentrate on famous historical persons, and students would have to consult histories or biographies to collect the necessary details.

Comparison (σύγκρισις)

The exercise in comparison, like most of the exercises, required students to revisit their readings in biography and historiography. Theon recommends studying Demosthenes' comparison of Conon and Themistocles (68), while Nicolaus mentions a comparison of Themistocles with Pausanias (61).⁴⁵ As a means of assessing the relative bravery of men and women, Theon suggests comparing Themistocles with Artemisia, Cyrus with Tomyris the Massagete or Sparethra "the wife of Amorges, king of the Sacae," and Zoroaster of Bactria with Semiramis (114–15).⁴⁶

Personification (προσωποποιία)

The theorists do not recommend particular speeches in historiography for study or imitation, although Theon does marvel at Herodotus's ability to "speak like a barbarian" in speeches crafted for Persian characters (116). Sample personifications that assume familiarity with historical context include "What words would Cyrus say when he is marching against the Massagetae, or what words would Datis say after the battle of Marathon when he meets with the king?" (Theon 115). Modern scholars' interest in the speeches employed by historians is not matched in the progymnasmata treatises.

45. Dem. 20.72–74.

46. Artemisia: see Hdt. 7.99, 8.68, 8.87, 8.101–3; Tomyris: see Hdt. 1.205–14; Semiramis: see Diod. Sic. 2.4–20. On Semiramis' role in the war against Bactria, see Diod. Sic. 2.6.5–10; for King Zoroaster (the Oxyartes of Diod. Sic. 2.6.2, a.k.a. Zaravardes), see Lenschau 1940, 1208; Patillon and Bolognesi 1997, 82.

tises. Perhaps the practice seemed so obvious and necessary to the theorists as not to merit any comment.

Ecphrasis (ἐκφρασις)

The historians provide good examples of ecphrases of animals, peoples, and events. Herodotus includes ecphrases of the ibis, hippopotamus, and crocodile (Theon 118).⁴⁷ For sample ecphrases of events, Thucydides offers the circumvallation of the Plataeans and the construction of a siege engine (118).⁴⁸ Ctesias provides a model ecphrasis of the Lydians and Persians (Theon 118–19).⁴⁹ Theon also notes that it is possible to combine categories of ecphrasis in a “mixed” type: for example, the night battles in Thucydides and Philistus combine the categories of event and period of time (119).⁵⁰ Pseudo-Hermogenes and Aphthonius also use the night battles in Thucydides as an example of a mixed or compound ecphrasis (Ps.-Hermog. 22, Aphth. 37).

For examples of ecphrasis for the student to imitate, Theon recommends studying Thucydides’ descriptions of the plague, the siege of Plataea, and naval and cavalry battles; Herodotus’ description of the seven walls of Ec-batana; the ecphrasis of the Vale of Tempe in Theopompus’ *Philippica*; and Philistus’ descriptions of “the preparations against the Carthaginians made by the tyrant Dionysius, and the fashioning of weapons and ships and siege-engines, and in Book 11 the events surrounding his funeral and the varied aspect of his funeral pyre” (68).⁵¹ Aphthonius recommends the ecphrasis of “Chimerium, the harbor of the Thesprotians” from Thucydides (37).

The study and imitation of such set pieces, together with their teachers’ instructions, would have given prospective historians a convenient method of systematically describing in rich detail the peoples, places, and typical events that their works comprised.⁵²

Thesis (θέσις)

Acquaintance with historical persons and events would help a student support his case in the exercise known as thesis. For example, in discussing the thesis “whether a wise man should participate in politics,” Theon says that the student could cite the precedents of Pittacus, Solon, Lycurgus, and Zaleucus (123). He also says that the introductions of theses can be taken from history (Theon 120–21). In addition, “If there are any *historiae* anywhere that agree with the things being said,” urges Theon (122–23),

one must make mention also of these, not at random and not in any chance order (μὴ χυδῶν μὴδ’ ὥς ἔτυχεν), but considering the examples in increasing order of importance

47. Hdt. 2.76, 2.71, 2.68.

48. Thuc. 3.21, 4.100.

49. Ctesias *FGrH* 688 F9b.

50. Cf. Thuc. 2.2–5, 3.22–25, 7.44; Philistus *FGrH* 556 F52.

51. Thuc. 2.47–54, 3.21; Hdt. 1.98; Theopomp. *FGrH* 115 F78; Philistus *FGrH* 556 F28 and F40a. Aphthonius recommends Thucydides’ infantry battles along with the naval ones (37).

52. One must be particularly careful in evaluating an ancient writer’s supposed use of ecphrasis. As Webb (1999) argues, the ancient definitions and presumed instances of the practice of ecphrasis do not always square with modern definitions and attempts to invent a history of the “genre.”

(κατὰ αὐξήσιν), first from the things done by one private man, then from those done by a ruler or king, next from those done by a whole city, and finally from those done by certain countries or peoples, but not however in such a way that the speech becomes overly full of *historiae* and poems.

The term *historiae* often means popular accounts of historical or quasi-historical people or events, or any reference or allusion that required comment by the teacher.⁵³ Theon's usage here—with his focus on the actions of individuals, cities, and nations—suggests that he is thinking of *historiae* as “historical references or accounts.”

It is generally accepted that ancient historiography is in some sense rhetorical; what is interesting here is that ancient rhetoric turns out to be so historical. History was at the center of a young man's training in the manipulation of words and ideas to create spoken and written discourse; one simply could not learn how to argue without learning how to argue about history.

From What Literary Sources Did Students Learn Historical Content?

Theon includes an explicit list of historians to read, together with justifications for his choices.⁵⁴ The student should read Herodotus first, because of his stylistic simplicity, and then go on in order to Theopompus, Xenophon, Philistus, Ephorus, and Thucydides (104 P-B). Elsewhere Theon's most frequent historical references are to Herodotus, Thucydides, and certain passages of historical interest in Demosthenes.⁵⁵ At various other points he cites passages from Ctesias, Xenophon, Ephorus, Theopompus, Philistus, and passages of historical interest in Lysias, Aeschines, and Hyperides.⁵⁶ In addition, in an overview of the genres of history (to be discussed below), we see that Theon was acquainted with the historical works of Apollodorus of Athens, Acusilaus of Argos, Hecataeus of Miletus, Asclepiades, Aristoxenus, Sartyrus, Cimnus, Philias, Philostephanus, Istrus, and Aristotle (103–4 P-B).⁵⁷

The other three theorists, by contrast, mention only two historians by name. Pseudo-Hermogenes mentions Herodotus (4) and Thucydides (4, 22). Aphthonius downplays the value of Herodotus in comparison with Thucydides (24), but this is merely part of a sample encomium of Thucydides (both the man and his history, 22–24).⁵⁸ Nicolaus mentions only Herodotus (12). So was Theon's reading list unusually ambitious in comparison to those used

53. Quint. 1.8.18; Cic. *De or.* 1.187; Dion. Thrax 1. For the term, see Potter 1999, 9–19, Patillon and Bolognesi 1997, p. 157, n. 430; for the historical exegesis of the grammarian, see Criboire 2001, 186, 206, 208.

54. Preserved only in the Armenian version, available in French translation on pp. 99–112 of the Budé edition of Patillon and Bolognesi (1997). I follow Kennedy 2003 in citing from the Armenian text by page number.

55. Herodotus: 66, 67, 68, 69, 75, 81, 83–84, 86–87, 93; Thucydides: 63, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 80, 83–84, 84–90, 93, 118, 119; Demosthenes: 63, 63–64, 66, 68, 69–70, 70, 91. These three authors are also mentioned elsewhere for mythological or other details, or for general comments about style.

56. Ctesias: 118–19; Xenophon: 68, 70; Ephorus: 66, 67, 69, 95–96; Theopompus: 63, 66, 67, 68, 70, 80–81, 110–11; Philistus: 63, 66, 68, 80, 119; Lysias: 68; Aeschines: 63, 70; and Hyperides: 68, 69, 70.

57. On Theon's list of historians, see Patillon and Bolognesi 1997, pp. 164–66, nn. 514–16, 519, 521, 526.

58. He also mentions Thucydides in 37.

in other rhetorical schools? Certainly we cannot read in full today many of the authors that Theon recommends or otherwise mentions: Ephorus, Theopompus, Apollodorus of Athens, Acusilaus of Argos, Hecataeus of Miletus, Philistus, Asclepiades, Aristoxenus, Satyrus, Cimnus, Philias, Philostephanus, Istrus, and Aristotle's constitutional histories. (Whether he read them in full or only in compendia or other secondhand sources is unknown.) It is possible that the authors of treatises on progymnasmata normally kept their reading recommendations separate from their discussions of the progymnasmata, and that Theon is unusual in this regard. It is difficult to tell, given the small number of these manuals that survive from antiquity. But it is a safe bet that most students spent a lot of time reading the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, or at least parts of them.⁵⁹

Which Historical Persons and Events Were Students Expected to Know How to Use?

In an appendix entitled "The 'Implicit Historical Syllabus' of the Progymnasmata Treatises," I have assembled a list of the people and events of Greek, Egyptian, and Near Eastern history that are mentioned in the progymnasmata treatises of Theon, Pseudo-Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus. Although history was not taught as a subject in ancient schools and was in any case rarely, if ever, envisioned as a chronological list of "important names and events to know," such a table can be useful in that it shows in an easily comprehensible fashion the kinds of persons and events that garnered the attention of the teachers of rhetoric, as well as their distribution across time. Placing these persons and events in chronological order and arbitrarily dividing them into periods is not intended to reflect any underlying reality, but is simply another means of trying to assess a complex, many-sided phenomenon by assimilating it to a modern way of organizing historical time. To get a more complete picture of this historical syllabus, we would need to supplement this listing with references to historical persons and events found in surviving examples of the progymnasmata.

This timeline of important persons and events confirms that Herodotus and Thucydides were the most important historians read in the schools, but it also suggests that readings from histories had to be supplemented with biographies and historical selections from the orators. It is also interesting to observe that, with the exception of a few people and events from what we

59. Teachers seem to have expected an active or working knowledge only of certain portions of these two works. In the progymnasmata treatises, most of the passages cited from Herodotus come from Books 1–2 (1.8, 31–32, 71–91, 98, 107–8, 141, 205–14; 2.45, 56–57, 68, 71, 76, 104), while Book 6 is never cited, Books 3–5 and 7 have only one or two citations each (3.1–2, 4.42–45, 5.71, 7.99 and 141), and Book 8 has three (8.68, 101–3, and 123). However, students were also supposed to be intimately familiar with the main characters and the historian's accounts of the major battles, which would augment the above list considerably. Most of the passages cited from Thucydides come from Books 1–3 (1.24–26, 32–48, 67, 79–86, 126, 139–44; 2.2–6, 19–23, 35–46, 47–54, 59–64, 68, 90–92; 3.2, 21, 22–25, 27–28, 68, 107–8), while Books 5, 6, and 8 are never cited, and Books 4 and 7 are cited only one or two times each (4.8–14, 100; 7.44). The number of citations of Books 1–4 is inflated slightly because of Aphthonius's sample encomium of Thucydides (22–24). This listing does not take into account multiple citations of the same passage or references to different sorts of information within the same modern paragraph.

call the Archaic period and one from the late fourth/early third century B.C.E., history for the rhetoricians essentially begins with the Persian Wars, skips to the Peloponnesian War, notes a few important persons and battles from the early fourth century, and then moves on to Philip and Demosthenes and the exploits of Alexander the Great. In other words, already by the first century C.E. the chronological sweep of Greek history as it was taught in the rhetorical schools looked virtually the same as it does in the undergraduate history surveys of many colleges and universities today.⁶⁰

2. THE THEORISTS ON GENRE AND STYLE IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

The progymnasmata were intended to teach the art of prose composition, and thus they offer many valuable tips on writing in general; these are not our focus here. We are instead interested in what students learned about historiography as a genre and the role of style in historiography. Most of the theorists' comments on the latter subject can be found in their discussions of the exercise in narrative, which was thought to be the most relevant exercise for the writing of history.⁶¹

Two of the progymnasmata treatises discuss history as a genre. Nicolaus attempts to connect historiography with oratory and perhaps thereby raise its status when he claims that Aristotle had identified history as a fourth genre of speech, combining features of deliberative, epideictic, and forensic oratory (55).⁶² Theon shows his students the wide range of possibilities open to a writer of history when he divides historical writing into eight subgenres and gives a list of examples for each, most of which we cannot read in full today: genealogical history (Apollodorus of Athens, Acusilaus of Argos, and Hecataeus of Miletus), political history (Thucydides and Philistus), mythical history (Asclepiades' *Tragodoumena*), records of excellent sayings (Xenophon's *Memorabilia*), biography (Aristoxenus and Satyrus), general history (Cimnus, Philias, Philostephanus, and Istrus), constitutional history (Aristotle), and the type of history that combines features of all these genres (Herodotus and others) (103–4 P-B).

The theorists devote a great deal of attention to defining and classifying narratives, as well. Nicolaus relates one of the common definitions of narrative as the report of "things that are treated by historians and have actually happened" (τῶν ἱστορουμένων καὶ γεγρονότων, 11). Pseudo-Hermogenes has a four-part division of the types of narrative, one of which is the historical (4). Nicolaus divides narratives into mythical, historical, pragmatic (or judicial), and fictive (12).⁶³ While Aphthonius defines historical narratives

60. If not better: it is my impression that the fourth century B.C.E. in most ancient history survey or Western Civilization courses today (present author's included) receives little attention beyond Plato (who is read primarily as a source for his fifth-century teacher) and Alexander the Great.

61. "For he who has beautifully and versatily expressed narratives and fables will also be able to compose history well and what is specifically called a narrative in hypotheses, for history is nothing other than a combination of narratives" (Theon 60).

62. On this claim, see Lichanski 1986, 23–25.

63. He also divides narratives into descriptive, dramatic, and mixed (12); an example of the mixed type is Herodotus' history, in which (he says) some passages are stated by the author as narrator and others are put into the mouths of various characters.

simply as those “containing an account of ancient events” (παλαιὰν . . . ἀφήγησιν, 2), Nicolaus makes a more careful distinction by defining historical narratives as “those of ancient events that are agreed to have happened (τῶν ὁμολογουμένως γενομένων παλαιῶν πραγμάτων), such as the events surrounding Epidamnus” (12–13).

How should a writer set out the facts of an historical narrative? One option is to relate the same facts in the same order, but in a different mode. For example, Theon analyzes Thucydides 3.2 to show how the author “sets out the following narrative in the manner of one making a declaration of fact (τοῦ ἀποφαινομένου): ‘Theban men, a little more than three hundred, entered about the first watch with arms into Plataea of Boeotia, which was an ally of the Athenians,’ and what follows” (87–88). He then proceeds at great length to demonstrate the possible permutations of this narrative: to treat it as a question, an inquiry, a command, a wish, a supposition, a dialogue, with facts presented positively or negatively, and using asyndeton (88–91); for this last he supplements his example from Thucydides with historical examples from Demosthenes.⁶⁴

The order of presentation of an historical narrative can also be varied for effect, according to Theon. “It is possible,” he says, “having begun in the middle, to run back to the beginning and then come down to the end” (86). For example, “Thucydides, having begun with the events surrounding Epidamnus, ran back to the Pentecontaetia and then came down to the Peloponnesian War” (86).⁶⁵ Another possible method is, “having begun at the end, to go to the middle, and thus to come down to the beginning” (86). After relating the account of Cambyses’ search for a wife from Herodotus 3.1, Theon shows how to rearrange its events so that causes precede effects and the events flow naturally in chronological order (86–87). Such explorations of the various ways in which an historical narrative can be “emplotted” (to use Hayden White’s term⁶⁶) do not, however, motivate the progymnasmata theorists to consider the extent to which historiography is an act of fiction or to agonize over whether historiography can then be trusted to relay an account of what really happened in history in a truthful and objective way. They do not ask how the historian selects facts and arranges them in a narrative, or to what extent this selection and arrangement influences interpretation, and vice versa.⁶⁷ For better discussions of such questions, the ancient reader would need to turn to Lucian’s *How to Write History* or Plutarch’s *On the Malice of Herodotus*.

64. Dem. 9.27, 18.69.

65. Epidamnus: Thuc. 1.24–26.

66. White 1973, 1978, and 1987, especially 26–57. White uses the term “emplotment” to refer to the means by which a narrative converts a bare chronicle of events into a story about those events. However, in the texts that he examines, emplotment (as he argues) takes place through the modes of epic, romance, tragedy, comedy, and farce (see, e.g., White 1987, 43). I would not necessarily claim that these modes are applicable to analyses of ancient historiography.

67. See White 1978, 121–34. “The problem with historical narrative,” explains Iggers (1997, 2), “is that, while it proceeds from empirically validated facts or events, it necessarily requires imaginative steps to place them in a coherent story. Therefore a fictional element enters into all historical discourse.” For reflections on the significance of the “linguistic turn” in the field of history, see Iggers 1997, 118–33.

The three most important virtues of a narrative are conciseness (συντομία), clarity (σαφήνεια), and credibility (πιθανότης). The virtue of conciseness comes from content. Theon argues that conciseness is more important for a speaker than for an historian. Although “it would perhaps be suitable in a history to spin things out at length (μηκύνειν) and begin from far back in time and fully investigate some of the things that seem to be detours (τῶν παρεργῶν),” a speaker using a narrative must stick more closely to his main point, just as Herodotus and Thucydides do when they discuss the Cylonian pollution but do not succumb to the temptation to give a full biography of Cylon (83–84).⁶⁸

The virtue of clarity can be achieved by using direct declarative discourse (Nicol. 16). One of the five figures of narrative, direct discourse (τὸ ὁρθόν) “is appropriate for histories, for it is clearer” (Ps.-Hermogenes 5). Historians should also narrate each separate event from beginning to end without interruption. Theon reports the common view that Thucydides’ history fails in this regard because of his choice to narrate the war by summers and winters, which results in the events of his narrative becoming “at the same time unclear and hard to remember” (80). In addition, Theon warns that a writer “must also avoid inserting long digressions (παρεκβάσεις) in the midst of a narrative.” However, including some digressions “gives the minds of the audience a rest,” and one should not avoid them completely, as Philistus does. The point is to use them judiciously, unlike Theopompus in the *Philippica*: “For there we find two, three, or even more whole histories related in digressions, in which there is not only no mention of Philip, but also no mention of any other Macedonian, either” (80–81).

The third and final virtue of narrative is credibility, which can be learned by closely analyzing select passages in the historians, as Theon shows (84–85):

In order for the narrative to be credible (πιθανήν), one should include words that are suitable for the characters, the actions, and the times; and as to the actions, those that are plausible and consistent with each other. It is also necessary briefly to add the causes to the narrative and to speak credibly of that which would otherwise not be believed.⁶⁹ And, in a word, it is appropriate to aim at what is suitable both to the character and to the other elements of the narrative, in both content and style. Our example will be the narrative about the Plataeans and Thebans from the beginning of Thucydides, Book 2.⁷⁰ For it was plausible (εἰκός) that the Thebans, always being at odds with the Plataeans and knowing that there would someday be a war, would wish to make the first strike against Plataea while they were still at peace; and [it was plausible] that they decided not to make an open attack but to attack on a moonless night, and in addition to this that they had some of the Plataeans who would open the gates for them, as there

68. Hdt. 5.71; Thuc. 1.126. There is something odd about this discussion. Theon contrasts speakers of narratives with historians, but Herodotus and Thucydides are taken to represent the speakers, while historians are those who write accounts that sound more like the theorists’ descriptions of encomium: “If someone is writing a history (ἱστορίαν . . . συγγράφει) about [Cylon], it is appropriate to say from what ancestors he descended and from what mother and father, and lots more like that, the contests in which he competed at Olympia, and what victories he won, and to name the Olympiads in which he was victorious. But someone speaking a narrative (διήγημα . . . λέγων) about him has no reason to give such details, just as Herodotus and Thucydides have done, when each of them proposed to speak of the Cylonian pollution” (Theon 83–84).

69. Lit. “that which is being disbelieved” (τὸ ἀπιστούμενον).

70. Thuc. 2.2–6.

were no guards stationed out front because of the treaty; and [it was plausible] that these traitors did not turn traitor for the Thebans' sake, but because of private enmity towards some of their fellow citizens, whom they thought they could destroy once this had happened.⁷¹ It is credible (πιθανόν) that the Plataeans, when they perceived that their city had suddenly been overpowered by the enemy, believed that many more had gotten in under cover of darkness and came to an agreement, but later, when they learned that there actually were not so many, attacked them. Also extremely credible (πάνν πιθανώτατος) is the confusion of the Plataeans as they are attacking the Thebans, and that of the women and the domestic slaves together pelting the Thebans with rocks and tiles, while screaming and shouting aloud, and—since there had been a great deal of rain during the night—that of the Thebans as they were being pursued through the mud and the darkness, unable to escape because of their ignorance of the roads. It is credible (πιθανόν) also that someone locked the gates using the spike at the lower end of a spear shaft instead of using a bolt-pin to bar it, and much more credible still (πολύ . . . πιθανώτερον) is the part about the woman giving an axe. For it was plausible (εἰκός) that a woman dwelling near the deserted gates, upon observing that the enemy had been cut off, became afraid that when they had despaired of rescue and had given in to their hopelessness, they would turn themselves to doing evil to anyone they could get their hands on, but beginning first with the nearby houses. For I pass over the fact that it is in keeping with a woman's nature for her to show pity even to enemies when they had been conquered.

Students who learned this sort of careful, point-by-point analysis of how an historian goes about creating a credible narrative—or at least, how an audience trained in the progymnasmata might read it—would be in a much better position to write their own credible historical narratives.

Narratives are the backbone of historiography, and we should thus not be surprised to find such great emphasis on historical examples in the theorists' treatment of this exercise. Study of narrative means, in effect, study of historians, and study of historians requires sensitivity to stylistic concerns, including mode of presentation (e.g., inquiry, command, supposition) and temporal order of presentation. It is also interesting to observe that students were asked at this stage of their education not only to retell stories from the historians, but to retell them in a variety of ways, invent short speeches for main characters, and "read between the lines" to ask how the best historians endeavored to establish the credibility of their narratives.⁷²

3. THE PROGYMNASMATA AND HISTORICAL DECLAMATION

We have seen that one of the three cardinal virtues of narrative is credibility (πιθανότης). Since the theorists rely mainly on historical examples in their

71. I am grateful to an anonymous reader for pointing out that the passage would make better sense if τοὺς Θηβαίους in 85.5 were emended to τοῖς Θηβαίοις or τῶν Θηβαίων ἕνεκα. I have followed the reader's recommendation and improved the translation at this point.

72. Other advice from Theon that bears on history writing and the stylistic evaluation of historians: avoid tropes, as in the oracle in Hdt. 7.141; avoid excessive hyperbaton, as is found in Thucydides; and avoid using ambiguous grammatical cases, as in Hdt. 2.104 (Theon 81–83). One should never add a maxim to a narrative—this "is fitting neither for a history nor for a political speech, but rather is suitable for the theatre and the stage"—unless it can be done smoothly and in a "charming" (ἐπίχαρις) way, as in Hdt. 1.8 and 1.32, and Dem. 2.19 (Theon 91).

treatment of narrative and seem to regard history writing as a possible application of this exercise, we might reasonably ask, how did these teachers of rhetoric regard the truth claims of history? This is a subject to which other ancient rhetorical texts (as well as ancient historians) can speak more eloquently and often with far more insight,⁷³ but the composition of progymnasmata did offer some opportunities for students to consider the problem. In discussions of the exercises in refutation and confirmation, the question of truth is raised very frequently. For example, Pseudo-Hermogenes says that “one must neither refute nor confirm things that are obviously false (τὰ δὲ πάνυ ψευδῆ), such as fables, but rather it is doubtless necessary to make refutations and confirmations of things that are capable of being proved or disproved (τῶν ἐφ’ ἑκάτερα τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν δεχομένων)” (11). According to him, the topics for refutation come “from the unclear (ἄσαφους), from the not credible (ἀπιθάνου), from the impossible (ἀδυνάτου), from the inconsistent (ἀνακολούθου)—which is also called the contradictory (ἐναντίου)—from the unsuitable (ἀπρεποῦς), and from the inexpedient (ἄσυμφόρου)” (11). Similarly to Pseudo-Hermogenes, Aphthonius states that “one must refute neither what is very clear (λίαν σαφῆ) nor what is completely impossible (ἀδύνατα παντελῶς), but rather such things as have a disposition between these two extremes” (10), and he recommends criticizing an account as unclear, not credible, impossible, illogical, inappropriate, and inexpedient. A slightly more nuanced treatment is found in Theon, who says that “if we then suppose that a deed is possible (δυνατόν), we must show that it is not credible (ἀπίθανον). And if it is credible (πιθανόν), we will consider whether it is false (ψευδές)” (93). Theon is suggesting that in every case where a truth claim can be defended using one of the topics, there is another topic that can be used to defeat it: the claim “it is possible” can be trumped by the objection “but it is not credible,” while the claim “it is credible” can be defeated by the counterclaim “but it is false.” Also weighing in on this question, Nicolaus says that “we will refute neither the things that are agreed upon as being true (τὰ ὁμολογούμενα ἀληθῆ) nor the things that are agreed upon as being false (τὰ ὁμολογούμενα ψευδῆ), but rather the things that receive credible discussion on both sides (τὰ δεχόμενα τοὺς ἐφ’ ἑκάτερα λόγους πιθανῶς). For we will appear to be telling the truth neither by overturning things that are agreed upon as being true—for nobody will pay attention—nor things that are agreed upon as being false—for nobody is in need of persuasion” (29–30). While the primary goal of the exercise in refutation was to help the student learn to defeat another’s oral argument, such practice in source criticism may also have given prospective historians some valuable tools for weighing and evaluating various accounts of an historical event.⁷⁴

73. Moles (1993, 118–21) considers the problem of ancient historians claiming that something is true when they know that it is not, and the difficulty of determining whether their claims of truth and falsity are due to prejudice or honest assessments of conflicting sources. On rhetoric and truth claims in ancient historiography, see also Wiseman 1993. Kelley (1998, 69) points out that in the imperial period, truth was less important to historians than “effective communication to a sophisticated readership.”

74. The sample subjects for refutation usually involve myths (e.g., Apollo and Daphne) or mythical stories related by historians. The two exceptions are Theon’s discussion (93) of Thucydides’ treatment of

The question of the truth or falsity of historical accounts would seem to have interesting consequences for declamation, the final stage in rhetorical education.⁷⁵ One kind of historical declamation required students to compose historical fiction; that is, to invent a plausible speech for an historical figure at a particular moment in history. For this type of historical declamation, students completing the course in progymnasmata would presumably have been well served. Their training helped them achieve facility with the progymnastic forms and written language in general, as well as familiarity with the requisite historical persons and events and the literary sources in which they appear; whatever details the young declaimer could not remember could easily be looked up. But what about the other type of historical declamation, which we might call “alternate history,” in which students were expected to develop speeches for historical figures in historically unattested or even impossible situations? How well did the progymnasmata prepare students, for example, to compose declamations in which Demosthenes defends himself against a charge of treason after a statue of Philip is discovered in his house, or in which Demosthenes ironically petitions the assembly to allow him to commit suicide rather than being handed over to Philip?⁷⁶ Somewhat surprisingly, there is very little evidence in the progymnasmata manuals to suggest that students were being prepared to compose this popular and frequently assigned type of historical declamation—in effect, to turn Greek history into fiction.⁷⁷ In his discussion of encomium, for example, Theon says that “it is also useful to conjecture about the future on the basis of past events, as if someone were to say about Alexander of Macedon, ‘What would he have done, having subdued so many and such great peoples, if he had lived on a bit longer?’” (110). Perhaps such an exercise could have encouraged the sort of imaginative approach to the lives of historical figures that was required by the “alternate history” type of historical declamation. Consider also Aphthonius’ discussion of thesis, in which he contrasts the general thesis “whether one should build a wall” with the specific hypothesis, “the Spartans deliberate over whether to fortify Sparta with a wall when the Persians are approaching” (41–42). As this precise debate is not one that is preserved

the story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton (1.20) and Herodotus’ treatment of Cambyses’ parentage (3.2). Whereas Aphthonius defines historical narratives simply as those “containing an account of ancient events” (2), a definition that could include mythical prehistory, Nicolaus apparently tries to exclude the mythological by defining historical narratives as those “of ancient events *that are agreed to have happened* (τῶν ὁμολογουμένως γενομένων παλαιῶν πραγμάτων), such as the events surrounding Epidamnus” (12–13; emphasis mine).

75. On historical declamation, see Russell 1983, especially chap. 6; Cribiore 2001, 231–44.

76. Kohl 1915, nos. 261 and 299.

77. Although the progymnasmata are intended to prepare students to compose declamations, our treatises say little about declamation, and even less about any differences between composing declamations and composing histories. An anonymous reader has suggested that the perceived omission of discussions of declamation could be due to the fact that the handbooks tend to emphasize more serious applications of rhetoric, and that we may have an exaggerated view of the importance of declamation. Both of these points are valid, but I still find it strange that a use of history that was so prominent at the next stage of rhetorical education—the student’s introduction to *stasis* theory—would be almost totally absent in the treatises on progymnasmata.

in the historical record,⁷⁸ Aphthonius' sample hypothesis would presume the student's command of a stock thesis about wall building, together with some knowledge of the Persian Wars and a willingness to bend the facts. The idea that one's knowledge of history could be used to create an "alternate history" for historical declamation would apparently have to wait until students were introduced to *stasis* theory.⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

This study has shed light on several aspects of Greek rhetorical education in the imperial period: how students learned to incorporate history and historiography in a graded series of compositional exercises, which works of historiography and which historical persons and events they were expected to know in order to be able to write and speak well, and what lessons they learned about the nature of history and history writing along the way. I would like to close by suggesting some practical ways in which we might use the progymnasmata to help us better understand the ancient art of prose composition and thus become more sensitive readers of ancient historiography.

First, it would be useful to have more detailed rhetorical analyses of the historians, particularly of the post-Classical historians who, like all post-Classical authors, learned to compose their prose by working through the exercises in progymnasmata. By "rhetorical analyses" I do not mean the sort of analyses—valuable to a certain point, but usually more interesting to rhetoricians than to historians or generalists—that focus simply on outlining the argument, labeling rhetorical figures and tropes, and identifying purple passages for praise or blame. Rather, we need rhetorical analyses—leading ultimately, I think, to more profitable literary and historical criticism of ancient historiography—that show how ancient historians used the formal building blocks of the progymnasmata to construct their histories. Existing studies of how historians composed their narratives and invented speeches for their actors are important, and there is still much of this basic work to be done, but scholars could also be investigating such topics as the influence of the exercises in refutation and confirmation—with their attendant vocabulary concerning plausibility, credibility, and the like—on the construction of historians' arguments; the use of mythological exempla and fables in historiography vis-à-vis instruction received in the schools; or the development and presentation of rhetorical commonplaces and theses by ancient historians. One might also follow a particular example of an exercise (e.g., ec-

78. Cf. Kohl no. 38 with commentary. I am grateful to Peter Green for the following observation: "There is the great debate whether to stay at Salamis or (the Spartan view) retreat and fortify the Isthmus: Hdt. 8.49, cf. 8.71–72 and 74.1; Diod. Sic. 11.15.2–16.3. Also, in Hdt. 8.68 Artemisia clearly spells out to Xerxes what would have been a highly effective strategy: i.e., to bypass Salamis and take the war down into the Peloponnesos. If the Persians had landed at Gytheion, say, and made a thrust up the Eurotas valley towards Sparta, the question of whether to fortify Sparta or not would hardly have been academic. If this possibility was even considered by the Spartans, we can be pretty sure that some such debate did in fact take place."

79. As I intend to demonstrate elsewhere. Nearly all the themes for historical declamation in Kohl's collection derive from discussions of *stasis* theory; one may see such themes discussed and partially worked out in Sopater's *Division of Questions* (ed. Walz).

phrasis of a naval battle) in historiography to learn how formal theoretical instruction, emulation of Classical models, and practice in composing generalized set pieces influenced historians' presentation of specific events. Modes of discourse, in other words, are modes of thought, and so to be unaware of the micro-genres in which ancient historians composed is potentially to miss out on a significant aspect of their art and argumentation, as well as of their ancient reception.⁸⁰

In order to be useful for literary critics and historians, identification of progymnasmatic forms must be followed by careful contextual analysis of their deployment. For example, the traditional method of rhetorical analysis may note that a particular passage is "encomiastic" and ask us to observe (or discount) the writer's enthusiasm for the subject. This is fine as far as it goes. But the method that I am proposing would have us compare the historian's encomiastic treatment of his subject to the recommendations made in ancient theoretical discussions of the encomium, as well as to surviving examples of the exercise in encomium, in order to discover how, why, and to what effect the historian has used (or failed to use) the traditional form of this exercise. For example, we might ask, why did the historian use an encomium here rather than a comparison, or a narrative, or an ecphrasis? In his encomiastic treatment of the subject, has the historian omitted certain traditional components of the encomium, added new ones, ordered them in an unusual fashion, or otherwise done anything that would not only conflict with his training in prose composition, but might also thereby alert his similarly-trained readers to something significant about the subject's parentage, most important accomplishments, or manner of death?

Other less formalist ways of studying the influence of the progymnasmata on history writing are possible, as well. Years of total immersion in Classical writers' views on wisdom, drunkenness, farming, impiety, bravery, city life, sexual morality, tyranny, and a host of other topics, in addition to the completion of a course of training in which writers arguably made those values their own, would certainly have had an effect on prospective historians.⁸¹ It would also seem reasonable to suppose that historians in the ancient world, just like historians from any other period, came to the task of writing history burdened by certain preconceptions about history, historians, and historiography that influenced how they went about their task, whether they embraced those preconceptions wholesale or felt obliged to revise or reject them. And so one might profitably ask what role the progymnasmata played in so burdening them.

80. In one of his discussions of the "emplotment" of historical narratives, White (1987, 43) suggests that "when the reader recognizes the story being told in a historical narrative as a specific kind of story—for example, as an epic, romance, tragedy, comedy, or farce—he can be said to have comprehended the meaning produced by the discourse." Might one say something similar about the ancient reader's recognition of progymnasmatic forms in historical narratives?

81. As Webb (2001, 290) observes, in addition to serving as building blocks or set pieces, the progymnasmata also "furnished speakers with a store of techniques of presentation and argumentation, with flexible patterns on which to model their own compositions, and a set of common narratives, personae and values to appeal to. . . . And the effects of the training they offered are naturally seen not just in speeches but in various types of literature."

It was once common for modern scholars to bewail the influence of rhetoric on ancient historians, as though we ideally should not find any evidence of it there at all. But history, much less the writing of history, was not a subject studied in the schools. Rhetoric was. In fact, it was *the* subject. At its worst, rhetoric could encourage artificiality, bombast, even unforgivably deceptive treatment of historical people and events. But contrary to some modern connotations of the term, rhetoric in antiquity was not simply a method of tarding up otherwise sober, objective content. Rhetoric shaped every aspect of the composition process, from initial selection of topic to final draft.

One question that modern scholars have often asked of the texts of ancient historians is, "What cold, hard truth can be revealed here once the glittery, deceptive veneer of rhetoric is stripped away?" This is a valuable question to ask; whether it is ultimately answerable is open to debate. But an equally valuable place to start might be to ask the question, "How could an ancient historian ever write a single word without relying fully on the compositional skills, knowledge of historical details and parallels, and assumptions about history acquired during his training in the progymnasmata?" It would seem that he could not. And that should concern both historians and rhetoricians more than it has hitherto.

University of Iowa

APPENDIX. THE "IMPLICIT HISTORICAL SYLLABUS" OF THE PROGYMNASMATA TREATISES

The following is a list and brief discussion of those historical persons and events from Greek, Egyptian, and Near Eastern history that are mentioned in the progymnasmata treatises of Theon, Pseudo-Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus.

Before the Persian Wars: Herodotus and Thucydides would have been the most convenient sources for most of the historical names and stories associated with the period before the Persian Wars, but Theon also mentions Ephorus' account of the Cylonian pollution (69), while the story of Sparethra might have been known from Ctesias (Theon 115).⁸²

Semiramis (Theon 115)
 Lycurgus (Theon 123)
 Zaleucus (Theon 123)
 Pittacus of Mytilene (Nicol. 18, Theon 97, 123)
 Cylon (Theon 66, 69, 83–84)
 Cleobis and Biton (Theon 66)
 Solon (Theon 123)
 Croesus (Theon 75, 100)
 Harmodius and Aristogeiton (Theon 93)
 Cyrus the Great (Theon 114–15): his birth (Nicol. 52), his march against the Massagetae (Theon 115)
 Tomyris the Massagete (Theon 114–15)
 Sparethra, wife of king Amorges of the Sacae (Theon 114–15)
 Cambyses: his parentage (Theon 93) and his search for a wife (Theon 86–87)

Period of the Persian Wars: While the theorists naturally expected most of the students' information about the period of the Persian Wars to come from Herodotus,

82. See Ctesias *FGrH* 688 F9. Theon does not recommend a source for the story of Sparethra and never mentions Ctesias.

Theon also mentions Theopompus (67) and Demosthenes (68). Pseudo-Hermogenes, on the other hand, would have learned the strange story of the death of Callimachus from reading Plutarch or one of his sources, from reading or hearing a declamation on this theme, or perhaps even from viewing the painting of the battle of Marathon in the Stoa Poikile.⁸³

- Battle of Marathon: including the historical controversy over the Hellenic Oath and the Athenian agreement against the king (Theon 67), and the story of how Callimachus' corpse remained standing after his death in battle (Ps.-Hermog. 16)
- Artemisia's bravery at the battle of Salamis (Theon 114)⁸⁴
- Plataeans' fight against Mardonius and the Persians (Theon 88)
- Aristides the Just (Nicol. 22)
- Pausanias (Nicol. 61)

Period of the Peloponnesian War: With the exception of stories about the birth of Pericles (Nicol. 51–52) and his nickname (Theon 111),⁸⁵ students could easily obtain everything they were expected to know about the Peloponnesian War from reading Thucydides, and no other authors are recommended for the period. Some students also learned about the life of this important author (Aphth. 21, 22–23). The length of this section in comparison to other sections is perhaps misleading: thirteen of the events listed here come from a single sample encomium of Thucydides provided by Aphthonius (22–24).

- Alcibiades (Ps.-Hermog. 24)
- Pericles (Ps.-Hermog. 24): including his nickname "Olympian" (Theon 111) and the circumstances of his birth (Nicol. 51–52)
- Dispute over Epidamnus (Theon 86, Nicol. 13)
- Corinthian-Corcyraean debate (Theon 70)
- Debate between Archidamus and Sthenelaidas (Aphth. 24)
- Theban siege of Plataea in 431 (Theon 85)
- Laying waste of Attica (Aphth. 23)
- Athenian circumnavigation of the Peloponnese (Aphth. 23)
- Plague (Theon 68)
- Siege of Plataea in 427 (Theon 68, 119)
- Sea battles at Naupactus (Aphth. 24)
- Capture of Lesbos (Aphth. 24)
- Debate between Diodotus and Cleon (Theon 70)
- Illegal trial of the Plataeans by the Spartans (Aphth. 24)
- Battle with the Ambracians (Aphth. 24)
- Athenian successes at Sphacteria and Pylos (Aphth. 24)
- Sicilian expedition (Theon 61)

The Fourth Century: The theorists do not recommend specific readings for most of the people and events of the fourth century, and it is often difficult to tell from the sparse details given which sources would have served students best. In fact, the only authors mentioned as sources for specific fourth-century persons and events are in Theon: Hyperides (69–70), Demosthenes (66, 68, 69–70), and Philistus (68).⁸⁶ Elsewhere, however, Theon mentions a wider range of fourth-century historians, including Theopompus, Xenophon, and Ephorus.⁸⁷

- Conon (Theon 68)
- Agesilaus (Theon 68)
- Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse: in particular, his preparations for battle with the Carthaginians and his funeral (Theon 68)

83. Theopomp. *FGrH* 115 F153; Dem. 20.72–74; Plut. *Mor.* 305C. On the painting of the battle of Marathon as a source for ancient writers, see Reader and Chvala-Smith 1996, 33–35.

84. Aphthonius also alludes to the battle of Salamis in his encomium of Wisdom: "And it [Wisdom] totally destroyed the whole power of the Persians, accomplishing it through a single plan" (27).

85. Birth: Plut. *Per.* 3.2; nickname: Diod. Sic. 13.98.3.

86. Hyp. frag. 33 (Jensen); Dem. 19.192–95, 20.72–74; Philistus *FGrH* 556 F28 and F40.

87. Theopompus: 63, 66, 67, 68, 70, 80–81, 110–11; Xenophon: 68, 70; Ephorus: 66, 67, 69, 95–96.

- Demosthenes (Ps.-Hermog. 8; Aphth. 6, 21)
 Epaminondas, namely in connection with his victories at Leuctra and Mantinea (Theon 103–4)
 Philip of Macedon (Aphth. 28–31, Theon 110–11): including the games he held after Olynthus (Theon 66), the sufferings of the Phocians (Nicol. 71), and the capture of Elateia (Theon 69–70)
 Olympias (Nicol. 21)
 Alexander the Great (Nicol. 21; Theon 98, 99, 110)

Expectations for familiarity with Greek history quickly drop off after the death of Alexander: the only name mentioned is that of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus (Theon 100).

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