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THE ART OF MEMORY
AND ITS
MNEMOTECHNICAL
TRADITIONS

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Nimium altercando veritas amittitur

(in extensive disputation truth is lost)

I. Mnemotechnics and Quellenforschung

1. INTRODUCTION

The Greeks and Romans considered history a branch of rhetoric. For a long time instruction regarding the past was given only by word of mouth. The written tradition developed slowly. Accounts of events of the past have always preserved clear traces of the oral tradition. This oral tradition – aided by the scholarly training in rhetoric – has been maintained.

Memory plays an important role in creating an image of the past. The mnemonic faculty of the mind functions by means of association. A visual image, a sound, a smell, and a touch are able to cause recollection. For this reason man has trained his memory to learn about events which occurred in time gone by.

Since Western civilization began to regard the *written* source as the preserver of the past, memory – and along with it the oral tradition – has been employed less frequently: the result is an underestimation of the function of memory in the social structure. It is often said that relevant information gathered from written sources can be complemented by data gained from archaeological remains, as the remains are often older than the written tradition. And not infrequently does the history of the world, its continents, oceans, and coasts, provide a fascinating fresh look into the history of mankind. It is in light of these impressive witnesses of historical events, witnesses which speak their own language and require individual explication, that the oral tradition as a source of information, falls from favour. In short, until recently, memory was no longer regarded as important.

Evidence for this attitude is provided by the outstanding, but young, university-libraries (especially those in the United States of America) which lack significant works regarding memory and its powers. To judge from their catalogues of holdings it seems that the nineteenth century produced no significant handbooks and monographs on the subject¹. It ap-

1. A number of standard works, for which I often searched in vain, are listed here for the convenience of those in a similar position: C.A.L. Kästner, *Mnemonik oder System der Gedächtniskunst der Alten*, Leipzig, 1805².

J.C.A.M. von Aretin, *Systematische Anleitung zur Theorie und Praxis der Mnemonik, nebst den Grundlinien zur Geschichte und Kritik dieser Wissenschaften*, Zülbach 1810.

Grégoire de Feinaigle, *Mnémotechnie*, Bordeaux 1835⁷.

A. Paris, *Principes et applications diverses de la mnémotechnie*, Paris 1833⁷.

F. et A. da Castilho, *Traité de mnémotechnie avec Dictionnaire mnémonique*, Bordeaux 1835³.

A. Gratacap, *Analyse des faits de mémoire*, Paris 1867.

pears to me, from the impression I received from a small number of young university libraries (not older than 150 years), that only in the second half of the twentieth century did memory once again receive attention², as the acquisition of recent studies in anthropology shows.

Not long ago it was deemed necessary to subject the memory and its function to a re-evaluation. At present the oral tradition receives intensive scrutiny from all quarters. In the first place³, it is certain that the oral tradition had never been completely ignored; in contemporary history it is being put to use. But many historians did not consider the recent past as history and therefore wanted to preserve recent events for *later* generations. It was often presumed that one's own past can not be viewed objectively, and that therefore it is better not to be occupied with this activity. The number of those who reasoned thus has shrunk considerably in the twentieth century. The two World Wars have contributed to this change of attitude, for the immediate past demanded an increasing amount of attention. In the second place⁴, cultural anthropologists have developed techniques and ingenious methods to deal with the oral tradition, methods which the historians could not ignore or ward off. The history of French cultural anthropology provides an excellent case in point. In the third place⁵, the ageing process which has taken place in this century gives sup-

Idem, *Théorie de la mémoire*, Paris 1866.

Karl Otto, genannt Reventloro, *Lehrbuch der Mnemotechnik*, Stuttgart 1847². + *Wörterbuch der Mnemotechnik*, Stuttgart 1844.

H. Kothe, *Katechismus der Gedächtniskunst oder Mnemotechnik*⁶, Leipzig 1887.

H. Ebbinghaus, *Über das Gedächtnis. Untersuchungen zur experimentellen Psychologie*, Leipzig 1885.

2. I could mention for instance G. Gusdorf, *Mémoire et personne*, Paris 1951; there are also earlier works, such as F. Specht, *Das Gedächtnis und die Gedächtniskunst* (1920) and E. Bleuler, *Mechanismus, Vitalismus, Mnemismus*, *Abh. zur Theorie der organischen Entwicklung*, VI, 1931.
3. Francis Yates' masterpiece, *The Art of Memory*, London 1966, in Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1969, 1978², is the first of a new series of studies dedicated to the memory and its application in history. The many journals of the 'oral tradition' confirm the existence of this development in history and its theory.
4. From the field of anthropology two quite different publications deserve special attention. They offer the tools for further research. J.R. Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, Cambridge 1978 (on the penetration of literacy in illiterate societies). Many works from specific cultures could be mentioned. For our subject revealing results are to be found in H. Maier, *Fragments of Reading: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangra*. Dissertation Leiden 1985: On the misfortune of a Malayan text that found its origin in a time of 'oral-aural literature', and which afterwards was really the victim of scribes and copyists. (With thanks to P.E. de Josselin de Jong).
5. Stevin Rose, *The Conscious Brain*, Penguin Books, 1976.
Memory in gerontology (with thanks to L. Kuenen):
 Research has been published in reports and news from the Max Planck Society, e.g. MPG Science Newsletter, December 1983: 'Intelligence can be boosted in old age'. By means of specific training learning programmes were drawn for figural thinking, inductive think-

port to a new appreciation for memory and for preserving the individual person's history by word of mouth. The modern-day care given to the aged provides a striking example: in order for the mind to keep fit, one is taught to commit regularly to memory a few lines of poetry. Gerontology's task is to keep the memory active, and we are told that such exercise has therapeutic effects. In the fourth and last place⁶, in our complex social structure there are many aspects of business and enterprise which demand personal leadership and rapid intellectual comprehension, especially comprehension which must be preserved. For this reason even the highest positions in society require one to train the memory.

2. (WESTERN) ANTIQUITY

The Greeks and Roman held memory in respect. Whoever was equipped with a good memory could profit by it. Therefore memory was systematically trained, and the training led to ability: the ability to recall the past. As long as the adage *historia magistra vitae* remained unquestioned – and during Classical Antiquity it was not questioned at all, but fostered and passed on – the training has been regarded as an honourable and indispensable activity. And in this exercise, the instructors of ancient time produced examples which were to be copied or avoided. In an artificial manner, associations between the past and present were built up. The past provided direction for behaviour in the present.

Poetry

For poetry, memory was easily developed, as rhythm and poetic conventions had formed a language which could be mastered through prac-

ing and *memory* (my italics) and attention. For our subject an important result is that training of memory has found a new field. Medical science has taken a closer look at the psychology of intelligence in old age. Other aspects of memory, for instance the psychology of intelligence in the young, actually demands new attention. Old and new methods in pedagogics will undoubtedly stimulate further research.

D. de Wied, *Stoffelijke beïnvloeding van het geheugen*, Haarlemse voordrachten XLII, Haarlem 1982 (Lecture for a wider public). Cf. the Bibliography at the end of his lecture. *Idem*, *Neuropeptiden en psychopathology*. (with thanks to the author).

6. a. Frederic Vester, *Hoe wij denken, leren en vergeten*. Baarn, De Bilt 1976.
- b. Gerhard Reichel, *Een ijzeren geheugen*, Amsterdam 1982. (with thanks to J.G. Tienlenius Kruythoff).
- c. G. Wolters, *Episodic Memory, Encoding distinctiveness and memory performance*, diss. Leiden 1983, following F. Yates, makes the connection with the first century B.C., namely the Auctor ad Herennium III, 22. This dissertation, however, was delivered to obtain a doctor's degree in the department of social studies, to which (in the Netherlands) history does *not* belong. The conclusion we must make from the list of works in notes 3-6 is this: nearly all the disciplines are once again actively occupied with the study of the memory and mnemotechnics.
- d. Michael Shallis, *The Silicon Idol. The micro revolution and its social implications*. Oxford 1985.

tice. In Greek history we read a remarkable tale connected with the poet Simonides of Ceos. An episode in this man's life caused him to be regarded as the founder of *methodical* improvement of memory. The story is as it were 'The Beginning of Mnemonics'. Simonides of Ceos lived *circa* 556-*circa* 468⁷.

'Simonides had written an ode of victory for a certain boxer, for which he was paid a stipulated sum. When the ode was delivered, however, a part of the fee was withheld. Simonides had, according to the usual practice, introduced a myth about Castor and Pollux. He was accordingly informed that he might look to those divinities for the rest of his fee. The story goes on to tell how Castor and Pollux repaid their obligation. A great banquet was being held in honour of the boxer, at which Simonides was present. During the banquet he was informed that two youths had arrived on horseback and earnestly desired to see him outside. No sooner had he stepped through the door and failed to find the youths than the roof fell in, crushing all the banqueters. So complete was the disaster that the relatives of the dead were quite unable to distinguish the bodies of the victims. Simonides discovered, however, that he could recall in memory the position of each man at the banquet, and so restored to each relative his own dead'. L.A. Post's commentary reads: 'The apocryphal nature of the story is obvious. Quintilian (11.2,16) points out another miracle besides the intervention of Castor and Pollux, namely, Simonides' failure to mention in his poems an incident so creditable to him. There is a third miracle, the complete destruction of all recognizable feature of the victims. Even a fire would hardly obliterate all marks.'

Cicero makes the following remark:

'It has been sagaciously discerned by Simonides or else discovered by some other person, ... that the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight, and that consequently perceptions received by the ears or by reflection can be most easily retained in the mind if they are also conveyed to our minds by the mediation of the eyes, with the result that things not seen and not lying in the field of visual discernment are earmarked by a sort of outline and image and shape so that we keep hold of as it were by an act of sight things that we can scarcely embrace by an act of thought. But these forms and bodies, like all the things that come under our view *require an abode* (*sede opus est*), in as much as a material object without a locality is inconceivable'⁸. Especially regarding these last words will I make some comments further in this study.

7. The story is told by Cicero, *De Or.* II, 86, 351-354 (in Quintilian 11, 2, 11-16). The condensed translation is derived from an important, but rarely mentioned article of L. A. Post, *Ancient Memory Systems*, *Classical Weekly* 25 (1932) 109 ff. See also H. Caplan, 'Memoria' in the collection *Of Eloquence*, *Studies in ancient and mediaeval rhetoric*, Ithaca. 1970, 222 f.

8. *Cic. De Or.* II 87, 357-358. The quotations of classical authors are taken from the Loeb Classical Library (LCL), unless otherwise stated.

Prose

Soon after Simonides' death prose literature became dominant, and the following century witnessed the increasing importance of the use of memory in speaking and writing in prose. Plato and the instructors collectively called sophists provide proof for this development. And I must also mention (albeit in passing) Aristotle's treatise *Pro Memoria* in the *Parva Naturalia*. It is also worthwhile to mention the observations of such pagan and Christian leaders as Plotinus and Augustine, as they represent a period upon which my argumentation centers, namely the fourth century A.D.⁹.

But the first handbook for the training of memory, the first example of education and schooling known to us, is an anonymous treatise from the first century before our era. The author wrote it for a pupil C. Herennius, and the work is known as the *Auctor ad Herennium*¹⁰. During the Middle Ages it was thought that Cicero was the author. On account of the association with this famous author, and on account of the bewildering approach to a pedagogical problem of first rank, did the treatise become and remain famous. As it was primary reading in the age-old scholastic tradition, the work forms an invaluable legacy for our western civilization. Its influence is most eloquently explained in the now classic work of Francis Yates, *The Art of Memory* (1966).

3. THE SCHOOLS OF RHETORIC

Initially, though later less frequently, all the sources of history were characterized by the tools produced by the schools. It was a fortunate occurrence if the audience was of the same generation as the author who declared his observations. And similarly, one should not think that the written text was effective without the explication by the instructors. Just as one was taught to write, so one was taught to read. Written authorities are rarely of primary importance, but the sources which have been committed to memory are common property of the speaker (teacher) and the audience (student). The memory is an important tool used by everyone. The background (*loci*) is established in which the images of remembrance

9. For the techniques employed by the sophists (to whom rhetorical education was entrusted) see especially the works of G. Kennedy, *The art of persuasion in Greece*, London 1963, and *The art of rhetoric in the Roman world*, Princeton 1972. See also his *Classical rhetoric and its Christian and secular tradition from ancient to modern times*, Chapel Hill 1980.

The philosophical tradition is also of relevance: especially that of Aristotle. See R. Sorabji, *Aristotle on Memory*, London 1972; Plotinus, *Enneads* IV, 6, and Augustine, *Confessions* X, viii, 12-16.

10. H. Caplan's outstanding edition and English translation in the Loeb Classical Library bears the title '*Rhetorica ad Herennium*', Cambridge, Mass. 1954.

(*imagines*) are located. These images serve the function of retaining situations and of recalling specific words (usually key words of a tale or argument). An example of these two functions is found in the *Auctor ad Herennium*.

But first allow me to make some general observations regarding the arguments produced so far. Instruction by word of mouth was able to flourish for such a long time because of two circumstances which cannot be over-emphasized¹¹. The first circumstance is that the written word during the time before the development of book-printing was of secondary importance in comparison with oral instruction, of which the tradition was firmly grounded in memory. The second, perhaps more important circumstance is that history, or knowledge of the past, is valuable for the present and the future. History is able to persuade someone to act. And who was better equipped for this task than the rhetor, who had even been taught to make black appear white and white black, and to succeed in this task¹²?

(a) The *situation* is described as the scene of a court-case.

The first example is taken from the *Auctor ad Herennium* III xx, 33-34: 'Often we encompass the record of an entire matter by one notation, a single image. For example, the persecutor has said that the defendant killed a man by poison, has charged that the motive for the crime was an inheritance, and declared that there are many witnesses and accessories to this act. If in order to facilitate our defence we wish to remember this first point, we shall in our first background form an image of the whole matter. We shall picture the man in question as lying ill in bed, if we know his person. If we do not know him, we shall yet take someone to be our invalid, but not a man of the lowest class, so that he may come to mind at once. And we shall place the defendant at the bed-side, holding in his right hand a cup, and in his left tablets, and on the fourth finger a ram's testicles¹³. In this way we can record the man who has poisoned, the inheritance, and the witnesses. In like fashion we shall set the other counts of the charge in backgrounds successively, following their order, and whenever we wish to remember a point, by properly arranging the patterns of

11. For Herodotus see Mabel L. Lang, 'Herodotean Narrative and Discourse', *Martin Classical Lectures XXVIII*, Cambr. Mass., 1984, especially 1-36, 142-149.

12. See my contribution to the *Festschrift for S. Dresden 'Lezen en interpreteren' 187-194*, entitled 'Isocrates en de triomf van de rhetorica' (= *Forum der Letteren* 1979, 381-388). The passage in Ps.-Longinus, 'On the Sublime', 38,2.

13. Notes 13-16 are derived from Caplan's edition (LCL). According to Macrobius, *Sat.* 7.13.7-8, the anatomists spoke of a nerve which extends from the heart to the fourth finger of the left hand (the *digitus medicinalis*), where it interlaces into the other nerves of that finger; the finger was therefore ringed, as with a crown. *Testiculi* suggests *testes* (witnesses). Of the scrotum of the ram purses were made, thus the money used for bribing the witnesses may perhaps also be suggested.

the background and carefully imprinting the images, we shall easily succeed in calling back to mind what we wish.'

(b) Background and *words*

The second example is taken from the Auctor ad Herennium III xxi, 34: 'When we wish to represent by images the likeness of words, we shall be undertaking a greater task and exercising our ingenuity the more. This we ought to effect in the following way:

Iam domum itionem reges Atridae parant¹⁴.

'And now their home-coming the kings,
the sons of Atreus, are making ready.'

If we wish to remember this verse, in our first background we should put Domitius, raising hands to heaven while he is lashed by the Marcii Reges¹⁵ – that will represent 'Iam domum itionem reges' ('And now their home-coming the kings,'); in the second background, Aesopus and Cimber¹⁶, being dressed as for the rôles of Agamemnon and Menelaus in the Iphigenia – that will represent 'Atridae parant' ('the sons of Atreus, are making ready'). By this method all the words will be represented. But such an arrangement of images succeeds only if we use our notation to stimulate the natural memory, so that we first go over a given verse twice or three times to ourselves and then represent the words by means of images. In this way art will supplement nature. For neither by itself will be strong enough, though we must note that theory and technique are much the more reliable.'

The Testes

Here follows an explanation to supplement the first example. Metrodorus of Scepsis, a senior contemporary of Cicero, plays an important role in the history of rhetoric. Cicero speaks of the *loci* as 'places like wax tablets

14. An iambic senarius, whether our author's own creation or from a tragedy by an unknown author (the *Iphigenia* mentioned below?) is uncertain. Note that here the play is upon the form of the word, not its meaning, and that no special provision is made for the adverb *iam*. Quintilian, 11.2.25, doubts the efficacy of symbols to record a series of connected words: 'I do not mention the fact that some things, certainly conjunctions, for example, cannot be represented by images.'
15. The scene is doubtless our author's own creation. Rex was the name of one of the most distinguished families of the Marcian *gens*; the Domitian (of plebeian origin) was likewise a celebrated *gens*.
16. Clodius Aesopus (a friend of Cicero) was the greatest tragic actor of the first half of the first century B.C.; Cimber, mentioned only here, was no doubt also a favourite of the day. See Otto Ribbeck, *Die römische Tragödie im Zeitalter der Republik*, Leipzig, 1875, pp.574-6.

in lieu of letters'¹⁷. Quintilian quotes this, and also the following passage from Cicero¹⁸: 'We must for this purpose employ a number of remarkable places, clearly envisaged and separated by short intervals: the images which we use must be active, sharply cut and distinctive, such as may occur to the mind and strike it with rapidity'¹⁹. And a little further in Cicero's own argumentation, the highly esteemed predecessor cites two important Greek rhetors, whom he brings on the scene without a trace of criticism. First he speaks about *inertes*, 'unscientific people who assert that memory is crushed beneath a weight of images and even what *might have been retained by nature unassisted* is obscured'²⁰. Thereupon he mentions 'eminent people with almost superhuman powers of memory', namely, Charmadas of Athens and Metrodorus of Scepsis in Asia (the last of whom, it was said, was still alive). Each man was accustomed to say 'that he wrote down things he wanted to remember in certain 'localities'.' According to Cicero, this method clearly aided natural remembrance.

It is remarkable, and essential for understanding Metrodorus' contribution, that Quintilian – without stating so outright – differs in opinion from Cicero and criticizes Metrodorus. 'How should Metrodorus have found three hundred and sixty different localities in the twelve signs of the Zodiac through which the sun passes? It was doubtless due to the vanity and boastfulness of a man who was inclined to vaunt his memory as being the result of art rather than of natural gifts'²¹.

Thus we ascertain a difference of opinion between Cicero and Quintilian, for the former shows no contempt whatsoever for the assistance given to memory by artificial means. The localities mentioned by Cicero were, without a doubt, the 360 different localities rejected by Quintilian.

I am of the opinion that the Auctor ad Herennium, in his example of the court-case (see above, p.11), alludes to the assistance given by the Zodiac: 'and on the fourth finger a *ram's testicles*'. I would like to suggest that the author is speaking about the place in which the legal expert, by virtue of his rhetorical training in mnemonics, attempts to store the witnesses and their statements, and in particular, that section of the Zodiac which was reserved for *the ram* (Aries). Therefore *testiculos arietinos* is to be translated as 'the testicles of Aries. In this way we can record... the witnesses.' *Arietinos* might exclude *testes* of other animals, as for example *testes Capricornei*, *leontini*, or *taurini*, which could have a different function in the mnemonics of the Zodiac.

17. *De Or.* II 86, 354.

18. *De Or.* II 87, 358.

19. Quintilian XI, 2, 22.

20. *De Or.* II 88, 360. Regarding Cicero's praise see also *Tusc. Disp.* I.24.59.

21. Quintilian XI, 2, 22, which follows the passage cited in note 19.

It is remarkable that the otherwise excellent book of J.H. Adams²² makes no mention of the metaphorical use of *testes* in the Auctor ad Herennium. Adams does state that scrotum 'never caught on in the popular language'²³, and thus it ought not to surprise us that there is no report about 'bag' or testicles in the sense stated above. Apparently the use of testis (= testicle) as a metaphor for testis (= witness) has not been reported. But this may be due to the literature which Adams consulted²⁴. And so *bursa*, as meaning scrotum, is reported (though it was first used thus in the Middle Ages)²⁵. This usage is known to us from, among other works, 'De Vos Reinaerde' in Mediaeval Dutch.

The significance of the testes is expressed by the ring on the fourth finger of the right hand, the so-called *digitus medicinalis*. I agree with the explanation given by H. Caplan. However, I do not accept the other explanation which Caplan suggested *as being possible*, namely that the scrotum is the purse by which witnesses are bribed, see the end of note 13 (above).

As far as I am able to determine, in no modern literature about the Zodiac is mention made of it as being used in ancient times as an aid for memorization. Cicero's praise of Metrodorus was justified, and he deserved a better fate. He certainly did not earn the scathing remarks, with which Quintilian relegates Charmadas and Metrodorus to the background: 'They may keep their systems for their own use. My precepts on the subject shall be of a simpler kind'²⁶. Metrodorus' 'topical system of mnemonics'²⁷ remains worthy of attention. By means of this system one acquires 12 × 30 sections to arrange the memory's stock in one large circle of the Zodiac: 'Les cadres astrologiques de la mémoire'.

22. J.H. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, London 1982.

23. *op. cit.*, 75.

24. For 'testicles' see *op. cit.*, *testis* (lit. 'witness'); see further index 265, 272.

25. For *bursa* see *op. cit.*, 75.

26. Quintilian XI, 2, 26.

27. H. Caplan, *Of Eloquence. Studies in ancient and mediaeval rhetoric*, Ithaca 1970, 216 and 246.

II. Historiography and Memory

I. INTRODUCTION

We have noted that memory and mnemotechnics play a role in certain occupations: the legal profession, politics, business, and the theatre cannot do without them. Forensic, economic, and historical ‘mnemonics’ are necessary to reconstruct the past. The schools formed this technique by means of countless examples. In addition to the accurate information, incorrect data have also been produced and handed on through the oral tradition: the same took place in the written tradition. In historical research one notices this phenomenon constantly. For many it is a fact that errors undeniably point to a ‘contact’ (or common ancestry), whether from A to B, or from N to A, B, C, etc. Many assume that the error almost invariably stems from *one* archetype, the so-called father of lies: a historian, and usually an anonymous one.

Thus modern historiography about Antiquity displays a very consistent preference for the *written* source, and rarely – if at all – takes account of the oral tradition. This is especially true for the later Roman Empire. Phantoms are created, no longer existent anonymous historians, sources for later writers, historians who were mentioned in the few written sources. A similar simplification of the tradition takes place when one reduces a series of biographies – which are assigned to six authors on the basis of the contents – to being the work of *one* author hidden behind the Six.

(1) One such phantom was revealed to the public in 1883 by A. Enmann in *Philologus*, Suppl. IV, Heft 3, dated 1884. (The acronym is EKG or KG, for the *Enmannsche Kaisergeschichte*.) The aim of this work was to describe the lives of the Caesars, from Hadrian (117) to circa 340.

(2) A falsifier of outstanding ability would be the author of the *Historia Augusta* (which has been ascribed to *six* authors), a work that since Casaubon’s edition of 1603 bears the name of *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (SHA). It includes thirty lives of emperors and claimants to the throne between the years 117 and 285. The first to postulate a reduction from six to one author was H. Dessau, *Hermes* 24, 1889; 27, 1892.

The two hypotheses are of a different nature but they share a one-sided emphasis on the *written* source. Rhetorical training plays *no* role in either of the two. Therefore the two hypotheses must be viewed with suspicion and ought to be placed under examination once again. Some courage is needed for this undertaking, as we are entering a world in which a nearly dogmatic preference for written sources exists.

The *Historia Augusta Forschung* in Bonn was carried out in the method

stated above and became world famous. The results are important and the study has been advanced. But slowly an atmosphere of exclusivity came about, as often happens when academics are caught up in dogma. Consequently, the researchers who made objections were denounced. The careful editor Straub presumably viewed this happening with regret and attempted to gloss over it. For me, at any rate, this is the only explanation for the fact that since the last issues (13, 14, and 15) of the series *Bonner Historia-Augusta Colloquia* of 1978, 1980, and 1983 no list of modern authors appears in the Indexes. This measure, however, can only hinder the discovery of invectives but not prevent it. Because the topic is important for *all* historical research and not only for Western Antiquity, it will be necessary to digress at times, though the digressions may be of little interest to the specialists. Nevertheless, it is my view that also historians of later periods ought to become acquainted with the topic. I also apologize for the repetition of observations made earlier in this essay²⁸.

2. ENMANN

At this juncture allow me to become more specific by giving some examples from the historical literature of the fourth century. I borrow them from the writings of two authors who produced their works at about the same time, (Aurelius) Victor and Eutropius. The former is African, and therefore very proud about the origin of emperor Septimius Severus from North Africa (I intend to return to this matter). Victor published his *Caesares*, a history from Augustus to Constantius in 360 or shortly thereafter. He assumed public office, was governor of the province of Pannonia Secunda in 361, and prefect of the city of Rome in 389.

Eutropius wrote a few years later, in 369 or 370. He, too, assumed public office: *magister memoriae* under Valens (364-378). His opus, *Breviarium ab urbe condita*, embraces the whole Roman history up to his own time. It is dedicated to Valens and reports his title from 369 and 370: 'Gothicus Maximus'.

Both authors are influenced by rhetoric, Victor being more 'an artist in his own right', who attempts to emulate Sallust and Tacitus. Eutropius is business-like and straight-forward, lacking in stylistic embellishments. As a result his work is readable for a wider audience, and the *Breviarium* enjoyed popularity, for it was even translated into Greek.

Scholars repeatedly point out their errors, which occur with remarkable similarity. These similar mistakes induced an extensive study of the sources in 1883. The study culminated in the following conclusion: among

28. The most accurate and dependable *état des questions* regarding the sources is given by T.D. Barnes, *The Sources of the Historia Augusta*, Collection Latomus, vol. 155, Brussels 1978.

the other sources which they used, both authors employed *one written* source – a history of the Caesars – which was called the ‘Kaisergeschichte of Enmann’ (*EKG*), after the one who discovered it. To the present day posterity had underscored the declaration that the errors of both fourth century Latin authors Victor and Eutropius derive from the same written source. Some errors are decisive for the accuracy of Enmann’s conclusion²⁹.

These decisive errors are:

- I: Septimius Severus was *advocatus fisci* (during his youth).
- II: Septimius Severus (192-211) defeated one of his rivals, Didius Julianus, at the Pons Milvius (or Mulvius).
- III: Another claimant to the throne, Pescennius Niger, was killed at Cyzicus.
- IV: Caracalla (211-217) married Julia Domna (his mother) who was called his stepmother.
- V: Genealogy.

The results of my research are intended to call into question the more than hundred year-old opinion that the writings stem from *one* written source, the *EKG*. The ‘errors’ listed above demonstrate, in my opinion, that each of the five instances deals with an oral tradition, a tradition founded upon their own reminiscences of the rhetorical training of the schools, which these authors received. Or they are the reminders of others who passed the information along orally. It is almost impossible to ascertain which of these possibilities was most likely, but the answer is irrelevant to the main controversy. The significant point is that these data come from the schools. The rhetorical tradition, passed on orally, re-appears in the *H.A.*, also in the shape of these four examples.

I. Advocatus fisci

Victor mentions the *patrocinium fisci* of the emperor (Caes. 20.30). I do not equate these words with the office of the *advocatus fisci*, as it was created by Hadrian (*vita Hadr.* 20,6: *fisci advocatum instituit*). It formed the first stage in the *cursus honorum*, and the fact that Severus commenced his career with this office is recorded in *vita Getae* 2,3, *vita Caracallae* 8,3, *Eutropius* 8,18, and *vita Macrini* 4.

No mention is made of this office in the *vita* of Septimius Severus himself. For this reason the question first arose whether he actually assumed the office at all³⁰. Dufraigne shares in this mistrust because Herodian and

29. For example R. Syme, *Roman Papers*, II, Oxford 1979, 791.

30. See the passages in the *vitae* mentioned by Magie in the LCL, in particular *vita Car.* 3,8. For the same reason T.D. Barnes calls Septimius Severus’ assumption of this office ‘almost certainly baseless’. *Historia* 16 (1967) 91. A.R. Birley agrees with Barnes’ interpretation in his biography, *Septimius Severus, the African Emperor* (Oxford 1971, 302).

Cassius Dio fail to mention this office³¹. R. Syme has, it appears once and for all, laid to rest the question regarding this office in connection with Severus³². But appearances are deceiving. In the first place we must notice one detail in which the *vita Severi* c.20 differs from similar passages in the other lives (1), and consequently we must take into account the historical development of the function of the *fiscus* (2).

(1) The generosity of this African emperor is reported time and time again in the *vita* (and denied by modern researchers), but in one instance Aelius Spartianus – as I would like to continue to call the author – differs from Victor. The exception is found in 18,3 where we read: *ac populo Romano diurnum oleum gratuitum et fecundissimum in aeternum donavit*: ‘He bestowed upon the Roman people, without cost, a most generous daily allowance of oil in perpetuity’. It is not noted by Victor, who had no reason to make a special mention of Severus’ favours to the Roman populace. The context of the *vita* makes it apparent that the oil was brought from North Africa (Tripolis). When the emperor died the supply of oil was large enough to be sufficient for Rome and Italy for five years (23,2). A similarly magnanimous liberality was to be expected from an emperor who took the *patrocinium* of the *fiscus* seriously. *Patrocinium*, mentioned by Victor, is a word full of meaning. It signifies the emperor’s power in a way that the alternative term *patrimonium* was unable to convey. Victor hardly makes an allusion to it, but the *vita* is specific.

(2) The inscriptions show how the administration of the *fiscus*, originally the first step in the equestrian career, became a powerful function, and that the emperor knew how the *fiscus* was best spent. Such was the course of events³³. It may be true that the emperor never did assume the office as it was instituted by Hadrian. But that is of no importance in the oral tradition. One observation, which, as far as I know, has not been made before, may be added to the series of sources given above. The combination *patrocinium fisci* occurs only two times in our sources³⁴: in the stated passage in Victor 20,30 and in the *Paneg. lat.* 6.23,1. Both instances deal with that office which is assumed at the beginning of the equestrian cursus; *Paneg.* calls it ‘*summa fisci patrocinia*’. In this oration the word *summa* reveals the high esteem adjudged to the office. It may be rhetorical exaggeration. However, both sources are of a late date, as Hirschfeld has demonstrated, when this office of *advocatus fisci* indicated a wider meaning, and perhaps also greater influence (second half of the fourth century)³⁵.

31. See his edition of Aurelius Victor, *Livre des Césars*. Paris 1975, p.130.

32. R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography*, *Studies in the Historia Augusta*, Oxford 1971, 81.

33. See O. Hirschfeld, *Die kaiserliche Verwaltungsämter bis auf Diocletian*², Berlin 1905, 51-52.

34. I owe this information to the benevolence of the TLL, for which I express my gratitude.

35. See note 33.

Patrocinium, a word seldom used for the *fiscus*, has a more technical meaning ('the exercise of the function of the patronus') than *patrimonium*, which 'comprised the estates regarded as the property by the emperor'³⁶. My explanation of this usage – only two instances – of *patrocinium* is based on a very common phenomenon, which occurs in nearly all the designations of public office, whenever a corps of 'officials' is augmented. In legal terminology the word 'patrocinium' received a place beside the terms *patrimonium* and *res privata*. This is a complication in the system whose precise nature remains obscure in modern research (see F. Millar in OCD², s.v. *patrimonium*). However, such terminology for the emperor's proprietary rights was used in normal practice. These rights were explained and taught in the schools.

The issue of the emperor's role as *advocatus fisci* has only secondary significance. If it was an invention of a *written* source, it could have been derived from another source (just as easily as the EKG, which Syme accepts as certain), for example Marius Maximus, as Birley thinks. It is worthwhile to report Birley's suggestion, which opposes Syme's claim, that 'errors in common are decisive'³⁷. Barnes, too, has some reservations when he says 'The allegation that Severus began as an *advocatus fisci* is *almost certainly* (italics mine) baseless' (*Historia* 16, 1967, 91). For him too this omission in the career of the emperor in the *vita Severi* is of significance. Thus, in Barnes' argumentation, the strange expression (which results from the fact that in HA, Eutropius, and Victor, there exists details which are 'false') is found 'if the latter assertion is false, why should the former serve credence?' This smacks of the hypercriticism of Beloch, who espoused the maxim: 'Der Historiker glaubt was in den Quellen steht nur, wenn bewiesen ist, das er richtig ist'³⁸.

Syme has explained the absence of certain details in the *vita Severi* as being due to the lassitude and boredom on the 'falsifier's' behalf, by whom the Lives were fabricated. I am unable to agree with Syme on this point, yet I do want to point to the fact that this reasoning makes Barnes' as well as Dufraigne's arguments powerless. For both scholars use the reliability of the *vita* and the absence of a fact to prove the unreliability of that fact! A further difficulty in this apparent unanimity of Syme, Barnes, and Birley is that the last of these, in reporting a lacuna in the career of Septimius

36. See Magic in *vita Commodi* 20,1. Cf. H. Nesselhauf BHAC 2, Bonn 1963, 73-93 (with reference to *vita Severi* 12, 4). For the fusion of *aerarium* and *fiscus* in *practice*, see F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*, 31 B.C.-AD 337, London 1977, ch. IV and Appendices 2 and 3, especially about the identification of 'fiscal' and 'patrimonial'.

37. For the existence of the EKG as 'necessary and unavoidable', cf. *Roman Papers* I, 790-791. For the uncertainties regarding the precise nature of *patrimonium* and *res privata* see F. Millar in OCD, 2nd ed., s.v. *patrimonium*.

38. K.J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*² 1,2 1916. See *Mnem. Q.S.* 26 (1973), 32.

Severus' father Geta, brings to the fore the following possibility: 'It could be that Septimius' father Geta held an equestrian tribunate and was advocate of the *fisci* under Pius... the absence of any mention of posts on inscriptions of *Geta senior* is not a difficulty. It would have been better to suppress the record of such minor functions when the man's son was emperor'³⁹. Is it possible that the author of the *vita* had the same reason for omitting the mention of the emperor himself in a similar function? Here too the question must remain unanswered.

What did the directors of the schools of rhetoric in the fourth century know regarding the changes in official titles? Little; even a *magister memoriae* such as Eutropius knew virtually nothing about the succession of offices. In Eutr. 8, 18, 2 no emphasis is placed on order: *primum fisci advocatus, mox militaris tribunus* (this combination is rightly opposed by Barnes, l.c.), but these general remarks on the career receive attention: *per multa et varia officia atque honores usque ad administrationem totius reipublicae venit*. Historical accuracy was not taught, and therefore it was not appreciated either. To the writers of excerpts such accuracy was unknown or incorrect; the reason for this was the oral transmission taught in the schools and which remained fastened in the memory – sometimes with complete accuracy. For Victor *one* expression concerning the African emperor was central: *patrocinium*. This word characterized the African-born emperor from the beginning to the end of his career.

Apart from that, the issue of nomenclature does not affect the stability of the regime. The filling of offices remained closely bound up with conventional stipulations⁴⁰.

II. Septimius Severus defeated Didius Julianus near the Pons Milvius (or Mulvius)

This is a much more striking example: at the Milvian Bridge Septimius Severus was to have conquered his rival Didius Julianus (in 193). The location is the northerly bridge across the Tiber, the Ponte Molle leading to Rome, where in 312 Constantine the Great achieved his decisive victory: the commencement of the Christian era, recounted with pomp and circumstance.

In the schools this conquest was referred to as *The Victory*, the Armageddon. In 193, too, a significant victory was obtained. The dynasty of the Antonines came to an end with the violent death of Commodus (in 192). The intervening period was filled with war. Then too, there was an

39. A.R. Birley, op. cit., 302.

40. In this matter nothing needs be added to the recently published results of H. Löhken, *Ordines dignitatum, Untersuchungen zur formalen Konstituierung der spätantiken Führungsschicht*, Kölner historische Abhandlungen 30, Köln-Wien 1982; W. Kuhoff, *Studien zur zivilen senatorischen Laufbahn im 4. Jahrhundert n. Chr. Ämter und Amtshaber in Clarissimat und Spektabilität*, Frankfurt/Main, Bern (Europäische Hochschulschriften: Reihe 3, Geschichte und ihre Hilfswissenschaften, Bd. 162) 1983.

Armageddon for the Roman Empire, and the end of its Indian Summer, as Edward Gibbon noted in modern time. The words which Eutropius (8,17; 10,4,3) and Victor (19,4) used, were taken from the oral tradition, the rhetorical tradition. It was not without reason that I mentioned Armageddon. The image of the Battle of the Nations is based on the Revelation according to John 16,16 (apparently the origins of this image can be found in early Jewish apocalyptic thought – I leave this aside). Modern rhetoric unabashedly uses Armageddon for describing the events of the First and Second World War: in Churchill's writings and elsewhere in modern war-accounts the fierceness and the magnitude of the horror is expressed. Professor J.M. Romein thought that the usage came from Protestant sermons, and that the image was taken over by believers and non-believers. Unfortunately, I am unable to support his view. If it is correct, it would only reinforce my thesis concerning the origin of this so-called error in rhetoric and the schools.

III. Pescennius Niger was killed at Cyzicus

The facts are well-known from Cassius Dio 73 and 74 and Herodian 3 and 4. Pescennius' threat was very serious; his adherents extended to Egypt and the East. Even Byzantium and Thrace were under his control for some time. At the start Severus had his hands full in Pannonia, but he soon forced Pescennius to retreat to Byzantium (Cassius Dio 76, 6.4). Byzantium itself was besieged in the fall of 193, and in that winter Pescennius suffered serious defeat near Cyzicus, situated opposite Byzantium. Soon thereafter Nicaea fell also. In the end Severus' troops burst through the Taurus-pass; the final defeat was near Issus (Cass. Dio 74, 7; Herodian 3,42). Pescennius died in the ensuing flight.

It is clear that Cyzicus played an important role in the war of succession. It is also clear that the epitomists 150 years later did not have access to sources such as Cassius Dio and Herodian, who differ from each other in various details. The most convincing evidence is provided by the H.A. *vita* Sev. 9,1; *vita* Pesc. 5,8 (Pescennius slain near Cyzicus). This is also the idea in Eutr. 8,18.4; a somewhat similar expression is found in Victor 20,8 'near the Cyzicenes'. Two particular details point to the oral tradition. The first is that Pescennius Niger's success came to an end at Cyzicus. The mention of the location has special meaning: on the other side of the sea of Marmora the Orient begins, opposite rival Byzantium – a place which was also in the hands of Pescennius' troops, albeit for a short time. In the second place, after 269 the antithesis of Europe and Asia is as dominant a theme in Roman history as in Greek. The geographic partition was described in detail as recently as 1945⁴¹. Valerian's humiliation, his impris-

41. M. Ninck, *Die Entdeckung von Europa durch die Griechen*, Basel 1945, 17-18. Cf. also H.U. Instinsky, *Alexander der Grosse am Hellespont*, Würzburg 1949 and H. Strasburger's review in *Gnomon* 23, 1951, 83-88.

sonment, and his death are occurrences only one hundred years old at the time of Victor's writing. When Eutropius' works became public, the debacle of emperor Julianus was not yet forgotten. In Libanius the echos are very clear⁴². Rhetorical education, for a major part, was influenced by the relationship between East and West in this unsettled fourth century. Apparently, one written source (EKG) was not sufficient to preserve the impressions which contemporary events also made upon the epitomists.

Already in ancient times the opposition between East and West existed, but then the point of view was different. In the fourth century before our era, the question could be posed, after Alexander the Great's successes in the east, what he would do after the conquest of Asia. If, after his return to the West from India, he cast his eye upon Europe, he would have seen another terrain in which to obtain new laurels⁴³. The Romans asked themselves: what would have happened if Alexander had not died? Such questions are found in concrete form in Plutarch⁴⁴. Clearly it was a topic for the schools of rhetoric. For there the politicians, lawyers, historians and biographers learned to pose the question: 'What would have happened if...?'

That Cyzicus is mentioned in the accounts of the years following 360, is understandable. The threatened city had a strategic location. Nearly 120 years after the East-West conflict between Valerian and Sapor of Persia in 260, the North-South conflict came with its fatal results: 378 witnessed the defeat of Valens at the hands of the Goths. After the battle at Adrianople, safety within the boundaries of a unified empire was no longer taken for granted. Cyzicus was involved in all these wars⁴⁵. 'At Cyzicus' and 'among the Cyzicenes' had a threatening ring in the second half of the fourth century A.D.⁴⁶. It is strange, to say the least, that the awareness of this threat has been reduced to *one* (incorrect) written source, when biographers and abbreviators write about Pescennius Niger and Severus. The influence of contemporary events on the reporting of more distant events must not be forgotten.

42. Libanius *or.* 30.41.4. Cf. 'Tria Corda', scritti in onore di A. Momigliano, Como 1983, 160.

43. See Symbolae, 'Historia Antiqua' (Festschrift W. Peremans) Leuven 1977, 214.

44. Plut. *De fortuna Rom.* 326 A-C, Livy 9, 17-19, especially 18.6. For modern views concerning Plutarch see above all C.P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, Oxford 1971, 68-69. The 'historicity' of Alexander's plans is uncertain and not part of my discussion (Diod. 18, 4, 1-6; Curtius Rufus 10,1, 17-20).

45. Zosim. 34,4.39,13 (under Valerianus, Gallienus, and Claudius II). Ammianus Marcellinus 26,8,6, Zosim. 180,11 (under Valens).

46. The following works shed light on the importance of Cyzicus for our period and earlier: F.W. Hasluk, *Cyzicus*, Cambridge 1910. D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 2 vol., Princeton 1950 (especially I, 81). A. H. M. Jones, *The Latin Roman Empire*, Oxford 1964, 436-7, 836. W. Ruge provides a superb treatment of the sources in RE XII, 228-233.

IV. *Caracalla married Julia Domna, his so-called stepmother*

Marriages of emperors provide spicy tales in the oral tradition. Julia Domna, wife of Severus and mother of Caracalla, was not always and everywhere favourably received. Stories about her and her son made the rounds. The more moderate tradition viewed her as his mother-in-law. The student who received a prudish Roman education would have respect for authority. The significance of the slander can be found in the *Historia Augusta*⁴⁷. A similarly scandalous fate awaited Marcus Aurelius and Faustina⁴⁸. For the Julio-Claudian dynasty one may think of Tacitus, who emphatically dissociated himself from such *rumores* (and thereby, from the oral tradition). His successors wrote biographies. In this genre the spicy details about the private lives – especially that of the emperor – are the nadir (as far as history is concerned). But regarding historical accuracy we are left in the dark. Clearly the H.A. goes further in this than the epitomists. This is due to the genre of biography. Stories were told that were based more on the *oral* ‘embellishments’ in education than on written sources; though such stories could have been handed on in the pamphlets (*libelli*). But here too it would be exaggeration to claim that everything can be traced back to written sources – let alone *one* written source. P. Brunt⁴⁹ was right to point out the one-sidedness of the belief that Tacitus employed *only* the recorded facts, the *acta senatus*, as his source material. According to Brunt, Tacitus too brings the rumours and scandals to light, even though he does so disparagingly. But no historian of any age can ignore such sources. In this there is no difference between biography and stories narrated in historiography. Even scandals were handed on by respected historians. We could go further even, and say that reporting such stories is the task of the historian. Certainly, there is a great difference between the historical genres. Biography goes the farthest in reporting such tales, as is partly its aim. For no one will believe that such personal tales can or ought to be stripped of the truth. And what has taken place ought to be recorded. Our doubts about the truth of *rumores* are no smaller than our doubts about all other historical events. This is not due to the sources but to the inability to verify the statements. The SHA goes the farthest in reporting such stories (as Suetonius had done previously), even though Julius Capitolinus is reasonably sober about Antoninus and Faustina. There was a time when historians wanted to separate history from biography. One may think of Xenophon and Theopompus. As soon as *one* per-

47. Regarding Julia Domna see Aur. Victor 20.3, 21.3. Eutr. 8.20. Vita Severi 18.8, 21.7, Carac. 10.1-4. Cassius Dio (75.15,6-7) is favourable. Cf. E. Kornemann, *Grosse Frauen des Altertums*, Wiesbaden 1947, 272.

48. Vita Pii 3.3, vita M.A. 19.1-7, 29.1-3. Victor 16.2.

49. P.A. Brunt in a book review, CR 34 (1985), 249.

son, in the figure of the Roman emperor, dominates the historical scene, this separation disappears. We can agree with Momigliano: 'At the beginning of the second century AD any attempts to separate Roman history from biography might well have seemed hopeless'⁵⁰. Therefore the difference plays no role in a comparison of epitomists such as Victor and Eutropius on the one hand and the SHA on the other. The only difference lies in the scope, which for the epitome is smaller, and understandably so. And usually the measure of truth cannot be ascertained. However, in both cases the oral tradition is much more dominant on account of the subject matter, human nature, and the education, than any written tradition whatsoever.

Finally, we should not give place of honour to the oral tradition on the basis of reports about the fidelity of the emperors and their wives, alone. Religious practices also, have a tenacious nature and certainly do not go back to written examples.

In connection with this Aur. Victor 33,31 and Suet. Tib. 75 are of relevance. When Gallienus died the Senate decreed that his adherents be thrown down from the *Scalae Gemoniae*, while the populace called upon Terra Mater and the divinities of the underworld. The same command is recorded at the death of Tiberius: there too the Gemonic Stairs, the Stairs of Mourning, are mentioned. Supporters of the (exclusively) written tradition think that Aurelius Victor derived his story from Tiberius. I support the theory of an ancient Roman custom of *damnatio memoriae* on the grounds of information given by A. Dieterich⁵¹.

V. Genealogy

The four notorious examples which would support the existence of the EKG have hereby been discussed, and, in my opinion, weakened. There still remains *one* spectacular example of lasting value, an example which is important for *all* history, even for the most modern biography. And especially for this reason should the detail be reported:

The Gordiani are three emperors of this name between 238 and 244: the elderly father, the son of at least forty years, and the thirteen year-old grandson (who was actually not the son of Gordianus II, but of his sister). The history of the son and grandson is confused and compressed in the transmission of the epitomists. Of this confusion also the EKG was quickly considered the source.

50. A. Momigliano, *Biographers and Historians*, TLS, Oct. 12 1984, 1147.

51. 'La *damnatio memoriae* des empereurs et la religion romaine'. Colloque sur changement et conflits au quatrième siècle ap. J.C., Bonn 1978, 217-224. A. Dieterich pointed the way in *Mutter Erde*, Leipzig-Berlin 1905, 77: 'Defixionsformel'. For a different view see Syme, H.A. *Papers*, 160.

To what extent this phenomenon occurs in all time in the oral tradition has been pointed out to me by the chief editor of the latest edition of the 'Biografische Woordenboek van Nederland'. Especially when one turns to the surviving family members for information regarding the deceased, one is lost as accurate biographer. Errors are legion. I myself had accepted information from a son about the life of his father. Most of the data was incorrect. The secretary of the editorial staff was not surprised. It was his custom to verify biographical information by means of other sources, for example the civic registrar. And his work bears fruit.

Even for the emperors and the daily events during their reign, the oral tradition was helpless. The rhetor was given every opportunity to invent and make up. Pretenders with names such as Marius and emperors with names such as Claudius (the latter an understandable choice) were described with picturesque details taken from the life of the great commander of the first century B.C., and the emperor Claudius⁵².

3. THE TETRARCHY

A similar reasoning can be applied to the more well-known concurrence between Victor (Caes. 39, 21-24) and Eutropius (Brev. 9, 21-24). Just as with the disturbances which preceded the eventual victory of Severus (192-193), so *unrests* and usurpations by pretenders occurred a century later (circa 293), when the most critical phase of the monarchy in Rome began, which culminated in the division of the control over the empire, the tetrarchy. This change lent a new consolidation to the Roman Empire, and the existence of the Imperium was secured once again for two centuries. The disturbances and wars are comparable to those of 192-193, and the oral tradition committed the same errors as it did then. Two Augusti came to the fore: Diocletian and Maximian. But this bipartition was not sufficient; two important military leaders were appointed as Caesars, namely Galerius and Constantius Chlorus, of whom the latter was the father of Constantine the Great who centralized power over the empire. At the centre of the crisis of the years 286-297 stands the promotion of Galerius and Constantius to Caesar, which took place on March 1, 293. The fact that the event took place on this date is of no importance in the oral tradition, but it is central in the written tradition and in the histories (especially the church history which concerns Constantine the Great). Because this date is lacking to Eutropius as well as Aurelius Victor, the supporters of the EKG once again emphasize the importance of the EKG as the first written source, as it would not have reported the proclamation of the Dies for the appointment of the Caesars.

For what was the case? The usurper Carausius took possession of Brit-

52. For the Gordiani see R. Syme, HA Papers, 157.

tannia in 286; that is, *before* the *dies imperii* of Galerius and Constantius. But the other insurrections (aided by the jealousy of the generals concerning the spectacular promotion of their two colleagues) occurred after 293. The Persian war began in 296 and the African and Egyptian disturbances took place in 296 and 297. What did the epitomists Victor and Eutropius do? They placed all of these wars *before* the installation of the Caesars. And they could hardly have done so on the basis of a written precedent, which should have been, once again, the EKG. My rebuttal to this is implied in the previous example of Severus' assumption of power a century earlier. There was *unrest* before, during, and after 293; unrest which induced the decentralization of power, in the form of the installation of the Caesars. To underscore the propriety of appointing the Caesars, the examples of that unrest are summarized. The date was unknown to Victor and Eutropius. The oral tradition (in which dates were rarely transmitted) did not possess this information – and even if it did have it, a lapse of memory could have taken place. The two writers of breviaries, Victor and Eutropius, also report the countries in different order: the former Persia, Africa, and Egypt, the latter Egypt, Africa and the Orient⁵³.

53. See T.D. Barnes, *The Sources of the Historia Augusta*, Collection Latomus, vol. 155, Brussels 1978, 93, who discusses these passages on the assumption that they stem from the EKG. Cf. also A. Chastagnol *BHAC* 1971 (1974), 55 f.

III. The *Historia Augusta*, put to the test by *one* example

I. THE EXAMPLE OF THE ANECDOTE

Barnes employed *one* vivid example to defend the opinions of Dessau, Hohl, and Syme regarding the EKG. He commenced with the words: 'Let us consider a specific case where Victor and Eutropius concur in a gross error'. *Ab uno disce omnes*. I discussed his prime witness above⁵⁴.

Likewise, mention is made of a vivid example for the *Historia Augusta*: Vita Severi 17, 5-19, 4 and Victor 20, 1-30⁵⁵. This example concerns an anecdote, also mentioned by Enmann⁵⁶ as a *pièce de résistance*, which is found in both authors. Anecdotes play an important part in biographies. It is impossible to discuss them all in the present study. For that reason, I, too, limit myself to *one* example. Allow me to apologize for this restriction.

The issues regarding the EKG are somewhat different from those concerning the SHA. In the case of the EKG discussion circled about one source for many authors. For the SHA Dessau, Syme, and others of similar opinions speak about many – at any rate more – sources. It is argued that an incorrect tradition brought it about that there were six authors. In reality *one* author wrote the Lives. The two theses are related but not identical. The similarity of the argumentation lies especially in the fact that only a *written* transmission is given consideration, a transmission which was extant and traveled from generation to generation. Here, a fundamental error is committed. For we must look for the tradition in rhetorical training and the exercise of memory in the schools. Another, final reason can be forwarded to explain a difference in the two theses regarding the EKG and the single author of the HA. The latter falls in the genre of biographies, while the former is an abridged history of imperial reigns. In the course of time this difference for Greek as well as Roman history became smaller⁵⁷. Nevertheless, one distinguishing mark remains, an element which is essential to real biographic works both in Greek and in Roman literature: the anecdote, the illustrative short story within a broader con-

54. Barnes, op. cit., 92-93.

55. The chief witnesses for this passage are, successively, Enmann, op. cit., 364-368, Dessau, *Hermes* 24, 889, 363-367, Syme, *H.A. Papers* 1983, 49-50. For a long time Hohl maintained a moderate point of view. I mention his name on account of the arguments presented in his earlier publications, which might be used to defend Dessau.

56. See previous note.

57. See Momigliano, quoted page 24.

text. Plutarch is perhaps the most masterly writer of such anecdotes, and for that reason he was an inspiration for Shakespeare. Sometimes positivists, but also less dogmatic historians, have attacked the transmission of anecdotes with vehement criticism: the anecdote was banished, accompanied by a similar judgement regarding biography. This is a modern infiltration, which has proved to be short-lived.

Anecdotes can be found in the epitomes, though they tend to predominate in biographies. But when the epitomists do employ them, the anecdotes are decked out with the same rhetorical embellishments found in the biographies. The thesis ought to be maintained that the recollection and the recording of the anecdotes can be traced back to the schools, which exercised the memory by providing examples.

Consider these two passages, which demand attention regarding the anecdote and its influence:

Victor 20 par. 25.26

nam cum pedibus aeger bellum moraretur idque milites anxie ferrent, eiusque filium Bassianum, qui Caesar una aderat, Augustum fecissent, in tribunal se ferri, adesse omnes, imperatoremque ac tribunos, centuriones ac cohortes quibus auctoribus acciderat, sisti reorum modo, iussit.

Quo metu cum stratus humi victor tantorum exercitus veniam precaretur: 'Sentitisne, inquit, pulsans manu, caput potius quam pedes imperare?'

vita Severi 18.9.10

idem cum pedibus aeger bellum moraretur idque milites anxie ferrent eiusque filium Bassianum, qui una erat, Augustum fecissent, tolli se atque in tribunal ferri iussit, adesse deinde omnes tribunos centuriones duces et cohortes quibus auctoribus id acciderat, sisti deinde filium, qui Augusti nomen acceperat. cumque animadverti in omnes auctores facti praeter filium iuberet rogareturque omnibus ante tribunal prostratis, caput manu contingens ait: 'Tandem sentitis caput imperare, non pedes'.

It is unnecessary to compare all the details of Victor 20 with Vita 18. In so far as martial exploits are concerned, there is no difference with the example I discussed about the troubles at the time of the tetrarchy. And the personal touches in Victor's report of Severus' government need little discussion: in this emperor he paid special attention and gave honour to a fellow countryman⁵⁸. What concerns us is a properly narrated anecdote, which belongs to biography. Not only is the identification of an anecdote taught, but also the arrangement of the narration, and technique. The anecdote which 'does the job', as it were, is presented and memorized. What Dessau attempted to prove remains *unproven*: 'Something like this comes from *one* author'. A similar tale can be told elsewhere to enliven the *bon mot* of an emperor: 'the head, not the feet, rules'.

58. I agree with Barnes, *The family and career of Septimius Severus*, *Historia* 16, 1967, 87-107, that mention of the opposite is scarcely made. The emperor pays little attention to his native soil.

History is learned through incidents. By these means it is grounded in the memory of the student. Thus we exercise history at one of the most simple levels at which it functions. But the incidents repeatedly have surprising effects, as the listeners themselves show. The minor variations in the anecdotes betray their origin in the oral tradition⁵⁹.

The mentality of the epitomists is superbly described by P.A. Brunt. He presents a fascinating treatment of the *Excerpta* of Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, concerning which he rightly remarks: 'in principal they were intended to be verbatim quotations'; Photius and Xiphelinus are not lacking to his catalogue. Their work is characterized by many quotations, aberrations, and omissions. Anecdotes and *bons mots* appear repeatedly in the epitomes, even though they actually belong to the biographies. (But why should an epitomist who strives to be interesting be concerned about the source of his anecdotes? There are so many at his disposal.) Brunt rightly mentions Florus, whose anecdotes 'are tricked out with turgid rhetoric'. It is difficult to identify literal quotations, especially since 'professed quotations come from memory' (479)⁶⁰. To conclude I add a typical evaluation concerning Plutarch: 'the abundance of his own citations... shows how his memory was stored from past reading (I add: and listening), and often he is merely paraphrasing from recollection; his use of the word *φησί* or the like, followed by *oratio recta*, is no guarantee of verbal exactitude, though *oratio obliqua* may, on the other hand, include actual quotations'⁶¹.

2. AN ANSWER TO A REQUEST

Hereby, I hope, I have provided a reply to the appeal made by P.L. Schmidt in RE⁶². I have no desire to follow in the steps of Dessau and

59. The translation reads approximately thus (it is derived from the *vita*, in accordance with the English translation of the LCL):

'On one occasion, when he so suffered from gout as to delay a campaign, his soldiers in their dismay conferred on his son Bassianus, who was with him at the time, the title of Augustus. Severus, however, had himself lifted up and carried to the tribunal, summoned all the tribunes, centurions, generals, and cohorts responsible for this occurrence, and after commanding his son, who had received the name Augustus, to stand up, gave order that all the authors of this deed, save only his son, should be punished. When they threw themselves before the tribunal and begged for pardon, Severus touched his head with his hand and said, 'Now at last you know that the head does the ruling, and not the feet'.

60. P.A. Brunt, *On historical fragments and epitomes*, CQ 30, 1980, 477-494.

61. Brunt, *op. cit.* 479. A reference to this paragraph of Brunt's article must suffice, though the passages which follow it are also relevant (and not only regarding Plutarch).

62. Schmidt, when he discusses Victor, formulates his question as follows: 'Die Skeptiker müssten sich dem Problem der Konvergenzen mit Eutrop stellen – sollte der Breviator wirklich eine so eigenwillige Selektion einem plan informierenden Compendium vorgezogen haben? – und die Frage nach A.V.s Vorlagen für das dritte Jhdt. präziser als Enmann beantworten'. RE Suppl. Bd. XIV, Col. 1668.

Enmann; much less to enter into a discussion with the participants of the Colloquia in Bonn. I wanted to show a way (one which they did not take) which in my opinion leads to significant results for the transmission and remembrance of texts. For this reason it is of primary importance that the members of the above-mentioned Colloquia restore rhetoric and mnemotechnics to their former place of honour. I have consciously avoided answering this question: to what extent was it possible that one or six authors wrote a historical treatise? For even a single person is able to adapt the mnemonics employed by many to his own situation. And so the theory suggested by Dessau and Syme remains a possibility. But then the questions once posed by Momigliano⁶³ become very significant indeed; for Syme did not answer them, and Dessau provided only partial and unsatisfactory answers. And the most important question remains: *Cui bono?*⁶⁴

Perhaps my thesis also provides an answer to the ultimate consequences which Dessau (1889, 392), draws for those who cling to the theory of the six authors: 'Wer dies thut, ist genöthigt, zwischen den einzelnen Verfassern eine Verbindung zu statuiren von einer Innigkeit, die, wie sie die gleiche Ausdrucksweise und Denkweise bei den sechsen zur Folge gehabt hat, auch wohl die sechse zu einer gemeinsamen Fälschung veranlasst haben kann'. The answer is obvious: the consequences are to be found in the training of the memory. The most impressive form is that wondrous discovery of the treasure-chamber of memory in the rhetoric of the Greeks, i.e. the Zodiac and its sections or *loci*, in which the *imagines* of history are stored.

Sometimes it seems that one can only speak of structure in *l'histoire de longue durée* and not of structure in the developments of more recent levels of history, which are defined as events of short or middle duration (F. Braudel⁶⁵).

63. A.D. Momigliano, especially his discussion of Syme's *Emperors and Biography* EHR 88, 1973, 114-115 (= Sesto Contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico, Rome 1980, vol. 2, 714-716, esp. 715). Finally, cf. also *idem*, in his review of Syme's *Roman Papers III* (1984) and *Historia Augusta Papers* (1983) in TLS October 12, 1984, 1147-8. In discussing the latter, Momigliano admits that the research has produced some good results. Occassionally, in my opinion, he is even too mild in his criticism; for example his appreciation for recent computer research (see 3. Mnemotechnics, p. 31 ff. below). However, he rightly maintains the views he expressed in his first article (1954) about this subject, and states: 'I must go on reasserting that for me the *Historia Augusta* remains the 'unsolved problem of historical forgery'. The article which appeared in 1954 has been republished (among others) in *Studies in Historiography* (1966), 142 ff.

64. Dessau, *Hermes* 27 (1892) 605: 'Freilich muss ich eingestehen, dass ich nicht Alles erklären kann. Ich muss es ablehnen, in Allem und Jedem, was unser Autor sich erlaubt hat, eine *ratio* finden zu wollen; er wird manches ohne die Spur einer solchen gethan haben; dafür war er eben ein obscurer Fälscher'.

65. The structure of human history on three different levels is at the basis of F. Braudel's 'La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II'. The historian's

The conclusion however, which this study makes is that originally the *histoire événementielle*, i.e. short-term history, pre-eminently the domain of the historian *tout court*, has a form, or rather, a structure of such uniformity as Dessau brilliantly demonstrated (though he did not know its origin). And this essay is intended to be a token of my deepest respect for this great pioneer. As printing was not known in Antiquity, a period in which there was at most an interest in history as a form of rhetoric and mnemotechnics, a grand system was known and common to many. We would have to study 'les cadres astrologiques de la mémoire'.

3. MNEMOTECHNICS

Metrodorus' attempts and the experiments of the Auctor ad Herennium, which I have discussed above⁶⁶, are of greater significance for the computer results than one might think. In the opinion of many, the computer has ended the conflict in favour of Dessau, Syme, and their partisans. One representative of this viewpoint, the well-respected organizer of the Colloquia in Bonn, Johannes Straub, is worthy of quotation: 'Dass wir es mit einem einzigen Autor zu tun haben, wird mittlerweile kaum mehr bezweifelt; sogar die moderne Computerwissenschaft hat diese Entdeckung Dessaus vor kurzem bestätigt und damit eine besonders willkommene Jubiläumsausgabe (d.h. 90 Jahre nach H. Dessau) dargebracht'⁶⁷. But in my opinion this rejoicing is premature, if all of the six writers enjoyed the same education. If my interpretation of the situation is accurate, then precisely those Lives which *follow* the *vita* of Caracalla provide the deepest insights. A very unified style and arrangement of reporting events far removed from the most recent record could be taught. And as much as history approached the lifetime of the writers, so did the practice of the

old domain lies on the lowest level: the quick time of the watch and the hours and the days, the *histoire événementielle*. More important is the second level, that of economic systems, social structures, and cultural roots of lasting influence (these roots are also the subject of cultural anthropology, in French terminology called 'histoire des mentalités'). The most important and highest level of existence is provided by nearly timeless structures of geographical surroundings, determined by geological time, structures showing hardly any alteration. This nearly motionless time is as it were symbolized by the sea, i.e. the Méditerranée, basis of the mediterranean world, which is the subject of Braudel's famous book (1949, new edition 1966).

One has to agree with Lawrence Stone that the books of F. Braudel 'will rank among the greatest historical writings of any time and place. They alone fully justify the adoption for a generation of the analytical and structural approach' (L. Stone, *The Past and the Present*, London, Boston Mass. 1981, 79). One has to add that the study of oral tradition will continue to demonstrate that the 'histoire des événements' has its proper place in the practice of historiography. The reason is obvious. Originally the small facts were stored in the treasure-house of human memory.

66. Concerning Metrodorus of Scepsis and the Auctor ad Herennium see above, page 12 ff.

67. BHAC 14 (1980), 'Vorwort' p.ix.

schools permit the students to choose and invent topics; 'bogus' emperors and 'bogus' usurpers are not produced by *one* falsifier, but they are the products of the imperfect attempts of the students and their fantasy. The more recent as well as the older lives reflect a system of education which made free use of clichés and which gave the students freedom in the choice of the topic⁶⁸ but not in style. One of the most important aspects of style, the length of the period, determined the results of the computer tests. I do not doubt those results. But the experts were not properly informed by those who commissioned them, for it ought to have been pointed out that the Lives are the products of *one* consistent and unchanging education. This fact is, in my opinion, a very important one in the 'good' lives as well as the 'bad' ones. Well then, if this view is correct, the computer experts must admit that they have been led up the garden path by false information. One must not assume malevolent intentions on behalf of either party, the computer programmers or those who gave them their information. It was the nature of the subject matter which misled them.

R. Syme is disappointed. The following quotation, taken from his latest contribution, reveals the strange attitude which he has towards his own research: 'Plural authors for the HA being now discountenanced, much writing goes down the drain. One fate carries off the learned along with the lazy, the clever no less than the credulous'. His bitterness is of such a nature that he conceives the issue to be between the 'clever' and the 'credulous'. Elsewhere he labels the 'credulous' with the even more contemptuous term 'the faithful', as if his opponents are not academics but believers. In the end he offers a consolation to this group which he detests and despises. For the enemy was not defeated by the arguments of their academic opponents, arguments based on historical fact, style, and structure. No, it was the computer which defeated them. And finally he turns his attention to his own supporters and himself. They too are disappointed because they laboured for years without having obtained a glorious victory, gained by their own efforts. No, they are like labourers in a vineyard, hard workers, to whom the villainous and scheming scoundrel occasional-

68. Sometimes the students are interested in legal matters and perhaps the instructor aroused their curiosity. For examples of interest in law see, D. Liebs, *Alexander Severus und das Strafrecht* BHAC 14, 1977/78, (1980), 115-147. *Idem*, *Strafrechtliches in der Tacitus-vita* BHAC 16 (1979/81), (1983), 157-171. The information shows traces of fourth-century facts, besides interest in military matters. See H. Rösger, *Die Darstellung des Perserfeldzugs des Severus Alexander in der HA*, BHAC 13, 1975/76, (1978), *idem*, *Princeps mundi, Zum römischen Weltherrschaftsgedanken in der HA*, BHAC 15, 1979/81 (1983), 255-273, which reflects upon the dissertation of the author, *Herrschererziehung in der HA*, diss. Bonn 1978. In the schools freedom was given to the students, wherever possible, to study on their own the topics in the collected compositions, perhaps even to emend them.

ly proffered a refreshment⁶⁹. In reply to this incorrect allusion⁷⁰ to Matt. 20, 1-16, given in the fashion of his dear 'impostor', one could quote P.A. Brunt's statement regarding Syme's latest publication: 'Some may feel that too much of it has been devoted to an unworthy object, the *Historia Augusta*'⁷¹.

Nevertheless, I feel the same respect for Syme as I do for Dessau. His many contributions have expanded our knowledge. We are closer to an accurate date for the SHA. The assumption that the book comes from around 400 is generally accepted, and I subscribe to this dating.

But I do have a different attitude towards the SHA than the one generally assumed. I consider it a useless and cheap reaction to a serious possibility: how can there be 'pure delight' in the fact that 'believers' have been beguiled by the 'impostor'? The origin of the book must be explained in the following manner.

The good as well as the bad compositions of the students were preserved in the libraries of the schools of rhetoric. Many schools had collections of five finger exercises made up about rulers who never existed. There were also more serious accounts, which in earlier times were corrected by fairly competent teachers. That time had passed when Victor wrote around 360. Especially the schools in outlying areas such as Pannonia and Moesia had instructors of poor quality and students of small promise. In earlier times the situation had been better. As far as we know, no emperor in the past personally requested a compendium which was to be short, a 'breviary of a breviary', such as Festus wrote for Valens⁷². I imagine that there were also many biographies about rulers which were not embellished by fabrications, on account of the demand for brevity.

The school archives would have preserved examples of such breviaries as well. And one must imagine that 'advanced' pupils were permitted to make use of the archive. In modern time too there are those who make their acquaintance with such archives. There is a great number of professors who keep the written projects of their students. I myself attempt to return these 'papers' to their authors after they have passed the examination, but I have often noticed that my colleagues destroyed such collections upon retirement, or only then made an attempt to return the presen-

69. It can hardly be more malicious. See 'Controversy Abating and Credulity Curbed?', *Historia Augusta Papers* 209-223: 'For the faithful, a sombre consolation awaits. They were not confuted through the mere appeal to language, style and structure. The computer did it. By the same token, disappointment for those who had laboured in the vineyard or derived refreshment from fiction and imposture. At the eleventh hour a machine cheats them of reward', *op cit.*, 213.

70. Not a word about 'refreshment' for those who had laboured in the vineyard!

71. P.A. Brunt in his discussion of Roman Papers III in *CR* 34, 1984, p. 349.

72. See my *Some Roman Minor Historians*, Leiden 1972, 173 ff.

tations. In the schools of rhetoric similar archives must have existed in which examples and *imagines* could be found, which were definite aids in education. Well then, I imagine that such schools possessed their own archives, but their common system of education, their common methods of operation, and perhaps even their common idiomatic expressions. I maintain this hypothesis on the grounds that even modern schools, as long as the memory is held in honour, cultivate their own language, style, and structure. It goes without saying that the intrinsic value of the products from the old schools could differ. But certain elements of style remained unchanged. One such element was sentence structure. If one agrees with this representation of the facts, then the computer research bears no fruit.

The 'Six'

Who are hidden behind the six names? Prosopographic studies have shed no light on the question. Only hypothesis is possible. I am in the same position as Dessau; see his dilemma quoted in note 64. My hypothesis suggests an intermingling of teachers and students, a mass of professional examples and clumsy attempts.

The names could have been chosen tongue-in-cheek; a *vir clarissimus* may mean an ambitious student. A name which appears several times may refer to one or more instructors.

The name of a single author and his work may have been used for decades, so that differences hardly exist in the methods of instruction and in practice material.

Included in the exercises are directions given by the instructors, but also the attempts made by the students. And these exercises are preserved in the archives of the school (or schools).

The achievements of the 'six' are a portfolio from such an archive. At times they remained unused, at other times those examples which were didactically successful were used more than once. The specimens presented by better students could also be re-used. We must refrain from passing judgment on the aesthetic quality of these different types of contribution.

Which version remained extant – and at what level of reshaping – can not be ascertained on account of the fact that no material for comparison exists to any hypothesis from modern research.

The 'six' are a chance conglomeration of many notations and unconnected stories of earlier and later time, inextricably intertwined. It is no wonder that the style, content, and chronology of these fragments caused havoc for the scholars. Even Salmasius was unsuccessful in his attempt to reconstruct *the* text satisfactorily, because *the* text never existed. And since very few philologists exist who are equipped with such an impressive knowledge of Latin as Claude Saumaise possessed, any attempt to imitate or emulate him seems as pointless as the search to square the circle.

So much has to be kept in mind, that the schools of the Danubian provinces must have been important. Their influence was a determining factor in the origin of the later Rumanian form of Latin⁷³.

It may seem that the theory defended here does not apply to the time when the printing trade was already in existence; but even then there were instances of this theory. A case in point are the scholars who were endowed with exceptional memory. Casaubon⁷⁴ was one such scholar, and we may assume that J.J. Scaliger had similar abilities⁷⁵. After the development of printing a number of men with capable memories have been known to exist. As I said, I do not claim that they did *not* exist *before* the development of printing. But in the case of the SHA convincing evidence is still needed, for until now no decisive evidence for one author has been provided by means of the methods employed by and adapted to computer research.

Examples of Metrodorus' method are not known, but a quest for them has never been made. It is often pointed out that astrology played a role in historical expositions. We are able to collect and explain astrological data found in a work of literature. Syme provided an excellent example of this in 'Astrology in the *Historia Augusta*'⁷⁶, but he did not mention what the authors took for granted, namely, a principle of division derived from astrology.

When I say 'derived from astrology' I may be going too far. For astronomy could just as easily have been the source. It is well-known how these two fields were confused by Kepler⁷⁷. The H.A. illustrates the relationship

73. Languages in the Roman Empire:

See recently A.D. Momigliano, *Settimo contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome 1984), 463-473; short bibliography in note 1 of this article (originally published in *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Serie III*, vol. XII, fasc. 3, 1982, 1105-1115). Further research has to be done. The alternative I would recommend for a special study has been put forward by F. Millar in his paper 'Local cultures in the Roman Empire'. He asked himself whether the population of the Danubian provinces normally spoke their native languages... 'or did they speak a vulgar Latin perhaps with local peculiarities? That possibility may remind us of how much the social history of the Roman Empire as we know it is based on the partial and unsatisfactory testimony of formal inscriptions', *JRS* 58, 1968, 126-134, especially 127.

74. Cf. M. Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon 1559-1614*, London 1875, 481 ff.

75. J. Bernays, *Joseph Justus Scaliger*, 1855, reprinted 1965, Osnabrück 1965, 35 and 119 f. A. Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger, A study in the history of classical scholarship I* (Oxford 1983), 102 f.

76. This article was first published in *BHAC* 1972/4, 1976, 291 ff. (= *HAP* 1983, 80 ff.).

77. See Friedrich Dannemann, *Die Naturwissenschaften in ihrem Zusammenhang*, Leipzig 1921, Bd. II, p.115, where he calls some of Kepler's pronouncements 'Voraussage des Wetters und der politischen Ereignisse'. 'Dies Geschäft' nannte er 'eitelste, aber notwendige Amtsarbeit'. 'Mutter Astronomie müsste gewisslich Hunger leiden', sagte er ein anderes Mal, 'wenn die Tochter Astrologie nicht das Brot erwürbe'. He does allow the possibility of 'eine Einwirkung kosmischer Vorgänge auf irdische Gegebenheiten' (for exam-

through the use of the term *mathematicus*, which denoted the astronomer as well as the astrologer.

4. SUMMARY

The SHA ought to be seen as the products of their age. Such a view includes the following:

1. At that time rhetoric and rhetorical training were common to the jurist and the man of letters. Often the latter supplied the former with specific facts. The structure is rhetorical. Thus Enmann's data are accurate, but the assignment to one source is incorrect.
2. At that time the oral tradition was influential; it is seen not only in the form of anecdotes, but also in the series of tales about personal life, familial relations, campaigns. Such material often transmitted errors. These errors do not stem from *one source* but from the schools.
3. The weakness of mnemotechnic training is seen in the inaccuracy of the facts. Errors are perpetrated through mnemotechnics. And in this respect every age has its errors. Parallels can be found in even the most recent history: the second World War, or parliamentary investigations.
4. When facts are not available, as in the case of the later and more poorly written lives of emperors and usurpers, facts are invented; the writer constructs his history in analogy to (or in contrast with) previous circumstances. And when a topic such as Claudius (II) or Tacitus (the emperor) is treated, or when mention is made of a Marius, the writers looked to identical names in the past and constructed a pattern accordingly. This too is a product of rhetorical training.

I will finish by reporting one more fact worthy of note. The indexes show that none of the recent writers of the BHAC used Quintilian, the *Auctor ad Herennium*, or the rhetorical works of Cicero in their study of sources. It is no wonder that Lloyd-Jones was forced to conclude (*Classical Survivals*, 1982, 79): 'It has not won universal assent'.

It is best to conclude this summary with a quotation of a scholar who knew the influence of the oral tradition for the period of the SHA better than anyone else. A.D. Nock was the best modern authority for the all-encompassing discipline of education, namely rhetoric, which sometimes appears in the shape of diatribe. Nock's masterly treatment of the develop-

ple comets). It is curious that Calvin rejected astrology as art of predicting individual destinies (differing from Melancthon). See J. Calvin, *Traité contre l'astrologie judiciaire*, éd. O. Millet, Genève 1985. It seems plausible that J.J. Scaliger's admiration for Calvin as a scholar (*Scaligerana* II, 250) found its origin in the fact that he agreed with this theologian's views concerning astrology. For Scaliger see A.T. Grafton and N.M. Swerdon, 'Technical chronology and astrological history in Varro, Censorinus and others', (*CQ* 35, 1985, 454-465), explicitly in their conclusion (465).

ment of spiritual life and education is found in Sallustius, *Concerning the Gods and the Universe*, Cambridge 1926, Chapter 1: The Intellectual Background. One of the things he states about the 2nd to 4th centuries A.D. is 'For very many the teacher of rhetoric was the sole source of higher education' (XXV-XXVI). He places special emphasis upon this well-known fact: 'Throughout antiquity the spoken word counted for more than the written word' (XXIX).

APPENDIX I

Analogies are worthless. An emphatic disclaimer is in place. Syme discussed examples, as did Momigliano when he wrote, 'Syme can point to the analogy of forgeries as those perpetrated by Sir Edmund Backhouse, the Hermit of Peking'⁷⁸.

I could provide evidence to the contrary by mentioning detective novels. Ellery Queen is *one* name for two authors. Per Sjöwall and his wife Maj Wahlöö offer a second example. Upon his death she gave the following report about their collaboration in all their published novels:

Interviewer: 'How did you write together?'

Maj Sjöwall-Wahlöö: For about a week we would discuss a book, its theme, plot, and characters. And then the day would come when we'd be ready to write. By then we'd have short synopses of all the chapters (explanatory note: 'Beck-policiér' includes precisely thirty); each synopsis was very short and written on a little slip of paper. There would be only a few lines, for example, *Lennart Kollberg and Martin Beck visit a widow and her daughter in Djursholm and it is stifling hot*. We would work solely in the evening and at night... around ten o'clock we'd start to work. Seated at two desks shoved together, we would work by candle-light and have at hand all the necessary material: maps, notes on conversations, forensic sentences, etc. Each of us would have such a little synopsis; Per started with chapter 1 while I started with the second. That's how it went.

Interviewer: That is impossible!

Maj Sjöwall-Wahlöö: It certainly isn't. When you know each other for some time, when you think about and discuss together a story for about seven months... We produced no book by sitting down at the desk with a blank piece of paper.

Interviewer: What about the style? Or did an 'editor' then take over?

Maj Sjöwall-Wahlöö: No. Of course you need a lot of time to develop a particular style together, a particular vocabulary and feeling for words. When we started we wrote with a very similar style – short, full of detail. For we both did the same kind of work.

Interviewer: Did you re-write?

78. Syme, HAP, 129, 217, Momigliano TLS 1984, 1148.

Maj Sjöwall-Wahlöö: Never! I hate re-writing; besides, I would be unable to. Per wouldn't be able to either.⁷⁹

I will not claim conclusive evidence from these examples! However, I do recommend a *juridical* dissertation on this topic: *Poe and After* (The Detective Story Investigated), by P.H. de Vries (Amsterdam: Free University, 1956).

Colleagues, whom I consulted for their expertise in modern literature, assure me that repeatedly one person's 'creativity' is assumed where in reality more authors were involved. Here follow three examples from the period of German Romanticism:

1. Tieck-Wackenroder; 2. Literary circles in which the periodical *Athenäum* was popular; 3. The first idealistic manifesto: Schelling-Hölderlin-Hegel. The term *symphilosophein* was not unheard in these circles.

In surrealism the reduction to one author was a popular device, contrary to all historical evidence. The co-operation between Breton and Eluard in *L'Immaculée Conception* is a case in point (With thanks to S. Dresden for this information).

The conclusion is evident: in other fields Dessau had predecessors and successors, but their intentions did not lead posterity astray.

79. VN (Vrij Nederland, a leading Dutch weekly) Jan. 6, 1985, p.5.

APPENDIX II

A practical example of the functioning of memory. L.A. Post, whose article concerning Ancient Memory Systems has already been mentioned⁸⁰, applied the method described in the Auctor as Herennium to his son. The results are so remarkable that they must be reported. Post's son was required to learn by heart a poem given him by his teacher.

'The poem to be learned was Hemans, The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, as given in a school textbook of English. It has ten stanzas of four lines each. [I treat three of them]. The first stanza is as follows:

The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches tossed.

The instructions I gave my son for learning follow.

Put this verse on the porch of 1 College Lane. You know what the porch looks like. Now you see the breaking waves dash high at one side of it. You see them break – then dash – so high that they wet the porch roof. See now just to the right a stern and rockbound coast. You can remember that it is stern because there is the stern of a wrecked ship showing among the waves. You also see the rocks. The woods are tossing their branches. You see them moving furiously up and down, and among the branches you see a giant. Now repeat the stanza, seeing the pictures.

When the first stanza had thus been accurately connected with a series of pictures seen in the frame of 1 College Lane, the second stanza was pictured on the lawn at the side of 2 College Lane. The porch was not chosen this time, because it was not sufficiently different from the porch of 1. The second stanza does not lend itself to vivid picturization. Consequently arbitrary symbols were used for enough words to recall the lines. The stanza runs as follows:

And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moored their bark
On the wild New England shore.

80. See above, note 7.

It would be possible to put in a symbol for each word, but that was not found necessary in practice. A vague picture of hills and waters in the night time was enough, supplemented by two symbols. To suggest the first word 'and' a red hand was planted against the dark sky, and for 'heavy' a yellow spring scale, fully stretched was placed to the right of it. This was enough: the boy actually recalled the first two lines with no other assistance. The stanza was completed by a single picture for the last two lines with no artificial symbols.

Not as the conqueror comes
 They the true-hearted came,
 Not with the roll of the stirring drums
 And the trumpet that sings of fame.

[Here also the stanza was represented locally by a 'background', *locus*.]

It is a very suggestive fact that the pictorial images used in memory work are extraordinarily similar to primitive picture-writing. Even the artificial punning methods used are also found in early writing, as they are in the kind of puzzle known as the rebus. While no proof is possible, it seems to me a wholly reasonable speculation to suppose that primitive men achieved their remarkable feats of memory because they possessed and organized vivid pictorial powers, and that early writing arose naturally from the graphic representation of precisely the pictures by which a series of events or a poem was remembered. It is a well-known fact that primitive pictures are a transfer of memory images. The same may well be true of the earliest forms of writing. Painting remained representational while writing is now entirely symbolic.'

One could object by claiming that Post's example deals with a poem, and that the prose of history has different demands. That is true, but the difference is irrelevant for the student who has completed the exercise. The examples of the *anecdotes* and *bons mots* mentioned earlier bridge the gap between poetry and prose. There is no difference in the method of memorization. The mnemonics are the same.

In an enlightening book⁸¹ J. de Romilly gives surprising confirmation that the differences between prose and poetry become negligible when rhetoric comes into play. She argues that when rhetoric had to prove itself in the fifth century B.C., poetry stood in its path. Gorgias was its greatest advocate. For him an oration was a form of poetic skill, only one lacking in meter. According to Gorgias, poetry provided the highly important possibility to ensure the attention of the audience by means of its magical and emotional appeal. His prose ought to have the same effect. In practice this meant that Gorgias began to employ the stylistic devices of poetry in

81. J. de Romilly, *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece*, Cambridge, Mass., 1975.

his prose works. In Romilly's opinion, Gorgias' most important contribution was as follows: except for the stylistic devices, he borrowed from the model of magic those devices which he deemed essential for his rhetorical aims. In an enlightening essay⁸² she had already discussed the magic spell of poetry. I regret that I have only given a passing reference to her important results, interesting though they are for our topic.

It may seem a ludicrous progression of thought to connect Gorgias' problem to the problems of historical mnemonics during the time of intellectual decline. It is so easy for critics to seize the opportunity to bring their imaginary, mocking falsifier onto the scene as an amused spectator of his own schemes. However, two considerations allow us to make this comparison between Gorgias and the SHA. First, great thinkers such as Plotinus and Augustus, both living during a time when the schools of rhetoric were languishing, recognized and respected the magical power of the memory⁸³. And second, the magic of later antiquity – after Metrodorus called upon astrology to aid the exercise of memory in the form of the Zodiac – is a badly neglected child of poetry's power of enchantment, in its written as well as spoken form⁸⁴. The magic spell of both poetry and rhetoric was building the frame-work for saving the past from oblivion.

82. J. de Romilly, *Gorgias et le pouvoir de la poésie*, JHS 93 (1973), 155-162.

83. Cf. above, note 9.

84. Cf. above, p. 8-10.