THE FRAGMENTS OF THE ROMAN HISTORIANS: CONVENTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES[*]

The Fragments of the Roman Historians. Volume 1: Introduction; Volume 2: Texts and Translations; Volume 3: Commentary. T. J. Cornell, General Editor. Editorial Committee: E. H. Bispham, T. J. Cornell, J. W. Rich, C. J. Smith. Contributors: E. H. Bispham, J. Briscoe, T. J. Cornell, A. Drummond†, B. M. Levick, S. J. Northwood, S. P. Oakley, M. P. Pobjoy, J. W. Rich, C. J. Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. l + 662, viii + 1159, viii + 829. ISBN for the set: 978-0-19-927705-6.

This essay elaborates on the interest of the *FRHist* with the context in which citations of lost texts occur. Attention to context offers a welcome reminder that Roman writers and modern readers play the deciding role in what counts as a 'fragment' of a lost author preserved in indirect traditions, and encourages a fresh look at the narrative and authorial significance for surviving authors of citing and evaluating lost sources. Tacitus, for example, can be read as appropriating the authority of his specialist sources, and even those sources he criticises play an important role in the narrative context in which they are cited.

I

When the younger Pliny (*Epist.* 5.8.) responds to Titinius Capito's suggestion to write history, that the materials are abundant but the collation of sources a burden, he reveals the expectation that collation must be undertaken by the historian, whatever his personal opinion of it. When Tacitus has the Smyrnaeans invoke the evidence of Lucius Cornelius Sulla in the course of their contest with the Sardians over who should host a temple to Tiberius, Livia, and the senate, he gives the impression that invoking Sulla clinched it for the Smyrnaeans (*Ann.* 4.56.2 = *FRHist* 22 F 27; cf. 4.15.3). Tacitus mentioned Sulla not merely to pass on a debt of knowledge or to narrate

their speech in its fullness but because he was aware of the authenticating power of such source references.

This awareness of the need for source comparison and sensitivity to the rhetorical function of source citation are two factors that contributed to the survival of traces from otherwise lost works of ancient history. We are almost entirely dependent on surviving historians for these traces. The new *Fragments of the Roman Historians* collects 1,203 'fragments' (I.38), of which only two are fragments in the material sense of text preserved on papyrus (*FRHist* 109) and parchment (*FRHist* 110), both unattributable with any certainty to known historians. Practically all the 'fragments' of these lost historians are preserved in an indirect tradition, i.e. derive from the purported direct quotation or paraphrase or description by surviving authors (I.3). There is, for example, no Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, or Granius Licinianus in the collection because these authors survive in manuscript traditions of their own.[1]

The *Fragments of the Roman Historians* offers a salutary reminder that traces of lost historians do not emerge unbidden from their literary contexts as 'fragments'.[2] Such collections are an artificial construction that results from a two-stage process. Firstly, traces of the lost historical texts are preserved through the working method of citation, quotation, paraphrase, and description performed by surviving citing authors for a wide variety of reasons. These citing authors have made decisions about whom to describe as an historian or not, and about what to describe as historical or not on the basis of their knowledge of the lost historians and their works and of their own artistic motivations. Secondly, modern scholars have made decisions about what they consider to be fragments of lost historians and their works, largely but not exclusively on the basis of an understanding of the first stage. Modern scholarly and editorial decisions are so fundamental to the delineation of the corpus of lost historians that it is fair to say that fragments are 'constructed' rather than 'discovered'.

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[1] Since the historical works of Livy and Tacitus, and Nepos' *de uiris illustribus*, survive in bulk and can be consulted in separate editions, the editors have excluded them from *FRHist* (I.8). Actually they should have been excluded on the ground that their works are mostly transmitted directly, even if 'fragments' occur in an indirect tradition.

[2] Cf. A. C. Dionisotti, 'On Fragments in Classical Scholarship', in G. W. Most, ed., *Collecting Fragments / Fragmente Sammeln* (Göttingen, 1997) 1–33 at 1: 'Generally speaking, classical fragments are made rather than born …'. Several of the issues relating to the delineation of fragments, and the importance of attention to context, are discussed in the essential essay on the subject by P. A. Brunt, 'On Historical Fragments and Epitomes', *CQ* 30 (1980) 477–91. I offer some remarks on fragments in my review of C. Smith and A. Powell, edd., *The Lost Memoirs of Augustus and the Development of Roman Autobiography* (Swansea, 2009), at *CR* 63 (2012) 119–21.

The editors define history as 'prose works dealing with some or all of the history of Rome and presented primarily in the form of a chronological narrative of political and military events' (I.7). They have restricted themselves to works written in Greek and Latin by native Romans who are described as historians by respected, surviving Roman authors or described as writing *historiae, annales,* or *res gestae* in prose (I.7–8; these descriptions might also have been generated by the lost historians describing themselves and their works). The exclusion of non-native Romans (i.e. those who acquired Roman citizenship) goes unexplained and removes from consideration authors such as Poseidonius of Apamea. The editors have defined history rather narrowly, and they could have discussed the nature of the genre more explicitly; do they judge it to include ethnography, which is a feature of several of the lost texts cited? Antiquarians, those writers of works 'dealing with the past of Rome but not in the form of chronologically organized narratives of political and military events', have been excluded, partly because of restrictions on space, but particularly because 'it is certain' that the Romans did not consider antiquarians to be historians (I.8). This explanation may seem specious in view of the editors' decision to include biographies of public figures and personal memoirs or autobiographies by public figures for reasons of utility, but without any intellectual justification and despite their admission that '… such works were not deemed histories by the Romans' (I.8). The conception of history that the *Fragments* offers is neither exclusively Roman nor modern, but an arbitrary mixture of the two.

Typographical conventions lay bare the artificiality of the genre. The editors use **bold type** to distinguish 'material attributed by the citing authority to the lost source' and paraphrased or described, and ***bold italics*** to identify material purported by the citing author to be a verbatim quotation (I.15). The editors here slip into the language of 'discovery'—the starting point is material *attributed by the citing authority* to the lost source—but they qualify these conventions and admit, as they must, that it can be unclear what the citing author intends to attribute to the source; the context of the attributed material can also derive from the same cited source, and paraphrase and description of lost material too might include original wording (I.15–16). Faced with such problems the editors have emboldened 'only those elements of the text that can with reasonable confidence be taken as attributed to the source, but in the knowledge that the fragment may in fact extend much further' (I.15). Here, more appropriately, the language of editorial negotiation and 'construction' may be glimpsed. The clear designation of material attributed to the lost historian may be seen by the suspicious sort of critic to close down interpretation by imposing limits on the fragment, the authoritative bold emphasis imposed by the authority of the editorial team. In fact the convention invites the reader to engage in

the process of deciding what counts as material from the lost historian. Editorial comments make it clear that they aim to present the material for readers to perform their own evaluation, as well as to 'to make readers aware of the limits of what can be known' about the lost works and their authors (I.3). Those limits are often negotiable.

The editors' rightly quote with varying degrees of fullness the text surrounding the material attributed to the lost source. Fragments can then be determined and interpreted in their context. Decisions about what counts and does not count as a fragment are often based on how the citing author introduces source material. Suetonius mentions Augustus' autobiography at *Aug.* 85.1 (= *FRHist* 60 T 1) but not explicitly in those places where he cites what Augustus wrote about his ancestry, his wife, and himself (60 FF 11, 13, 17). These citations are judged only 'possible' fragments, presumably because Suetonius does not name the Augustan source text; but from where else could they have come? The editors' method here seems unduly cautious, particularly in view of the position they take on 60 F 1, which is presented as a verbatim quotation from the *Autobiography*. Consideration of contexts can influence the evaluation of the extent of a fragment. For example, since Plutarch appears to attribute to Augustus an admission that he feared for his life in the period before he took the consulship in 43 B.C. (*Cic.* 45.6 = *FRHist* 60 F 13), it may be reasonable to extend the material Plutarch apparently drew from Augustus at *Brut.* 27.1–3 to include the fear Augustus is said to have felt in the same period (60 F 6). Finally, quotation of context encourages readers to consider how the citing author uses his source material—the subject of the next section.

II

The *Fragments of the Roman Historians* will provoke discussion about what can be known of the lost historians that are cited and the history that they are understood to have written. Studying the fragments can also shed light on the methodology of the citing authors.

Tacitus is thought to have cited 11 authors on 18 occasions. These figures reflect his explicit identification mainly in the *Histories* and *Annals* of literary sources that are regarded as historical, and do not take into account his use of the unnamed sources, such as those mentioned throughout his ethnographic digression on the history of the Jews at *Hist.* 5.2–8, his use of writings in other genres, and his use of non-literary evidence. All citations fall into the category of paraphrase or description. Tacitus does not claim to offer verbatim quotations: it would be surprising if he did in view of the

methodology of ancient historians generally[3] and of his own approach to the emperor Claudius' speech on the admission of the Gallic elite to the Roman senate in particular (*ILS* 212; *Ann.* 11.24).

Discussion of Tacitus' sources for the *Annals* has generally been concerned with how many and which literary sources he has used at any given time, and with the extent of his consultation of non-literary evidence such as *senatus consulta* and, especially, the *acta senatus*, thanks in main to the strenuous argumentative and imaginative efforts of Ronald Syme (cf. I.131). When practically nothing but the reputation of Servilius Nonianus survives and not much more of Aufidius Bassus, and nothing in the shape of a fragment of either in Tacitus, one may be forgiven for considering it futile to explore the extent of Tacitus' use of them in the *Annals*.[4] The single reference to the *acta senatus* at *Ann.* 15.74.3 does not inspire confidence in Tacitus' systematic use of such archival material, and a special citation may suggest irregular use. Here as elsewhere Tacitus conformed to the practice of ancient historiographers.

One recent strategy for avoiding this *cul de sac* of *Quellenforschung* is to seek intertextual relationships between Tacitus and other works, including his source material. For example, Tacitus seems to offer a malicious parody of the language of the *Res Gestae* when he places in the mouths of knowledgeable but critical spectators at Augustus' funeral a hostile description of Augustus' entrance into public life (*Ann.* 1.10.1). C. S. Kraus and A. J. Woodman argue that Tacitus is not using the *Res Gestae* 'as a "source" (the facts will in any case have been well known), but as an inviting text whose official line he could subject to malicious reinterpretation'.[5] This is impossible to test, and the distinction is unnecessary: Tacitus can use the *Res Gestae* as a source and engage allusively with it.[6] Even in those cases where Tacitus is thought to focalise allusion to an author or text through the characters in his narrative, he may be allusively engaging with his source material. Kraus and Woodman consider it reasonable to propose that the similarity between Tacitus' version of the debate on governors' wives at *Annals* 3.33–4 and Livy's version of the debate on the status of women at 34.2–7 (195 B.C.) was the result of Tacitus' dispensing with originals and

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[3] See e.g. J. Marincola, 'Speeches in Classical Historiography', in id., ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Malden, Mass. and Oxford, 2009) I.118–32 at 120. (I am not concerned here with Tacitus' purported verbatim quotation of characters in his text.)

[4] Cf. I.521, 523–24.

[5] *Latin Historians* (*Greece and Rome* New Surveys in the Classics, no. 27; Oxford, 1997) 98.

[6] F. Haverfield, 'Four Notes on Tacitus', *JRS* 2 (1912) 195–200, at 197–9.

composing the debate from a combination of *inventio* and the text of Livy.[7] This is a deeply problematic approach where Tacitus' sources do not survive. In fact, Tacitus' handling of the inscribed version of Claudius' speech on the Gauls in *Annals* 11 offers a lead on his method elsewhere: he discerned Claudius' debt to Livy and worked Livian material into his own version of the Claudian original.[8] He most probably took the same approach in constructing the debate on governors' wives.

Intertextual analysis does not solve the problem of source analysis, and it will not advance the study of the fragmentary historians, since we rely on Tacitus and other surviving authors for our knowledge of them and their works. But examining the context and form of Tacitus' citation of his sources can illuminate his methodology and his appreciation of the rhetorical function of citing and glossing his sources.

Tacitus consulted more than one source at a time: at *Ann.* 4.53 (= *FRHist* 77 F 1) he states that the *scriptores annalium* do not record an item about the elder Agrippina that he found in the memoirs of her daughter (see below), and a few chapters later he expressions reservations about the *communis opinio* that he has followed on the reasons why Tiberius retired to Capri (*Ann.* 4.57.1). Tacitus admits to performing the source collation that Pliny considered such drudgery, when at *Ann.* 13.20.2 (= *FRHist* 80 F 4) he cites Fabius Rusticus, the elder Pliny, and Cluvius Rufus—three of his main sources[9]—and remarks that he will follow the consensus opinion (*nos consensum auctorum secuturi, quae diversa prodiderint, sub nominibus ipsorum trademus*). Tacitus makes this claim about his method going forward into the later *Annals* (*secuturi*), and his discussion at *Ann.* 14.2 (= *FRHist* 84 F 3) of the question whether Agrippina or Nero initiated incestuous relations bears this out: he privileges the version of Cluvius Rufus that Agrippina took the leading role over that of Fabius Rusticus that it was Nero, reports that other authors give the same version as Cluvius Rufus, and then narrates a *fama* that supports it. Source comparison was a feature of Tacitus' general approach, whether he makes the process explicit (cf. *Hist.* 3.28.1, *Hormine id ingenium, ut Messala tradit, an potior auctor sit C. Plinius, qui Antonium incusat, haud facile discreverim*; *Ann.* 1.13.1, *de prioribus consentitur, pro Arruntio quidam Cn. Pisonem*

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[7] Op. cit. (n. 5) 98. Their apparent scepticism of the possibility that Tacitus consulted the *acta senatus* suggests that they rule out the other interpretation they propose: Tacitus used the *acta* and 'merely' added Livian colouring.

[8] Woodman himself describes Tacitus' method here as a 'window reference' to Livy: see op. cit. (n. 5) 98–9; S. J. V. Malloch, *The Annals of Tacitus, Book 11* (Cambridge, 2013) on 11.23-25.1.

[9] Cf. F. R. D. Goodyear, *The Annals of Tacitus, Books 1–6*. Volume II: *Annals* 1.55–81 and *Annals* 2 (Cambridge, 1981) on 1.69.2.

tradidere; omnesque praeter Lepidum variis mox criminibus struente Tiberio circumventi sunt; 1.29.4; 1.81.1: 3.3.2, *matrem Antoniam non apud auctores rerum, non diurna actorum scriptura reperio ullo insigni officio functam*), or implies it by narrating a particular version of events (see below e.g. on *Ann.* 15.61.3). His methodological explicitness in the Neronian books may result from a variety of causes: a change in attitude to source citation, for example, or the degree of difference between major sources for the period. Yet one aspect of his claim at 13.20 that did not become his constant method in the later *Annals* was naming his sources.[10]

Tacitus' citation of a lost historian can offer some idea of the lines of the main tradition. Tacitus reports a statement of Fabius Rusticus that the tribune Gavius Silvanus did not proceed directly from Nero to Seneca with instructions to die but went via the praetorian prefect Rufus Faenius to check his orders (15.61.3 = *FRHist* 87 F 4). The negative *non eo quo venerat itinere* is a pointer that Tacitus was using other sources too[11] and that they have Silvanus retrace his steps, as Tacitus' citation of Fabius Rusticus' version of the Agrippina–Nero incest story indicates: 14.2.1–2 (= *FRHist* 87 F 3), *tradit Cluuius ardore retinendae Agrippinam potentiae eo usque provectam…(2) Fabius Rusticus <u>non</u> Agrippinae, sed Neroni cupitum id memorat* …. Tacitus clearly felt that Fabius Rusticus' detail about Silvanus added to his portrait of Silvanus' disillusionment with Nero and involvement in conspiracy.

Ancient historians customarily claim authority from their status as, for example, eye-witnesses or participants or contemporaries or office-holders. Historians writing at a remove can be read as attempting to appropriate specialist insight or knowledge to themselves through the citation of sources. Glosses on the material, and common background knowledge, contribute to readers' recognition of the import of a citation. Increased authority for the citing historian is the ultimate goal of this strategy. Tacitus' use of Corbulo's memoirs of his eastern campaigns under Nero, for example, allowed him to appropriate first-hand, eyewitness knowledge of events (15.16.1–3 = *FRHist* 82 F 2). Tacitus' ostentatious use of Vipstanus Messalla for the story of a son killing his father at the battle of Cremona in October of 69 (*rem nominaque auctore Vipstano Messalla tradam*: *Hist.* 3.25.2–3 = *FRHist* 86 F 1) allowed Tacitus to draw on the authority of a respected man on the spot (cf. *Hist.*

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[10] Cf. R. H. Martin, *Tacitus* (London, corrected edition, 1994) 209.

[11] Levick (*FRHist* comm. ad loc.) argues that Tacitus was following other sources at this point in his narrative and that Rusticus was 'not an especially important contributor'. But Tacitus' reference can mean that Fabius was a main source and in contrast to the others contributed the detail about Silvanus.

3.9.3 = *FRHist* 86 T 1; 4.42.1–2 = *FRHist* 86 T 4).[12] Tacitus' description at *Ann.* 1.69.2 (= *FRHist* 80 F 2) of the elder Pliny as the author of a work on Rome's German wars does more than identify a source of the colourful detail about the elder Agrippina congratulating returning troops at the head of a bridge over the Rhine: Tacitus claims Pliny's specialist knowledge for himself, and he must have been an important source of information on Germany.[13] Tacitus clearly relished the chance to cite the memoirs of the younger Agrippina for a meeting between the elder Agrippina and Tiberius in 26 during which she pleaded to be allowed to remarry (*Ann.* 4.53.1–2 = *FRHist* 77 F 1). Tacitus takes care with the citation. He clarifies that his main sources, the *scriptores annalium*, do not record the encounter, and a simple notice of omission becomes a hint of competition: Tacitus has gone one step further than his predecessors.[14] Tacitus' description of the content and aims of the younger Agrippina's work implies that it will be a novelty to his readers, and the specific identification of the younger Agrippina as the mother of Nero rather than as the daughter of the elder Agrippina may be a pointer to the chronological emphasis of the work, and to its dynastic content. The gloss on Agrippina's memoirs allows Tacitus to point up the privileged information at his fingertips, and claim authority from it: Agrippina offers exclusive insight that Tacitus' predecessors have not drawn on and his readers will not know.

It is customary to read some of Tacitus' citation of sources, particularly where unnamed ones are concerned, as a device for avoiding responsibility for a story that he may consider disreputable or incredible but nonetheless wants to record. Tacitus can also criticise his sources explicitly, such as when he seems to reject Fabius Rusticus' testimony that Nero's praetorian prefect Burrus kept his place with the support of Seneca with the remark that Fabius favoured Seneca because he benefited from his friendship (*Ann.* 13.20.2 = *FRHist* 87 F 2). Criticism does not mean that information from a lost source cannot contribute to Tacitus' narrative purpose. Tacitus attributes to the elder Pliny the story that the conspirators against Nero planned to use Claudius' daughter Antonia to generate popular support for Calpurnius Piso in 65 (*Ann.* 15.53.3–4 = *FRHist* 80 F 5). Tacitus states that he does not want to leave the story out even though he describes as *absurdum* the possibility of Antonia's involvement and the likelihood that Piso would commit himself to another woman, and his explaining his reasons led B.

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[12] Such is Vipstanus' credibility that Tacitus cannot chose between his version and Pliny at *Hist.* 3.27.3–28.1 (*FRHist* 86 F 2).

[13] Cf. Goodyear, op. cit. (n. 9) on 1.69.2; *FRHist* I.531–4.

[14] Cf. R. H. Martin and A. J. Woodman, *Tacitus Annals IV* (Cambridge, 1989) ad loc.

Levick in her commentary to describe Tacitus as taking Pliny to task. Has Tacitus recorded the story simply to provide an opportunity of taking one of his main sources to task? Probably not. Tacitus judged it worth recording the story because it would, if true, illustrate the extremes of the situation encapsulated in the epigram, 'the lust for power is more powerful than all other emotions'. In this sense mention of Pliny also guarantees the story.

Tacitus' handling of the memoirs of Domitius Corbulo is not dissimilar. Tacitus describes Corbulo's stories about Caesennius Paetus at the time of his surrender to the Parthians at Rhandea as invented to deepen Paetus' disgrace (*augendae infamiae composita*: *Ann.* 15.16.1–3 = *FRHist* 82 F 2). Yet Tacitus seems favourably inclined to the spirit of the Corbulo's strategy, since he goes on to narrate with certainty (*reliqua non in obscuro habentur*) that Paetus fled in panic and left the wounded behind him as he went; the scene, in Tacitus' eyes, is a disgrace. Corbulo might have written to enhance the disgrace of Paetus, but his account paints a picture that complements Tacitus' criticism of Paetus. If Tacitus' criticism of Corbulo's memoirs here has any wider significance, it may be that Tacitus is engaging with Corbulo's literary self-presentation in the east on those occasions when he seems to be critical of him (cf. e.g. *Ann.* 15.6.4, 15.10.4).

III

The *Fragments of the Roman Historians* provides an opportunity to revisit anew the methods of the citing historians. Study of Tacitus' handling of his sources, freed from the interminable pursuit of historiographical phantoms, can illuminate his method and narrative preoccupations. In particular, Tacitus' critical evaluation of his sources does not mean that he cannot benefit from their material. His source citations can be read as an attempt to claim for himself the authority that specialist or insider knowledge gives in the first instance to his sources. Such a reading can be applied across Tacitus' literary and non-literary sources, and deeper into the source strata. Tacitus can, for examples, draw authority from the sources that he cites *and* from the apparently restricted or privileged source material that he attributes to them: cf. *Ann.* 2.88.1, *reperio apud scriptores senatoresque eorundem temporum Adgandestrii principis Chattorum lectas in senatu litteras…*;[15] 3.16.1, *audire me memini ex senioribus visum saepius inter manus Pisonis libellum quem ipse non vulgaverit; sed amicos eius dictitavisse, litteras Tiberii et mandata in Germanicum contineri, ac*

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[15] The text is uncertain but it does not affect the point: see Goodyear, op. cit. (n. 9) *ad loc.*; A. J. Woodman, 'Introduction', in id., ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus* (Cambridge, 2009) 1–14, at 8–9.

destinatum promere apud patres principemque arguere, ni elusus a Seiano per vana promissa foret; nec illum sponte extinctum verum immisso percussore. quorum neutrum adseveraverim: neque tamen occulere debui narratum ab iis qui nostram ad iuventam duraverunt.

Many other citing sources invite analysis. Take Suetonius and his use of Augustus' *Autobiography*, for which he is an important witness. Recent scholarship has explored the aims, content, and scope of the *Autobiography*, just as M. P. Charlesworth analysed 'fragments' of the propaganda of Antony embedded in the life.[16] But what does Suetonius' citation of Augustus and Antony at *Aug.* 2 say about the way he shapes his narrative?

> … siquidem Gnaeus et deinceps ab eo reliqui omnes functi sunt honoribus summis. at Gaius eiusque posteri, seu fortuna seu voluntate, in equestri ordine constiterunt usque ad Augusti patrem. proavus Augusti secundo Punico bello stipendia in Sicilia tribunus militum fecit Aemilio Papo imperatore. avus municipalibus magisteriis contentus abundante patrimonio tranquillissime senuit. sed haec alii; ipse Augustus nihil amplius quam equestri familia ortum se scribit vetere ac locuplete, et in qua primus senator pater suus fuerit. M. Antonius libertinum ei proavum exprobrat, restionem e pago Thurino, avum argentarium. nec quicquam ultra de paternis Augusti maioribus repperi.

What is the function of quoting Augustus' version? How does it stand in relation to Antony's, and what influence does Antony's 'propaganda' exert, not only here but cumulatively? What does the final sentence say about Suetonius' method generally?

'Fragments' raise as many questions about the authors who cite them as they do about the authors cited.

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[16] For the Autobiography, see above, n. 2. M. P. Charlesworth, 'Some Fragments of the Propaganda of Mark Antony', *CQ* 27 (1933) 172–7.