

**THE ‘MISERABLE PARENT’ AND THE ‘LUCKLESS TRIBE’: A
THUCYDIDEAN APPROACH TO JOURNALISM**

by

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ABSTRACT

As the situation of journalists becomes increasingly precarious in the 21st century, more than ever journalism must reinvent itself to remain relevant in the frenzy of the digital age. Furthermore, the current model of journalism — based on the concept of objectivity and rooted in a news function — no longer adequately serves its public. It is therefore perhaps ironic that the solution to these problems may be found, in part, in the 2,500-year-old work of Thucydides. But Thucydides, who was far from the objective reporter of the Peloponnesian War many would like him to be, would have a lot to say about our current model of journalism, and his actual intentions for his History may offer a way forward for the journalists of today.

DEDICATION

To Finn, the best cat.

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Chapter 1: A ‘Miserable Parent’? A ‘Luckless Tribe’?

ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχουσαι
ὕμεις γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα,
ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδὲ τι ἴδμεν
*Enlighten me now, O Muses, tenants of Olympian homes,
For you are goddesses, inside on everything, know everything.
But we mortals hear only the news, and know nothing at all.*
-Iliad II 484-86, tr. Walter Lippmann, 1920¹

*“The idea of a newspaper correspondent keeping the journal of a siege
till after the affair is over has driven me wild.”*
-Mowbray Morris, manager, *The Times*, 1854²

In the Crypt of London’s St. Paul’s Cathedral,³ a bronze bust — one among many such memorials — sits atop a marble base inscribed with a simple, though perhaps presumptuous, epitaph:

Sir William Howard Russell, LLD
The first and greatest of War Correspondents
Crimea 1854. India 1857.
United States of America 1861.
France 1879. South Africa 1879.
Born March 28, 1820. Died February 10, 1907.

The first and greatest: this was certainly a bold claim for the Irish reporter sent by *The Times* of London to cover the Crimean War in 1854, and while one

¹ Lippmann and Merz 1920. Lippmann and Merz opened “A Test of the News,” their study of how *The New York Times* covered the Russian Revolution, with this quote from the *Iliad*, choosing to translate κλέος as news, instead of the more common translation of “rumour” or “report.” Lippmann and Merz denied that their goal was to judge the *Times*’ accuracy based on a “whole truth” about Russia, since no definitive account existed in 1920. Instead, they examined “whether the reader of the news was given a picture of various phases of the revolution which survived the test of events, or whether he was misled into believing that the outcome of events would be radically different from the actual outcome.” They found the news of the Russian Revolution to be misleading, concluding that “misleading news is worse than none at all” (p.1-5).

² *The History of The Times*, vol. 2, 169 in Knightley 2004, 2.

³ Specifically, it is found within the OBE Chapel, otherwise known as St Faith’s Chapel, in the Crypt of St Paul’s Cathedral.

could argue that Russell was the greatest of war correspondents for a moment in time simply by grace of being the first, neither description is very likely. Although Russell's career was impressive, few, if any, would rank him among the best of war correspondents,⁴ and as for the assertion of being the first — or in Russell's own words: “the miserable parent of a luckless tribe”⁵— this is demonstrably false: neither was he first to take up the work of a war correspondent, nor was he the first to assert his greatness and firstness in his life's work. After all, Thucydides, who as I will argue should be considered a precursor to the “tribe” of modern war correspondents and of the journalistic instinct, spent the first part of his *History* doing just this.⁶ To make such an assertion, a great journalist — or even a good one — it would seem, would know to dig a little deeper.

Thus, the question remains: *Who was first?* Phillip Knightley, author of the authoritative history of war correspondents,⁷ hands the originator role to Russell's fellow Crimean War reporter, C.L. Gruneisen of the *Morning Post*.⁸ However, it is short-sighted to suggest that war correspondence began with the Crimean War, just as, as I will argue, it is myopic to presume that journalism began with the newspaper.⁹ If one considers Russell's journalistic method within a broader

⁴ Knightley 2004, 2.

⁵ Quoted in Knightley 2004, 2.

⁶ Thucydides, of course, spends the first 20 chapters of his *History* demonstrating how the Peloponnesian War was the greatest war faced by the Greeks, or maybe ever. By doing so he was both making the case for his own greatness while also showing how his work would be something different from everything before it.

⁷ Knightley, P. *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Mythmaker from the Crimea to Iraq*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004.

⁸ Knightley 2004, 2.

⁹ Stephens (1988, 4) offers this critique of Knightley, and suggests a similar shortsightedness is present in the assumption that “the idea of news itself” was an invention of the Jacksonian era.

historical perspective, it is evident that the origin of his form of journalism, and with it journalism itself, should be pushed back to much more ancient roots. Not only was Russell far from the first to employ the methodology of a war correspondent, standing as merely one such reporter in a long line of war correspondents before him, but the title of the “miserable parent of a luckless tribe” should instead be conferred upon a seemingly unbecoming figure: that of the great Athenian historian himself, Thucydides.¹⁰

Uncertain beginnings

William “Billy” Russell arrived in Malta with a British force in February 1854. He had been tasked with recording the events of the war and sending dispatches in the form of letters back to London. Russell quickly proved an adept reporter from the field, demonstrating a natural talent for covering warfare and the inner workings of the military. According to Knightley, if Russell had not been a war correspondent, “he would have been a soldier, no doubt a general.”¹¹ However, Russell was not without struggles in his reporting, and he frequently turned to letters to his editor in London to vent his frustrations as they invariably arose throughout the assignment. In fact, it is these entries in Russell’s dispatches, offering insight into his reporting method, from which the most compelling

¹⁰ While here I draw my own comparisons between Sir William Howard Russell and Thucydides, I have since found that I am not the first to do so. A.J. Woodman (1988, 19) mentions Russell briefly in his discussion of the challenge of accuracy in oral reports in wartime coverage among modern reporters and Thucydides, though he does not expand upon this comparison, as I have.

¹¹ Knightley 2004, 3.

comparisons between Russell and Thucydides, a general himself, can be drawn. Russell discovered early on that it was difficult to find a position from which to watch a battle,¹² and he soon turned to stopping every soldier and officer he encountered to record their descriptions of the battle.¹³ While this offered a solution, it also presented its own set of problems as Russell learned what many before him had also discovered: that eyewitness reports are often contradictory. Soon the enormity of his task was made clear to him:

"How was I to describe what I had not seen? Where learn the facts for which they were waiting at home? My eyes swam as I tried to make notes of what I heard. ... I suppose I was unnerved by want of food and rest, but I was so much overcome by what I saw that I could not remain where the fight had been closest and deadliest. ... It was now that the weight of the task I had accepted fell on my soul like lead."¹⁴

It was also common for Russell to write one account of a battle, only to decide that it lacked accuracy, prompting him to question officers again for clarification.¹⁵ In Russell's biography, published four years after his death, his biographer, John Black Atkins, recounts one particular instance when Russell wrote one dispatch but then rewrote it upon learning more details:

"The first letter he wrote never reached London, and [Russell] congratulated himself afterwards that it did not. After finishing his first imperfect letter he rode

¹² Atkins 1911, 156; Knightley 2004, 7. In Russell's own words: "I never was in a more unpleasant position. Everyone else on the field had some *raison d'être*. I had none. They were on recognised business. It could scarcely be recognised or legitimate business for any man to ride in front of the army in order that he might be able to write an account of a battle for a newspaper."

¹³ Knightley 2004, 8.

¹⁴ Russell, quoted in Atkins 1911, 160.

¹⁵ Knightley 2004, 8.

about the field on a borrowed horse, and having collected much new information, sat down to write a new account of the battle.”¹⁶

It is here that Russell demonstrates remarkable similarities with Thucydides’ discussion of his method in Book I of his *History*:

“But with respect to deeds, when it came to the happenings of the war, I thought it my duty to set down in writing not what news I heard from the first person to come along, nor even how things seemed to me to have occurred, but instead to record both the deeds for which I myself was present and the accounts from other eyewitnesses, having thoroughly tested each with as much accuracy as possible. These were arrived at laboriously because eyewitnesses did not give identical accounts of the same things, but these were given according to partiality for one side or the other, or from memory.”¹⁷

The struggles of dealing with eyewitness reports, attempting to witness the events himself, and a desire to get the most accurate and objective account possible – Russell, writing in 1854 and who, as Knightley argues would have been a general had he not been a war correspondent,¹⁸ was describing the very same challenges of war reporting that Thucydides, a general himself, discussed almost 2,300 years before the Crimean War.

However, few of Russell’s claims to accuracy hold up under scrutiny – at least not by today’s standards of objective reporting. While Russell’s style was

¹⁶ Atkins 1911, 161.

¹⁷ Thucydides 1.22.3-4. Translations are my own unless I have indicated otherwise.

¹⁸ Knightley 2004, 3.

generally that of a battlefield correspondent who tried to give an “over-all scene” that provided a “contemporary observer’s account of how a battle was lost or won,”¹⁹ his reports were far from a neutral ‘views from nowhere’ of battles. “I shall proceed to describe, to the best of my power, what occurred under my own eyes, and to state the facts which I have heard from men whose veracity is unimpeachable, *reserving to myself the right of private judgement in making public and in suppressing the details of what occurred on this memorable day,*” he wrote at the start of his famous account of the Charge of the Light Brigade.²⁰ Russell wrote from the protagonist’s side²¹ — in his case the British side — and his descriptions of the shameful conditions facing British forces, while not published, were passed around to Cabinet ministers and, whether indirectly or not, resulted in the topple of the government and Florence Nightingale’s entrance into the war.²² This is hardly the unbiased accuracy that one would expect from an objective reporter, nor that of the scientific historian, a title that has been attributed so often

¹⁹ Knightley 2004, 8. An example of Russell’s dispatch style is quoted in F. Lauriston Bullard’s *Famous War Correspondents*: “At five minutes before twelve o’clock the French, like a swarm of bees, issued forth from their trenches close to the doomed Malakoff, scrambled up its faces and were through the embrasures in the twinkling of an eye. They crossed the seven metres of ground which separated them from the enemy in a few bounds, and in a minute or two after the head of their column issued from the ditch, the Tricolour was floating over the Korniloff Bastion” (1914, 47).

²⁰ Russell 1854, emphasis mine. His account of the Charge of the Light Brigade, quoted above, “concentrated on the glory of the event — ‘the pride and splendour of war’” (Bullard 1914, 44), but in the version recorded in his personal journal, Russell wrote quite poignantly about the suffering and realities of war: “I looked at the group of officers representing the military mind of England close at hand in this crisis and I was not much impressed with confidence by what I saw” (Russell, quoted in Knightley 2004, 10).

²¹ *The History of The Times*, vol. 2; p. 166.

²² Knightley disputes Russell’s role in bringing Florence Nightingale into the war, suggesting that it is overstated. See also Woodham-Smith 1964.

to Thucydides. Yet in many passages Thucydides prompts similar questions about his supposed objectivity as a historian, admits to recording only what he thought worthy of mention, and is known to have omitted events from his record.²³

These compelling comparisons between Thucydides and the journal entries of a war correspondent are not merely anecdotal: the fact that Russell clearly was not a neutral reporter is important when it comes to obtaining a fuller picture of Thucydides as a journalist.²⁴ Of course, Thucydides was no common reporter like Russell, and one might justifiably argue that to call Thucydides the real “miserable parent of a luckless tribe” is an unfair assessment of the Athenian historian; yet it is for this very reason that Thucydides should be considered a member of the “luckless tribe.” When journalists and journalism scholars invoke Thucydides, it is usually to affirm journalistic objectivity — that by drawing upon Thucydides, whom they see as the pinnacle of objectivity, as the first of their kind, they garner the added legitimacy that comes from claiming one of the “greats” of the so-called “Western canon” as one of their own. Keith Windschuttle, an Australian journalist and journalism professor, illustrates this kind of thinking to the extreme in his argument for making Thucydides the first journalist:

[Thucydides’ objectivity] meant Thucydides took a revolutionary step for both himself and for the cultural legacy his work has bequeathed. ... The idea of being able to detach yourself from your own culture, to look down, as it were, upon yourself and to be a critic of your

²³ Thuc. 3.90.1: “I shall however confine myself to the actions in which the Athenians took part, choosing the most important.”

²⁴ This also makes it virtually unique among similar assessments made by journalists. Windschuttle 1999; Lambel 2013; Stephens 1988; Saltzman 2010; and Luksic 2011 have all considered Thucydides as a fully objective historian/ reporter and thus upholds journalistic objectivity in the image of modern journalists.

own practice, is a characteristically Western notion and, indeed, one of the great strengths of Western culture — possibly even its greatest strength ... This is why those postmodernists who deride the idea of objectivity, who claim that all cultural products are necessarily subjective and culturally relative, should not be allowed to get away unscathed as they have in recent years ... they would deny us one of the most powerful intellectual tools of our own cultural inheritance.²⁵

However, Windschuttle, and journalism scholars like him, neglects a fairly important point: Thucydides was far from an objective reporter of the Peloponnesian War. If anything, Thucydides offers further proof that the concept of journalistic objectivity is based on a false premise of truth and, as Windschuttle demonstrates, to look upon Thucydides as a journalist in order to affirm journalistic objectivity is a practice that has troubling implications for how truth in journalism is perceived. Rather than elevating Thucydides, and with him journalism, to the peak of objectivity, it is perhaps a more helpful image to consider Thucydides as “the miserable parent of a luckless tribe,” who, like Billy Russell, was not fully objective. In turn, this new way of looking at Thucydides may open a way for journalism to take a form that is more in line with what Thucydides actually intended for his *History*, a form that did not hold objectivity as the end goal.

κτῆμα ἐς αἰεὶ

When one begins the undertaking of approaching Thucydides with a journalistic eye, one immediately runs into the problem that Thucydides' history

²⁵ Windschuttle 1999, 56.

of the Peloponnesian War and modern works of news journalism do not, at first glance, share the same aim. For one, Thucydides intended his history to be a κτήμα ἐς αἰεὶ, “a possession for all time,”²⁶ while journalists write with the knowledge that their reports of events may be relevant for mere hours or even minutes. Even in investigative pieces, the numerous follow-up stories that must be written as the topic develops means that it is not until years later that the journalist, or a historian, might document the events as a single body of work, benefiting greatly from hindsight. It is for this reason that journalists, often in moments of self-professed importance, declare their work as the “first rough draft of history.”²⁷ Thucydides’ work was hardly a rough draft.²⁸

Indeed, Thucydides’ statement that his work was to be a κτήμα ἐς αἰεὶ, or a

²⁶ From Crawley’s translation of 1.22.4.

²⁷ Usually attributed to Philip L. Graham of the Washington Post in 1948, although the attribution of this quote is conflicted (see Shafer 2010).

²⁸ Hunter (1977, 270) argues that the length of the war alone, from 431-404 BCE, is enough to suggest that Thucydides revised his earlier writing. Thucydides himself states from the outset that he started writing as soon as the war began (1.1) and also mentions that he is writing about the events as they happen (2.1; 5.26). Yet he will sometimes insert comments on later events (2.56; 5.26; 6.15.4). Furthermore, at 3.90, Thucydides says that he will record only what is worthy of record, and that what he thought was worthy of mention had to line up with what he thought was the cause of events, such as the Athenians’ involvement in Sicily (3.86.4). However, the question of just how much Thucydides revised and when he wrote the extant version of the *History* has resulted in a heated topic in Thucydidean scholarship known as the composition question. This decades-long debate has scholars in two camps, with Unitarians who believe the *History* shows a cohesion that could only have come out of Thucydides composing his history at one time and Analysts who consider the extant version of Thucydides’ *History* as composed not all at once, but in parts over the course of the war and after. There is no real sense of resolution. However, whether one falls on the unitarians or analysts side matters not for this paper because both positions hold that Thucydides would have written some form of the extant version after the events of the Peloponnesian War occurred, and therefore would have benefitted from hindsight. For unitarians, see Meyer 1899; Finley 1967; de Romilly 1947. For analysts, see Ullrich 1846; Schwartz 1919, 1929; Polenz 1919, 1920; Schadewaldt 1929. Hunter 1977 provides a detailed summary of the composition question debate and the positions of the scholars caught up in it.

possession for all time, is one of the more well-known quotes from his *History*, and Richard Crawley offers perhaps the most enduring translation of 1.22.4: “In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time.”²⁹ This obviously does not align with what most journalists, at their best, would claim to do, and stands in direct opposition to how journalism, at its worst, has so often been presented: yellow journalism,³⁰ flashy news broadcasts, clickbait, and the many other forms that journalism has assumed to catch the public eye. However, Crawley’s translation, while often considered the standard, is not the only way to translate 1.22.4, and a recent translation put forth by Hunter R. Rawlings might better support Thucydides’ larger argument in 1.21-22:³¹ “For many readers (hearers), my work will seem somewhat unappealing, but serious readers who want the clear truth will study it because of what it will tell them about patterns of history. In summary, my work has been composed as a possession to be read repeatedly, not as a competition-piece to be read just once on the spot.”³²

This translation, Rawlings argues, better fits with one of Thucydides’ main messages, “that public performance of speech ... is not aimed at finding the truth

²⁹ Tr. Crawley.

³⁰ Yellow journalism, now emblematic of the sensationalization of the news, was initially coined by *New York Press* editor Ervin Wardman in 1897 to describe the sensational reporting of Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal*, which competed to attract audiences. Both newspapers ran a yellow-coloured cartoon called the Yellow Kid, giving source to the term “yellow journalism.” For more, see Campbell 2001; Ward 2015, 241 and Anderson, Downie and Schudson 2016, 24.

³¹ Rawlings 2016, 110.

³² Thucydides 1.22.4, tr. Rawlings 2016, 110.

about the world around us...but rather at momentary pleasure and personal gain.”³³ Rather than simply a passage that argues for the enduring nature of Thucydides’ work, 1.22.4 serves to contrast two types of texts — competitive-pieces aimed at pleasing general audiences in the present moment, versus a piece of writing that would be relevant for future readers to read more than once in careful study — as well as two types of readers/hearers³⁴ — a general audience who seeks only to listen for pleasure, versus a few elite readers who will study a text with care.³⁵ With this translation, Rawlings inadvertently hits upon a common issue identified by both Thucydides and journalists alike, and his argument about Thucydides’ aim for his work fits well within current streams of thought in journalism, providing a compelling argument for the application of Thucydides’ concept of history to today’s journalistic practices.

News vs. Journalism; News vs. Truth

News

It must be noted from the outset that Thucydides was not a writer of news. News exists for the moment; it, and by extension journalism, is not intended to be topical for long. In today’s digital age and 24/7 news cycles, it is possible to publish news as it happens, to the point where the interval of time between an event and

³³ Rawlings 2016, 112.

³⁴ As Rawlings (2016, 108) indicates, the word ἀκούειν can often be translated as “reading by listening,” since this was prevalently how the act of reading was performed during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. See also Knox and Easterling 1985, 13 for more on the ‘reading vs. hearing’ question.

³⁵ Rawlings 2016, 109-111.

its reportage is almost instantaneous. This constant barrage of news has created a media ecosystem that has had increasingly to find ways to compete with other seemingly infinite sources.³⁶ As a result, a common criticism of modern journalism practices centres on the “shortsightedness, the superficiality, the frenzy of news”³⁷ that seeks to attract an audience over the goal of spreading accurate information. By its very nature, news is often “the first story that comes to hand”³⁸ and relevant only for the moment, meaning that Thucydides, who wrote the extant version of his text after the events occurred³⁹ and intended it to be a work of lasting value, should not be considered a writer of news.

Furthermore, journalism is aimed at general audiences. This, coupled with current trends toward news organizations focusing on audience numbers instead of on the quality of what is produced, means much of reporting that passes as journalism is directed at the lowest common denominator of its general audience. Intended to be eye-catching, this type of journalism falls neatly into the category of writing Thucydides opposed: the “public performance speech ... not aimed at finding the truth ... but rather at momentary pleasure.”⁴⁰ In the Public Policy Forum’s 2017 report on Canadian media, *The Shattered Mirror*, the assessment of

³⁶ Though, as is pointed out in the Public Policy Forum’s *The Shattered Mirror*, “to some extent, the increased supply may be an illusion created by the same news being replicated in many locations” (2017, 9).

³⁷ Stephens 1988, 57.

³⁸ Stephens 1988, 57. Stephens uses this description of news in a deliberate contrast to Thucydides’ assertion in 1.21.2

³⁹ See footnote 28 above.

⁴⁰ Rawlings 2016, 112.

this journalistic trend is quite damning: “Today these indispensable agencies of information are rapidly being reduced to mere content providers, feeding updates on breaking developments into the torrent of chatter ... The 20th century news media are less and less prominent, except to provide grist for a public conversation they no longer control.”⁴¹

If the media can be considered the public square in today’s geographically vast societies, a descendent of sorts of the Athenian agora,⁴² then journalists, instead of directing public discourse, are only adding to the noise as they compete for the public’s attention. Thus, in this regard, Thucydides was writing in opposition to the news — the frenzied “torrent of chatter” of his own time. However, while he was not writing news, this does not mean that Thucydides did not partake in some form of journalism. The main criticisms of today’s journalism are directed against a journalistic system that is based on misconceptions about what journalism is, namely distinct from the concept of news. It is important to make this distinction in order for journalism to transition into a system that is not only useful for today’s audiences, but also one that can adequately shape public discourse.

⁴¹ Public Policy Forum 2017, 14.

⁴² Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 22, 197; Gill 2016, 23; Stephens 1988, 57. In fact, journalist, author and Pulitzer Prize official John Hohenberg goes so far as to call the Athenian agora a type of “oral journalism” (Hohenberg 1973, 2). A similar comparison was also made by Arthur Brisbane, editor for many papers in the Hearst media empire, in an editorial he penned in 1912: “Among other things the newspaper’s editorial column takes the place of the public square at Athens where one man could talk to all citizens. The writer of the editorials is the talker in the public square of today. He can if he chooses do as much for this age as the Greek using his voice instead of a pen, typewriter, or phonograph did in his age” (Brisbane 1912).

Journalism

To understand current misconceptions about journalism, it must be noted that news and journalism are not synonymous. In fact, news has existed long before it became associated with journalism, and journalism is only one means among many with which to spread the news.⁴³ For the purpose of this paper, news will be defined according to Michael Stephens' definition ("new information about a subject of some public interest that is shared with some portion of the public"), since the English word for news has held this general sense for over 500 years.⁴⁴ However, news has existed for as long as there has been a need to communicate relevant information about the present.⁴⁵ It would have likely started as word of mouth, such as a call to others that a predator was approaching or idle gossip passed among members of the same community.⁴⁶ As Stephens argues, the progress towards journalism "along the road from busybody to newscaster has depended on an increasing ability to amplify the news — to endow it with the power to travel faster, and to arrive with less distortion."⁴⁷ Thus, news is not limited to the reporting of a journalist, but messengers, town criers, ballad-writers and minstrels have all contributed to the development of the amplification of the news, and eventually gave rise to the figure of the journalist.

⁴³ Hamilton and Tworek 2017, 391. Keith Windschuttle (1999) attempts to expand the definition of journalism, though he conceives of journalism as a uniquely "Western" invention.

⁴⁴ Stephens 1988, 8.

⁴⁵ Anderson, Downie and Schudson 2016, 7.

⁴⁶ Anderson, Downey and Schudson 2016, 6-7.

⁴⁷ Stephens 1988, 27.

The word “journalist,” first found in French to refer to those who wrote in “learned journals,” did not appear until the seventeenth century, and it was not until 1721 that it was used to describe members of the press.⁴⁸ Yet journalism itself is not so easy to define, and definitions vary depending on when its start date is placed and what model of journalism is being considered, since journalism does not follow a constant model worldwide.⁴⁹ Some definitions address the medium — that journalism did not truly start until the printing press allowed for mass production of the written word — thereby linking the beginning of journalism to the beginning of the newspaper.⁵⁰ Other definitions of journalism tie it to a professional ideology. Anderson, Downie and Schudson argue that journalism did not exist until it became “a set of ideas and practices at least partially distinct from other fields” and “a social domain that people might understand themselves to be vocationally or avocationally a part of,”⁵¹ while Deuze considers journalism as a “professional/occupational ideology” that only developed through the “professionalization process of the early twentieth century.”⁵² In particular, Deuze

⁴⁸ Ward 2015, 115. It was coined by Joseph Addison in *The Spectator*.

⁴⁹ Deuze 2005, 443. The concept of journalism varies by multiple factors, from the level of press freedom to the prominence placed on objectivity. The Anglo-American model for instance places more value on objectivity than the European model, and journalistic objectivity developed at different rates and at different times around the world. For a comparison of the Anglo-American journalism model and the European model, see Chalaby 1996; for the development of modern journalism in Australia, see Maras 2013, 31, 201-229; for Brazil as a case study, see Albuquerque and Gagliardi 2011.

⁵⁰ Anderson, Downie & Schudson 2016, 6-7. Though they do distinguish news from journalism and point out that news and news dissemination have been around for as long as there have been forms of communication.

⁵¹ Anderson, Downie & Schudson 2016, 6.

⁵² Deuze 2005, 444.

is referring to the professional ideology of the Anglo-American model of journalism, which, with its enduring emphasis on objectivity, will be the focus of this paper.⁵³

It was Walter Lippmann who popularized the professional ideology argument for journalism. In his 1931 “Two Revolutions in the American Press,” he wrote that “journalism could not be a profession until modern objective journalism was successfully created and with a need of men who considered themselves devoted, as all the professionals ideally are, to the service of the truth alone.”⁵⁴ He, too, was describing the Anglo-American model of journalism, which places emphasis on objectivity, balance and neutrality, and champions the ‘view from nowhere’. Yet as I will argue below, this model of journalism, largely followed in Canada and the United States, was never truly fulfilled.⁵⁵ This is because a

⁵³ I use the term “Anglo-American” to describe the model of journalism that arose out of the British press tradition from the 17th-19th centuries and continued to evolve in the American tradition. It describes the type of journalism used in Canada and the United States today as well as, to a certain extent, in the UK and Australia. While this paper will focus only on the Anglo-American model of journalism, this is only because it is so closely tied to objectivity and is the one practiced in Canada. I would like to note that there are other models for journalism, and I completely reject the notion that objective journalism (i.e. Anglo-American journalism) is the only true form of journalism. This Western-centric idea was first put forth by Jean K. Chalaby in 1996 with his article “Journalism as an Anglo-American Invention.” It ignores many developments in journalism in other areas of the world, a glaring example of this being that China was considered the model of press freedom for centuries, upon which the world’s first freedom of information act was based. (This was the Swedish 1766 act: *His Majesty’s Gracious Ordinance Relating to Freedom of Writing and of the Press*, influenced by Finnish priest Anders Chydenius, whose treatise “Account of the Chinese Freedom to Write”, itself based on Jean Babtiste Du Halde’s *Description géographique et historique de l’empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (1735), described China as “the richest kingdom in the world in population and goods and the model country of the freedom of the press” (tr. from Finnish by Lambel 2002). For more, see Rydholm 2013, Manninen 2006, and Lambel 2002).

⁵⁴ Lippman 1931, 440-441.

⁵⁵ Hamilton and Tworek 2017, 391.

journalistic model that is based almost entirely upon objectivity tends to conflate news and journalism by placing value on objectivity over truth, and this type of news-focused journalism, as a result, falls short of relating the truth.⁵⁶

News and truth

Lippmann himself famously pointed out that truth and news were not interchangeable.⁵⁷ As he wrote in his 1922 work *Public Opinion*, “news and truth are not the same thing. ... The function of news is to signalize an event. The function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them in relation with each other, and to make a picture of reality upon which men can act.”⁵⁸ However, a model of journalism that focuses on the news through objective reporting can never be “in the service of truth alone,” as Lippmann would later assert.⁵⁹ In order for journalism to fully achieve its responsibility to the truth, it must separate itself from solely a news-function. It is for this reason that journalism must be more clearly defined in a way that aligns with seeking the truth. As others have already proposed, if one strips journalism down to its fundamental level, journalism can be defined as something much simpler, separated from technology, medium, method, and professional ideology.⁶⁰ By doing so, the concept of journalism

⁵⁶ Hamilton and Tworek 2017, 391; Pöttker 2012, 16-17.

⁵⁷ Though, in his earlier works, such as *Liberty and the News* (1920), he uses ‘news’ and ‘truth’ interchangeably.

⁵⁸ Lippmann 1922, 358.

⁵⁹ Lippmann 1931, 441.

⁶⁰ Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 16.

becomes broader and it is possible to extend with confidence the roots of journalism to long before the development of the newspaper. At its essence, journalism is a practice that helps others make sense of the world and what is happening around them.⁶¹ Thus, while journalism and news are intertwined, journalism can be considered separately from the “just the facts” coverage of the news championed by the Anglo-American model of journalism.⁶²

The Anglo-American model of journalism was built on a news-function that relied heavily on objectivity, an end goal that, in part, prevented the journalism model from being fully realized.⁶³ The Anglo-American model has also not translated well into the digital age of journalism; journalists no longer hold a monopoly on news in the public square, increasingly finding themselves having to compete with other sources of news such as social media, blogs, and public relations pieces masquerading as journalism. Now more than ever, in the frenzy of the digital age, the role of journalism must be redefined in order to survive. Rather than compete with other sources of news, journalists must cut through the noise of the public square.

Fortunately, journalism can exist beyond a strictly news function. As Horst Pöttker suggests, while journalism should always be topical, topicality does not always mean “what is happening today, but what is relevant today.”⁶⁴ This concept

⁶¹ Gill 2016, 10. Kovach and Rosenstiel expand upon this concept and define the purpose of journalism to “provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing” (2014, 17). This definition is also in line with Lippmann’s (1922, 358) definition of journalism, the purpose of which was “to make a picture of reality upon which men can act.”

⁶² Hamilton and Tworek 2017, 391.

⁶³ Hamilton and Tworek 2017, 391.

⁶⁴ Pöttker 2012, 15.

of topicality aligns well with the ‘making sense of the world’ definition of journalism. In fact, Pöttker, urging journalists to look beyond the news function of journalism, calls instead for an emphasis on the orientation function of journalism, echoing an argument made by Robert Park in 1955: “The function of news is to orient man and society in an actual world. In so far as it succeeds it tends to preserve the sanity of the individual and the permanence of society.”⁶⁵ This orientation function of journalism, relying on context, deeper investigations, and analysis — aspects of journalism that are not traditionally considered to be objective — makes the news more transparent and understandable for the public. This in turn should provide, as Lippman wrote, “a picture of reality upon which men can act.”⁶⁶ The orientation function, therefore, brings journalism into a position better to seek out the truth, thereby aligning more closely with Thucydides’ view of history.

A journalism model that is focused on an orientation function will consider what is relevant in deciding what to cover; it is not focused solely on the immediate present, though the news certainly informs it, but it looks beyond to make the immediate present more understandable. Instead of adding to the noise and daily grind of news, it seeks out the truth. In a similar vein, Thucydides, who, using

⁶⁵ Park 1955, 86; Pöttker 2012, 15. Though Park uses news and journalism interchangeably.

⁶⁶ Pöttker 17-19; Lippmann 1922, 358. Thucydides, though, saw utility as lying more in the intellectual realm than the practical, and it is difficult to determine whether he thought it was possible to change the course of history or whether he thought it was only possible to recognize and understand what was going on (Marincola 1997, 173-174 n.205).

Rawlings' translation, wrote about his *History*, "in summary, my work has been composed as a possession to be read repeatedly,"⁶⁷ was arguing that his work would be *relevant* for all time. In fact, Thomas Cole argues that ἐς αἰεὶ "is usually translated 'for eternity,' but it can just as easily mean 'for any occasion that may arise.'"⁶⁸

As the situation of journalists becomes increasingly precarious in the 21st century, the moniker of the "luckless tribe" has perhaps never been so fitting. Furthermore, it is becoming clearer that the Anglo-American model with its emphasis on objectivity — a remnant of journalism's professionalization period — has failed overall to add anything meaningful to the noise of the public square by favouring "objective reports" over ones that better reflect the truth. More than ever, journalism must reinvent itself to remain relevant in the frenzy of the digital age. It is therefore ironic that a possible solution to the current problems in journalism may be found, in part, in the 2,500-year-old work of an Athenian general. However, by adopting a broader definition of journalism that is differentiated from solely a news function and recognizing the flaws in upholding objectivity as the main indicator of accuracy in the works of both journalists and Thucydides, it is possible that journalists will find not only a "miserable parent" in Thucydides, but also a way forward for journalism.

⁶⁷ Rawlings 2016, 110.

⁶⁸ Cole 1991, 105.

Chapter 2: The First Journalist

“I am no Romance-Monger to present the world with Tragi-Comedies of my own invention.”

-John Dillingham, editor, the *Moderate Intelligencer*, 1645⁶⁹

καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἴσως τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται...
The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest...

-Thuc. 1.22.4, tr. Richard Crawley, 1910

In 1754 George Colman the Elder, publisher of the English newsbook⁷⁰ the *Connoisseur*, wrote what may be the first published instance of an explicit comparison between journalists and Thucydides. This was still during the early days of modern journalism — the word ‘journalist’ had yet to take hold⁷¹ — and Colman, following the practice of many publishers and editors at the time, turned to the pages of his newsbook to make an argument for the unique place held by writers of the “periodical papers” within the realm of literature:

“We writers of essays, or (as they are termed) periodical papers, justly claim to ourselves a place among the modern improvers of literature ... [No] sagacious commentator, has been able to discover traces of any similar productions among the ancients: except we can suppose, that the history of Thucydides was retailed in six-penny numbers ...”⁷²

⁶⁹ Quoted in Ward 2015, 132.

⁷⁰ Newsbooks were precursors to the newspaper. Neither full-length books nor “sensational broadsides or pamphlets,” the newsbooks published news and contained very little commentary. They were the most popular format of the English periodical press until the *Gazette* newsheet began publication in 1665. (Ward 2015, chapter 4).

⁷¹ While ‘journalist’ was first used in English to describe members of the press in 1721, use of the term did not take off until the mid-19th century. See Ward 2015, 115.

⁷² Colman, 14 February 1754, in Black 2011, 1.

While Colman was perhaps the first to bring Thucydides' name into the discussion, the concept of the newspaper as "an objective historian of the times" had already become popular by the 18th century.⁷³ Editors regularly asserted their reliability to readers in the form of editorial comments and prospecti, promising "impartiality, unbiased eyewitness accounts, and matters of fact" — an ethic not unlike that of the perceived "faithful historian."⁷⁴ In fact, this rhetoric was so popular during the early days of the press that had Thucydides written his description of method⁷⁵ in the prospectus of a 17th or 18th century newsbook, it would have been virtually indistinguishable from the editorial commentary of the day.⁷⁶

This 'journalist as faithful historian of the times' trope also anticipated, like Thucydides, the distinction between journalism and news. Editors, likening themselves to historians, would assert the superiority of their content by disparaging the "news-mongers" of other periodicals. Francis Clifton of the *Weekly Medley* was one such editor. In one editorial commentary, he contrasted the

⁷³ Ward 2015, 173.

⁷⁴ Ward 2015, 127. Of course, as Ward points out, "we should not read modern [journalistic] values into the past ... publishers were starting to use the language of matter of fact. But there was little news that was strictly impartial in the modern sense." Editors may have been making claims of impartiality and accuracy, but what was actually being printed — partisan and sensational news — was something else entirely. See Ward 2015 chapters 4 and 5 for more on the development towards an ethic of objectivity in the 17th and 18th century British periodical press.

⁷⁵ Thucydides 1.22.

⁷⁶ Perhaps one of the more compelling examples of this is John Dillingham's, editor of the *Moderate Intelligencer*, comment about his newsbook, published between 1645 and 1649: "I am no Romance-Monger to present the world with Tragi-Comedies of my own invention" (Quoted in Shapiro 2003, 91). The similarities to Thucydides 1.22.4 are striking. Many authors have compiled the editorial statements of the early press, providing more examples of these assertions. See Frank 1961, Black 2011, Hook 1952, and Shapiro 2003.

“hawking diversions” of princes and generals “which the common News-Mongers count to be sublime” found within the pages of his competitors with the “other more solid point ... the view of an historian” that was found in his own.⁷⁷ This, he asserted, was accomplished by recording only the “confirm’d and known authentic passages of the present times.”⁷⁸ Clifton would later add in 1720, “I stand distinguished by the name of an historian from the common herd of news writers...”⁷⁹ While it was one thing for Clifton and Colman and other 17th and 18th century English editors to make such claims, it was quite another thing entirely for their publications to live up to them. It may have been common for editors to make sweeping ethical statements of impartiality, accuracy, and an avoidance of frivolities, but these were mostly purely rhetoric for the sake of earning readers’ trust and such appeals to ethics were rarely fulfilled within the pages of the newsbooks.⁸⁰ However, the fact that editors made claims to them at all demonstrates a developing awareness of journalism ethics and evidence for Thucydides’ place in the discussions of those ethics, even as modern journalism began.

⁷⁷ Clifton, 3 October 1791, in Black 2011.

⁷⁸ Clifton, 3 October 1791, in Black 2011.

⁷⁹ in Black 2011.

⁸⁰ Ward 2015, 132. This is much like how Russell, described in the introduction, claimed to be accurate in his dispatches but often failed to achieve it.

Does ‘journalist’ fit?

While journalists no longer consider themselves historians,⁸¹ today the concept of Thucydides as a journalist remains a compelling notion among members of the press. Introductory journalism textbooks will commonly start with Thucydides in historical overviews of the occupation,⁸² and he has even inspired a few newsroom pitches over the years — “Thucydides: The First Journalist” was the topic of an episode of the CBC Ideas podcast in 2011.⁸³ Furthermore, while classicists do not seem to entertain the notion that Thucydides was a journalist,⁸⁴ the concept has been the topic of multiple journal articles within the journalism scholarship sphere.⁸⁵ Yet, there is reason to question the notion of Thucydides as first journalist, starting with the word “journalist” itself. Semantically, the title does not fit — the word “journalism” comes from the French word *journal*, meaning ‘daily’, which in turn is taken from the Latin adjective *diurnus/a/um* (daily).⁸⁶ Thucydides was not writing, and then publishing, daily the news of the

⁸¹ To an extent — cf. “First rough draft of history.” Conboy’s 2012 compilation *How Journalism Uses History* delves further into this topic. See especially “A Reservoir of Understanding: Why Journalism needs history as a thematic field” by Horst Pöttker (pp. 15-32) and “Are Journalists Always Wrong? And are historians always right?” by Christopher B. Daly (pp. 33-45).

⁸² Such as Lambel 2013, 6. Though, as Lambel notes, media historian Mitchell Stephens (1988, 48) does not agree with this assessment of Thucydides. Stephens instead reflects that Thucydides was not writing news and therefore cannot be considered a journalist (though as I argue above, journalists do not only write news, and news is not the only journalistic output). Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014, 106, 97-98) also consider Thucydides to have a journalistic instinct.

⁸³ Luksic, July 6, 2011. The episode featured interviews with Clifford Orwin, Robert Strassler, Caroline Dewald, and Victor Davis Hanson. Hanson did not think Thucydides was a journalist.

⁸⁴ See Luksic. Woodman 1988 and Tritle 2000 are exceptions, but even they do not go in depth.

⁸⁵ Such as in Windschuttle 1999, Lambel 2013, and Saltzman 2010.

⁸⁶ Markel 1974, 258 makes a similar argument for why the ‘New Journalists’ should not be considered journalists. He, too, was basing his argument on the assumption that journalists only write the news.

Peloponnesian War.⁸⁷ In fact, given that the word journalist was not even adopted for describing the occupation of news reporters until the 18th century, applying such a term to Thucydides might seem anachronistic. Yet many of today's journalists would not be considered journalists by this metric, either; and, as I argue above, it is important to remember that "daily" news and journalism are not synonymous. Thus, semantics aside, there are plenty of reasons why Thucydides can — and even should — be compared to modern journalists.

Certainly, the parallels are there: in subject, both Thucydides and journalists cover contemporary events; indeed, Thucydides was the first historian to do so.⁸⁸ In method, Thucydides, like journalists, relied on eyewitness testimonies, or by witnessing events himself. He gathered information through talking to witnesses, just as interviews are now the backbone of journalism pieces. Because of this, many journalists are able to recognize their own practices in Thucydides' explanation of his methodology, and it is this methodological

⁸⁷ Though Thucydides was most likely taking notes over the course of the war. See footnote 28 above.

⁸⁸ Thucydides was certainly following in Herodotus' footsteps, but while Herodotus wrote without a focus on a particular time or place, Thucydides wrote about the war of his own time. Since so little prose literature survives from Herodotus' time, it is difficult to get the sense of the tradition he was working with. Hecataeus of Miletus is the only candidate scholars can claim with any certainty who would have established a historiographic tradition from which Herodotus would later draw, yet only fragments of Hecataeus survive (see Said 2007 and Marincola 2001, 21). While Dionysius of Hallicarnassus in *On Thucydides*, 5 included a passage that traces the development of historiography, because nothing survives, its accuracy is suspect. This development was from "local" historians writing about their own hometown/country in order to pass down local traditions (usually based on monuments and religious records), these local writers included much of the mythical in their accounts. Then came Herodotus, who wrote broadly with respect to time and place, and then Thucydides, who wrote of one war in his own time. (See Momigliano 2001, 195; Marincola 2007, Introduction).

description upon which most arguments for Thucydides' supposed objectivity rest, both historically among classicists, as will be discussed in chapter 4, and among the journalists claiming their tradition of objectivity has ancient roots.

A methodology of verification

Although Thucydides has been given the title of the first “scientific” historian and a model for historiography because of his method,⁸⁹ he offers very little by way of explanation of his methodology in his text. Beyond a scant few narratorial interjections,⁹⁰ most of Thucydides' methodology is set out in a few brief passages in Book I of his history.⁹¹ The passage (1.21-22.3) directly follows the part of Book I now referred to as the ‘Archaeology’ (1.1-20), where Thucydides examines the history of Greece from the remote, mythical past to the Persian Wars, in an attempt to demonstrate that the Peloponnesian War was far greater than any

⁸⁹ Cochrane especially put forward this idea with his *Thucydides and the Science of History* (1929), laying out how Thucydides lined up with the model of the objective “scientific historian” as well as evidence for the influence of the medical writers on Thucydides' work.

⁹⁰ Thucydides rarely interrupts his third person narrative with the “authorial ‘I’, setting him apart from Herodotus, who is notably freer with his digressions and commentary on his narrative (Dewald 1987, 148-149), counts 1087 narratorial interjections in Herodotus). Unlike Herodotus, Thucydides does not reveal to his readers how he reaches his conclusions and, as Westlake (1977, 345) notes, “expects them to trust his judgement.” This has been cause to see Thucydides as objective, though many now call this interpretation of Thucydides' interjections, or lack thereof, to question. For this, see Gribble 1998. For more on the differences between Thucydides' and Herodotus' use of narratorial interjections, see Dewald 1987. For an overview of authorial comments in Thucydides, see De Bakker 2017. It is also worth noting that Herodotus in many ways embodies Kovach and Rosenstiel's “new journalist” — who takes on the roles of Authenticator, Sense Maker, Witness Bearer, Watchdog, and Intelligent Aggregator, among others — better than Thucydides. (Note that this is separate from the journalism practiced in the New Journalism school, as will be discussed below.)

⁹¹ Other interjections of a similar nature in Thucydides are 2.47; 2.65; 3.82; 5.26; 8.97 (Dewald 1987, 150). According to Plant (2010, 167), one of the most significant contributions to history writing by Thucydides was “to determine and reflect on his historical methodology” as he did in 1.22. Hornblower also says there was no precedent for this because Herodotus did not do it, nor did comparable later writers (Hornblower, vol. 1, 1991, 6-7).

prior conflict the Greeks had experienced. Thucydides thus begins the section on his methodology by describing why his account of the remote past is more accurate than others that existed at the time, before launching into his explanation of recording the events of his own time:

On the whole, however, the conclusions I have drawn from the proofs quoted may, I believe, safely be relied on. Assuredly they will not be disturbed either by the lays of a poet displaying the exaggeration of his craft, or by the compositions of the chroniclers that are attractive at truth's expense; the subjects they treat of being out of the reach of evidence, and time having robbed most of them of historical value by enthroning them in the region of legend. Turning from these, we can rest satisfied with having proceeded upon the clearest data and having arrived at conclusions as exact as can be expected in matters of such antiquity. To come to this war; despite the known disposition of the actors in a struggle to overrate its importance, and when it is over to return to their admiration of earlier events, yet an examination of the facts will show that it was much greater than the wars which preceded it.⁹²

While this passage explains how Thucydides covered the period before he was an eyewitness or contemporary, many of the points he discusses already set up his method for recording the events of his own time — one that would be free from exaggeration and carefully investigated. More importantly, by stating that the facts point to the Peloponnesian War being greater than all wars before it, he also demonstrates a willingness to use facts he deems accurate to support his own conclusions.

Of more interest to the comparison with journalists, Thucydides continues

⁹² Thuc. 1.21. Tr. Crawley.

his section on his methodology by describing his method for composing the history he himself lived through, starting with his method of composing the speeches and then his method of recording the actions of the events of the war:

“And with respect to speeches, some spoken before the war and others given while the war took place, it was difficult to remember the exactness of what was said, both for me with respect to the speeches I heard myself and for those reporting speeches to me, of which I heard from one place or another. Thus, I have made each speaker say whatever seemed to me best suited to each occasion, preserving as closely as possible the general sense of what was truly said.”⁹³

“But with respect to deeds, when it came to the happenings of the war, I thought it my duty to set down in writing not what news I heard from the first person to come along, nor even how things seemed to me to have occurred, but instead to record both the deeds for which I myself was present and the accounts from other eyewitnesses, having thoroughly tested each with as much accuracy as possible. These were arrived at laboriously because eyewitnesses did not give identical accounts of the same things, but these were given according to partiality for one side or the other, or from memory.”⁹⁴

It is the latter part, 1.22.3, where journalists find the most kinship with Thucydides. This passage especially is invoked by many journalism scholars to show that their principles of truth, fairness, accuracy, objectivity and balance can be found in Thucydides’ history, tying journalists to a “methodology of verification”⁹⁵ that has ancient roots. As we saw with Russell and his Crimean War dispatches, Thucydides identifies the very same problems faced by modern

⁹³ Thucydides 1.22.1.

⁹⁴ Thucydides 1.22.2-3.

⁹⁵ Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014, chapter 4) call this process the “discipline of verification.”

journalists: conflicting accounts, discerning hearsay from facts, and biased or untrustworthy witnesses. In fact, it was with this passage that Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel opened their chapter on ‘Journalism of Verification’ in *The Elements of Journalism*. Referring to Thucydides as “the Greek correspondent,” they note the similarities between the method Thucydides claims to have used and that of modern journalists. “Why does this passage feel so contemporary?” they ask. “Because it speaks to the heart of the task of nonfiction:

“How do you sift through the rumours, the gossip, the failed memories, the manipulative agendas, and try to capture something as accurately as possible, subject to revisions in light of new information and perspective? How do you overcome your own limits of perception, your own experience, and come to an account that most people will recognize as reliable? Strip away all the debate about journalism, all the differences among media or between one age and another. These are the real questions faced daily by those who try to gather news, understand it, and convey it to others.”⁹⁶

However, as Kovach and Rosenstiel suggest, while, Thucydides’ section on his methodology might appear recognizable from a journalist’s perspective, it is usually only viewed as such by considering his discussion on his methodology relating to the events of the war alone. Consideration of 1.22.3 in isolation misses the greater points Thucydides makes in chapters 21 and 22 of Book I as a whole, and, by doing so, ignores the persistent debate within Thucydidean scholarship concerning how accurate Thucydides was making himself out to be.

⁹⁶ Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 98.

In 1.22, Thucydides differentiates his process for covering both the deeds and speeches of the war, but when it comes to how journalists have viewed Thucydides and drawn comparisons to his method, only his method for “writing up”⁹⁷ the deeds, and not the speeches, is quoted.⁹⁸ This comes with good reason: on the one hand, the way Thucydides claims to cover the events of the war generally aligns well with modern concepts of accuracy, especially among journalists. Here, we have assertions of careful investigation: Thucydides will not record the first version of events he hears, nor will he report things based on his own opinion of how events came about. Just as in journalism, Thucydides stresses the importance of autopsy, or eyewitness testimony, whether by witnessing the events himself or by weighing the accounts of other eyewitnesses accordingly.⁹⁹ It is also in this section that Thucydides comes closest to mentioning the concept of impartiality, acknowledging that eyewitnesses provide differing accounts of the same event because of partiality, εἰς ἓν ἄνθρωπον, for one side and that he has his work cut out for him to sort through the misinformation arising from them.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ For the implications of the verb συγγράφω, “wrote up,” and how it denotes something that is not an independent composition, but a record of events that have already existed, see discussion in Greenwood 2006, 15-16, 62, 67 and in Edmunds 1993, 834-837.

⁹⁸ Lambel 2013, Windschuttle 1999 and Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014 are all guilty of this.

⁹⁹ Autopsy was an important feature of accurate knowledge for ancient historiographers. Introduced by Herodotus to historiography, it would feature prominently with later historiographers. Polybius, and later Lucian, would place it first in a hierarchy of evidence (Polybius 27.1-4; Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 47). Yet as Marincola points out, unlike Herodotus, Thucydides does not seem to indicate that autopsy is the way to certain knowledge or that autopsy is superior to inquiry. He even criticizes autopsy for non-contemporary history (monuments of Sparta vs. monuments of Athens). See Marincola 2001, 82 for Thucydides on autopsy and Sacks 1981, 49 and Miles 1995, 10 for importance placed on autopsy in later historiographers.

¹⁰⁰ As is Marincola 1997, 164: “it can hardly be denied that [Thucydides’] methodological statement read in full context is meant to indicate that the historian has recognized and overcome

On the other hand, Thucydides does not appear to record the speeches in his History with the same degree of accuracy as the events of the war, and even seems to contradict himself through the methods he lays out for both. Instead of recording the speeches in the same manner as the deeds, with “as much accuracy as possible,” Thucydides instead admits that it was difficult to remember the exactness of what was said — even of the speeches he himself heard.¹⁰¹ In further contradiction to his methodology for the deeds, Thucydides claims to compose the speeches according to “what seems best” to him to suit the occasion, whereas he uses the opposite treatment for the deeds, stating firmly that he will *not* record events as they seemed to him to have occurred. Many scholars have pointed out this contradiction and have used it as proof that Thucydides is not as accurate as he claims, since he essentially admits to putting words in the mouths of his speakers.

As is to be expected with a topic like Thucydides and the accuracy of his speeches, many scholars have weighed in on the subject. Most arguments hinge on the translation of τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης and τὰ δέοντα,¹⁰² with many falling in one

the problem.” Thucydides never makes a direct claim to being impartial, but this has not stopped journalism scholars (Lambel 2013 and Windschuttle 1999 especially) from bringing up this part as proof that Thucydides was the original “objective reporter.”

¹⁰¹ Cf. Polybius 12, 25a-25b, who seems to demand that speeches be produced verbatim, or at the very least with an accurate paraphrase. However, Polybius is not content with just the actual words spoken but is also concerned with the causes — beyond “just the facts” of what was said.

¹⁰² Some suggestions for τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης are “general intention” (Proctor 1980, 150), “main thesis” (de Ste-Croix 1972, 7-12), “the main thing” (Wilson 1982, 97-98), and “general sense” (Finley 1972, 26). While τὰ δέοντα is usually translated along the lines of “the things needful” (Orwin 1989, 355).

of two camps: either Thucydides went for “maximum feasible accuracy,” or he “completely fabricated the speeches.”¹⁰³ At issue are the seemingly opposing clauses of τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης and τὰ δέοντα — how can Thucydides, on the one hand, profess to keep true to the ξυμπάσης γνώμης of what was actually said while, on the other hand, make his speakers say what, in his opinion, was best suited (τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα) to each occasion? Various attempts, such as one by de Ste-Croix,¹⁰⁴ have been made to render compatible the two clauses, while others, such as Finley,¹⁰⁵ have merely accepted that there is no way to translate around the contradiction. However, both arguments assume that Thucydides viewed both τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης and τὰ δέοντα as the opposing concepts we perceive them to be,¹⁰⁶ and by keeping a journalistic perspective, it becomes clear that Thucydides’ methods for speeches and deeds need not contradict each other.

¹⁰³ See discussion in Orwin 1989, 362 n24. For scholars who argue that Thucydides was attempting to be as accurate as possible: Greene 1965, 20-33; Gomme, *An Historical Commentary I*, 138-139; Kagan 1975, 24; Cogan 1981, x-xvi. The idea that Thucydides completely fabricated the speeches was put forth by Eduard Schwartz 1926 and Helmut 1969. Pelling 2009, 179-180 takes a middle ground between the “historical accurist” argument and the “free composition” argument by saying that Thucydides’ vague phrasing means “either and both” since these are English translations, while also offering up the strong possibility that Thucydides’ vagueness was deliberate in order to be an “umbrella description” for a variety of procedures he used.

¹⁰⁴ De Ste-Croix 1972, 8-12 and Dover 1973, 21 both attempt to achieve compatibility between the τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης and τὰ δέοντα clauses, but others, such as Wilson 1982, 96-97 find their proposals unsatisfactory.

¹⁰⁵ Finley 1972, 26, who says that “There is no way to get round the incompatibility of the two parts of the statement.”

¹⁰⁶ Pelling 2009, 179 takes a similar line with his argument that the Greek can be interpreted either as historical accuracy or free composition and both at the same time, since translations only deal in English equivalents: “But, of course, we cannot ask which translation is ‘right’, as if a Greek audience would have puzzled out which English equivalent would be better two and a half millennia later.”

Accuracy and truth

Too many studies on Thucydides' methodology for covering deeds and speeches are based on two assumptions: first that our current conception of accuracy aligns with the ancient concept of accuracy with which Thucydides was familiar, and second, that facts of speech and facts of deeds are the same thing. As pointed out by Greenwood,¹⁰⁷ one must be careful to avoid judging Thucydides' accuracy with modern standards of accuracy. I outlined in chapter 1 how modern concepts of truth in journalism have been conflated with objectivity — that is, an extreme view of accuracy through which objectivity, marked by “just the facts” reporting, is the measure for the truthfulness of a news story. (This view of accuracy and truth has been largely shaped by 19th century positivism — and in no small part by the technological development of this period — as I will discuss in the following chapter.) The same can be said in general for how Thucydides' work is often judged. This has taken many forms, where Thucydides has been considered either the model for objective historiography and his *History* an accurate historical account or “the least objective historian”¹⁰⁸ with a work that, through manipulation and invention, falls better within the more fictive framework of literature. However, Thucydides, in his methodological statement, would not have conceived of accuracy in this way.

¹⁰⁷ Greenwood 2006, 65-82.

¹⁰⁸ Hunter 1973, 184.

For one, as alluded above, our modern concept of accuracy depends on many factors, including technology. Today, with the ability to record speech and transcribe it verbatim, we can expect accuracy when recording speech as no less than word-for-word.¹⁰⁹ Thucydides did not have access to recording technology, and even admits to the difficulty of remembering exactly what was said, offering instead a more reasonable expectation.¹¹⁰ This view has led scholars such as Jocelyn Small to suggest that accuracy in antiquity is better understood as “accuracy as gist.”¹¹¹ And indeed, even within the field of journalism, the concept of accurately recorded speech as a strictly verbatim practice is fairly new, dating only to the 1920s. The first journalistic interview was conducted in 1859,¹¹² but even as interviewing became more common in the 1870s and 1880s, it was not until later in the 1880s that reporters began quoting sources directly.¹¹³ Furthermore, even into the beginning of the 20th century, journalists were advised *against* note-taking. Instead, journalists were “encouraged to rely upon their own memories.”¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Greenwood (2006, 65-66) discusses accuracy in light of recording technology, though never brings journalists into the discussion. I will discuss how technology helped to shape journalistic objectivity in chapter 3 below.

¹¹⁰ Thuc. 1.22.1.

¹¹¹ Small 1997, 193.

¹¹² This was by Horace Greely of the *New York Tribune*, who interviewed Brigham Young. Greely, who, like Thucydides, had no access to recording technology, prefaced his published interview in a manner not unlike Thucydides’ explanation for his speeches: “Such is, as nearly as I can recall, the substance of nearly two hours of conversation, wherein much was said incidentally that would not be worth reporting, even if I could remember and reproduce it” (quoted in Anderson, Downey and Schudson 2016, 20-21). Interviews were introduced to journalism by Americans, and it was not until the 20th century that their British counterparts picked up the practice.

¹¹³ Schudson 2001, 156.

¹¹⁴ Schudson 2001, 157.

Invention, while keeping within what was likely to have happened given the situation, was also an acceptable practice. In Edwin Shuman's *Steps into Journalism: Helps and Hints for Young Writers*, published in 1894, journalists were advised that "in order to make an article out of the bare announcement at hand the editor must supply the missing details from his imagination."¹¹⁵ Clearly what is considered accurate and acceptable reporting practices is not a stable concept.

Related to this point is the important distinction between facts of speech and facts of action, and assuming they are equivalent is a poor starting point for analyzing Thucydides' treatment of speeches and deeds. Had Thucydides possessed the technology necessary for recording the speeches and had been able to include a word-for-word transcription of them in his *History*, it is unlikely that he would have chosen to do so. While this version of the speeches might have provided an accurate representation of *what was said*, it would not necessarily have given his readers an account of *what was true*. This becomes obvious when we consider a problematic practice in modern objective news reporting where journalists quote sources and, instead of indicating the truthfulness of the quote, merely 'balance' it with a source arguing the opposite. Modern journalism scholarship¹¹⁶ recognizes this practice of making facts out of what was said, noting

¹¹⁵ Shuman 1894, 120. This was during the age of the telegraph newswires, when not a lot of details were given in dispatches. This is not so different from Thucydides in 1.22.1: "Thus, I have made each speaker say whatever seemed to me best suited to each occasion, preserving as closely as possible the general sense of what was truly said."

¹¹⁶ See especially Thomas Patterson's book *Informing the News: The Need for Knowledge-Based Journalism* where he lays out "The Source Problem" well in chapter 2 (pp. 33-59).

the danger posed by sources, especially politicians, using speech to direct people in certain lines of thought. This method of news reporting, deeply imbedded in the concept of ‘objectivity,’ results in a model of which, as Pooley argues, “the definition of accuracy is less a question of the truth of what is said than a question of whether someone actually said it.”¹¹⁷ Thucydides himself appears to recognize this distinction; as Jebb suggests, Thucydides’ use of “τὰ δ' ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων instead of τὰ δ' ἔργα τὰ πραχθέντα” was a “bold” choice and that “the phrase has the special effect of bringing out the antithesis between facts of speech and facts of action.”¹¹⁸ Thucydides, furthermore, was not so much interested in the words spoken themselves, as the ideas behind the words. This is perhaps best summarized by Greenwood:

“It is significant that Thucydides offsets the actual words of the speakers with an emphasis on the ideas behind the words. In fact, there are numerous instances in the History where Thucydides portrays speech culture (particularly in Athens) in a way that suggests the use of speech to cover up what was really going on and to mislead audiences. Even if it had been possible to record the speakers’ words with precision, one gets the sense that Thucydides would still have been more concerned with the interpretation of the idea behind words.”¹¹⁹

Thucydides was attempting to provide his readers with a fuller picture of the Peloponnesian War that transcended what witnesses would have seen or heard

¹¹⁷ Pooley 2009, 5, quoted in Patterson 2013, 52. Leon Sigal expressed a similar thought in his *Reporters and Officials*: “Most news is not what happened, but what someone says happened” (Sigal, 1974, 69).

¹¹⁸ Jebb 1907, 372, n.25.

¹¹⁹ Greenwood 2006, 64-65.

during the day-to-day experience of the war. Looking at accuracy as a measure for reliability prevents us from seeing this whole picture. After all, Thucydides was not aiming for a strictly accurate “just the facts” account of the Peloponnesian War; he was attempting to seek out the truth and find meaning in the noise of facts, both those of action and speech. Rather than undermine his goal of a truthful account, Thucydides’ procedure for covering speeches, as much as it might not line up with current definitions of accuracy, had a role to play.¹²⁰

There are indeed many reasons for considering Thucydides as the first in a long journalistic tradition, many of which stem from the similar methodologies of both, yet journalists’ reasoning for making this claim only highlights the flaws in their own field. While the image of Thucydides as an objective, and therefore accurate, reporter of the Peloponnesian War makes for a tempting comparison, it does not reflect reality. After all, truth, in the journalistic as well as Thucydidean sense, is much more than accuracy alone, and it is the misunderstanding that truth and accuracy are equivalent that has clouded both our ideals in journalism and interpretations of Thucydides.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Greenwood (2006, 66) reaches this conclusion as well, but holds “historical truth” as equivalent to accuracy.

¹²¹ Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 53-55: “As we will see, ‘journalistic truth’ means more than mere accuracy. It is a sorting out process that takes place between the initial story and the interaction among the public, newsmakers, and journalists” (p. 55). Thucydides’ speeches, which helped drive his narrative and reveal motives, characters, and most importantly meaning, did just this.

Chapter 3: A Man Without a City

μάλιστα δὲ κατόπτρῳ ἑοικυῖαν παρασχέσθω τὴν γνώμην ἀθόλῳ καὶ σπιλινῷ καὶ ἀκριβεῖ τὸ κέντρον, καὶ ὁποίας ἂν δέξῃται τὰς μορφὰς τῶν ἔργων, τοιαῦτα καὶ δεικνύτω αὐτά, διάστροφον δὲ ἢ παράχρουν ἢ ἑτερόσχημον μηδέν.

[The historian] must make his mind like a mirror: clear and bright and accurate with respect to the surface; and whatever kinds of deeds he receives, he must present these same deeds, neither distorted nor false nor altered.

-Lucian, *How to Write History*, 51

“A newspaper is a mirror reflecting the public, a mirror more or less defective, but still a mirror.”

-Arthur Brisbane, 1912¹²²

Long before professional journalists came on the scene, many disciplines beyond historiography have laid claim, or have had claims made on their behalf, to Thucydides as one of their own. These claims have come from diverse sources — more recently, Thucydides has been likened to everything from a scientist¹²³ and tragedian¹²⁴ to the inventor of political science.¹²⁵ Throughout antiquity, Thucydides was widely considered to be the greatest historian, his work providing a model for those who came after him. Lucian of Samosata, writing in the second century CE, singled Thucydides out in his monograph *How to Write History*, noting that “Thucydides especially set out the rules [for historiography] and

¹²² “Editorial How and Why: Big Crowd Greets Brisbane Noted Journalist Says Newspaper Writing is Talking Wholesale,” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Volume 56, Number 41, 12 November 1912.

¹²³ Notably Cochrane’s *Thucydides and the Science of History* published in 1929, which saw Thucydides’ *History* as an “exact parallel to the attempts of modern scientific historians to apply evolutionary canons of interpretation derived from Darwinian science” (p. 3).

¹²⁴ Especially Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, 1907. Cornford considered Thucydides’ narrative to be “shaped by Aeschylean tragic forms.”

¹²⁵ Ober 2006.

distinguished good writing from bad.”¹²⁶ Even Dionysius of Halicarnassus named him “the greatest of all historians,” despite his more critical stance on Thucydides in general.¹²⁷ But what were the criteria for this ideal historian? Lucian described him, among many things, as a “man without a city” (ἄπολις),¹²⁸ an independent reporter of events¹²⁹ with an eye only to Truth¹³⁰ who, with a mind like a mirror, recorded only what happened.¹³¹ Above all, the ideal historian had to be impartial (ἴσος).¹³²

Ancient roots to objectivity

Though few theoretical discussions on historiography survive from antiquity, resulting in a gap in our understanding of how the ancients would have conceived of its nature, it is possible to make some generalizations.¹³³ Of the treatises that survive, Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ *On Thucydides*, Plutarch’s *On the Malice of Herodotus*, Lucian’s *How to Write History*, and Book 12 of Polybius provide an idea of what was considered good practice. From these, and from what

¹²⁶ Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 42

¹²⁷ D. Hal. *Thuc.* 2. While largely admired, the reception of Thucydides was not homogenous throughout antiquity, as shown in the writing of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who was critical of how Thucydides handled historical content. However, as Gavin Weaire (2005) argues, when one compares how Thucydides was assessed in the *Epistula ad Pompeium* against the later assessment in *De Thucydide*, even Dionysius’ assessment softened over time. For a more general overview of Thucydidean reception in antiquity, see Fromentin and Gotteland 2017.

¹²⁸ Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 41.

¹²⁹ Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 41.

¹³⁰ Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 39.

¹³¹ Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 41-42.

¹³² Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 41.

¹³³ Marincola 2001, 6.

can be generalized from the statements made by other ancient historians, the most common trait attributed to the good historian was that of impartiality.¹³⁴ But this does not mean that impartiality was the foremost goal. As A.J. Woodman demonstrated in his book *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, the main expectation for historical accounts was that they be true; only, truth, as the ancients saw it, was opposed not to falsehood, but to bias.¹³⁵ In other words, in order for an account to be true, it had to be impartial. While both Woodman and Marincola insist that this view of truth is different from our own views, an examination of truth in journalism, as it has been shaped by the rise of objectivity and positivism, will show that the ancient historian's conception of truth is not that far off from the modern journalist's.¹³⁶

Modern objectivity draws from a long tradition, one that can be traced back to both the Homeric narrator and the rational inquiry of the Presocratics.¹³⁷ The "ultimate model" for the ancient historiographer's impartiality was Homer, who, because of his fair treatment of both the Greeks and the Trojans and his reserve in

¹³⁴ Marincola 1997, 158-174. Herodotus and Thucydides do not make explicit mentions of impartiality, though based on their methods there appears to be an awareness of not wanting to seem partial. Polybius is first to make an explicit statement of impartiality (12.5.1-5). Sallust (*Cat.* 4.2-3) and Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.1 are other examples. Of course, such statements were not always followed, but the fact that they were made demonstrate the importance placed on impartiality to increase one's credibility — something that is not so different from the editorial statements in the English newsbooks of 17th and 18th century England.

¹³⁵ Woodman 1988, 71-74. Marincola (1997, 159-160 and 2009, 19) follows Woodman's argument.

¹³⁶ Neither Marincola nor Woodman define what they mean by the modern standard for truth, so it is difficult to determine what each meant by 'different'.

¹³⁷ See Marincola (1997, 158-174) for influence of Homer on impartiality in ancient historiography and Ward (2015, 63-80) for an overview of ancient Greek philosophical influences on modern concepts of objectivity.

interrupting his narrative, has been considered the inventor of objectivity. “Only a just man made perfect could have written the *Iliad*,” wrote Simone Weil in *First and Last Notebooks*¹³⁸ — a provocative statement made all the more significant in light of the fact that it was Homer’s legacy of objectivity upon which Weil and Hannah Arendt found rare common ground in their divergent political theories.¹³⁹ Arendt, too, credited Homer with the invention of objectivity *and* historiography, because, in the *Iliad*, Homer praises Hector as well as Achilles.¹⁴⁰ However, more scientific roots to modern concepts of objectivity can also be drawn from the rational inquiry of the Presocratics, who adopted a critical attitude, reasoning based on evidence and argument, and a disinterested approach to knowledge,¹⁴¹ as well as to medical writers of the Hippocratic Corpus, many of whom demonstrate an early form of empiricism that placed importance on observation and experimentation.¹⁴²

While Homer has been credited to being Thucydides’ main influence when it came to the importance of the impartial narrator,¹⁴³ since the writings of the

¹³⁸ Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, 336.

¹³⁹ Esposito 2017, 8.

¹⁴⁰ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 51: “Impartiality, and with it, all true historiography, came into the world when Homer decided to sing the deeds of the Trojans no less than those of the Achaeans, and to praise the glory of Hector no less than the greatness of Achilles.”

¹⁴¹ Ward 2015, 64 and Curd 2001, 2-4.

¹⁴² Ward 2015, 65-66. I will discuss more on the possible influences the medical writers had on Thucydides’ methodology in chapter 4.

¹⁴³ Marincola 1997, 193; Rood 2006, 248. Rood also points out that Herodotus’ first-person interventions became fewer the closer the narrative got to the historian’s own time, and in this sense Thucydides could also have been drawing from Herodotus’ method. Arendt, too, takes up the position that the original and most influential model for objectivity was Homer: “The disinterested pursuit of truth has a long history; its origin, characteristically, precedes all out theoretical and scientific traditions, including our tradition of philosophical and political thought.

natural philosophers and physicians were based on the assumption that natural principles governed nature, it is also possible to infer that it was not a huge leap for the first ancient historians to try to explain history by gathering facts about the human experience.¹⁴⁴ Modern concepts of objectivity, drawing originally from both streams, still show signs of these ancient roots, from the word's popularized synonyms of 'scientific', 'rational' and 'fair' to objectivity's tenacious effects on how we have come to perceive truth. In the following chapter, I will outline the development of the modern concept of objectivity — and its later adoption within the field of journalism — and, as it was indelibly so in the past, how objectivity has come to be intrinsically tied to our modern concept of truth.

Defining objectivity

Despite its hallowed status in journalism, objectivity is famously a difficult word to pin down, and for this reason it is unclear where objectivity is supposed to fit in journalism.¹⁴⁵ This in turn has led objectivity to undermine journalism's primary goal: that of truth. While proto-objectivity can be traced throughout the history of journalism from the seventeenth century onwards, it was not until the 1920s that it was formally adopted into the standards of Anglo-American journalism. By this time, there was divided opinion over whether emphasis should

I think it can be traced to the moment when Homer chose to sing the deeds of the Trojans no less than those of the Achaeans, and to praise the glory of Hector, the foe and the defeated man, no less than the glory of Achilles, the hero of his kinfolk" (*Between Past and Future*, 258).

¹⁴⁴ Ward 2015, 66.

¹⁴⁵ As Gauthier (1993) points out.

be placed on the journalistic method or the journalists themselves.¹⁴⁶ This confusion stems largely from two causes: the uncertain definition of objectivity and its history within the profession of journalism.

Objectivity is frequently brought up in discussions of the accuracy and truthfulness of news stories. However, rarely is it determined what is meant by the term itself.¹⁴⁷ While much emphasis is placed on objectivity as a key value in American and Canadian journalism, there is no universally accepted definition for objectivity, nor has the sense of the word remained constant throughout its usage. Despite this, most discussions surrounding objectivity as it pertains to the sciences, social sciences, and journalism begin with the false assumption that the term has held a fixed definition.¹⁴⁸ In fact, the definition of objectivity has varied to such an extent throughout its usage that, prior to the 17th century, objectivity and subjectivity held definitions opposite to how they are conceptualized today¹⁴⁹ — the word “objective” pertained to objects within one’s consciousness, while “subjective” described the actual objects.¹⁵⁰ The definition of objectivity shifted with the rise of empiricism and underwent many adjustments and changes from the Enlightenment onwards. By the 1920s, objectivity was fully adopted into journalism, relying heavily on the positivistic influences of the sciences and social

¹⁴⁶ Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 55. This remains a source of confusion, as *The New York Times*’ and *The Wall Street Journal*’s social media policy demonstrated in the fall of 2017 (Ingram 2017).

¹⁴⁷ Both Daston and Galison (1992) and Hackett and Zhao (1998) confront this question.

¹⁴⁸ Daston 1992, 598 addresses this issue and argues that the current concept of objectivity is derived from many concepts, each with its own history of usage dating from the 17th century.

¹⁴⁹ Nagel 1986; Maras 2013, 19; Ward 2015, 45.

¹⁵⁰ Daston and Galison 2007, 29; Maras 2013, 19; Ward 2015, 45.

sciences.

There are three generally accepted senses of objectivity: ontological, epistemic and procedural.¹⁵¹ Ontological objectivity is the agreement of a belief with external reality, while epistemic objectivity means that a belief can be verified with evidence and inquiry.¹⁵² Procedural objectivity refers to the method used to arrive at an unbiased decision.¹⁵³ Throughout the history of objectivity's usage, different senses have held varying levels of prominence. According to media ethicist Stephen J.A. Ward, current concepts of journalistic objectivity fall under all three senses: ontologically, a piece of journalism is objective if it accurately presents the facts of what happened; epistemologically, news stories are objective if the method used adheres to proper standards and verification; and procedurally, reports are objective if they are fair and balanced.¹⁵⁴ However, within journalistic objectivity, there is a heavy focus on "aperspectival objectivity," a type of epistemic objectivity, which became fully conceptualized by the late nineteenth century.¹⁵⁵ This type of objectivity is perhaps best encapsulated by Thomas Nagel's "view from

¹⁵¹ Ward 2010a, 138. Not everyone describes objectivity with three senses, however. In fact, Ward (2010b, 90) also argues for only two senses by combining procedural and epistemic and calling it "epistemic or methodological objectivity." Other senses are used to describe objectivity as it pertains specifically to journalism, such as in Hackett and Zhao (1998, 85) whereby "goal or ethic," "epistemology" and "practices or methods" are used.

¹⁵² Ward 2010a, 138.

¹⁵³ Ward 2010a, 138.

¹⁵⁴ Ward 2010a, 139.

¹⁵⁵ Daston (1992, 597) uses the term "aperspectival objectivity" to describe one type of "epistemic objectivity," a branch of objectivity that arose out of the positivism movement in the 19th century and also includes "mechanical" and "procedural" objectivity (Daston 1992; Ward 2015, 105). For more on the development of objectivity prior to the Enlightenment as it relates to journalism, see Ward 2015, chapter 2.

nowhere” — the idea that one can consider the world with detachment.¹⁵⁶ While there is emphasis on impartiality and disinterestedness in journalistic objectivity as it widely appears today, these have not always been associated with objectivity, and it is important to understand that the current version of objectivity is a conglomerate of its many prior phases.¹⁵⁷

Journalistic objectivity borrows from both philosophical and scientific objectivity, and while objectivity has a long and varied past, much of what is found in journalistic objectivity can be traced to the ethical and philosophical developments of empirical objectivity that arose out of the Enlightenment and its stress on reason.¹⁵⁸ This Enlightenment objectivity was characterized by the “impartial judge” in ethics and “correct representation” in philosophy, as found in the writings of Immanuel Kant, David Hume and Adam Smith.¹⁵⁹ While Kant is credited with bringing objectivity to prominence within philosophy, his take on objectivity, that of “objective validity,” aligned more with the ontological sense of objectivity, rather than the epistemic version.¹⁶⁰ Truth, according to Kant, was “the agreement of knowledge with its objective.”¹⁶¹ Indeed, pre-Kant, the discussion of

¹⁵⁶ Nagel 1986. The “view from nowhere” was later brought into journalism theory by media critic Jay Rosen, who uses the concept to argue that balanced reporting only hinders the spread of the truth (Rosen 2003).

¹⁵⁷ As Daston (1992, 597) points out, it is for this reason that the word “objective” today is considered to be synonymous with words such as empirical, factual, scientific, impartial and rational. With journalistic objectivity words such as balanced, fair, non-distorted, and neutral can also be added (Munoz-Torres 2012, 570).

¹⁵⁸ Ward 2015, 96.

¹⁵⁹ Ward 2015, 96.

¹⁶⁰ Daston 1992, 602; Ward 2015, 100.

¹⁶¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781, 97. As quoted in Ward 2015, 101.

objectivity was mainly ontological in nature and did not contain the perspectival tones that are inherent within it today. However, perspectivity was discussed in philosophy at the time, providing the roots for epistemic variants of objectivity that were to come.¹⁶²

It is possible to trace the source of aperspectival objectivity to the philosophical discussions of perspective of the 18th century, but it is important to note that 18th century perspectivity was concerned with morals, and that the word ‘objective’ was not used explicitly in such discussions. During the 19th century, when true aperspectival objectivity was defined, the focus changed to a scientific nature, rather than a moral one.¹⁶³ Hume and Smith, who laid the groundwork for what would later become aperspectival objectivity, demonstrate this focus on morals and aesthetics rather than a scientific object.¹⁶⁴ Hume makes the first steps toward aperspectival objectivity in his “Of Standards of Taste” but does not approach impartiality through the “view from nowhere.” Rather, he wrote that one should consider things from many perspectives at once: “I must depart from the situation, and considering myself as a man in general, forget, if possible, my individual being, and my peculiar circumstances.”¹⁶⁵ Smith moved closer to impartiality through self-effacement in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* by

¹⁶² Daston 1992, 602-603.

¹⁶³ Daston 1992, 603.

¹⁶⁴ Ward 2015, 100; Daston 1992, 602-605.

¹⁶⁵ Hume, 1826, “Of Standards of Taste,” in *Philosophical Works*, Vol. 3. Edinburgh, 271; Daston 1992, 604.

recommending the role of the “impartial spectator”: “We must view them, neither from our own place nor from his, but from the place and with the eyes of a third person, who has no particular connexion to either, and who judges with impartiality, between us.”¹⁶⁶ While Hume and Smith certainly set the stage for the aperspectival category of objectivity, neither took up the true ‘view from nowhere’ that would come to define scientific aperspectival objectivity in the 19th century, and later, journalistic objectivity.

Another aspect of journalistic objectivity that is present in the 18th century concept of objectivity is the question of what is considered to be objective. The confusion of whether ‘objective’ describes the method of the journalist or simply the journalist may be said to bear striking similarities with the shift between the 18th and 19th century of what was considered ‘objective’ in science. During the 18th century, it was the scientist, not the method of science, that was considered to be objective.¹⁶⁷ This objectivity, in keeping with the moral tone of the eighteenth century concept, compelled scientists to be objective in order to remain indifferent to public response and to refrain from pursuing science for personal gain, as well as to restrain themselves from inserting themselves into their work.¹⁶⁸ In much the same way, journalists are often made to give the appearance of being the objective

¹⁶⁶ Adam Smith, 1759, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, eds. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (1976), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 135; Daston 1992, 605.

¹⁶⁷ Daston 1992, 605. This moral imperative placed upon scientists of the time was so strong that Daston refers to scientists as “paragons of the virtue of disinterestedness.”

¹⁶⁸ Daston 1992, 605; Daston and Galison 1992, 81.

ones in order to seem more ethical.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, objectivity — and its opposite, subjectivity — entered common usage. In this period, the focus became more on aperspectival objectivity, meaning that truth may only be attained by removing oneself completely from any one point of view.¹⁶⁹ There was also a great emphasis placed on facts and the phrase “let nature speak for itself” was commonly invoked to express the prevailing thoughts in an era of scientific advancements.¹⁷⁰ Overall, objectivity rose to greater prominence during this period, and this was largely because of the development of positivism.¹⁷¹ It was Comte who invented the philosophy of positivism, which, in the ontological sense, stated that truth and facts must be value-free, while epistemically, it contained the belief that one could select facts and uncover the truth without making value judgements or interpreting.¹⁷² This resulted in the fact-value dichotomy and the emergence of true aperspectival objectivity.¹⁷³ Positivism was embraced by the scientific community and this caused scientists to attempt to “escape from perspective” in order to understand true nature.¹⁷⁴ An important result of positivism was that true knowledge became equated with value-free knowledge. Since ‘objective’ was defined to mean value free, this meant that objectivity *was* truth, while its

¹⁶⁹ Daston 1992, 607; Ward 2015, 103.

¹⁷⁰ Ward 2015, 103; Daston and Galison 1992, 81.

¹⁷¹ Ward 2015, 105.

¹⁷² Ward 2015, 103, 105; Munoz-Torres 2012, 570, 572.

¹⁷³ Munoz-Torres 2012, 570; Ward 2015, 106.

¹⁷⁴ Ward 2015, 106.

opposite, subjectivity, was a lack of truth.¹⁷⁵

Ward calls nineteenth century positivistic objectivity “pure objectivity” and argues that this definition has narrowed the concept of objectivity to an “extreme interpretation of an ideal.”¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, because objectivity was so readily applied to the natural sciences, it was assumed that it would work well in the social sciences and humanities as well.¹⁷⁷ By the end of the 19th century, the social sciences adopted objectivity and added to it the idea of neutrality.¹⁷⁸ It is this concept of objectivity — a concept that had become so misconstrued because of its emphasis on neutrality, detachment, and separation of facts from values that it was realistically impossible to achieve¹⁷⁹ — that was eventually copied by journalists during the professionalization period in the early 20th century.

Development of journalistic objectivity¹⁸⁰

While it is possible to trace the roots of journalistic objectivity to the beginning stages of modern journalism in the seventeenth century,¹⁸¹ objectivity as an established ethic in the Anglo-American model of journalism is a relative

¹⁷⁵ Munoz-Torres 2012, 574.

¹⁷⁶ Ward 2015, 110.

¹⁷⁷ Munoz-Torres 2012, 570.

¹⁷⁸ Ward 2015, 108.

¹⁷⁹ Munoz-Torres 2012.

¹⁸⁰ For this section, I will mainly follow the development of journalistic objectivity as it occurred in the United States, since this is where most of the scholarship on the topic lies. Objectivity developed at different paces and for different reason in other Western countries. While objectivity in Canadian media follows a development similar to the American one, as Ward (2015, 260-1) points out, Canadian newspapers were more likely to look to their British counterparts for a model in the beginning stages.

¹⁸¹ Ward 2015, 116. According to Ward, this was due in large part to the growing focus on empirical objectivity in the sciences.

newcomer to the discipline. The dating of when objectivity fully entered journalism, however, is debated, with scholars divided over whether it should be dated from when objectivity began to make headway in the methodology of journalists or when it was finally formalized in journalistic codes. Called the “Schudson-Schiller problem” after noted media historians Michael Schudson and Dan Schiller, both the periods of the 1830s and the 1920s have been suggested.¹⁸² Schiller places the introduction of journalistic objectivity in the 1830s, coinciding with the development of the penny press,¹⁸³ while Schudson argues for the date of the 1920s, the so-called Progressive Era when the term objectivity became “widely used” and “a moral goal for journalism.”¹⁸⁴ Although many scholars follow Schudson with the date of the 1920s,¹⁸⁵ because the dates are almost a century apart, it is impossible to reach a definitive conclusion.¹⁸⁶

While there is no conclusive date for when objectivity started to be considered a main ethic in journalism, the development of journalistic objectivity from the 1830s to the early twentieth century is worth considering, mainly because while objectivity is largely considered the primary value of journalism ethics, it was not so much a desire for ethical practice, but a commercial, technological, and political push, as well as a movement towards professionalization, that brought objectivity to the fore. In short, journalistic objectivity has not been rooted in a

¹⁸² Maras 2013, 38.

¹⁸³ Schiller 1981.

¹⁸⁴ Schudson 1978.

¹⁸⁵ See Hamilton and Tworek 2017, Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, Hackett and Zhao 1998, Carey 1997 [1969], Janowitz 1975.

¹⁸⁶ Knowlton 2005, 4. For more on the debate, see Maras 2013, chapter 1.

desire to be ethical alone, nor has the end goal been strictly that of truth.

Technology argument

Two major technological developments impacted the form and the method of journalism in the nineteenth century: the invention of the steam press, and the telegraph. With the introduction of the steam press in the 1830s — and later the Hoe rotary press in 1846 — along with the use of wood pulp in paper manufacture, newspapers could be mass-produced, and produced cheaply.¹⁸⁷ This spurred on a shift from the partisan, opinion-driven, elite press that had dominated journalism since the seventeenth century, to the emergence of the penny press.¹⁸⁸ With the penny press — the “primordial soup of journalistic objectivity,” according to David Mindich¹⁸⁹ — journalism took the form of the popular press, which was much more available to the wider public than the newspapers of previous periods. Not only were newspapers printing more copies, but they were made affordable to most of the population. Furthermore, the cheap production of newspapers coincided with a time of a growing economy and population, increased access to public education, and scientific advances.¹⁹⁰ In an attempt to appeal to a larger audience, newspapers began moving towards claims of impartial reporting in order not to alienate their

¹⁸⁷ Allan 2010, 35; Ward 2015, 210.

¹⁸⁸ Ward 2015, 209. The penny press was named after the fact that papers could be purchased for a penny.

¹⁸⁹ Mindich 1998, 12, following Schiller’s theory of the origin of journalistic objectivity in the 1830s.

¹⁹⁰ Ward 2015, 205. These conditions were present in Britain, France, the United States, and Canada, and each saw the rise of the popular press between the 1830s and the 1880s.

increasingly diverse audience. This movement away from the opinion-driven partisan press saw news begin to take prominence over editorial.¹⁹¹ Other efforts to reach a larger readership took the form of changes in writing style. Instead of the elegantly-worded essayists of the elite press, reporters wrote in a simple, plain style that was concise and factual.¹⁹² In this way, the rise of the penny press, caused in large part by the invention of the steam press and the subsequent rise in circulation of newspapers, resulted in journalism's first break from partisanship.¹⁹³

While the steam press was crucial to mass-production, it was the telegraph that impacted the form and method of journalism the most. Introduced in the 1840s, use of the telegraph became widespread by the 1850s.¹⁹⁴ Since the cost per character was one cent,¹⁹⁵ the use of the telegraph favoured brevity, and thus called for the transmission of "just the facts" rather than interpretation and commentary.¹⁹⁶ This new "objective style" of journalism was caused less by a desire to be ethical than it was about the demands of new technology.¹⁹⁷ Another result of the telegraph was journalism's ubiquitous inverted pyramid structure — where the

¹⁹¹ Mindich 1998, 12; Ward 2015, 208. See also Irwin, "The Power of the Press," 1911. Not all editors at the time favoured the impersonal journalism of the latter nineteenth century. W.T. Stead was a vocal opponent of the "impersonal press" and thought opinion was more important than reporting. See Stead, "Government by Journalism," 654.

¹⁹² Ward 2015, 205.

¹⁹³ Mindich 1998, 12. It is also important to note that the "pennies" should not be considered the bastions of objective, ethical reporting — press barons, such as Pulitzer and Hearst, often tried to entice readers by sensationalizing the news while still making claims of truth and accuracy. It was, after all, the era of yellow journalism. For more, see Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 52; Emery 1962, 374.

¹⁹⁴ Allan 1997, 305; Knowlton 2005, 3-4.

¹⁹⁵ Kielbowicz 1987.

¹⁹⁶ Palmer 1978, 208.

¹⁹⁷ Ward 2015, 211.

important details are placed at the top along with the 5W lede and other, less important, information is included further down.¹⁹⁸ The reason for this new format was twofold: telegraph lines could fail mid-transmission, and with the creation of news wire services, such as Reuters, the Associated Press and, later, the Canadian Press, which spread news over wide regions, it was easier for editors to add region-specific details along with updates to the articles.¹⁹⁹ The wire services also put an onus on reporters to be politically neutral, since non-partisan stories could better serve more papers.²⁰⁰ With this new form that championed brevity and facts, there was less room in stories for opinion, explanation and analysis, thus making stories appear objective.²⁰¹

In recent times, the technology argument can also explain the staying power of journalistic objectivity. Broadcast television news brought an increased focus upon objectivity achieved through eye-witness accounts,²⁰² while Australian journalism scholar Steven Maras argues that it was radio broadcasting that brought objectivity to the fore in Australia.²⁰³ Yet there are problems with the technology argument. Maras notes the dangers inherent in technological determinism since the theory ignores other factors.²⁰⁴ The newspapers of the

¹⁹⁸ Porwancher 2011, 191.

¹⁹⁹ Porwancher 2011, 191; Ward 2015, 210.

²⁰⁰ Schudson 1978, 4.

²⁰¹ Carey 1997, 161; Ward 2015, 210. This is not to say that all was objective and fact-based at this time. As Schiller (1981, 4) points out, telegrams bearing biased and false misleading were not uncommon.

²⁰² McQuail 1992, 186; Maras 2013, 31. See also Hackett and Zhao 1998, 47.

²⁰³ Maras 2013, 31.

²⁰⁴ Maras 2013, 29. See especially Stensaas 1986, 58, but also Schiller (1981, 4), who argues that

nineteenth century were also the origin of objectivity's commercial imperative that features so prominently in today's media landscape.²⁰⁵ With the help of new technology, the circulation of popular newspapers rose significantly among British and American publications and, with it, there also grew a commercial incentive for objectivity.²⁰⁶

Commercialization and political arguments

Arising out of the technology argument for the development of objectivity in journalism is the commercialization theory, which in turn is closely related to the political argument. Indeed, it was not only a technological drive, but one driven by commercialism and political reasons, that caused a movement away from the partisan, elite press and towards a press that no longer wanted to persuade, but to present “just the facts” and let readers make up their own minds.²⁰⁷ As discussed in the technology argument, as newspaper circulation grew due to mass-production, newspaper owners sought out more ways to increase readership. In this way, news began to be viewed as a commodity, and this meant that consumer satisfaction trumped all else.²⁰⁸ For this reason, it was in a newspaper's best interest to be neutral politically — a move that would place neutrality before

the use of the telegraph and wire services were brought into newsrooms that already claimed to put facts first — as Carey (1997 [1986], 160) also indicates, “the telegraph cemented everything the ‘penny press’ set in motion.”

²⁰⁵ Hackett and Zhao 1998.

²⁰⁶ Ward 2015, 206.

²⁰⁷ Ward 2015, 213.

²⁰⁸ Ward 2015, 215.

everything, even truth — since this could attract readers from a wide variety of political backgrounds. Taking the position of neutrality also meant that newspapers could attract more advertisers, and at the time (the late 19th century), when advertising made up 65 per cent of the revenue of Canadian newspapers and was increasing, maintaining a stance of non-partisanship was appealing.²⁰⁹ The commercial side of journalistic objectivity is still very much present in the field today. As in the past, objectivity is viewed as a method of cost-savings, and this has many negative effects on reporting. Since stories that are more interpretive take more time to produce and are therefore more costly, passive reporting replaces fact-checking and analysis.²¹⁰ In effect, newspapers espouse neutrality and impartiality in order to appear trustworthy to readers, but this is only objectivity under the guise of being a virtue. In reality, objectivity is often employed by the media for material gain — to procure more readers and advertisers in order to increase profits and to save production costs.²¹¹

Professionalization argument

Commercial, technological, and political factors influenced the development of objectivity in journalism, but it was not formally introduced as an ethic until the 1920s. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, the field of journalism underwent the process of

²⁰⁹ Carey 1997, 137; Ward 2015, 224; Maras 2013, 32-34.

²¹⁰ Blakenburg and Walden 1977, 594; Hackett and Zhao 1998, 66.

²¹¹ Porwancher 2011, 186.

professionalization.²¹² This was in part a reaction against the tendency of the penny papers to sensationalize,²¹³ but it was also the result of journalists beginning to consider themselves as professionals.²¹⁴ As Maras argues, professionalization was viewed as a way to gain status, credibility, and trust, and journalists turned to objectivity as their main focus as they began to formalize a standardized model.²¹⁵ At this time objectivity, spurred on by positivism, was becoming important in many academic disciplines; it was thought that formally adopting objectivity into journalism would legitimize journalism in the eyes of other disciplines.²¹⁶ Objectivity, therefore, became an ideal, leading to the concept of “best practice” in journalism — a practice that embodied balance, neutrality, and fairness.²¹⁷ At least on the surface, the reason for objectivity became more about morals than practical purposes.²¹⁸

Professionalization in journalism resulted in the development of codes of ethics, the institutionalization of journalism in universities, and editorial statements — all with a heavy emphasis on objective reporting.²¹⁹ Beginning in the 1890s, there was a move toward bringing the concept of objective reporting into

²¹² Schudson 1978, Schudson is best known for the professionalization argument, which argues that journalistic objectivity did not exist until it was formalized in a code of ethics. However, other scholars, like Schiller (1981) believe that the other arguments are equally valid, and that the consideration of the professionalization argument alone ignores other important factors in the development of journalistic objectivity.

²¹³ Ward 2015, 234.

²¹⁴ Maras 2013, 24-25.

²¹⁵ Maras 2013, 24; Janowitz 1975, 618

²¹⁶ Ward 2015, 108; Maras 2013, 24-25

²¹⁷ Maras 2013, 24; Schudson 1978, 68

²¹⁸ Knowlton 2005, 4

²¹⁹ Carey 1997 [1969], 138; Ward 2010a, 140; Maras 2013, 25

universities. Edwin Schuman's 1894 textbook, *Steps in Journalism*, was the first of its kind, and it is evident by its content that impartiality was already gaining ground as an important ethic: "It is the mission of the reporter to reproduce facts and opinions of others, not to express his own."²²⁰ By 1911, objectivity was finally explicitly named in the context of journalism in Charles G. Ross' textbook *The Writing of News: A Handbook*, where Ross wrote, "News writing is objective to the last degree, in the sense that the writer is not allowed to 'editorialize.'"²²¹ Thus, The Anglo American model of journalism truly came into its own through professionalization. By the 1920s, journalism and objective had become virtually inseparable.

Objectivity 'no longer a goal ... [but] a fetish.'²²²

While it is possible to trace the roots of journalistic objectivity back to nineteenth century positivism, as well as to determine how objectivity came to hold so much sway in journalism ethics, efforts to define objectivity in the current journalistic context, outside its philosophical and scientific origins, prove challenging. As Kevin Marsh, former editor of the BBC College of Journalism, points out, a more popular definition of objectivity — "no statement is true from every possible standpoint" — is by its nature a paradox, since the very definition of

²²⁰ Schuman 1894, 65-66

²²¹ Ross 1911, 20; Dicken-Garcia 2005, 90. Note that, here, objectivity is defined as the opposite of editorializing.

²²² Peterson 1956, 88, commenting on the pervasive hold objectivity had on journalism.

the word is an exception to its own definition.²²³ Furthermore, determining a conclusive meaning of objectivity in journalism is made even more difficult by the fact that media scholars, practicing journalists, and the public each have varying opinions about what objectivity is. The public and most journalists do not deal in terms such as “ontological,” “epistemic,” and “procedural,” even though most definitions of journalistic objectivity fall under these categories. Yet while definitions vary, underlying notions about objectivity in journalism remain the same. These notions, such as the fact-value dichotomy, balance, fairness, neutrality, and lack of bias are all rooted in positivism and the belief that truth is value-free.²²⁴ Journalists make claims, and the public demands, that they present “just the facts.” This realization of objectivity usually results in the demand that journalists find and present knowledge without any form of interpretation and that facts can be selected without values.²²⁵

Following the positivistic dichotomy of truth and bias, in many respects, objectivity and truth have become conflated in today’s journalistic standards: since objectivity is often defined in opposition to bias, truth must also be equated with a lack of bias.²²⁶ Journalists purport to attain this semblance of objectivity by using neutral language and taking up the “view from nowhere.”²²⁷ In order to achieve the

²²³ Marsh (2014, 219) suggests that one would have to rewrite the definition to read: “no statement is true from every possible standpoint except this one.”

²²⁴ Munoz-Torres 2012.

²²⁵ MacIntyre 2007 [1981]; Munoz-Torres 2012, 569.

²²⁶ Munoz-Torres 2012, 569.

²²⁷ Rosen 2003; Hackett 1984, 232; Munoz-Torres 2012, 569.

“view from nowhere,” journalists must turn to balance — the idea that journalists must deliberately seek out opposing viewpoints as proof of objective reporting.²²⁸ In other words, good reporting meant creating stories that gave opposing views equal validity.

There is also a lot of confusion concerning whether objectivity is intended for the method used by journalists or for journalists themselves.²²⁹ As discussed above, objectivity first began to enter journalism as a push-back against the partisan press. From the beginning, objectivity was intended more for the methodology than the journalist. This can be found in changes to the journalistic writing style adopted throughout the nineteenth century, such as the use of simple language in reports, the 5W lede and the inverted pyramid format, as well as in the efforts to make stories politically neutral in order to appeal to larger audiences. This emphasis on method was further cemented at the start of the twentieth century with the rise of professionalization in the industry. Journalists wanted to appear professional, and thus developed a reporting method that adhered to positivist practices in the sciences and social sciences — the so-called “best practice” of fairness and neutrality. As expressed by the then-general manager of the Associated Press, Kent Cooper, implementing objectivity into journalism called for “the journalist who deals in facts diligently developed and intelligently

²²⁸ Durham 1998, 124.

²²⁹ Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 55.

presented.”²³⁰ In other words, objectivity was meant to bring a transparent, defensible, and rigorous methodology to the discipline.²³¹ However, along with professionalism came a moralizing element as well, and as the morality of journalists was brought into question, journalists began to turn to objectivity as a way to describe themselves as a shield against criticism. Bolstered by the false premise of positivism that truth and facts can be separated from opinion, neutrality became something to describe the journalist, suggesting that journalists themselves are able to be free from bias and can transcend their own point of view, almost unto self-effacement.²³² In this way, objectivity was no longer used to describe the method of journalists but was used to describe the journalists themselves.

As objectivity began to take hold in journalism toward the end of the nineteenth century, there also developed the way with which it was to be portrayed outwardly in journalism. Perhaps best illustrated by James Gordon Bennett, publisher of the New York Herald, who wrote, “a reporter should be a mere machine to repeat in spite of editorial suggestion or dictation,”²³³ journalism was portrayed to be a passive endeavour — whereby journalists wrote ‘just the facts.’²³⁴ However, this rarely represents what journalists actually do, which, as Ward

²³⁰ As quoted in Gramling 1940, 314; Schudson 2001, 161-2.

²³¹ Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 10; Ward 2015, 38-9.

²³² Kovach and Rosenstiel 55, 103.

²³³ Quoted in Schiller 1977, 93.

²³⁴ Ward 2015, 219-20.

argues, is a form of active empiricism — such as choosing what stories to cover, what sources to interview, and what angle to take.²³⁵ The same is true of journalism now, but while, on the one hand, journalists' claims of passively recording the news hides the real method employed, passive journalistic techniques have crept into the reporting process, appearing as the uncritical acceptance of sources' responses and false balance.

Objectivity and truth

At issue with objectivity's now-foundational role in the Anglo-American model of journalism is how positivism led to the conflation of 'objective' with truth. If truth was to be 'value-free', it had to be true from every possible angle. When journalists brought objectivity into their discipline, this 'values-free' concept of truth resulted in a type of reporting that sought an objective product above all else, where neutral and objective stories were prioritized over stories that sought out the truth. In effect, objectivity replaced truth as the goal instead of being used as one tool among the many at journalists' disposal to achieve their desired goal of truth. In the news stories themselves this is reflected in balanced stories that place opposing viewpoints on equal standing regardless of their respective validity. This leads to a public that is ill-served by a press whose reporters do not bother to "sort out the truth" in order "to avoid the appearance of taking sides."²³⁶ Therefore, if a

²³⁵ Ward 2015, 220.

²³⁶ Patterson 2013, 41.

source says something inaccurate or untrue, instead of identifying it as such, a reporter will only quote a source from the other side of the debate,²³⁷ allowing both sides to stand as legitimate.

However, objectivity is not a stand-in for truth, and the passive reporting style that merely provides a platform for ‘both sides’²³⁸ of story without scrutinizing them and showing to the public where inaccuracies lie only “peddles to hype and misinformation.”²³⁹ Ironically, in order to appear fair, balanced, neutral, and unbiased — the four horsemen of journalistic objectivity — journalists step into a role that takes them further away from the truth they are trying to achieve. It is for this reason that if journalists are to truly take up the role of sense-makers in a digital age whose public square is noisier than ever before, a new model must be sought out. Enter Thucydides, who did not “peddle to hype and misinformation” — this was, in fact, what he explicitly sets out to write against — and who offers many traits upon which a truth-seeking model for journalism can be built.

When Lucian described the ideal historian as “a man without a city,”²⁴⁰ he wrote with Thucydides in mind. Nagel’s “view from nowhere” — and Rosen’s subsequent adoption of the phrase into the realm of journalism studies²⁴¹ — with

²³⁷ This “debate” is often forced by the journalists themselves. See Patterson 2013, chapter 2.

²³⁸ “Both sides” journalism is also guilty of over-simplifying problems by making it appear as if there are only two sides, even though most are multi-faceted. See Marsh 2014, 217.

²³⁹ Patterson 2013, 6.

²⁴⁰ Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 41.

²⁴¹ Rosen 2003.

its roots in the aperspectival objectivity of Hume and Smith, is not so very different from the ancient equation of impartiality and truth that Lucian was writing about so many centuries before. In the following chapters, I will argue that Thucydides chose truth over facts in his coverage of the Peloponnesian War; yet, for many years, this was overlooked, and Thucydides' value was seen only in his supposed objectivity. When scholars began to question this objectivity and found evidence for inaccuracies and bias within his narrative, Thucydides' value as a historian diminished and scholars instead began looking at him in a more literary light, where his work was relegated to the realm of literature. However, just as in the objectivity problem in journalism, truth in Thucydides — and his value as a historian — is much more than the categories of 'objective' and 'biased' allow.

Chapter 4: The Scientific Inquirer

“Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts; nothing else will ever be of any service to them.”
-Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, 1854

λεγέτω μὲν οὖν περὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς ἕκαστος γινώσκει καὶ ἰατρὸς καὶ ἰδιώτης, ἀφ’ ὅτου εἰκὸς ἦν γενέσθαι αὐτό, καὶ τὰς αἰτίας ἄστινας νομίζει τοσαύτης μεταβολῆς ἰκανὰς εἶναι δύναμιν ἐς τὸ μεταστῆσαι σχεῖν: ἐγὼ δὲ οἶόν τε ἐγίγνετο λέξω...
All speculation as to its origin and its causes, if causes can be found adequate to produce so great a disturbance, I leave to other writers, whether lay or professional; for myself, I shall simply set down its nature...
-Thucydides 2.48.3, tr. Crawley

When Charles Dickens penned the opening lines²⁴² of his novel *Hard Times*, published in 1854, he was intending to satirize the positivistic movement that was sweeping the country at the time, with its emphasis on ‘facts first’, rationality and objectivity.²⁴³ With his usual ironic finesse Dickens chose to begin his work of fictional literature with an invocation to facts, the very act of which overturns the notion that it is facts alone from which we learn about the world. This irony would not have gone unnoticed by careful readers in the 19th century; after all, the ‘cult of objectivity’ had by then taken hold firmly within the scientific fields and was beginning to make headway in other disciplines, including history. As historians began to transform their field with an eye towards science, so too did positivism

²⁴² Quoted above.

²⁴³ It is notable that these opening lines were chosen as the opening quote of both a chapter by Sara Forsdyke about Thucydides (‘Thucydides’ Historical Method’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides*, 2017) and an article by Juan Munoz-Torres about journalistic objectivity (‘Truth and objectivity in journalism: Anatomy of an endless misunderstanding,’ *Journalism Studies* 13(4), 2012). Both works contain discussions that challenge the notion of objectivity.

impact perspectives about Thucydides and his historical method.

A modern scientific spirit

In a similar manner to how positivistic concepts of objectivity are entrenched in today's journalistic practices, past receptions of Thucydides have shaped, and continue to shape, current receptions, and the reception from the 19th century that considered history as a science is one of the most influential.²⁴⁴ This movement has its roots in 19th century German historiography and is particularly reflected in the work of German historians Leopold von Ranke and Wilhelm Roscher.²⁴⁵ Both Roscher and Ranke considered Thucydides to be the origin of this type of scientific historian, one who would pursue truth about the past without bias, through inquiry and by sticking to the facts.²⁴⁶ Under this view, Thucydides' methodological statements were taken "at face value"²⁴⁷ — just as it is for journalists looking to find their principles in the work of Thucydides, 1.22.3 was the main passage upon which the idea that Thucydides was the founder of

²⁴⁴ Forsdyke 2017, 19.

²⁴⁵ Forsdyke 2017, 19. See Süßmann 2012 for more on the development of scientific approaches in 19th century German historiography and Morley 2012 and Muhlack 2011 for a breakdown of how both Ranke and Roscher treated Thucydides. The reception of Thucydides among 19th century German historians was far from singular — opinions of Thucydides' objectivity varied from seeing him as purely objective to more-or-less subjective. See Meister 2014. Ranke, himself considered to be the "father of the objective writing of history," found a model for this historiographical impartiality in Thucydides: "It was his nature to do justice to both sides" and "Scrupulous adherence to the simple truth" (Ranke 1884, 318).

²⁴⁶ Forsdyke 2017, 19. Though Roscher thought Thucydides was impartial, he saw him both as a historical scientist and a historical artist because on the one hand he stuck to the facts and was impartial, but on the other hand he made judgements and connections through analysis and interpretation in order to make the facts easier for readers to understand (Morley 2012, 120, 125 from Roscher 1824, 11-12).

²⁴⁷ Morley 2012, 120.

scientific, or objective, history was based.²⁴⁸ Other evidence for Thucydides' supposed objectivity and scientific spirit came from the fact that he was exiled from Athens in 424 BCE, and could therefore cover the war more easily from both sides of the conflict;²⁴⁹ rarely interjected his narrative; and did not look to the divine for explanation.²⁵⁰

Nineteenth century British historians “appropriated” the German tradition, undergoing the “new science of history” as well.²⁵¹ By the end of the century, the prevailing view of Thucydides was that of a scientific historian and model for the way to write history, and this extended into the scholarship of the 20th century.²⁵² The impact of positivism can be found in the influential works of J.B. Bury,²⁵³ G.F. Abbott,²⁵⁴ Charles Norris Cochrane,²⁵⁵ F. El. Adcock,²⁵⁶ and A.W. Gomme.²⁵⁷ Abbott, who found within Book I of Thucydides the principles of scientific

²⁴⁸ Forsdyke 2017, 25. This is because Thucydides acknowledges the bias of eyewitness accounts (though he never mentions objectivity explicitly).

²⁴⁹ Thuc. 5.26.5; Forsdyke 2017, 25. Evidence for this was also found in Thucydides' formulation of “the war of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians” in Thuc. 1.1.1: τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων (Rood 2006, 229). This is similar to Herodotus' formulation of the “Greeks and barbarians” in his proem. Thucydides even calls the war “the Attic War” from the perspective of the Peloponnesians (5.28.2; 5.31.3; 5.31.5). Unlike journalists, there was no commercial imperative for Thucydides' objectivity: “As he owned mines in Thrace (4.105.1) he was perhaps spared the necessity of making money from literary work” (Momigliano 2001, 198).

²⁵⁰ See Hornblower 1992 for Thucydides' “religious silence.”

²⁵¹ Lianeri 2014, 177. Lianeri provides a more nuanced overview of Thucydides in 19th century British historians' thought.

²⁵² Pires 2006, 811. Pires provides an overview of perceptions of Thucydides in the 19th and 20th centuries concerning his work as science or art that goes much more in depth than this summary section. See also chapters 10-12 of *A Handbook to the Reception of Thucydides* (ed. Lee and Morley, 2014).

²⁵³ Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians*, 1909 [1958].

²⁵⁴ Abbott, *Thucydides: A Study in Historical Reality*, 1925 [1970].

²⁵⁵ Cochrane, *Thucydides and the Science of History*, 1929 [1965].

²⁵⁶ Adcock, *Thucydides and His History*, 1963.

²⁵⁷ Gomme, 1962; 1967.

historiography, considered Thucydides the “modern, scientific historian”²⁵⁸: “Could any argument be more modern, any method more scientific? ... We get in his Introduction not a manual of early Greek history, but a spirit of inquiry.”²⁵⁹ Finding examples of objectivity in Thucydides’ method played a considerable role in this assessment: “Although Thucydides had never heard the words ‘subjective’ and ‘objective,’” Abbott wrote, “he understood the distinction tolerably well.”²⁶⁰

One line of argument for evidence of Thucydides’ scientific propensities was his description of the plague in Book II.²⁶¹ Cochrane popularized this view in his book *Thucydides and the Science of History*, where he presented Thucydides as a scientist who was influenced by the fifth century BCE medical writers such as Hippocrates.²⁶² Thucydides begins his account of the plague by stating that he will only describe the nature of the plague and will not speculate on its causes.²⁶³ As he had witnessed and experienced the plague firsthand, Thucydides is well-positioned to provide an account that follows an empirical process of describing the plague and its symptoms, which he does in great detail in 2.49. Cochrane determined that

²⁵⁸ Pires 2006, 811.

²⁵⁹ Abbott 1925[1970], 36-37.

²⁶⁰ Abbott 1925 [1970], 39. Abbott used Thucydides 1.22.3 as evidence for this.

²⁶¹ Thuc. 2.49.

²⁶² Rood 2006, 248. Thucydides’ method of critical inquiry was not only shared by the medical writers. Other intellectuals, such as historians, rhetoricians and sophists (see Plant 2010 for Gorgias and Antiphon, specifically) would have applied this type of method during the second half of the fifth century, and it is important to be mindful of this fuller picture of Thucydides’ intellectual milieu in order to better understand Thucydides’ text in context (Forsdyke 2017, 25). For more on Thucydides’ intellectual milieu, see Thomas 2006, 2017; Hornblower 2009. For more on the medical writers specifically, see Parry 1969; Thomas 2006; Lateiner 1986; King and Brown 2017; Alford 1998; and Page 1953.

²⁶³ Thuc. 2.48.3.

this empirical process, with its emphasis on autopsy, was exemplified in the Hippocratic method, which was based on the concept that observable natural principles — not the divine — governed nature.²⁶⁴

Most scholars today consider Cochrane’s view overzealous in its attempt to align Thucydides with the Hippocratic corpus,²⁶⁵ yet this theory does serve to show how Cochrane’s opinion of Thucydides — and that of classicists who considered Thucydides in a positivistic light — as an empirical and objective scientific historian mirrored the shift in science, medicine, journalism, and society in general that occurred with the introduction of positivism in the 19th century. As I outlined in the preceding chapter, objectivity arose from the empiricist method where it was encouraged that one describes only what could be seen and to record only the facts. Just as Cochrane interpreted Thucydides’ account of the plague as evidence that Thucydides was a modern scientific historian who rejected divine causes and used an empirical method, he was describing the shift in thought of his own time. Perhaps the most parallel example of this, and the one that is most directly related

²⁶⁴ Thomas 2006, 93 — most similar to *Epidemics I* and *Epidemics III*. Though as Thomas points out, the medical texts existed on a spectrum and not all were empirical (Thomas 2006, 95). Page’s (1953) article “Thucydides’ Description of the Plague,” provides a detailed analysis of the vocabulary similarities between Thucydides’ Plague account and the texts of the medical writers, concluding that Thucydides must have been familiar with the Hippocratic corpus. While Thucydides’ text does not contain religious elements (see Hornblower 1992), Thomas suggests that because Thucydides leaves open the cause of the plague, it invites the idea of a possible irrational interpretation, rather than stand as an example of Thucydides’ stance on sticking to the facts instead of speculating (Thomas 2006, 99, 104).

²⁶⁵ Notably Thomas 2006, who argues that while Thucydides did seem to be familiar with Hippocratic methods and language: “the fact that the description of the Plague ends emphatically with a description of its religious, mental, and social effects, with the breakdown of society, only underlines how very distinct from the medical writers Thucydides really was” (108).

to journalism, is how the shift in medical, journalistic and public thought surrounding the New York City cholera epidemics of 1832, 1849 and 1866 is evident in the newspaper coverage of the epidemics in real time. It is possible to trace the movement from a religious-based approach to one based on empiricism and science in the news stories of each epidemic.²⁶⁶

Inaccuracies and bias

Although it was popular, not all scholars took up the positivist angle. Even before Cochrane's *Thucydides and the Science of History* was published there were works coming out that questioned the notion of Thucydides' objectivity, notably Cornford's *Thucydides Mythistoricus* in 1907. As Virginia Hunter would later argue in 1973, positivism in Thucydidean studies resulted in a "sterility" in historiography because it led to a "preoccupation with individual facts" whereby knowledge was "fragmented and particularized."²⁶⁷ From this perspective, one cannot attempt to synthesize the facts, only collect more. Thucydides, Hunter wrote, "far from being studied and valued as a human being and thinker eminently representative of his age, is wrenched from that age and made to spew out minor discrepancies."²⁶⁸ As this view alternative view of Thucydides began to take hold, there was a growing awareness of the many elements of Thucydides' *History* that did not line up with the fully accurate and objective scientific historian he was upheld to be.

²⁶⁶ See Mindich 1998 and 2005 for a detailed study of this.

²⁶⁷ Hunter 1973, 5.

²⁶⁸ Hunter 1973, 5.

Errors, omissions, patterns and placement

By the 1930s, new evidence from inscriptions and archaeology began leading to criticisms of Thucydides' reliability.²⁶⁹ While rare, outright errors do exist in Thucydides' text, and although we do not possess much contemporary evidence with which to compare Thucydides, Dover notes that in almost every instance where we are able to compare Thucydides with other sources, it poses a problem for Thucydides' accuracy.²⁷⁰ One oft-cited topographical mistake is that of the width of the sea between Sphacteria and the mainland noted in 4.8.6 in Thucydides' account of the Pylos campaign²⁷¹ while others arise from discrepancies between Thucydides' account and epigraphic evidence.²⁷² Thucydides rarely expresses uncertainty explicitly,²⁷³ and while Marincola cautions that it is "difficult to attach any attempt to deceive to these particular errors,"²⁷⁴ there are indications that some of the errors may have been made purposely by Thucydides in order better to better align his narrative with his concept of human nature.²⁷⁵

Inaccuracies in Thucydides' text are not the only elements that hint at Thucydides' greater intention for his *History* — one that went beyond 'just the

²⁶⁹ This included the epigraphic evidence of tribute lists. Hesk 2014, 225.

²⁷⁰ Dover 1973, 4: "It is disturbing to find that in those few cases where we can actually consider what Thucydides says in light of demonstrably independent evidence (including topography) the usual outcome is not renewed confidence but doubt." See Cawkwell 1997 for a more balanced assessment of this.

²⁷¹ Sears 2011.

²⁷² Marincola 2001, 99.

²⁷³ 5.74.1 being an exception, where Thucydides admits to not knowing the exact details of the Battle of Mantinea: "such was the battle, as close as possible to what happened."

²⁷⁴ Marincola 2001, 99.

²⁷⁵ Sears 2011.

facts' of the Peloponnesian War. Omissions of certain events of the war, exaggerations,²⁷⁶ and patterns within the narrative all point to Thucydides' overarching project of presenting his theory on human nature.²⁷⁷ Concerning omissions, Thucydides himself admits to recording only what is worthy of record,²⁷⁸ and this had to align with both what he believed to be the cause of the war and his theory about human nature, particularly the tendency of the strong to dominate the weak.²⁷⁹ There are two main methods of identifying the events Thucydides omitted from his narrative, as outlined by Marincola.²⁸⁰ Some are mentioned in passing by Thucydides himself within his narrative, such as the previous embassies to Persia at 4.50 and previous letters that Nicias wrote to the Athenians in 7.11.1.²⁸¹ Other omissions are only known to us by comparing Thucydides with other contemporary, or near-contemporary, accounts, of which the Peace of Callias in 445 BCE is one.²⁸² Another tactic, similar to the omissions, that Thucydides employed to advance his view of the war was to consolidate an event that occurred repeatedly over the course of the war into one single account, as in is the cases of the Plague and the stasis in Corcyra.²⁸³ Likewise, Thucydides

²⁷⁶ Thucydides' claim that the Peloponnesian War was the greatest war being one example of this. See Marincola 2001, 98-99 for more on how Thucydides both overstates and generalizes through his use of superlatives, and Grant 1974 for a list of examples.

²⁷⁷ Marincola 2001, 98-103.

²⁷⁸ Thuc. 3.90.1: I will recall the actions most worthy of mention — either those that had to do with the allies of the Athenians or with those warring against the Athenians.”

²⁷⁹ Forsdyke 2017, 29.

²⁸⁰ Marincola 2001, 101-102.

²⁸¹ Marincola 2001, 101.

²⁸² Marincola 2001, 101-102. These sources can be both literary and inscriptional.

²⁸³ See Marincola 2001, 75-76 for more examples. It is important to note that Thucydides' consolidation and omission of various aspects of the Peloponnesian War all serve as a reminder

generally presents only the two most opposing speeches in order to highlight the most contrasting viewpoints, despite the fact that there would have been more opinions presented at the time with varying levels of agreement and disagreement.²⁸⁴

Pattern, narrative placement and repetition are all elements used by Thucydides in order to reinforce his concept of history and human nature. This is a view advanced by Hunter's *Thucydides: The Artful Reporter*, which looked at the interaction of motivation and anticipation, pattern and inevitability, and cycle found within Thucydides' *History* and the role these played in shaping Thucydides' narrative to fit a certain paradigm.²⁸⁵ Facts, according to Hunter cannot be considered outside of the "pattern which informs them,"²⁸⁶ and through this lens it becomes difficult to ignore how Thucydides' careful placement of events — a classic example being the juxtaposition of Pericles' Funeral Oration and Thucydides' account of the Plague which serves to contrast Athens at her height with Athens at her lowest point — as well as the interplay of λόγος and ἔργον shape his narrative.²⁸⁷

Bias and self-representation

The factors listed above all contributed to bolstering the notion that

that Thucydides' is not the "official account" of the Peloponnesian War — just as no news article should ever be considered the official account of an event, despite what the title of "newspapers of record" would like us to believe (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 97).

²⁸⁴ Forsdyke 2017, 20. This is similar to the "both sides" approach in journalism, which ignores the fact that more than two views exist on any one subject.

²⁸⁵ Hunter 1973. Finley 1963 also commented on pattern in Thucydides (esp. 295).

²⁸⁶ Hunter 1973, 177.

²⁸⁷ Parry 1972, 1981, 1989 for antithesis of logos and ergon.

Thucydides was subjective in his reporting on the Peloponnesian War. And although Thucydides himself never explicitly claimed to be objective, this has not stopped many scholars from speculating about what side Thucydides was taking. Such attributions of bias are far from new — Dionysius of Halicarnassus accused Thucydides of holding an anti-Athenian bias because of the Athenian’s exile in his *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius* and *On Thucydides*²⁸⁸ — but by the second half of the 20th century, the view of Thucydides as a subjective historian had all but overturned the Thucydidean model of the objective reporter. From the very first line in Book I with the use of ξυνέγραψε, or “wrote up,” to describe his method of composing his *History*, there is evidence for Thucydides’ active role in shaping his narrative.²⁸⁹ Among many positions, Thucydides has been thought to take a pro-Pericles stance,²⁹⁰ to show favour to a moderate oligarchy,²⁹¹ as well as to be biased against the δημός because of his impeachment as a general.²⁹²

The variety of biased positions attributed to Thucydides has arisen in part from Thucydides’ lack of transparency in his judgements and interpretations. As indicated by Forsdyke, while Thucydides called for critical examination of the facts,

²⁸⁸ Dio. Hal. *De Thucydide* 41 and *Ad Pompeium* 3. See also Weaire 2005, 252-253. It is interesting that Thucydides exile has also been used as evidence that he was objective — as discussed in Forsdyke 2017, 25.

²⁸⁹ Greenwood 2006, 62: By using ξυνέγραψε Thucydides “implies that it is not an independent composition, but that he is ‘writing up’ material that has already existed ... this allows Thucydides to downplay the process of representation and interpretation that are involved in narration.”

²⁹⁰ Parry 1972, 48; Thompson 2009. Pearson (1947, 51-54) argues that Cleon is not fairly treated by Thucydides in favour of Pericles and Themistocles, though he lets the narrative do the talking.

²⁹¹ Based on his Tyrannicide Digression. See Raaflaub 2006.

²⁹² Roberts 1962. See Greenwood 2006, 111-114 for more examples of Thucydides’ bias.

“it is unclear from these passages what that process was.”²⁹³ For instance, how does Thucydides determine what is worthy of record?²⁹⁴ What is his process for selecting what speeches to present that best express the most opposing viewpoints?²⁹⁵ Furthermore, Thucydides is not as prone as Herodotus to name his sources, and will often settle for λέγεται (“it is said”) as a means of attribution.²⁹⁶ And while Herodotus often states what his informants told him and informs his readers about what account he favours, Thucydides prefers to hide his process for judging which account is the most likely, and only once reveals the different stories that his sources told him at 2.5.6.²⁹⁷ Here, unlike Herodotus, Thucydides does not come out preferring one side over the other;²⁹⁸ instead, for the most part, Thucydides’ account of the Peloponnesian War reflects only the version of events Thucydides has chosen to relate. This appearance of an unmediated narrative has been used by scholars as proof of Thucydides’ objectivity,²⁹⁹ yet, as demonstrated above in how journalists’ claims to objectivity tend to hide their actual reporting methods, Thucydides’ lack of narratorial interjections only creates a “vener [of

²⁹³ Forsdyke 2017, 23.

²⁹⁴ Thuc. 3.90.1.

²⁹⁵ Thuc. 3.36.6.

²⁹⁶ See Rood 2006, 244 and Westlake 1977 for the topic of Thucydides and his expressions of uncertainty through his use of λέγεται.

²⁹⁷ Rood 2006, 245. This was in his account of the Plataean massacre.

²⁹⁸ Rood 2006, 245.

²⁹⁹ Dewald (1987, 150) uses the metaphor of transparent glass to describe Thucydides “narrative surface,” claiming that the lack of narratorial mediation makes the narrative appear as if it reflects exactly what occurred. This is, of course, an illusion. While Herodotus creates a messier picture by including multiple conflicting accounts, he is at least transparent in his process of choosing which account is the most likely. Thucydides does not reveal his research and reasoning, and though his account serves his audience better in cutting through the noise of the public square, his lack of transparency may be seen to weaken the credibility of his argument.

objectivity] atop something hollow.³⁰⁰

As views of Thucydides as an objective reporter turned to considering him as a subjective narrator, the opinion on his appearance of impartiality shifted from a that of a stance he was truly upholding to one that served only as a rhetorical tool.³⁰¹ The idea was that by not acknowledging his subjectivity, Thucydides masks it, creating for his readers a sense that the narrative tells itself, a sense that is reinforced by the scarcity of narratorial interjections within the work.³⁰² In other words, Thucydides was only using objectivity as a “rhetorical stance”³⁰³ to affirm to his readers the authority of his narrative. This is further suggested by Thucydides’ self-representation in his *History*. As the argument of an anti-Athenian bias arising from his exile suggests, Thucydides was far from an independent observer for portions of the war and was rather an active participant in it. Indeed, Thucydides himself alludes to this throughout his *History*, but while he never denies his involvement in the events of the war, Thucydides is careful to distance the historical character Thucydides from the author and narrator of his work.

In his narrative, Thucydides portrays himself in three different manners: as

³⁰⁰ Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014.

³⁰¹ Rood 2006, 227

³⁰² Rood 2006, 225, 242; Dewald 1987, 150. Though Thucydides uses first person narratorial interjections more than third person statements, these are still few (Rood 2006, 242). Rood notably does not take up the view that Thucydides used objectivity as a rhetorical stance in order to “persuade readers of his own infallibility” and instead argues that Thucydides’ narratorial persona was to create vividness (Rood 248).

³⁰³ Ober 1998, 58 n.2, quoted in Rood 2006, 227.

author in the third person, as narrator in the first person, and as a character in the third person.³⁰⁴ Thucydides opens³⁰⁵ his work with his authorial portrayal, introducing Thucydides, “the Athenian,” as author of the work, and he does so again in the “second preface”³⁰⁶ that occurs in Book V. The use of the third person adds a layer of distance between Thucydides the narrator, who interjects the narrative in the first person, and Thucydides the author. Thucydides is notably restrained in his deployment of first-person interventions but appears to use them in cases where he has immediate knowledge — whether through experience or witnessing — of the event being described in order to bolster the authority of his account.³⁰⁷ Finally, Thucydides does not disclose in the account of his part in the fall of Amphipolis that the author, Thucydides “the Athenian,” is the very same

³⁰⁴ As described by Rood 2006, 230-231.

³⁰⁵ Thuc. 1.1: Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον. Like Herodotus before him, Thucydides opens his *History* with his name as the first word (Herodotus 1.1.0: Ἡροδότου Ἀλικαρνησέως ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε), and some scholars, such as Bradley (2010, 230) have refer to these as signatures or by-lines. Through this reasoning, it is thought that Thucydides and Herodotus sought to gain the confidence of their contemporary audiences, since they would know what to expect in the succeeding pages and there would be no confusion as to who was writing the history. The use of the term ‘by-line’ has obvious connotations with modern journalism, and this becomes problematic when one uses the term to demonstrate that Herodotus and Thucydides sought to present an open and objective account, which is what Bradley implies. It must be noted that the use of by-lines as a tool in ‘objective journalism’ only appeared in the Anglo-American model of journalism in the 1920s. Although it remains a staple in the Anglo-American model, by the time by-lines appeared on continental Europe later in the interwar period, they served the opposite purpose and were instead employed to acknowledge the subjectivity of the writer. Even today, objectivity is not as important to European journalists as it is to Anglo-American journalists. Thus, it is too simplistic to say that by-lines are synonymous with objectivity (Hamilton and Tworek 2017, 396).

³⁰⁶ Thuc. 5.26.1

³⁰⁷ Such as in the event of the Plague (2.48.3) and in the “second preface” (5.26.5). See Rood 2006, 231, 242. However, Rood (2006, 248) points out that even Herodotus’ first-person interventions become “much less frequent the closer in space and time to his own time.” Dewald 1987; Gribble 1998; and de Bakker 2017 all discuss narratorial interjections in Thucydides.

man as the character, Thucydides “son of Olorus.” In fact, the only instance when Thucydides uses his patronymic is when he is referring to himself as a character in 4.104.4, which was his common practice for introducing other characters in his narrative.³⁰⁸ By treating himself as if he is just another character in his account, Thucydides obscures the fact that Thucydides the character is narrating his own part in the war, creating for Thucydides the narrator the distance necessary to maintain his appearance of objectivity.³⁰⁹

The idea of Thucydides using a portrayal of objectivity as a rhetorical device to mask his role in shaping his narrative calls to mind the use of objectivity among modern journalists in order to gain credibility, even though the objectivity they uphold is rarely reflected in what journalists do. Furthermore, as I discussed in the chapter above, while objectivity was introduced to professional journalism as a way to describe the journalistic methodology, its subsequent adoption by journalists as a way to describe themselves has led to some troubling issues within the field, such as neutral, passive reporting that is over-reliant on elite sources and balanced news reports that give equal validity to at least two sides of the story, regardless of merit.³¹⁰ Like the problem in journalism, seeing Thucydides as a model of objective reporting ignores a large part of what Thucydides was actually aiming for his *History*. But while today’s public sphere is at times poorly served by a press that

³⁰⁸ Rood 2006, 231. However, Thucydides does use the first-person in 5.26 when he explains that it was because of his exile after being general at Amphipolis that he was better able to gather information from both sides.

³⁰⁹ Although Rood (2006, 248) says that it is anachronistic to see Thucydides’ supposed objectivity in this light.

³¹⁰ Gurleyen and Hackett 2016, 28; Hackett and Zhao 1998.

often trades finding truth for regurgitating both the information and misinformation of the public square in order to appear objective, Thucydides did try to sift through the conflicting news and hearsay of the Peloponnesian War that would have been present in his time.

In recognition of the elements of Thucydides' work that conflicted with the predominant image of the historian as an objective reporter of the Peloponnesian War, there was a shift in Thucydidean scholarship that moved away from seeing Thucydides' text as history, upon which one could expect to find the "facts alone," and instead moved towards viewing the work as literature, one that was artistically shaped to align with the version of the Peloponnesian War 'according to Thucydides'. Once considered a scientific inquirer of an objective history, Thucydides came to be seen as an artful author of a literary work, a shift that came with important repercussions on conceptions of truth.

Chapter 5: The Reporter as the Artist

“We wanted to pursue reporting as an art form. I think that is wonderful: the reporter as the artist. Wonderful.”

-Gay Talese on the New Journalism, interview with John Brady, 1972³¹¹

“And if objective means not to allow one’s own outlook, philosophical or otherwise to obtrude, then Thucydides was surely the least objective of historians.”

-Virginia Hunter, *The Artful Reporter*, 1973³¹²

It was an exasperated Henry Luce who came up with what is perhaps one of the media magnate and founder of *Time* magazine’s most quoted lines: “Show me a man who thinks he’s objective and I’ll show you a man who’s deceiving himself.”³¹³ This was 1930; Luce was speaking against the predominant objective style of reporting that by that time had swept American and Canadian newspapers.³¹⁴ The *Time* founder believed that news should be subjected to

³¹¹ Quoted in Weber 1974, 5; Brady and Talese 1972.

³¹² Hunter 1973, 184.

³¹³ Henry Luce, *Time*, 1930, quoted in Baughman 1987, 29.

³¹⁴ Luce would have been arguing directly against the objective style of *New York Times* publisher Adolph Ochs, who penned the term “without fear or favor” (Baughman 1987, 29). (Though even Ochs’ *Times* was known to show bias, starting with the full passage in which the line “without fear or favor” was written. While the expression dates to before April 18, 1896 when Ochs famously wrote it in his “Business Announcement” announcing his takeover as publisher, Ochs was first to use it in the context of recording the news. However, even at this early juncture, the phrase was relatively vapid and meaningless. Although Ochs’ pledge “to give the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of party, sect, or interests involved” is still an oft-quoted call to journalistic objectivity, few people, if any, continue quoting Ochs to include the passage following his impartiality proclamation: “There will be no ... departure from the general tone and character and policies pursued with relation to public questions that have distinguished *The New York Times* as a non-partisan newspaper — unless it be, if possible, to intensify its devotion to the cause of sound money and tariff reform ... and its advocacy to the lowest tax consistent with good government, and no more government than is absolutely necessary to protect society” (See also Dunlap 2015; Tift and Jones 1999). And of course, there are Lippmann and Merz’s findings of anti-Bolshevik coverage in the *Time*’s coverage of the Russian Revolution (Lippmann and Merz 1920; Baughman 1987, 29).

analysis and interpretation in order to explain to readers the world around them, a world that was not so straightforward that it could be well-served by the pervasive dry objectivity doctrine of the traditional newspapers.³¹⁵ And while Luce’s opinion was shared by others — the *New Yorker* magazine wanting similarly to be interpretive in its coverage and the “muckrakers” of the early 20th century, who took an approach to their reporting that was far from neutral, are only some examples³¹⁶ — objectivity enjoyed a ‘golden age’ from the 1920s to the 1950s where it was widely accepted as the main ethic of journalism.³¹⁷ By the 1950s, spurred on in part by the 1947 report of the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, journalistic objectivity began to lose its unquestioned status within the field and by the 1960s, new forms of journalism were cropping up in reaction to it.³¹⁸ This was the period directly following World War II, one that saw the civil rights movements and the Vietnam War. For some journalists, there was a growing awareness of the limits of objective reporting. As stated in the Hutchins Commission’s report, “It was no longer enough to report *the fact* truthfully. It was now necessary to report *the truth about the fact.*”³¹⁹

A similar movement was occurring within Thucydidean scholarship during this same period when positivism was giving way to postmodernism. This was the

³¹⁵ Ward 2010a, 144; Baughman 1987, 29. It’s interesting, in this case, that the non-objective style of *Time* “borrowed literary techniques from Homer” (Ward 2015, 256) seeing as, as I discuss above, Homer is so often considered the inventor of objectivity.

³¹⁶ Ward 2010a, 144; Baughman 1987, 29-20; Ward 2015, 256.

³¹⁷ Ward 2010a, 143-144.

³¹⁸ Ward 2010a, 144.

³¹⁹ The Commission on Freedom of the Press 1947, 22. Emphasis theirs.

shift from viewing Thucydides as objective, scientific, cold, and detached to a writer who was passionate and intense — an artist, a psychologist,³²⁰ and “the least objective of historians.”³²¹ Though the shift was precipitated by new epigraphic sources and studies into Thucydides’ bias and omissions, as in journalism, it was also a product of the times. W. Robert Connor, who considered the former view “a Cold War reading of Thucydides,³²² wrote that “doubts about the value or even the possibility of individual and institutional neutrality were brought forcibly to the surface by the Vietnamese War and may have encouraged a re-examination of some of the premises in earlier Thucydidean scholarship.”³²³

Between history and literature, science and art³²⁴

While scholarship that focused on considering Thucydides in a literary light grew in number throughout the 20th century, as in the case of the objectivity debate in journalism, there is no clear demarcation for when this split in thought occurred.³²⁵ Francis Cornford’s *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, published in 1907, was one of the first books that disagreed with the view that Thucydides’ was a rational

³²⁰ Bowersock 1965.

³²¹ Hunter 1973; Connor 2009, 31.

³²² Connor 2009, 31.

³²³ Connor 2009, 30. See also “Introduction” in Connor 1984.

³²⁴ The topic of Thucydides as historian or tragedian, scientist or artist unsurprisingly is fraught and scholarship on the topic is vast. I provide here only a very brief overview. For a more in depth look into this subject, see Francis Pires’ “Thucydidean Modernities: History Between Science and Art” (2006), Kenneth Dover’s “Thucydides ‘as History’ and ‘as Literature’” (2001), and Jon Hesk’s “Thucydides in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries” (2014). Rusten’s (2009) “Thucydides and His Readers” also outlines this debate.

³²⁵ For instance, Gregory Crane reverts to Thucydides as scientist with his 1996 book *The Blinded Eye: Thucydides and the New Written Word*: “Thucydides anticipated the scientific analysis as one of its forefathers” (Crane 1996, 23).

History. It instead focused on what he considered to be mythical elements found within the work. What appeared to be a factual and scientific narrative, Cornford argued, was only superficially so — a veneer atop a tragic, mythical, and artistic narrative, borrowing heavily from elements of Greek tragedy, especially with regard to human nature.³²⁶ In all, Cornford wrote that his findings were “fatal to Thucydides’ avowed intention to represent events without distortion or bias.”³²⁷ Cornford would receive much criticism for his book at the time of its publication, but by the middle of the 20th century, scholars increasingly began to take up a more artistic view of Thucydides.³²⁸

John H. Finley’s 1938 “Euripides and Thucydides” would follow up on Cornford’s findings of “tragic texture” in Thucydides’ style, arguing for a Euripidean influence on the text as a whole.³²⁹ Later, Hans-Peter Stahl’s seminal work *Thucydides: Man’s Place in History*³³⁰ would also argue the tragic elements featured in Thucydides’ account of the war.³³¹ Stahl, who criticized the positivistic approach to Thucydides, argued against seeing Thucydides as objective and influenced many other scholars to consider Thucydides for his literary, rather than historical, merits.³³² We can see this influence in Virginia Hunter’s boldly titled 1973 book *Thucydides: The Artful Reporter*, which placed Thucydides in the role

³²⁶ Cornford 1907; Pires 2006, 830; Hesk 2014, 221.

³²⁷ Cornford 1907, 134.

³²⁸ Hesk 2014, 221.

³²⁹ Finley 1938; Hesk 2014, 222.

³³⁰ Stahl 1966, published in English in 2003.

³³¹ Stahl 2003; Hesk 2014, 222; Pires 2006, 832.

³³² Stahl 2003; Rusten 2009, 30.

of inventor and shaper of events and speeches in order to fit his concept of human nature.³³³ Hunter, who identified patterns and cycles in Thucydides' *History*, the result of which was having events fit neatly into Thucydides' themes and opinion of human nature, was the first to use the word "reporter" as a way to describe Thucydides in this way. However, Hunter's reporter was not an objective reporter of news, but "artful" and manipulative.³³⁴ There was also R.G. Collingwood, who, with an "idea of history" that was scientific, went so far as to call Thucydides "anti-historical" because he was too psychoanalytical and did not "narrate the facts for the sake of narrating the facts."³³⁵ While Collingwood would not be overly influential among classicists, it should be noted that Collingwood still followed a very positivistic view of history, believing Thucydides not to be a true historian because of his unscientific approach.³³⁶ Finally,³³⁷ Connor's post-modernist study of Thucydides, mentioned above, saw Thucydides' objectivity as a "rhetorical, artistic procedure" and would be another important addition toward the 'Thucydides as literature' position.

Today, literary studies dominate Thucydidean scholarship, raising the possibility that by seeing Thucydides as primarily a literary text, classicists run risk

³³³ Hunter 1973.

³³⁴ Both Connor (1984) and Dover (1973) would criticize Hunter's view of Thucydides as being too manipulative (Rusten 2009, 14).

³³⁵ Collingwood 1994, 29.

³³⁶ Hesk 2014, 229.

³³⁷ This is only an overview; there are many other scholars who take up the literary view of Thucydides. See also the works of Adam Parry, especially his theory on logos and ergon in Thucydides. Clifford Orwin's *The Personality of Thucydides* and Dover's "Thucydides 'as History' and 'as Literature'" are other examples.

of suggesting that Thucydides is “completely unreliable and self-aggrandizing.”³³⁸ In this light, Thucydides, no longer the historical authority, is relegated to the ranks of “mere source,” and rather than studying his account with an eye to its description of actual historical events, Thucydides’ value is found mainly in the literary merits of his writing.³³⁹ However, the distinction of holding Thucydides to be either an accurate, objective scientific writer of history *or* an artful and passionate writer of literature ignores the historian’s own view of his work and his placement of it within the intellectual milieu of fifth century Greece. By branding Thucydides’ work, and those of other ancient writers, as either history or literature, we in effect apply our own labels to the writers of antiquity who would not have conceived of their works and the genres in which they fell as we do. Furthermore, such a distinction perpetuates the notion that something is of historical value only if it falls within the lines of being strictly accurate, sticking only to the facts, and being without bias. However, as demonstrated in how this narrow thinking leads to obscured truth in news coverage, ‘accuracy’ by way of ‘just the facts’ and ‘truth’ are not necessarily synonymous. It thus becomes especially important to be mindful of how this false dichotomy shapes our concept of truth in modern contexts — contexts in which literature is so often considered to be out of line with facts and (therefore) truth. This modern construct of truth is only that: a modern construct — and does not reflect how Thucydides would have perceived of truth and accuracy.

³³⁸ Hesk 2014, 228; Rusten 2009, 14.

³³⁹ Rusten 2009, 8.

The dichotomy of literature and history or literature and fact bears many similarities to the persistent debate in journalism over whether the word ‘story’ is appropriate for describing a news article because of its fictive connotations.³⁴⁰ This debate was perhaps never more prominently brought to the fore than with the emergence and short lifespan of the New Journalism style of the 1960s and 1970s, the practitioners of which blended literature into their journalistic style and believed that a strict adherence to ‘just the facts’ only hindered access to the truth. While I bring up the New Journalists because they demonstrate the argument that truth and fact are not necessarily synonymous, the fact that the controversy over the New Journalism and whether it should be considered real journalism was once called ‘The Reporter as Artist’³⁴¹ in 1974 — just one year after Hunter published *The Artful Reporter* — suggests that there are more affinities that exist than meet the eye between the topic at issue in Thucydidean studies and the questions emerging among journalists about the role of objectivity in their field that took place at the same time.

‘The Hun is at the gate!’: Enter the New Journalism³⁴²

“I doubt if many of the aces I will be extolling in this story went into journalism with the faintest notion of creating a ‘new’ journalism, a ‘higher’ journalism, or

³⁴⁰ See Bird and Dardenne 2009 for a take that challenges this notion.

³⁴¹ Weber 1974.

³⁴² The useful thing about the New Journalists is we have many of their published reflections on their work outlining what they thought they were doing and why. By looking into their methods and reasoning behind it, it could provide insight into Thucydides’ work. More research could be done here.

even a mildly improved variety. I know they never dreamed that anything they were going to write for newspapers or magazines would wreak such evil havoc in the literary world ... Nevertheless, that is what happened. Bellow, Barth, Updike — even the best of the lot, Philip Roth — are all out there right now ransacking the literary histories and sweating it out, wondering where they stand. Damn it all, Saul, the *Huns* have arrived ...”³⁴³

Tom Wolfe was optimistic when he predicted that the New Journalism, a subjective, literary style of journalism popularized by such writers as Gay Talese, Hunter S. Thompson, Joan Didion, and Tom Wolfe himself, would “wipe out the novel as literature’s main event”³⁴⁴ — too optimistic, some would say, as the style died out in the early 1980s. Regardless, the New Journalism certainly stirred up controversy in its day: the New Journalists were unabashedly subjective in their coverage — something that made their more “traditional” colleagues uncomfortable — and their pursuit of “truth” over “fact” did not align with the journalistic doctrine of accuracy as ‘just the facts’ and objectivity as an indicator of truth. As a result, the New Journalists received many detractors.³⁴⁵

Take a closer look at what the New Journalists thought embodied their work and the purpose it served, and an image of a certain type of reporter begins to emerge, one that is more in line with Hunter’s “artful reporter” than Cochrane’s

³⁴³ Wolfe 1973, 3. The last part was Wolfe referring to a challenge he made to novelist Saul Bellow a few years earlier, in which he was suggesting that the New Journalism would bring about the death of the novel. See Leader 2018, 259.

³⁴⁴ Wolfe 1973, 9.

³⁴⁵ For example, see Markel 1974; Arlen 1974; Wakefield 1974.

scientific and objective historian, a subjective writer, but one that is nonetheless set upon sifting out the truth. In fact, these same elements of the New Journalism — “deep-see” embedded reporting that relied on “reporting in depth,” “psychological insights,” and “truth not merely facts”³⁴⁶ — are very similar to Thucydides’ method of reporting. This passage from Lester Markel, a critic of the New Journalism, demonstrates this clearly:

“Some practices of the New-J’s bother me to no end — the portrayal of a composite rather than a single character (only thus, they hold, can the profile be rounded and complete); the collapsing of a sequence of happenings over a considerable period into a single episode of a single day (only thus, they contend, can the typical event be portrayed); the reporting of talk that might have or should have taken place, even if it didn’t (only thus, they believe, can the subconscious be brought to the surface for the reader to behold); a casual regard for ‘facts.’ (‘It is often possible,’ says David Freeman, ‘for facts to get in the way of real truth.’)”³⁴⁷

Many of the criticisms levelled at the New Journalists are the same as those that have been used to discredit Thucydides. Thucydides, too, has been accused of bias for using composite characters because of his practice of presenting the speech of a single person to represent all the arguments for one side, usually by choosing the strongest argument among them.³⁴⁸ He consolidated events that reoccurred

³⁴⁶ Markel 1974, 257.

³⁴⁷ Markel 1974, 257.

³⁴⁸ Marincola 2001, 75-76; Forsdyke 2017, 20. Diodotus, whose name literally means “given by Zeus” and who is thought to have been invented by Thucydides to represent the arguments of the moderate opinion of Cleon’s opponents in the Mytilenian debate in Book III, is an obvious example of this.

throughout the war, such as the Plague and the stasis in Corcyra, into a single account.³⁴⁹ Finally Thucydides, as demonstrated in the speeches and his practice of sifting through the facts certainly placed showing his readers the truth about the war over merely regurgitating the facts.

Furthermore, the argument that Thucydides placed too much focus on the psychological elements of the history is similar to how practitioners of the New Journalism were criticized. As mentioned above, Collingwood said that Thucydides wrote psychological history, calling him, in fact, the father of psychological history: “Now what is psychological history? It is not history at all ... It does not narrate the facts for the sake of narrating facts.”³⁵⁰ Like Collingwood’s critique of Thucydides, New Journalists were likened to sociologists and psychologists and thus were considered not to be journalists at all. Here too Markel offers an example:

“The New-J’s depend in large degree on intimate glimpses and interviews — ‘whole scenes and stretches of dialogue’ to achieve [Tom Wolfe’s] ‘basic units of reporting.’ There seems to be involved here a process that approaches the psychoanalytical technique. But the greater, the much greater, part of the news concerns events, rather than personalities, and obviously you cannot put a happening on the couch.”³⁵¹

This, however, does not seem to have been so obvious to Thucydides, who very much put happenings “on the couch,” so to speak,³⁵² and whose *History* is

³⁴⁹ Marincola 2001, 75-76.

³⁵⁰ Collingwood 1994, 29.

³⁵¹ Markel 1974, 258.

³⁵² Or is it “on the *kline*”?

fundamentally opposed to the notion that the greater part of the happenings of the Peloponnesian War concerned events. Thucydides, after all, was greatly interested in how personalities shaped events — it is one of the driving reasons behind why his work is now considered more literary than historical.

The New Journalists, like Thucydides, understood that in order to delve into an event and uncover the truth, it was necessary to go beyond a superficial ‘just the facts’ account. Truth in news stories, according to the New Journalists, was not found in objective ‘he-said-she-said’ balanced reports that relied on the appearance of neutrality to shield its writers from criticisms of bias. While this type of news report got the facts of the matter and was accurate to the degree that such things were said and such events did occur, it often muddled up the real story and prevented the truth from being revealed.

One of the benefits of studying the New Journalists alongside Thucydides is that there exists a lot of their own commentary and reflections from which we can learn more about why they made the choices they made and their own opinions about their work, providing insight into what drove this method of searching for truth. For this, Michael Herr, author of *Dispatches*, is a useful example.

Somewhere in Khe Sanh ...

W. Robert Connor wrote that the Vietnam War, because of the questions it raised about the possibility of neutrality and objectivity, may have changed the direction of Thucydidean scholarship.³⁵³ It is perhaps no coincidence that some of

³⁵³ Connor 1984

the most enduring works in the New Journalism style came out of this war. As prevailing opinions shifted from seeing Thucydides as a scientist and rationalist, who wrote with detachment and strove for objectivity, to more of a passionate and literary writer who was not at all objective, Albin Lesky's description of Thucydides as writing with "the agitation of a passionate and troubled spirit"³⁵⁴ captured the general attitude of the period. Lawrence Tritle, whose *From Melos to My Lai* compared Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War to his own experience in Vietnam, made a similar remark in his book.³⁵⁵ In one passage, Tritle reflects on a fellow student and Vietnam veteran in grad school, Stephen Ruzicka, who said that "Thucydides must have had a bad conscience about something to write such convoluted prose."³⁵⁶ Tritle points out that this is very similar to one of Collingwood's critiques of Thucydides:

"The style of Herodotus is easy, spontaneous, convincing. That of Thucydides is harsh, artificial, repellant. In reading Thucydides I ask myself, What is the matter with the man, that he writes like that? I answer: he had a bad conscience. He is trying to justify himself for writing history at all by turning it into something that's not history."³⁵⁷

It was apt for Tritle to mention this aspect of Thucydides' style considering the chapter in which it was discussed, a chapter titled "The Language and

³⁵⁴ Translated by Parry (1970).

³⁵⁵ Tritle 2000. Tritle's book has been criticized for its forced comparisons and distortions of ancient sources (see Goldhill 2002), yet his comments on the similarities of how Michael Herr, author of *Dispatches*, and Thucydides deal with the language of violence in war are worth considering.

³⁵⁶ Tritle 2000, 126.

³⁵⁷ Collingwood 1994, 29.

Historiography of Violence” that compared Thucydides’ comments in 3.82 — his account on the destruction of Corcyra — concerning how words changed meaning in war to Michael Herr’s repeated comments of the same throughout his book *Dispatches*.³⁵⁸ *Dispatches*, Herr’s book on the Vietnam War, is considered to be one of the best works of the New Journalism and is usually credited as the best book to come out of the Vietnam War. Like Thucydides, Herr’s prose is famously challenging to read. With it, he tries to capture the confusion of war, while getting at the true story that his colleagues missed. Unlike other war correspondents, Herr very much experienced combat first-hand. He let this impact his writing. However, despite his status within the New Journalism, Herr himself never considered his work as a war correspondent for *Esquire* to be journalism, mainly due to his use of composite characters, a fact that he readily admitted in a rare interview:

“I’ve said this a lot of times. I have told people over the years that there are fictional aspects to ‘Dispatches,’ and they look betrayed. They look heartbroken, as if it

³⁵⁸ Tritle 2000, 124-142. For example, compare “It was characteristic of a lot of Americans in Vietnam to have no idea of when they were being obscene, and some correspondents fell into that, writing their stories from the daily releases and battlegrams, tracking them through with the cheer-crazed language of the MACV Information Office, things like ‘discreet burst’ (one of those tore an old grandfather and two children to bits as they ran along a paddy wall one day, at least according to the report made later by the gunship pilot), ‘friendly casualties’ (not warm, not fun), ‘meeting engagement’ (ambush), concluding usually with 17 or 117 or 317 enemy dead and the American losses ‘described as light’” (Herr 1977, 222) with “Words had to change their ordinary meaning and to take that which was now given them. Reckless audacity came to be considered the courage of a loyal ally; prudent hesitation, specious cowardice; moderation was held to be a cloak for unmanliness; ability to see all sides of a question inaptness to act on any. Frantic violence, became the attribute of manliness; cautious plotting, a justifiable means of self-defence. The advocate of extreme measures was always trustworthy; his opponent a man to be suspected. To succeed in a plot was to have a shrewd head, to divine a plot a still shrewder; but to try to provide against having to do either was to break up your party and to be afraid of your adversaries. In fine, to forestall an intending criminal, or to suggest the idea of a crime where it was wanting, was equally commended...” (Thuc. 3.82.4-5, tr. Crawley).

isn't true anymore. I never thought of 'Dispatches' as journalism. In France they published it as a novel.

"I always carried a notebook. I had this idea — I remember endlessly writing down dialogues. It was all I was really there to do. Very few lines were literally invented. A lot of lines are put into mouths of composite characters. Sometimes I tell a story as if I was present when I wasn't, (which wasn't difficult) — I was so immersed in that talk, so full of it and so steeped in it. A lot of the journalistic stuff I got wrong."

"Like what?"

"You know, this unit at this place. But it didn't bother me. There is no shortage of regimental histories."³⁵⁹

Herr did not call himself a journalist in light of the prevailing views surrounding journalism. Because he did not present the facts-only account of the Vietnam War — the "this unit at this place" account that dominated the news cycles of the day — Herr instead was able to depict the war as it was actually experienced by those involved, offering insight that most journalists, following the rules of fairness and objectivity, were unable to provide. As Herr said, just because his account was unconventional did not mean it was not true.³⁶⁰ Herr contemplates this further in a chapter titled "Colleagues," where he compares the stories he was able to file with those of his fellow reporters:

"Somewhere on the periphery of that total Vietnam issue whose daily reports made the morning papers too heavy to bear, lost in the surreal contexts of television, there was a story that was as simple as it had always been, men hunting men, a hideous war and all kinds of

³⁵⁹ From "Michael Herr: A Man of Few Words: What Is a Great American Writer Doing Holed Up in London, and Why Has He Been So Quiet All These Years?" by Paul Ciotti, published in *The Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1990.

³⁶⁰ "as if it isn't true anymore" (Ciotti 1990).

victims. But there was also the Command that didn't feel this, that rode us into attrition traps on the back of fictional kill ratios, and an Administration that believed the Command, a cross-fertilization of ignorance, and a press whose tradition of objectivity and fairness (not to mention self-interest) saw that all of it got space. It was inevitable that once the media took the diversions seriously enough to report them, they also legitimized them. The spokesmen spoke in words that had no currency left as words, sentences with no hope of meaning in the sane world, and if much of it was sharply queried by the press, all of it got quoted. The press got all the facts (more or less), it got too many of them. But it never found a way to report meaningfully about death, which of course was really what it was all about."³⁶¹

Like Thucydides, Herr writes about how words change meaning in war. Like Thucydides, Herr admitted years later that he invented dialogue and composite characters to best match the situation. Like Thucydides, Herr was writing about a war he experienced and saw firsthand. Herr was not interested in getting caught up in the facts and numbers; like Thucydides, he wanted to document a meaningful account of the war, one that would cut through the noise of news cycles and public squares and present a version of the Vietnam War that would be useful for future readers wanting to know the truth-beyond-the-facts about it. Thucydides wrote to show careful readers the truth of the Peloponnesian War, one that, through the patterns outlined in his *History*, would be recognized. Herr wrote with an eye to the fact that the Vietnam War was only one example of the simple story of “men hunting men” — a story that he did not think would ever die. As Herr wrote in the

³⁶¹ Herr 1977, 214-215.

last line of *Dispatches*, “Vietnam Vietnam Vietnam, we’ve all been there.”³⁶²

Trust, truth, and transparency

When one begins the undertaking of approaching journalism with a Thucydidean eye, one immediately, if not cautiously, runs into the problem that the works of modern journalism and Thucydides’ history of the Peloponnesian War do not earn their audience’s trust in the same way. Thucydides was not transparent in how he recorded his narrative, but it was for this very reason that many of his readers have trusted him. Modern journalists, on the other hand, must be radically transparent if they are to switch from a facts-over-truth news-function model of journalism to a more analytical and interpretive orientation-function model that aligns more with Thucydides’ view of the truth.

Thucydides’ lack of transparency is evident in his narratorial portrayal of an unmediated account — Lucian’s “man without a city” — that bears similarities to the objectivity unto self-effacement and ‘view from nowhere’ praised by the followers of positivism. Although this unmediated facade earned Thucydides credibility in antiquity, because it aligned with the ancient concept of truth being impartial,³⁶³ his practices in this regard fall short of the requirements of modern

³⁶² Herr 1977, 260.

³⁶³ It has even been called transparent by scholars such as Dewald because “one event appears to lead logically to the next” (Dewald 1987, 148).

journalism. Thucydides, after all, does not name his sources,³⁶⁴ nor does he explain his process for choosing the more likely account to include in his narrative.³⁶⁵ Furthermore, Thucydides does not make clear his use of composite characters; his method for recording speeches, beyond their brief mention in 1.22; and his role in some of the war's events.

Although Michael Herr's use of composite characters did not undermine what was true about his narrative, such techniques do undermine readers' trust and are not transparent. Modern journalists will have to place transparency first as they make the "move from accuracy to truth."³⁶⁶ Kovach and Rosenstiel refer to this as the "Spirit of Transparency,"³⁶⁷ where journalists bring the act of reporting more forcibly into the story by explaining to the audience the process that went into it. Thus, everything subjective about journalistic methodology that is often hidden beneath the guise of objectivity — the choice of angles, sources, quotes, etc. — can be brought into the transparent process and, rather than undermine audiences' trust, can be used instead to help earn it. This type of reporting, Kovach and Rosenstiel argue, will bring about an end result where "most of the limitations journalists face in trying to move from accuracy to truth are addressed, if not

³⁶⁴ Both Brasidas and Alcibiades have been suggested as sources because of the large roles Thucydides affords them in his work (Marincola 2001, 64). For Alcibiades and Brasidas as sources for Thucydides, see Westlake 1989.

³⁶⁵ With very few exceptions, such as 2.5.6, Thucydides offers only a single version of events. This was unlike Herodotus, who brings out this part of his inquiry to the surface of his history by providing different version of accounts of the same event and commenting on which is more likely. See Dewald 1987.

³⁶⁶ Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 114.

³⁶⁷ Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 114-122.

overcome, by being honest about the nature of knowledge, why they trust it, and what efforts they make to learn more.”³⁶⁸

More importantly, there are statistics to back this up. In the American Press Institute’s Media Insight Project’s 2018 report on “Americans and the News Media: What they do — and don’t — understand about each other,” there was a 40-60 per cent split over the question of whether the public trusted the media. Forty per cent of Americans surveyed responded that “most news reports are fairly inaccurate,” while 60 per cent said that “most news reports are fairly accurate.”³⁶⁹ Although these results were not horrible — more Americans were found to trust the news than those who did not — it is evident that the American media, and Canadian media too, have their work cut out for them when it comes to building audience trust. When the same survey asked the public “what types of coverage they found most useful,” 63 per cent of respondents chose the option of “facts with some background and analysis” compared with 27 per cent choosing “mostly just facts.” However, when the public was asked to give an opinion on what they considered most news coverage to be, 42 per cent of respondents chose the option “just commentary and opinion” compared with 33 per cent saying they considered news coverage to actually be “facts with some background analysis.” Only seven per cent chose “mostly just facts” and 17 per cent identified “mostly analysis.”³⁷⁰ This

³⁶⁸ Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014, 114.

³⁶⁹ The Media Insight Project 2018, 6. The Public Policy Forum’s 2017 report on the state of the media in Canada, *The Shattered Mirror*, found a ~30-70 split in the public’s trust in the news coverage in television, radio, newspapers and magazines, suggesting that Canadian have more trust in their news coverage (Public Policy Forum, 2017, 42).

³⁷⁰ The Media Insight Project 2018, 7.

suggests that the public wants more than “just the facts” news coverage, but that the media will have to build trust in order to achieve it.

Already there are media start-ups that are beginning to embrace this concept of transparent, truth-oriented, journalism: In Canada *The Discourse*, a crowd-funded community newspaper “re-imagined” founded in 2014, is leading the way in its innovative approach to journalism. *The Discourse* is not breaking-news based; rather than adding to the noise of the daily news cycle, it seeks to produce impactful, in-depth stories that “reveal hidden truths.”³⁷¹ Priding itself on being “radically transparent,” *The Discourse*’s principles include “practicing slow journalism,” “prioritizing impact over clicks,” and being “committed to getting it right”³⁷² — all elements that place it within the orientation-function model of journalism. Furthermore, the fact that *The Discourse* is crowd-funded means it does not have to depend on advertising to fund its revenue and is protected from the pitfalls faced by traditional media when they are further pressured to take up objectivity over concerns that they risk losing funding if they offend one of their advertisers. Another crowd-funded media start-up dealing in “unbreaking news,” the Dutch *De Correspondent*, professes principles such as being “the antidote to the daily news grind;” not taking the “view from nowhere,” but telling their audience “where [they] are coming from;” and believing in “transparency and continued self-improvement.”³⁷³ *De Correspondent* launched their American

³⁷¹ “Our 10 Principles.”

³⁷² “Our 10 Principles.”

³⁷³ “Our 10 Founding Principles.”

counterpart, *The Correspondent*, in September 2019. That these media start-ups have met with success is indicative that it is possible for news companies to break free from the commercial imperative that for so long has driven objectivity within the field.³⁷⁴ This gives reason to be optimistic that there is room for journalism models built on transparency, not objectivity, to grow in the current media landscape.

³⁷⁴ There would have been no such commercial imperative for Thucydides: “As he owned mines in Thrace (4.105.1) he was perhaps spared the necessity of making money from literary work” (Momigliano 2001, 198).

Conclusion: The Daughter of Time

“Truth [in the newsbooks] is the daughter of Time.”

-Henry Walley, editor, *The True Informer*, 1643³⁷⁵

καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἴσως τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται:
ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων **τὸ σαφές** σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν
μελλόντων ποτὲ αὔθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιοῦτων καὶ παραπλησίων
ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἔξει. κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ
ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται.

*For many readers (hearers), my work will seem somewhat
unappealing, but serious readers who want the clear truth will study it
because of what it will tell them about patterns of history. In
summary, my work has been composed as a possession to be read
repeatedly, not as a competition-piece to be read just once on the spot.*

-Thucydides 1.22.4, tr. Rawlings³⁷⁶

Timing has everything to do with it, and also nothing at all. When I first started to think about Thucydides in journalistic terms (which eventually turned into thinking about journalism in Thucydidean terms), Donald J. Trump had just become the 45th president of the United States of America. Suddenly, objectivity was all that was on anyone’s mind. From the media’s unwillingness to call a lie a lie, to its insistence on giving the Kellyanne Conways and Jeffrey Lords of the public square airtime for balance’s sake, and to its inability to report meaningfully on issues, like race, that the Trump presidency brought to the fore, many members of the public and journalists alike were, if they had not been before, becoming awakened to the fact that the media has a truth issue.

And while much has been said about how the media is getting it wrong, this lengthy and ongoing discussion has resulted in very little actual action. The

³⁷⁵ in Frank 1961, 54. Insertion by Ward 2015, 132.

³⁷⁶ Translated by Hunter R. Rawlings III, 2016.

press is still very much news-oriented. Journalists still spend their days chasing down scoops in competition with a multitude of other sources racing to break the news — and it’s not just the journalists anymore — participants all in a never-ending cycle of ‘just the facts’ (and snippets of interviews that themselves become facts of their own.) If the news cycle is a beast that needs to be fed, then journalists are the gullible lot who have been tricked into expending their time and energy feeding it. The press, instead of helping the public make sense of the world, is only adding to its confusion. Reporting “just the facts” and letting balance stand without distinguishing what side is telling the truth does not add value to public discourse. All it does is add noise to the public square.

Jonathan Chait addressed this problem at the start of his Trump-Putin collusion story for *The Intelligencer*, published in July 2018:

“And while the body of publicly available information about the Russia scandal is already extensive, the way it has been delivered — scoop after scoop of discrete nuggets of information — has been disorienting and difficult to follow. What would it look like if it were reassembled into a single narrative, one that distinguished between fact and speculation but didn’t myopically focus on the most certain conclusions?”³⁷⁷

In this passage, Chait recognized that the media’s coverage of the Trump-Putin story, by focusing too much on the facts and not the whole story, had only served to muddle further the public’s perception of the subject, an issue that Chait tried to remedy in his own article. This need for journalism that keeps context in focus and analyzes the truth behind the news falls closely in line with what Lippmann,

³⁷⁷ Chait 2018.

and perhaps even Homer too, meant by his reading of 2.484-486 of the *Iliad* —

Enlighten me now, O Muses, tenants of Olympian
homes,
For you are goddesses, inside on everything, know
everything.
But we mortals hear only the news, and know nothing
at all.³⁷⁸

— where only the gods, because they are able to see the full picture, can know the truth. After all, news without truth, to Lippmann, was worse than no news at all.³⁷⁹

One can imagine, almost, Thucydides sharing a similar sentiment to Chait's when he set out to write a history of the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides wanted to write an account that would be set apart from the word-on-the-street versions of his own day — one that recognized the importance of showing the whole picture so that readers would be able to pick out context and better understand the events through their interpretation. Thucydides was not interested in 'feeding the beast' with on-the-spot 'competition pieces' covering the news of the Peloponnesian War; his goal looked beyond this notion of reporting to the truth.

As I have argued above, Thucydides has also been subjected to the mistaken notion of objectivity as truth. For centuries, Thucydides was considered trustworthy *because* he appeared to scholars to be objective, and journalists have adopted Thucydides as one of their own for this very reason. But Thucydides was

³⁷⁸ Tr. Walter Lippmann, 1920.

³⁷⁹ Lippmann and Merz, 1920, 1-5.

not the model of objective, ‘just the facts’ reporting that journalists have wanted him to be and, unlike scholars who have taken evidence against Thucydides’ objectivity to mean he should be considered in a more literary light, his unobjective methods could provide a model for what a truth-oriented press might look like.

Thucydidean scholars have offered many translations for τὸ σαφὲς in 1.22.4, but while Lesky’s translation of “complete accuracy”³⁸⁰ and Rawlings’ translation of “the clear truth”³⁸¹ might appear similar at first glance, each fundamentally changes the argument Thucydides was making in the passage. Accuracy and truth, after all, are not synonymous. One can accurately record words spoken by a source, but if those words are lies, one cannot say that this record is truthful, something that Thucydides was evidently mindful of when he laid out his method for recording the speeches of his *History* in 1.22.1. In the same way, I have argued above that news and journalism are not the same, and a news-oriented model for journalism conflates accuracy and objectivity with truth. As long as this Anglo-American model of journalism stands, there is little hope for change. This model of journalism, rooted so firmly in objectivity and neutrality, will always favour facts and accuracy over truth, to the point that objectivity, the transcendent value of the Anglo-American journalism, often only obscures it.

But the solution to the problem is as timeless as it has ever been. News

³⁸⁰ Lesky 1966, 459, in Woodman 1988, 23. Compare Crawley’s “exact knowledge.”

³⁸¹ Rawlings 2016. Dover (1973, 43) translated this as just “the truth” (Woodman 1988, 23).

never shows the whole picture, but maybe journalism can. For those who want the truth, to seek out the whole story, they will have to dig a little deeper. This type of journalism is slow; it does not flourish in a media ecosystem that favours fast-paced news cycles that continuously pump out news. It requires a press that can take the time to recognize context and values careful, transparent analysis.

Henry Walley, editor of *The True Informer* newsbook, recognized this in 1643:

“Truth [in the newsbooks] is the daughter of Time. Relations of Battels, fights, skirmishes, and other passages and proceedings of concernment are not alwaies to be taken or credited at the first hand, for that many times they are uncertaine, and the truth doth not so conspicuously appeare till a second or third relation. And hence it is that victories sometimes fall much short of the generall expectation; and battles oftentimes prove but skirmishes, and great overthrowes related to be given to the enemy prove oftentimes equall and balancing losses on both sides.”³⁸²

Sir William Howard Russell recognized it in 1845: “After finishing his first imperfect letter he rode about the field on a borrowed horse, and having collected much new information, sat down to write a new account of the battle.”³⁸³

Michael Herr recognized it when he went to cover the war in 1967:

“Talk about impersonating an identity, about locking into the role, about irony: I went to cover the war and the war covered me; an old story, unless of course you’ve never heard it. I went there behind the crude but serious belief that you had to be able to look at anything, serious because I acted on it and went, crude because I didn’t know, it took the war to teach it, that you were as responsible for everything you saw as you were for everything you did. The problem was

³⁸² in Frank 1961, 54. Insertion by Ward 2015, 132.

³⁸³ From Russell’s biography, Atkins 1911, 161.

that you didn't always know what you were seeing until later, maybe years later, that a lot of it never made it in at all, it just stayed stored there in your eyes. Time and information, rock and roll, life itself, the information isn't frozen, you are."³⁸⁴

And finally, Thucydides recognized it as he wrote up the war in the fifth century BCE. From Russell to Herr, there is much we can learn from "Those Crazy Guys Who Cover The War."³⁸⁵ But journalists, the so called "members of the luckless tribe," can perhaps learn the most from the one who came first, the "miserable parent" of them all: Thucydides.

³⁸⁴ Herr 1977, 20.

³⁸⁵ Herr 1977, 188.

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