Staging power: a study of narrative patterns in Herodian's history of the Roman Empire

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INTRODUCTION

Herodian's *History of the Roman Empire* is one of the few historical writings from the Roman empire that has survived as an entire book. For all of that, it has rarely been studied in its literary context. Most earlier critics devoted their efforts to the cross-examination of the work's historical information, the pursuit of the historian's sources, and the search for his mysterious identity. From the eighteenth to well into the twentieth century, this was the scholarly consensus on Herodian: he misused his sources, above all Dio; he was guilty of major errors and omissions; he invented facts left and right; his style was too rhetorical and too dramatic; he mindlessly reproduced patterns and models learned from text-books; his work was not historiography; almost all of it was worthless and unusable[1]. Facts presented in the *History*, an extant piece of contemporary history covering in eight books the years 180-238, were examined according to modern standards of accuracy and objectivity and, as a result, were judged quite poorly[2]. This quest for 'truth' in Herodian's *History* led, namely, to the formulation of historical *stemmata* and a restoration of connections, often dubious, with authors now lost, and even still unknown to us[3]. Since critics tended to reject Herodian's claim

[1] As noted by Hidber 2006, 30, only Flavius Josephus, among the Greek historians of the imperial period, surpassed Herodian in the number of translations and editions produced until the end of the seventeenth century. Friedrich August Wolf's negative assessment of the *History* and its author, found in the introduction to his 1792 edition, seems to mark an important shift in scholarship, one that would persist for a couple of centuries at least (see Whittaker 1969-70, xxxviii; Torres Esbarranch 1985, 70; Hidber 2006, 33-34). Earlier examples of this line of criticism can be found namely in Tillemont 1732, 261 ("Il semble avoir donné plus à l'ornement qu'à l'exactitude"; repeated at 487), but would gain more traction in the following century. For instance, in Müller 1870, 184, Herodian's method can be summarized as 'a forceful compilation of contradictory facts' and 'a tendency to push everything to the extreme'. This would be argued in detail by Fuchs 1895 and 1896; see below, [3-4]. For Platnauer 1918, 2, Herodian's "slovenliness" left the reader with a "general sense of confusion, a sort of intellectual haze". For a good overview of the scholarship between the eighteenth and early twentieth century, see Hidber 2006, 32-45, with Roos 1915 (esp. on Herodian's use of Dio); Widmer 1967, 5-10; Zimmermann 1998 and 1999c.

[2] According to Photios, a Byzantine writer from the ninth century, Herodian, as a historian, "is second to few" (*Bibl*. 99: οὐ πολλῶν ἐστὶ δεύτερος). Twelfth century Byzantine chronicler and theologian John Zonaras, writing an *Epitome of History* from the Creation to the reign of emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118), used Dio's account for the third century and relied on Herodian's work (perhaps indirectly) only when the *Roman History* ends, in 229. It should be noted that Zonaras probably used Xiphilinus' epitome, which might betray convenience rather than preference (cf. Mallan 2018, 364-6). On the use and knowledge of Herodian's *History* by ancient authors, such as the *SHA*, Ammianus Marcellinus, or Zosimus, see e.g. Baaz 1909, 65-80; Whittaker 1969-70, xxxvi-xxxvii; Paschoud 2000, xxxviii-xl (Zosimus); Hidber 2006, 20-25; Kelly 2008, 231-40 (Ammianus); Paschoud 2018, x-xvii, xxii-xxvii (*SHA*). On its appreciation by early modern authors as a 'mirror of princes', see Zimmermann 1998 and Hidber 2006, 28-32.

[3] For instance, both Baaz 1909 and Smits 1913 posit that Herodian and Dio drew from a common source (though Smits denies that Herodian also made use of Dio) while Rubin 1980, 85-131 attempts to link the *History* to Severus' *Autobiography*, Antipater's *Erga*, or lost pamphlets of various ideological tendencies. On Herodian's knowledge and use of Dio and his sources more generally, see below, [4, with n. 15].

of *autopsia* (cf. 1.1.3; 1.2.5; 2.15.7)[4], correct information was, more credibly, thought to have come from this or that work, while mistakes indicated a problematic departure from the sources. Much attention, therefore, has been given to the *History*'s links with other ancient historical records, but also to its date of composition[5] and intended readership[6], as well as Herodian's personal identity (age, origins, position)[7].

All of these conclusions hinged on questions of truth and factual reconstruction, or how events had *really* happened. Weighed down, as it were, by the work's style which was considered antithetical to 'proper' history, most of the factual information provided by Herodian could be easily ignored. The problem was, and to an extent continues to be, the fabricated (or, at the very least, modern) opposition between 'literary' and 'historical': insofar as 'literature' is frequently matched to 'fiction'[8], historiography appeared to be inherently

[4] On this point, see further below, [113; 190-1].

[5] The work is generally considered to have been written around 245-50 under Philip (r. 244-9) or Decius (r. 249-51): e.g. Whittaker 1969-70, x-xix; Alföldy 1971a, 218-19; Müller 1996, 9-10; Marasco 1998, 2839; Zimmermann 1999a, 285-302; Polley 2003; Hidber 2006, 10-15; Kemezis 2014, 300-4; Galimberti 2014, 10. Some scholars argue for a slightly earlier date, already in the early years of Gordian III (r. 238-44, e.g. Kaldellis 2017, 51-52), while Sidebottom 1997 suggests the 260s, when Gallienus ruled as sole emperor (i.e. 260-68; this hypothesis has not gained much traction). Certain critics consider that the *History* is either unfinished or at least unrevised, on the basis of a discrepancy between Herodian's own claims the work will cover either sixty (1.1.5) or seventy (2.1.5.7) years and a heavy imbalance of detail and speeches between the first and last books; see, among others, Whittaker 1969-70, ix-xi; lviii-lxi and n. 2 *ad* 2.1.6; Sidebottom 1998, 2813, esp. n. 183 and 2817; Kemezis 2014, 302 (with additional bibliography at n. 12). See further below, [69, n. 155; 257, n. 358; 268, n. 5]. Càssola 1957b, 217 had also proposed that the books of the *History* were published separately, but the idea has been largely disavowed.

[6] Cf. Hidber 2006, 16-19 for a discussion of the topic (concluding that the book targeted a varied audience, in terms of origins, period, and education, and would have been aimed at non-Greeks as well); with Whittaker 1969-70, xxviii-xxxi; Sidebottom 1998, 2822-6; Kemezis 2014, 231-4. On the manuscript tradition of the *History*, as well as early modern and modern editions and translations since Politian's Latin translation in 1493, see Whittaker 1969-70, lxxxiii-lxxxvii; Lucarini 2005, ix-xlvi (broadly speaking, two main groups, o and i, most of the codices coming from the fifteenth century, except the codex Leidensis, dated to the eleventh century but corrected in the fifteenth, with tenth-century excerpts from seventh-century historian John of Antioch who seems to have used a source from neither group). The work has been transmitted under a range of titles, which are reflected in the various modern editions and translations. There have been a few pieces on the *History*'s textual aspects: e.g. Schmidt 1891 (syntax); Szelest 1951 (clausulae); Giangrande 1957 (critical notes); Stein 1957 (style and language); Càssola 1963 (critical notes); Lucarini 2017 (Atticism) and 2018 (critical notes).

[7] Herodian's age is usually determined in connection with his own claims that and that he has seen or heard everything himself: see e.g. Grosso 1964, 30-31; Whittaker 1969-70, xxxi-xxxv; Roques 1990a, 2-3; Zimmermann 1999a, 285-90. Furthermore, Herodian's position (cf. 1.2.5: βασιλικαῖς ἢ δημοσίαις ὑπηρεσίαις) is considered to have been too low for him to have actually seen or heard everything he presents in the *History*. ὑπηρεσίαι is generally used in opposition to ἀρχαί, both in Herodian's work and elsewhere; see Roques 1990b, 56-57, with Mason 1974, s.v. ἀρχή (3) and ὑπηρέτης (1), (2). This gave way to a plethora of hypotheses: *rhetor*, imperial freedman, *apparitor*, knight, priest, *lictor*, accountant, imperial procurator, *Stubengelehrter*, etc. Herodian's origins also led to many theories: Syria, Antioch, Alexandria, Greece, Asia Minor, the East (and even this is questioned by Gascó La Calle 1982, 169-70). On all these questions, see useful overviews in Whittaker 1969-70, xix-xxviii; Zimmermann 1999a, 285-319; Hidber 2006, 1-15; Cecconi 2010, 130-2; Kemezis 2014, 298-308 (concluding, at 308, that "from a literary point of view it is his anonymity above all that defines his authorial persona."). In the face of this "mystère" (ap. Roques 1990a, 1), Müller 1996, 9, would even call Herodian an "Unperson".

[8] Cf. Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history, the former about οἷα ἂν γένοιτο, "the kind of things that (might) happen", the latter about τὰ γενόμενα, "what has happened" (*Poet*. 1451a37-38). This passage has been much discussed; see recently Halliwell 2017, esp. 193-201, with further references. According to

incompatible with any sort of literary activity – least of all one so overly rhetorical or dramatic as that of Herodian. Certainly, the idea of 'pure' history in classical scholarship has substantially receded in the past decades, especially through the advances in modern historiographical theory, with notable works by Hayden White[9]. Yet looking at the treatment of so-called minor ancient historians such as Herodian, there remains a certain resistance towards viewing composition, let alone staging, as positive attributes in the act of history-writing, since both the 'raw' historical data in the *History* and the quality of Herodian's style were regarded with suspicion by modern critics. It seems to me, however, that composition, whatever biases and specific interests it may include, is part and parcel of the intellectual process (from observation to presentation, by way of interpretation) necessary to the production of a historical text[10]. This dissertation is an effort to re-evaluate the shape and function of narrative, and especially dramatic, devices as used by an author who has routinely been criticized for valuing 'style' over 'substance', and whose style was in fact considered to be quite unsuited to the historical material with which he was concerned.

Though Herodian's writing strategies had already been acknowledged and examined by Karl Fuchs at the end of the nineteenth century, these observations were used to dismiss the *History* as a superficial piece, full of repetitions, commonplaces, stereotypes, and ornate images that are meaningless and, worst of all, inaccurate[11]. This would also contribute to redefining the work's genre and categorizing it instead as a (historical) novel using contemporary events as backdrop[12]. Most of the earlier research devoted to Herodian's *History* followed the essence of Fuchs' conclusions, and focused on a strict examination of its historical content and its sources: the main concern for these critics was the work's perceived usefulness in their quest for historical reconstruction[13]. These questions were closely tied to

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Halliwell, Aristotle "is insinuating that *even* such colourful, poeticising story-telling as can be found in Herodotus still purports to make truth-claims about the particulars of the past and lacks the essential requirements of poetry." (at 198) On this passage, in a discussion about tragic history, see below, [184-5].

[9] E.g. White 1973 or 1978; cf. below, [8-10] on the notions of fact and fiction in historiography.

[10] See below, [10-13], on (the process of) writing history.

[11] Fuchs 1895, esp. 344-51 and 1896, esp. 218-34; already noted in Zürcher 1868, esp. 266-8 or Müller 1870, esp. 184-5; 191, and later echoed in e.g. Platnauer 1918, 2; Bersanetti 1938 and 1940; Reardon 1971, 216-19; Rubin 1980, 85-131; 215-34.

[12] Given that the title under which we have come to know Herodian's work is not original and that there is a blatant lack of (modern) historical rigour, Roques 1990a, 7-8 argues that the *History*, "en dépit de son titre, doit être regardée moins comme une œuvre de science que comme une œuvre d'art." (quote at 8) Roques even claims that "Hérodien trahit Clio." According to Syme 1971, 255 Herodian was "a Greek rhetorician passing himself off as a writer of history". This view is also found in Alföldy, e.g. 1971b, 431, who defines the *History* as "mehr eine Art historischen Romans"; with Kolb 1972; Strobel 1993b. Reardon 1971, 216 sees the work as "rien d'autre qu'une série de biographies des empereurs"; with de Blois 1998, 3415, stating that it was "even more a mixture of history and biography than that of Dio." Interestingly, Sidebottom 1998, 2828-30 favourably compares modern expectations towards modern historical novels with Herodian's approach to history-writing: "Herodian is like a good modern historical novelist, and thus we should consider him, as the ancients did, a skilled exponent of a valid and enjoyable type of historical discourse." (at 2830) For Christol 1990, 132, Herodian "nous offre comme des 'Mémoires': dans son œuvre il rassemble les points de vue de ses contemporains ou relate ses propres impressions." Cf. below, [38].

[13] See [n. 1] above on early scholarship. Altheim 1948, 165-74 is, at that point in time, an unusual case of praise, while Reardon 1971, 218 concedes that Herodian "est important pour nous, *malheureusement*, en

Herodian's knowledge and use of Dio's *Roman History*, which was seen as a more reliable source[14]. Certain studies, accordingly, looked specifically into the textual parallels between Herodian and Dio[15]. Inevitably, these showed the superiority of Dio's account and the questionable use Herodian made of it[16]. At its core, then, the *History* could be seen as a flawed, moralizing recap of better sources, weakened by its author's blind application of rhetorical patterns and phrases lifted from school manuals.

Against this movement of positivist source criticism, there emerged, between the late 50s and the 70s, a sustained effort to treat the usual questions about Herodian's person and methods and about the information featured in the *History* in a more positive light[17]. This new

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tant que source historique" (my emphasis; also Potter 2004, 232: the *History* is a "mixed blessing" or Bekker-Nelsen 2014, 224: "not entirely without merits"). Interestingly, critics' dismissals of Herodian are often quite imaginative, see collections of such statements e.g. in Widmer 1967, 7-8; Bowersock 1975, 229-31; Sidebottom 1998, 2775-6. At best, Herodian is considered to be a 'product of his age', a time when writing was still heavily influenced by the Second Sophistic: so e.g. Echols 1961, 7 ("typical third-century baroque"; Echols also views Herodian as an "amateur" historian); Reardon 1971, 216 ("à la mode du III^e^ siècle"; with 218-219); Birley 1999, 204 ("a self-conscious stylist", echoing Platnauer 1918, 2 and 4 "pretentious dilettantism"). For a (somewhat) favourable outlook, see also Whittaker 1969-70, xxxix; Roques 1990a, 10; Marasco 1998, 2904-07; Zimmermann 1999a, 8; 321-2; Kemezis 2014.

[14] That being said, Dio too has been subjected to harsh criticism in scholarship, but especially for the contemporary books and never quite as much as Herodian; when the two are put in direct comparison, Dio's is assumed to be the definitive text, except in a few rare instances (e.g. Bowersock 1975). A similar case can be seen for the valorization of the *Historia Augusta* over Herodian's *History*, even though the biographies (above all the so-called minor *Vitae*) are otherwise quite maligned in modern scholarship. On the use of Herodian by the author of the *Historia Augusta*, see a good summary in Chastagnol 1994, lxi-lxii.

[15] So e.g. Roos 1915; Kolb 1972 (in a three-way comparison with the *Historia Augusta*); Scheithauer 1990 (specifically on Elagabalus' rule); Chrysanthou 2020. Many, starting with Kolb 1972 (who was expanding on Roos 1915), hold Dio's *Roman History* to be Herodian's main source for books 1 to 6, both for its factual material and its literary makeup; with e.g. Alföldy 1971a, 208 and 1971b, 431-3. For Càssola 1957a and Whittaker 1969-70, lxi-lxxi, the problem with this idea is this modern assumption that ancient historians would stick to a single source that they would then follow blindly and faithfully throughout their own work. Most scholarship would address the question of Herodian's use of Dio in one way or another. In his analysis of Severus' civil wars (193-7), Rubin 1980 even argues that Herodian did not use Dio at all, but instead relied on other sources, now lost and otherwise unknown, to produce his own account of this period. See Sidebottom 1998, 2780-92 for a good discussion of the different opinions and of the textual evidence; with Whittaker 1969-70, lxiv-lxviii and Hidber 2006, esp. 49-56. Interestingly, while generally favouring Dio's account and his historical methods, Roques 1990a, 13 values Herodian's lucidity over Dio's, in terms of understanding "les dangers que constituaient, pour la domination de Rome, les intrigues de Cour, la montée de l'anarchie militaire, la pression accrue des Barbares, l'affirmation progressive des particularismes"; with e.g. Whittaker 1969-70, xxxix: "For all the deficiencies of Herodian, he is not automatically to be dismissed in favour of Cassius Dio, much less the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*." Whittaker 1969-70, lxvii-lxviii also argues, following his idea of an unrevised work, that Dio was used in a second stage of writing, "to check and supplement" (which would explain why linguistic parallels between the two are mostly in books 1 and 2). Dio's canonical status in modern scholarship is questioned in Càssola 1967, xix, who would rather talk about "divergenze tra le varie fonti" when comparing Herodian's *History* to the *Roman History*. To that effect, another potential source of Herodian might have been his contemporary Marius Maximus, a senator who wrote imperial biographies (from Nerva to Heliogabalus, 96-222) meant to be the continuation of Suetonius' *Vitae*: see e.g. Whittaker 1969-70, lxiv-lxxi.

[16] Books 72-80 of Dio's *Roman History*, on the years 180-229, are now mostly known through the epitome of John Xiphilinus, a Byzantine monk from the eleventh century. Of these last books, only book 79 and part of 80 are extant. On the *Roman History*'s manuscript tradition, see e.g. Cary 1914, xix-xxvi.

[17] In particular: Càssola 1956-7 (on Herodian's reliability); 1957a (on the historian's sources); 1968 (translation into Italian, with introduction); Grosso 1964, 34-47; Widmer 1967 (a thematic approach); Whittaker 1969-70 (a substantial introduction and commentary to his translation; "on the whole Herodian is guilty of less error than might be supposed from his critics", at xliii); Alföldy 1971a (on Herodian's

tendency would work towards re-assessing some of what earlier criticism had deemed major factual omissions, such as the *Constitutio Antoniniana* under Caracalla, Alexander's prefect Ulpian, or the commission of the *uiginti uiri* in 238. Namely, these were put in perspective with their historical context, and their importance is supposed to have seemed, right at that moment, difficult to measure, or simply overrated by modern research. More importantly, the treatment, or sometimes the non-treatment, of these events and characters would be examined in light of their place and function within the *History* itself, instead of being tied to dramatic effect or rhetorical patterns. For instance, C.R. Whittaker would write that "Herodian's method is to select facts, which in themselves are true, as exempla to typify and interpret a character. The criterion for the interpretation is political rather than rhetorical."[18] But beyond a brief incursion into this idea of literary composition as an organizing principle, the majority of these studies, all things considered, would remain rather dependent on aspects of factual historicity[19].

Recent scholarship, however, has engaged in a fruitful re-evaluation of Herodian's historiographical practice and of his work, in which notions of representation, composition, and interpretation are now key aspects. The turn of the last century saw a new wave of studies on Herodian, with important advances in works by, e.g., Gabriele Marasco, Ilona Opelt, Harry Sidebottom, Martin Zimmermann, Barbara Kuhn-Chen, and Thomas Hidber[20]. Echoing early

identity); 1971b (on his awareness of the 'crisis'); 1973 (on the scene of Marcus Aurelius' death); 1974 (on contemporary views of the 'crisis' of the third century). Similarly themed articles in Spanish were published during the 1980s, namely by Gascó La Calle 1984, on Herodian's sources; 1985, on his origins; 1987, on his position. Against this trend of rehabilitation, Ernst Hohl (e.g. 1954; 1956) and Frank Kolb (1972) both remained quite hostile towards Herodian; anthologies generally share this view, so e.g. Reardon 1971, 216-19. For Alföldy 1971b, 432, the *History* is written "im Stil einer billigen Journalistik", but he also acknowledged its appeal to a wider public and argued that Herodian shows a profound understanding of the 'crisis'. This renewal of positive scholarly interest in the *History* coincides (or corresponds?) with the publication of new translations: Echols 1961 (in English); Whittaker 1969-70 (in English, in the Loeb collection); Càssola 1967 (in Italian; reedited in 2017); Torres Esbarranch 1985 (in Spanish, with a detailed introduction). This increased production of research on Herodian's *History* led to two literature reviews issued as standalones in the 1980s: Gonzáles-Cobos Dávila 1983 and Martinelli 1987. Other modern translations used in this dissertation: Brok 1972 (in Dutch; revised version in Brok/Hunink 2017); Roques 1990a (in French); Müller 1996 (in German); Galimberti 2014 (in Italian, book 1 only; part of an ongoing project).

[18] Whittaker 1969-70, lviii; lxxiv ("the matrix of the ideal prince guides the selection of facts"); lxxv; lxxxi. Cf. de Blois 1998, 3416: "He made use of contrasting schemes and employed traditional commonplaces and ideal images to interpret historical facts."

[19] Whittaker 1969-70, l-lii notes some of the "valuable factual information that is not found elsewhere in the literary sources for this period." (quote at l) Echoed in e.g. Canfora 1990, commenting on Rostovtzeff's use of Herodian, esp. for the reign of Maximinus. For his part, Glen Bowersock (1975) encouraged Herodian's use over Dio's in certain aspects such as Elagabalus' reign and more generally Syrian religion (though remained unconvinced in most others), while Linda Piper (also 1975, asking "Why read Herodian?") advocated for a revalorisation of the work, given that Herodian is the "best historian of his time" (ap. Alföldy), he "strives for honesty" (ap. Càssola), and he is "above all […] interesting." (all quotations at Piper 1975, 28) On Herodian's method, see also below, [37-40].

[20] Opelt 1998 (on the imagery of fear and terror in the *History* as a dramatic device); Marasco 1998 (on political ideas in the *History*); Sidebottom 1998 (on Herodian's historical methods); Zimmermann 1999a, with 1998 (on the *History*'s reception between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries) and 1999b (on Herodian's representation of the people); Kuhn-Chen 2002 (on Herodian's conception of history, in comparison with Dio and Appian); Hidber 2006 (published version of a thesis defended in 1999).

ideas about Herodian's style, conception of history, and use of literary devices, these new analyses, contrary to Fuchs and most scholarship up to this point, came to more favourable conclusions on the *History* and its author's method (though views on the work's political content remained lukewarm[21]). Following these new paths of reflection and a generalized increase in scholarship on Flavian and post-Flavian Roman imperial literature, there has been an ever-growing interest in Herodian's work[22], and a considerable number of articles have been published in the last decades discussing individual emperors or specific topics, either within a particular rule or the work at large[23].

Most influential for our current purposes, and perhaps also in general, are the two books by Zimmermann and Hidber. Zimmermann, in the first monograph devoted to Herodian in over thirty years, investigated what role "die ordnende Hand des Historikers" played in the selection, organization, and presentation of the material, through a detailed analysis of Commodus' rule in book 1 and briefer readings of the following books[24]. Zimmermann argued that the work is shaped around the representation of the moral quality of emperors and insists on the importance of *paideia* and *empeiria*, over innate attributes, as the cornerstone of good emperorship and a successful rule. Portrayals were produced not through authorial comments, but by the 'course of events' (*Ereignisablauf*)[25]. Hidber, along similar lines, examined at length the *History*'s introduction, on the basis of its themes, its

[21] E.g. Sidebottom 1998, 2812: "neither profound nor original (to our eyes it is also not particularly useful) but at least it is coherent." Cf. Zimmermann 1999a, 13: "einem zweitklassigen Autor"; Hidber 2006, 278: "keine Tiefgreifende Analyse"; Kemezis 2014, 24: "a great deal of his content is inaccurate or vague, and what little analysis he gives of events is often superficial and banal". A similar view in Whittaker 1969-70, lxxii, followed by de Blois 1998, 3423: "'Political philosophy' may be putting the ideals of Herodian on too high a place, since there is nothing very profound about what is said."

[22] For instance, Alessandro Galimberti, in connection with his 2014 translation of book 1 of the *History*, has published several articles on Commodus: 2017a (image as military emperor); 2017b (conspiracies and popular uprisings); 2018 (religious policy). Galimberti has also edited two volumes on the *History* Herodian's work: one, released in 2017, is a collection of papers presented in a seminar held in 2015-16 at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milan), looking at the work book by book, the other was published at the end of 2021 and deals with the author's historiographical thought and themes of interest (the latter was yet unavailable at the time of writing). Two recent dissertations, Andrews 2019 (on the representation of politics under the Severans in Dio and Herodian) and Dovbyshchenko 2020 (on narrative strategies in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Herodian's *History*), can be cited as further evidence of the work's popularity. There are also a handful of ongoing projects. Julian De Rivas has been preparing a new French translation of Books 1 and 2, with a critical edition and commentary. Mario Baumann is working on a commentary on the *History*, while Chrysanthos Chrysanthou is exploring social and collective consciousness in imperial Greek literature, studying Herodian's work and Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*.

[23] Among many others: Marasco 1996 (Macrinus); Rowan 2005 (religion); Conde Guerri 2006 (old age); Martin 2006 (Maximinus); Bekker-Nelsen 2014 (political failings); Buongiorno (Maternianus); Galimberti 2016 (Caracalla and the Antonine constitution); Speidel 2016 (Thracians); Bérenger 2017 (legitimacy for Macrinus and Elagabalus); Mecella 2017 (space and war under Maximinus); Motta 2017 (the *demos*); Schettino 2017 (topography and politics); Molinier Arbo 2018 (supernatural elements); Bérenger 2020 (imperial dress for Elagabalus); Rantala 2020 (a gendered reading of Elagabalus); Hekster & Kaizer, forthcoming (on the 'east'), etc. The *History* is also frequently featured in pieces focusing on the third-century 'crisis', or more generally the years 235-8, (e.g. Strobel 1993a; de Blois 1998; Haegemans 2010).

[24] Opelt 1998, 2928 also insisted on the importance of Herodian's "sprachliche Gestaltung" for our understanding of the *History*; with e.g. Paño 1997, 300: "la unidad temática de la obra […] se corresponde con un tratamiento homogéneo en lo que a técnica compositiva y expositiva se refiere, es decir a método."

[25] Zimmermann 1999a, 5.

influences (esp. Thucydides and Herodotus)[26], and the programme it proposes; he showed, by way of a predominantly narratological reading, how its promises were generally upheld throughout the work. Hidber also studied in detail how the idealized Marcus Aurelius was used as model for all subsequent emperors in the *History*. Like Zimmermann, he was particularly interested in the progression of rules, which he too schematized through a linear analysis of the work[27].

Amidst several other pieces dealing with individual characters or events from the Severan period and featured in the *History*, Kemezis' 2014 book explored how political changes occurring under the Severans were expressed in the works of three contemporary Greek authors: Cassius Dio, Philostratus, and Herodian. These accounts are viewed as 'worlds', "a narrative construct influenced but not determined by external reality as perceived by readers."[28] While Dio proposed, as Kemezis argued, a new format of history-writing by implementing four different narrative modes (Republic, *dynasteiai*, Principate, contemporary; each working from a similar ideology of imperial consensus, but through diverging methods and literary techniques), Herodian chose to oppose a conventional shape, more adapted to the Antonine age, to a chaotic reality in order to emphasize the peculiarity of the period. Narrative style is viewed here as a literary tactic that enables the historian to subvert readers' expectations, for instance through the physical (dis)location of emperors or the (mis)use of conventional forms of rhetoric.

For much of the earlier scholarship on Herodian, both the *History*'s form and content were found to be lacking. Broadly speaking, Herodian's work was viewed as an abridged version of the contemporary books of Cassius Dio's *Roman History*, and other, lost, pieces like the biographies of Marius Maximus, in which Thucydidean patterns were mixed with sophistic figures in an attempt to showcase rhetorical skill and culture. For some critics, the *History* was too literary, yet "agréable à lire, pour qui ne cherche pas de l'histoire"[29]. For others, even Herodian's style was unfortunate[30]. And in some cases, certain scholars otherwise favourable to the work's historical contribution were vexed by its stylistic peculiarities,

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[26] Matijašić 2018, 192 sees the preface as a "a learned mix of implicit citations and references to the hyper-canonical historians." The parallels with Thucydides have also been examined in detail by Stein 1957, 76-90 (with a list at 219-21), who concluded that these were mostly detectable in the *History*'s preface (since the rest does not meet its promises), and that they must have been processed through a long tradition and not come directly from Thucydides. Stein argues that Josephus might have been a more immediate influence. This stance on Herodian's reliance on Thucydides is generally followed by Whittaker 1969-70, lv-lvi ("most passages probably derived from the Atticizing movement in the schools of rhetoric and are repeated by generations of historians."); n. 2 *ad* 1.1.1. Sidebottom 1998 sees a wider Thucydidean influence, though concedes that Herodian may have only known this model "via excerpts or the schools." (at 2777, n. 6) On Thucydidean and Herodotean resonances, see also Kuhn-Chen 2002, 253-60 and Hidber 2006, 73-123.

[27] Zimmermann 1999a, chapter 3 "Gegenspieler" (151-283) and Hidber 2006, chapter 3 "Die Ordnung der Geschichte" (124-87), with part of chapter 4, 201-43, which deals with how every emperor is measured against the figure of Marcus Aurelius.

[28] Kemezis 2014, 11.

[29] Reardon 1971, 218. On Herodian's 'errors', see also below, [38-39].

[30] E.g. Hohl 1954, 32 (neither subtle nor tasteful); Echols 1961, 6 ("pompous, repetitive, and derivative"); Bird 1976 ("farrago of clichés", "stereotype", "commonplace", "rhetorical convention", "stock *formulae* learned at school"). Norden 1923, 397-8 wrote that he could not get past the first book.

namely the vast amount of repetitions[31]. While important features of Herodian's method of composition, such as patterns and juxtapositions, were already discussed by Fuchs, they were either seen as an impediment to a truthful account or as the product of lazy or unsubtle writing, and were therefore undervalued. For instance, speeches and other set pieces were usually considered as 'decorative' rather than 'historical' and not particularly well-adapted to those made to utter them[32]. Herodian's narrow selection of his material has also been noted early on, but was taken as evidence of a poor historical method and shallow understanding[33].

More recently, scholarship has considered these same questions in a more favourable manner or, at least, produced analyses that avoided on the whole negative biases on what constituted 'proper' history. Following Whittaker's conclusions about "how the matrix of the ideal prince guides the selection"[34], Denis Roques also argued that, even in the case of major inaccuracies, the facts presented by Herodian "are based on a deliberate selection and attest foremost to his lucidity"[35]. As seen above, this view has been examined at length in the three books by Zimmermann, Hidber, and Kemezis, but has also been discussed in relation to more specific points, such as narration[36], time[37], space[38], characterization[39], and assassination plots[40]. What can also be drawn in these studies is that, against earlier views of the *History* as a loosely connected 'series' or 'collection', this is "a reasonably sophisticated work"[41] and a coherent story, especially on the basis of its thematic and narrative unity.

Leaving aside the questions of Herodian's identity, the historical accuracy of the material, and the extent of Dio's influence on the *History*, this dissertation instead follows on from these recent advances centered around the work's narrative composition and the historian's use of literary devices. For these purposes, attention will be given to the historian's

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[31] E.g. Càssola 1956-7, 191 ("retore da quattro soldi"); *id.*, 1967, xvii ("con un linguaggio povero, sciatto, e banale"); Whittaker 1969-70, liv: "The *History* is garnished with imitations of classical models, rhetorical declamations, moralizing *sententiae*, antiquarian diversions and etymological bric-à-brac."

[32] Roques 1990a, 11, also noting how a closer look at these speeches would likely reveal their dependence on formulas learned from school manuals; with e.g. Whittaker 1969-70, lvii. This idea, extended to Herodian's style more generally, is also found in e.g. Stein 1957; Bird 1976, 84.

[33] Again, Reardon 1971, 218, n. 71: "précisément: on reconnaît l'historien à ce qu'il considère important."

[34] Whittaker 1969-70, lxxiv; with l: "Omission of proper names, and of accurate facts and figures or specific examples is the rule in the *History*, contrived not through ignorance but by intent"; with e.g. Sidebottom 1998, 2821: "there are strict limits to Herodian's inventions." Somewhat echoed in Matthews 2007, 274: "His writing is elegant and fluent but without the more severe historical qualities […] and some episodes are told with an effective narrative flair and important details". Cf. also Rostovtzeff 1926, 381, talking about both Dio's and Herodian's works as "substantial and well-composed accounts."

[35] Roques 1990a, 9: "procèdent d'un choix réfléchi et témoignent d'abord de sa lucidité". "Lucidité, orginalité, dignité" are, according to Roques, at 10, three key attributes of Herodian's writing. Roques, at 13, adds that Herodian "a choisi ses matériaux historiques en fonction d'une conception bien déterminée de l'Empire, ou plus précisément de l'empereur." With e.g. Müller 1996, 15: "Auslassungen sind geradezu Konstituenten dieses historiographischen Prinzips".

[36] Hidber 2004.

[37] Hidber 2007.

[38] Pitcher 2012.

[39] Pitcher 2017.

[40] Scott 2018b. One article by Marcel Meulder (2002) also argued that Herodian's account of the year 193 was constructed on a trifunctional model.

[41] Sidebottom 1998, 2827.

manner of presentation of events and characters, his *narrative*, over the versions that have been established through the cross-referencing of different types of sources and scholarly consensus[42]. This means that, in narratologist terminology, this dissertation will focus on "the level of representation"[43]. More specifically, building on previous conclusions about the centrality of the imperial figures and how it affects the shape of the *History*, this study will focus on the critical moments that are imperial accessions and deaths. Marking the narrative entrances and exits of emperors, these act as key episodes in this 'story of power transitions' and have therefore shaped the structure of this dissertation[44]. As will be further discussed in the next chapter, beginnings and endings are not only important points in any story, but they are also 'strategic' moments. Although Herodian's stories of imperial lives are not set in a strict ring composition, these opening and closing episodes are undoubtedly shaped around similar themes and narrative elements. In this case, the similarities between these corresponding moments allow Herodian to emphasize specific character traits and create cues for the readers: through careful shaping, an emperor's accession episode foreshadows the nature (political, moral, narrative) of his reign, while his death confirms these key elements.

The following three chapters, which form the main part of this dissertation, are each based on particular aspects of Herodian's narrative style that have often been criticized in modern scholarship: abundance of repetitions and formulae, indiscriminate use of classical models, excessive (or indeed any) dramatization of events. Working against earlier dismissal of these devices as superficial embellishment, this thesis will consider them as serious components of the historian's writing and, in doing so, aims to examine the inner workings of Herodian's storytelling, even down to its finer details. As White explains,

> The events are *made* into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like – in short, all of the techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play.[45]

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[42] On the distinction between narrative, story, and plot used in this dissertation, see also below, [10-11].

[43] Cf. de Jong 2014, 37-8: "Narratologists have long realized that a narrative consists of two layers: the level of the world and events represented and the level of representation. The theories of Bal and Genette even distinguish three levels." With White 1978, 91, talking about the "mediative function" of a historical narrative: "As a symbolic structure, the historical narrative does not *reproduce* the events it describes; it tells us in what direction to think about the events and charges our thought about the events with different emotional valences. The historical narrative does not *image* the things it indicates; it *calls to mind* images of the things it indicates, in the same way that a metaphor does." (emphasis original)

[44] Zimmermann 1999a, 5 found that Sidebottom's narratological and rhetorical approach (1998, 2813-22) gave too much attention to 'individual sections', and that it detracted from the key concept of the emperor's representation. By considering story patterns and structure, this analysis based on episodes of imperial accessions and deaths is an attempt to reconcile an approach such as that of Sidebottom with what most scholars now view as the core of Herodian's method of composition, that is character representation.

[45] White 1978, 84 (emphasis original). White adds: "The same set of events can serve as components of a story that is tragic or comic, as the case may be, depending on the historian's choice of the plot structure that he considers most appropriate for ordering events of that kind so as to make them into a comprehensible story."

Accordingly, my approach will be above all literary, by which I mean that I will be looking primarily at language, style, and storytelling.

As mentioned above, a major point of interest among critics of (ancient) historiography is the weight of fiction as opposed to fact. While (early) modern scholarship has tended to judge these texts on the basis of science and (philosophical) truth, it seems that, in antiquity, the "only system which historiography was always part of was the literary system"[46]. Interestingly, this trait of ancient historical stories is reflected in how White views all historical narratives as "verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences." [47] Broadly speaking, the idea is that the raw historical material needs to be processed through several phases of activity on the historian's part before it can become a history, or historical narrative, imbued with meaning[48]. As White further develops, unprocessed facts need to be "encoded" as narrative elements in order to gain an explanatory force[49]. This action might be considered, strictly speaking, part of fiction, but, following White, contributes to providing facts with a density, or fullness, essential to any sort of deeper historical understanding[50]. Gap-filling is another necessary operation to make a coherent, structured, unified, or comprehensible, (hi)story: this is not a random act, either for Herodian or (ancient) historians more generally, but conforms to the idea of a 'true enough' principle (or verisimilitude), which is grounded in reasonable interpretation and internal coherence[51]. As de Jong points out, "[*a*]*mplificatio*, the elaboration of the bare facts with all kinds of circumstantial detail, was a standard technique of ancient historians." [52] The

[46] Nicolai 2007, 7, also noting: "It is commonly accepted that history was not included in the disciplines that moved towards exact knowledge, truth in the philosophical sense of the term, and that the results of historical research were part of *doxa* (opinion)." Though cf. White 1978, 99: "history as a discipline is in bad shape today because it has lost sight of its origins in the literary imagination."

[47] White 1978, 82 (emphasis original).

[48] Certeau 1975: an "opération historiographique", built around the relationship between a "lieu social", a "pratique", and an "écriture". Echoed by Ricœur 2000, but placed in a system of "niveaux de langage et des problématiques enchevêtrées" (at 737: "phase documentaire"; "phase explicative/ comprehensive"; "phase proprement littéraire ou scripturaire"). As Ricœur notes, "le narratif n'est pas confiné à l'événementiel mais coextensif à tous les niveaux d'explication et à tous les jeux d'échelles." (at 742)

[49] White 1978, 83: "histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of *mere* chronicles; and stories in turn are made out of chronicles by an operation which I have elsewhere called 'emplotment'. And by emplotment I mean simply the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific *kinds* of plot structures." (emphasis original) On cultural encodation, through e.g. "metaphysical concepts, religious beliefs, or story forms", see also White 1978, 85-89. Cf. also Levene 2010, 390, n. 154, who argues that "the ancients do not appear to make the metaphysical distinction between genuinely existing 'fact' and historian-constructed 'emplotment' which is central to the proponents of the 'linguistic turn'."

[50] White 1978, 85: "*How* a given historical situation is to be configured depends on the historian's subtlety in matching up a specific plot structure with the set of historical events that he wishes to endow with a meaning of a particular kind. This is essentially a literary, that is to say fiction-making, operation. And to call it that in no way detracts from the status of historical narratives as providing a kind of knowledge." (emphasis original) Cf. Marincola 1999, on the role of innovation in ancient history-writing.

[51] This idea is more easily accepted for the reconstruction of 'historical' speeches (ap. Thuc. 1.22.1), but is also valid for narrative: see e.g. Pelling 1990, 45-51 (talking about Livy, Tacitus, and Plutarch).

[52] De Jong 2014, 171.

"translation of fact into fictions"[53], or narrativization of historical material, is at the heart of this dissertation.

From a technical point of view, I adopt the three-layered "vertical structure of narrative", to borrow de Jong's phrase, of text-story-fabula which has been posed by narratologists[54]. This is summarized quite clearly by Mieke Bal:

> A *narrative text* is a text in which an agent relates ('tells') a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof. A *story* is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors.[55]

Applied to historiography, this means that the *fabula* can be both the unprocessed historical material and the reconstruction made by readers and sought by critics[56]. From this vertical system, concerned more with cognition, I also propose a sub-hierarchy oriented towards the structure of the story. For the present purposes, the story, defined broadly as what is being told in a certain way in a narrative text, is composed of one or several *plots* which can mean both "the incidents of a narrative" and their "arrangement"[57]. Plots can in turn be broken into one or several *episodes* (or units), understood here as a "series of related events standing apart from surrounding (series of) events because of one or more distinctive features and having a unity."[58] Finally, these episodes are built around one or several *scenes*, by which I mean, borrowing from film studies, a single, self-contained event, taking place within a single setting[59]. This structural division will facilitate a finer, thematic analysis of the text.

As we will see throughout this dissertation, an important part of Herodian's method of composition is a particular selection of information: Herodian can schematize, or streamline, episodes into a limited set of narrative patterns by paring down their context and

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[53] White 1978, 92. To quote Fowler 1997b, 129: "cultural critics need to abandon the pretence that what they are juxtaposing with literature is raw 'history,' events and facts, rather than stories they themselves want to tell."

[54] Cf. de Jong 2014, 37-38. A fourth level, "referential" or "material", can be found in historiography, which refers to written or oral reports used by the historian (38-39).

[55] Bal 1997², 5, insisting on a wide variety of "texts". See also Prince 1982, 61: a text which "recounts a certain number of situations and events occurring in a certain world." (emphasis on the narrated) Or de Jong 2014, 17: "a text in which a narrator recounts a series of events" (emphasis on the presence of a narrator). On narrative, and more specifically historical narrative, cf. White 1978, 96-99.

[56] For de Jong 2014, 38, the fabula "does not exist in and of itself but is a reconstruction by the narratees".

[57] Prince 2003, s.v. "plot" (1) and (2). I do not use the distinction between story and plot that is based on causality (or, in Russian formalist terms, the opposition between fabula and sujet). Plot is taken as equivalent to *intrigue*: "The plot; the aggregate of motifs characterizing the characters' machinations, conflicts, and struggles." (Prince 2003, s.v. "intrigue")

[58] Prince 2003, s.v. "episode". Though see below, [20-21], on the possible overlap of episodes due to the nature of the *History*.

[59] E.g. Kuhn & Westwell 2020², s.v. "scene": "A scene is normally set in one location and in a single period of time, and may comprise a single shot or a series of shots; a sequence normally comprises several scenes." I also use this definition of scene to acknowledge the marked visual, or pictorial, character of Herodian's history, which has even been referred to as 'cinematic', cf. below, [185, n. 14; 210-12]. Through its spatial and temporal limitations, this 'scene' is necessarily related to the narratological scene, one of the five tempos in narrative speed (along with ellipsis, pause, stretch, and summary) which more or less equates story time (ST) to fabula time (FT). See e.g. Prince 2003, s.v. "scene", with Bal 1997², 105-6.

sequence[60]. Herodian's work is generally quite terse, not encumbered with an abundance of factual details, such as names, dates, or places, which were thought by earlier critics to have the potential to make events and characters more factually specific (and accurate). This lack of particulars has been a great source of frustration for these scholars, who judged many accounts and descriptions inside the work "so vague as to be almost worthless"[61]. But another way to look at the *History*'s 'shortage' of information is through the lens of concision[62]. Herodian's schematizing techniques can thus be linked to Lucian's instructions on history-writing (*conscr. hist.* 27-28; 56-57): "indeed, a great deal should even be omitted"[63]. So Christina S. Kraus notes on historiography in general:

> That concision depends not only on stylistic brevity, but especially on the ability to present individuals and their deeds in such a way that an audience can make sense of them: that is, by building them out of familiar models both of character and action that allow the historian to communicate a wealth of information powerfully and telegraphically. The technique is akin to that of intertextuality, which brings in whole layers of nuance and meaning through a single gesture.[64]

Efforts, then, to find common ground between writer and audience affect both the storytelling and the story, even (and perhaps especially) if the topic is emphatically said to be unprecedented.

From these recognizable patterns emerges the exploitation of parallels between a set of contextually similar episodes in order to find the gaps in which to insert meaningful peculiarities. In addition to giving form, density, and rhythm to the whole story, this creates an internal dialogue between similar scenes. Emphasizing certain actions and character attributes within a controlled narrative frame allows Herodian to generate thematic recurrences, and these in turn can provide cues for the readers, either to accompany their interpretation or, conversely, to challenge their expectations. By breaking down the story's overall linearity, this comparative approach will also contribute to providing a global understanding of the work; it will give to all books and imperial reigns attention more or less equivalent to the space, whether textual or conceptual, they occupy in the *History*, regardless of their historical (or critical) predominance. Another important point is that this study will

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[60] Herodian's method of selection and composition are further discussed below, [37-40].

[61] Whittaker 1969-70, xliv, on the description of Britain, but the sentiment was easily echoed by many scholars commenting on the *History* as a whole. A similar assessment in Echols 1961, 7: "Herodian's geography is vague and must be cited with extreme care." Also Roques 1990a: "Hérodien multiplie les approximations, parfois assorties de banalités".

[62] Cf. also White 1978, 90: "Our *explanations* of historical structures and processes are thus determined more by what we leave out of our representations than by what we put in." (emphasis original)

[63] Lucian., *conscr. hist.* 56: μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ παραλειπτέον πολλά. Cf. Quint. 10.1.102, admiring "Sallust's immortal rapidity" (*immortalem Sallusti uelocitatem*); 10.1.73 on Thucydides (*densus et breuis et semper instans sibi*); see too Cic., *de orat.* 2.93, approving the brevity of Thucydides, among others; also Cic., *de orat.* 2.56 and *Brut.* 29. Sallust himself was compared to Thucydides on the question of brevity, cf. Sen. Mai., *Contr.* 9.1.13 (*cum sit praecipua in Thucydide uirtus breuitas, hac eum Sallustius uicit et in suis illum castris cecidit*). If brevity is generally advisable, one important pitfall is obscurity, as note e.g. Cic., *Brut.* 29; Dion. Hal., *Thuc.* 51; Quint. 41-52, etc. Phot., *Bibl*. 99 notes that Herodian's work is in fact neither too superfluous nor too thrifty with details (οὔτε δὲ περιττολογίαις ἐστὶ σεμνυνόμενος, οὔτε τι τῶν ἀναγκαίων παραλιμπάνων).

[64] Kraus 2010, 414.

focus less on reconstructing precisely what may have been Herodian's intention in writing this piece than on the literary text that is produced. Similarly, this thesis is intended first as an analysis of the characters and events such as they are represented in the *History*, not of their historical versions that have been established through modern research.

Drawing from narratological studies, I will pay close attention to the "role of the narrator and narratees, the methods of characterization, the handling of time, matters of focalization or point of view, and the role of space for the whole of the text"[65]. Specific objects of study, literary or more specifically narratological, may include, but are not limited to: order and choice of words, verb tenses, diathesis (voices), syntax, metaphors, analepses and prolepses, allusions, irony, setting, the intervention of secondary characters, or speeches. The goal here is not to produce an exhaustive catalogue of the techniques used by Herodian for each episode, rather to explore the building blocks of their overall logic.

It should also be noted that not everything can be significant all at once (and this meaning is not fixed), but the idea is that there is a guiding principle that propels the whole narrative. Accordingly, I adopt a thematic approach, based on key episodes of imperial accessions and deaths, rather than follow the strict chronology of the *History*. This entails that the same episode, considering that it might be part one emperor's death and part another's accession sequence, can be analyzed twice, but from the perspective of different characters (and through different threads), and thus to different conclusions. Similarly, another consequence of a thematical reading is that it allows to break down episodes into scenes, and even into actions, in order to divide these smaller elements between different, specific frameworks[66]. Following the comparative principle of Herodian's method, in which the "drive to compare and contrast takes centre-stage"[67], I also propose throughout this dissertation a series of close readings in small clusters of two, three, or four examples. This will enable a detail-oriented analysis of Herodian's method of composition, since it is precisely through the interplay between 'same' and 'different' that the historian is able to create patterns of interpretation.

In the same spirit, if certain episodes or portrayals can constitute unique cases within the *History*, they often find parallels with representations in other ancient texts. Most of the time these parallels are not explicitly cited by Herodian, but tap into, through literary or narrative choices, famous earlier examples or *topoi*[68]. These external comparisons, generally taken to be intertexts at a thematic (and cultural) level, are necessarily subjective: as Stephen

[65] De Jong 2014, 10. After an overview of the development of narratological studies (1-9), she divides the contribution of narratology to classics in five broad categories: distinction between narrator and historical author; distinction between narrator-text and character-text; focalization; time as a tool of interpretation; enhanced methods for close reading (10).

[66] I have attempted to signal these divisions both prospectively and retrospectively in the notes.

[67] Likened by Pitcher 2017, 249, to the 'metaphorical turn'; cf. also below, [198-9].

[68] Cf. König, Langlands & Uden 2020, 16: "In the case of all of these texts [i.e. those under study in the volume], plotting their connections cannot be a matter of tracking the incidence of deliberate allusions, since their authors frequently wrote from different subject positions and in different languages in distant parts of the empire. Their texts interact, however, by employing comparable tropes and manoeuvres in reaction to a common set of experiences of contemporary Roman reality."

Hinds explain, talking about *topoi* and allusive discourse more generally, "[n]o two readers will ever construct a set of cues in quite the same way; no one reader, even the author, will ever construct a set of cues in quite the same way twice."[69] Since there are very few explicit references made by Herodian, precedence has generally been given to comparisons with other imperial figures, as they seem to resonate more with the particulars of the examples featured in this dissertation, rather than relying strictly on Greek examples (for the most part, non-imperial) on the sole basis that the *History* is written in Greek. In making these choices, I thus proceed with "a flexible and expansive conception of literary interaction" between Greek and Latin traditions[70]. This position seems especially valid in the case of third-century imperial literature: by then, as Kemezis argues,

> it no longer makes sense to describe cultural processes in the eastern half of the empire in terms of "adaptation" or "assimilation." Being part of the Roman world had ceased to be an externally imposed circumstance to which one had to react. It was an integral component of one's self-definition, and no more separable from one's overall identity than Greekness or the various local affinities that all Greek-speakers also possessed[71].

That is not to say that there were no specificities between these two traditions, or that "Graeco-Roman" literature was flat or homogenous, but that there was a shared repertoire of figures (historical or otherwise), themes, and patterns. The point, then, is not to attempt to reconstruct factually and with precision Herodian's library, which has been, like his identity, deliberately anonymized, rather to get a general idea of which models or *topoi* might be invoked to process a piece of contemporary imperial history in the third century.

Although this thesis is not meant as a systematic study of textual parallels for characters and events recorded by Herodian, comparisons with other ancient works will be inevitable in order to further emphasize the singularity of certains elements in the *History* that have often been called 'errors', 'inaccuracies', or 'fabrications'[72], namely with Cassius Dio's contemporary *Roman History* and the later *Historia Augusta*. These, beyond the enduring question of the influence of Dio's work in the *History*, generally devote the most textual space to the events covered in Herodian's work and set up the most substantial contrasts. In some instances, other authors such as the fourth century Latin epitomists (Aurelius Victor, the author of the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, Festus, and Eutropius), the historian and theologian

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[69] Hinds 1988, 47. See below, [113-17] for an expanded discussion on intertextuality, models, and *topoi*.

[70] König, Langlands & Uden 2020, 2; as their volume aims to show, these 'interactions' go beyond this binary, with Jewish, Syriac, or Chaldean literary cultures, but for the scope in this dissertation I limit myself to Greek and Latin. Cf. also Kemezis 2014, 28: "the diverse urban and elite populations within the empire developed a shared discursive space within which Easterners and Westerners could communicate meaningfully (in Latin or in Greek) about what it meant to be an inhabitant of the Roman *oikoumene*."

[71] Kemezis 2014, 27; with 25-29 on what being 'Greek' or 'Roman' might have meant to an individual at that time.

[72] Cf. White 1978, 99: "We are always able to see the fictive element in those historians with whose interpretations of a given set of events we disagree […] So, too, if we recognized the literary or fictive element in every historical account, we would be able to move the teaching of historiography onto a higher level of self-consciousness than it currently occupies.". With above, [10], on elements of fact and fiction in historical narratives.

Orosius in the fifth century, or the early sixth-century historian Zosimus, will also be called upon to compare the distilled imperial figures, the different traditions, the reception of given emperors, and the enduring utilization of certain tropes and images. Material evidence, such as coins and inscriptions, will be invoked on occasion; they might, for instance, confirm an aspect of Herodian's story as reflective of an ambient or official representation and not simply a singular invention of the historian.

As Herodian proposes in the *History*'s preface, he has written this work "assuming that the knowledge of events that were so great and so numerous for a short timeframe may not prove unpleasant (*οὐκ ἀτερπῆ*) for future generations too"[73]. If, as White argues, "the historian's aim is to familiarize us with the unfamiliar" and that to do so, "he must use figurative, rather than technical, language", then this dissertation is an exploration of how Herodian can deploy these "techniques of *figurative* language" in order to process this strange period in such a way that the narrative text produced is not only intelligible and accessible, but also enjoyable[74]: fiction then functions as a channel to a deeper understanding of history.

[73] 1.1.3: *οὐκ ἀτερπῆ τὴν γνῶσιν καὶ τοῖς ὕστερον ἔσεσθαι προσδοκήσας ἔργων μεγάλων τε καὶ πολλῶν ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ γενομένων* (exceptionally, my trans.). To my sense, the turn *οὐκ ἀτερπῆ* seems noticeable enough to warrant a closer rendering, especially since it might be understood as a litotes alluding to the well-known Thucydidean preface, which posits that the "absence of romance" (1.22.4: *τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες*) will make the work "rather unpleasant" (*ἀτερπεστερον*); on this phrase in Thucydides, see Flory 1990. On the idea of pleasure proposed by Herodian as what a reader might draw from his work, see esp. Hidber 2006, 101-5. For Kemezis 2014 (e.g. 21; 232-4; 272-5), this enjoyment is grounded in the readers' disengagement from the gloominess of the story, whose "polished literary form characteristic of the idealized Antonine age" (at 233) creates a false distance and allows for taking pleasure in reading such 'plot twists'.

[74] All quotes from White 1978, 94 (emphasis original).