AUFSTIEG UND NIEDERGANG DER RÖMISCHEN WELT

BAND II. 34.4

RISE AND DECLINE OF THE ROMAN WORLD

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HERAUSGEGEBEN VON / EDITED BY

WOLFGANG HAASE

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Herodian's Historical Methods and Understanding of History

by HARRY SIDEBOTTOM, Oxford

Contents

Herodian's 'History of the Empire after Marcus' seldom is highly regarded by modern scholars. *„Niedrig ist ... das Niveau seiner Schrift als Historie: sie ist mehr eine Art historischen Romans als ein Geschichtswerk"*[1]. Herodian commonly is seen as an ignorant, careless, derivative, fraudulent and trite moralizer (or even novelist) trapped by the rhetoric of his age[2].

It gives me pleasure to thank two friends, EWEN BOWIE and SIMON SWAIN, for reading and commenting on this article.

[1] G. ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte und Krisenempfindung bei Herodian, Hermes 99 (1971), 429–449, quote at 431, repr. in: ID., Die Krise des Römischen Reiches (Stuttgart, 1989), 273–293, with *addenda* at 293–294, hereafter cited as ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte with the original pagination.

[2] G. W. BOWERSOCK, Herodian and Elagabalus, Yale Classical Studies 24 (1975), 229 (hereafter cited as BOWERSOCK), notes the near consensus in condemnation, which he argues against. See also ID., in: P. E. EASTERLING and B. M. W. KNOX, The Cambridge History of Classical Literature I. Greek Literature (Cambridge, 1985), 710–713. Surveys of modern works on Herodian are given by ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 431, n. 4; A. I. DOVATUR, Review of Recent Works on the Historian Herodian (in Russian), Vestnik Drevnej Istorii 131 (1975), 205–217; A. GONZÁLEZ-COBOS DAVILA, Herodiano: estado de la cuestión, Studia historica historia antigua I (1983), 91–98; and G. MARTINELLI, L'Ultimo Secolo di Studi su Erodiano (Genova,

Even for one of his defenders he is *„un retore da quattro soldi"*[3]. Herodian's text has suffered one of the unkindest fates that can happen to the work of a writer. It has been reduced to a mere quarry for historical data, and an unsatisfactory one at that, for it is often seen as little more than a rhetorical épitome. Modern scholarship has concentrated almost completely on the text's sources and reliability to the exclusion of its intentions and interests, and of the possible responses of its ancient readers.

This article, after (unavoidably) discussing the problem of Herodian's sources, chiefly the level of his text's dependence on that of Cassius Dio (section II), and considering the concept that Herodian clearly perceived and analyzed the third-century crisis (section III), attempts somewhat to redress the balance. It is argued that the text has a coherent understanding of imperial history, which rests ultimately on the concept of *paideia* (section IV). The reader's engagement with the text is seen to be fostered by a variety of reasonably sophisticated narratological and rhetorical devices, which play with certain superficial levels of historical 'truth' in order to convey with greater immediacy what the text sets up as more profound levels of historical 'truth' (section V). With these readings, it is suggested that the text can profitably be analyzed as political literature: created by, and for the consumption of the Greek élite, to help legitimate their position in relation to Roman power, and to help perpetuate their status as an élite (section VI). Before all this, we should examine what the text explicitly claims for itself.

I. Statements of Intent

Herodian's text opens with polemic and the creation of a dichotomy (1.1.1–6). 'Most' historians do the following things, and are to be con-

1987). For recent, usually negative assessments of Herodian see M. ŠAŠEL-KOS, A Historical Outline of the Region between Aquileia, the Adriatic, and Sirmium in Cassius Dio and Herodian (Ljubljana, 1986), 282–286; A. R. BIRLEY, The African Emperor: Septimius Severus, 2nd ed. (London, 1988), 204–205; J. BURIAN, Maximinus Thrax. Sein Bild bei Herodian und in der Historia Augusta, Philologus 132 (1988), 230–244; G. MARTINELLI, Tradizione e dipendenze (Cass. Dio LXXIII, 22, 1–4 e Herod. 1, 17, 1–8), Atti dell'Academia Ligure di Scienze e Lettere 45 (1988), 343–356 (hereafter cited as MARTINELLI); G. ALFÖLDY, Cleanders Sturz und die antike Überlieferung, in: ID., Die Krise des Römischen Reiches (Stuttgart, 1989), 81–126 (hereafter cited as ALFÖLDY, Cleanders); A. DIHLE, Die griechische und lateinische Literatur der Kaiserzeit von Augustus bis Justinian (Munich, 1989), 356–357; A. SCHEITHAUER, Die Regierungszeit des Kaisers Elagabal in der Darstellung von Cassius Dio und Herodian, Hermes 118 (1990), 335–356 (hereafter cited as SCHEITHAUER); D. ROQUES, Hérodien. Histoire des Empereurs Romains. De Marc-Aurèle à Gordien III (180 ap. J.-C. – 238 ap. J.-C.), (Paris, 1990), 7–15. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to consult K. STROBEL, Das Imperium Romanum im „3. Jahrhundert" (Stuttgart, 1993).

[3] F. CASSOLA, Sull'attendibilità dello storico Erodiano, Atti dell'Accademia Pontaniana 6 (1956/7), 191 (hereafter cited as CASSOLA, attendibilità).

demned for them. They write about antiquity to win a reputation for *paideia*, sacrifice truth for vocabulary and style, mythologize relying on the pleasure they give curtailing investigation into their accuracy, and some, because they hate tyrants or wish to honour kings, cities or individuals, inflate the trivial (1.1.1–3). Herodian, implicitly contrasted to the above, explicitly claims accurate research (only first-hand or 'checked and corroborated' second-hand information will do), writes of recent times, of many great events happening in a short space of time (such as rarely or never before), and relates these events chronologically reign by reign (1.1.3–6).

It is easy to dismiss Herodian's *prooemium*, with its nod towards Thucydidean standards, as a merely conventional emphasis of the importance of the historian's subject and the accuracy of his narration (an unreal polemic against imaginary opponents)[4]. It is true that in ancient historiography the more recent and 'known' the history one was writing, the more necessary it was to claim diligent research and strict accuracy[5]. It is also true that Herodian's *prooemium* ultimately derives from Thucydides[6]. But the identification of the *fons et origo* of a *topos* does not preclude the need for further analysis.

A summary dismissal of Herodian's *prooemium* as 'a conventional *topos* derived from Thucydides' overlooks the possibility of the presence in Herodian of a serious claim to alter the boundaries of contemporary historiography. As EWEN BOWIE noted, the scope of Herodian's history sets it apart from the main trends of previous Greek historiography under the principate[7]. Previous Greek historical writers concerned with imperial Rome composed universal histories[8], or primarily military histories of one or more campaigns[9], or biographies[10]. Although we must always beware of equating the classical authors we know about with the totality of ancient literary production[11], a history of a defined period of recent Roman history by a Greek appears novel[12]. If so, while not

[4] C. R. WHITTAKER, Herodian, vol. I (London/Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 2, n. 2. The two volumes (vol. II, 1970) hereafter cited as WHITTAKER I and II.

[5] C. B. R. PELLING, Truth and Fiction in Plutarch's Lives, in: D. A. RUSSELL (ed.), Antonine Literature (Oxford, 1990), 30–32.

[6] Thuc. 1. 20–23; F. J. STEIN, Dexippus et Herodianus rerum scriptores quatenus Thucydidem secuti sint (Diss. Bonn, 1957), 77–89; BOWERSOCK, 229, n. 1. It is quite probable that Herodian only knew Thucydides' text via excerpts or the schools.

[7] E. L. BOWIE, Greeks and their Past in the Second Sophistic, Past and Present 46 (1970), 3–41, repr. in: M. I. FINLEY (ed.), Studies in Ancient Society (London, 1974), 166–209, at 181.

[8] For example Cassius Dio's 'Roman History', or Asinius Quadratus' 'Thousand Years' (FGH 97).

[9] For example Arrian's 'Parthica' or those historians of Verus' campaigns mocked by Lucian in 'How to write History'.

[10] The obvious example being Plutarch's 'Lives of the Caesars'.

[11] F. CASSOLA, Erodiano e le sue fonti, Rend. dell'Accad. di Arch., Lett., e belle arti di Napoli 32 (1957), 165 (hereafter cited as CASSOLA, fonti).

[12] Possibly in this light some of Herodian's criticisms come into sharper focus: those who dwell on antiquity (1.1.1) might chiefly be the universal historians, those who exalt the trivial (1.1.2) both military historians and biographers (cf. 2.15.6–7), those who write to honour cities (1.1.2) the local historians, and those who do the same for private individ-

inhibiting other types of Greek history of Rome[13], Herodian may have introduced a new and viable sub-genre[14] to the flourishing Greek historiography of the third century[15].

'A conventional *topos* ultimately deriving from Thucydides' is a valid reading of Herodian's *prooemium*, but is it the only one? A close reading of a text's use of a *topos* can reveal much about the text as a whole. It is argued below (section V) that in the main body of Herodian's text, and especially in the speeches, a high level of irony can be discerned. An alternative (and more complex) reading of the *prooemium* can be made if some intellectual playfulness, or irony, or just intent is allowed (or even admitted as a possibility) to the text.

At first glance the *prooemium* creates a clear dichotomy. But as the reader advances through the text the dichotomy soon blurs. Herodian does most of the things which he condemns in 'most' historians[16]. He takes care with style and vocabulary (if not always to great effect)[17], includes antiquarian and mythologizing digressions[18], and writes of kings and tyrants[19]; leaving aside for the moment the more contentious issue of his playing with historical truth[20]. In fact the dichotomy seems to be undermined as it is being created.

Herodian's text hints that it will not be all that different from the texts of 'most' historians. 'Some' historians write of kings and tyrants, and do so to praise

uals may be a hint at Philostratus who in 'The Lives of the Sophists' can be interpreted as attempting to create a new kind of contemporary Greek history, BOWIE, op. cit. (n. 7), 182.

13 Histories of wars, e.g. Dexippus' 'Skythika' (FGH 100 Fr.s 6–7), imperial biographies, e.g. Ephorus 'the younger' on Gallienus in 27 books (FGH 212), and universal histories, e.g. Porphyry's history from the fall of Troy to Claudius II (FGH 260), all continue.

14 Nicostratus in his history from Philip the Arab to Valerian and Odaenathus (FGH 98) may be a follower, or even a continuator, of Herodian; although Herodian's date may be as late as the 260s, H. SIDEBOTTOM, The Date of the Composition of Herodian's History, L'Antiquité Classique 65 (forthcoming). Eusebius' history from Octavian to Carus (FGH 101) does not fit neatly into any category.

15 See T. D. BARNES, The lost *Kaisergeschichte* and the Latin Historical tradition, Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1968/9 (Bonn, 1970), 13–43, on the contrasting paucity of third century historical writings in Latin.

16 As noted by ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 447.

17 For example the use of the Atticizing τὸ ἀβροδίαιτον of 2.7.1, on which see WHITTAKER I, 181, n. 4. A comprehensive analysis of Herodian's language and style is badly needed to supersede the few lines of E. NORDEN, Die antike Kunstprosa, 4th ed., I (Leipzig–Berlin, 1923), 397, n. 4, and the more prolix offering of K. FUCHS, Beiträge zur Kritik der ersten drei Bücher Herodians, Wiener Studien 17 (1895), 244–251. Such an analysis coupled with one of Heliodorus' 'Aethiopika' might do much to illuminate the discussion on the date of the latter: on which see recently C. S. LIGHTFOOT, Fact and Fiction – the third seige of Nisibis (AD 350), Historia 38 (1988), 116–119, who inclines to a date in the third century. This is not considered conclusive by E. L. BOWIE and S. J. HARRISON, The Romance of the Novel, Journal of Roman Studies 83 (1993), 160.

18 For example, 1.11.1–5. On this generally see Z. RUBIN, Civil-War Propaganda and Historiography, Coll. Latomus 173 (Brussels, 1980), 223–224.

19 On Herodian's political terminology see W. WIDMER, Kaisertum, Rom und Welt in Herodians META MARKON BAΣIΛEIAΣ IΣTORIA (Zurich, 1967), 11–14.

20 See below, section V.

or condemn – usually good motives, if they do not, as they do here, lead to inflation of the trivial and praise does not slide into flattery[21]. Herodian says that he also will write of kings and tyrants, and his failure to provide an explicit motive for so doing leaves open the possible inference (which is indeed a correct one) that he has similar motives (to praise and condemn, but without flattery or the elevation of the trivial)[22]. 'Most' historians aim to give pleasure (1.1.1). So does Herodian (1.1.3); although Herodian's text says it evokes pleasure by the accuracy of its narration of important events, whereas the others' texts do so by mythologizing. 'Most' historians write to win a reputation for *paideia* (1.1.1). Herodian also implicitly claims *paideia.* To write a history at all, let alone one which opens in Thucydidean language and sentiments[23], is an implicit claim to *paideia.* To put oneself in a position to judge the *paideia* of others is to claim *paideia* (1.1.1). The certainty that future generations will read one's history is yet another implicit claim to *paideia* (1.1.3). The paradoxical strategy of claiming *paideia* by seeming to disavow it was well known in the Second Sophistic[24]. Herodian's *prooemium* thus appears as a text which partly subverts itself.

If any of the above is given credence, a more complex and more interesting reading of Herodian's *prooemium* becomes available. Herodian's *prooemium* implies that the narrative which follows will be better than those of most historians (it will be of great events told accurately and without bias after sound research), and it will be different in that it covers an unusual time scale. Yet it will not be of a totally different nature (the blurring of the dichotomy). It will not be much like Thucydides (Herodian changes the 'great events over a long time' of Thucydides to 'great events compressed into a short time')[25]. Instead,

[21] 1.1.2. See A. J. WOODMAN, Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies (London/Sydney, 1988), 40–44, on the respectability, indeed centrality, of praise and blame as motives for ancient historiography, and the thin line between praise and flattery.

[22] 1.1.4. Herodian's stress on ἀλήθεια, 1.1.1; 2, implies that his praise will be free of flattery, and the stress on the importance of the events he narrates (1.1.3) may preclude the suspicion that he too will deal in trivia. At 2.15.7 Herodian explicitly denies that he exaggerates to flatter – although he claims to have lived through the times he narrates (1.2.5; 2.15.7), he is not writing under the rulers he describes and thus in the ancient view is not really liable to bias, cf. T. J. LUCE, Ancient views on the causes of bias in historical writing, Classical Philology 84 (1989) 16–31.

[23] Above, n. 6.

[24] It was *de rigeur* for a philosopher; see H. SIDEBOTTOM, Studies in Dio Chrysostom On Kingship (Diss. Oxford, 1990), 16. The strategy fits well with the partly self-deprecating tone of Herodian's *prooemium.* Herodian does not follow a Thucydidean or Herodotean model and start with 'Herodian of X...': which would have spared us much debate on his origins (see the rightly sceptical overview of the modern debate by F. GASCÓ LA CALLE, La Patria di Herodiano, Habis 13 [1982], 165–170). Instead Herodian starts with οἱ πλεῖστοι, and it is not until 1.1.3 that we reach ἐγώ. Again, at 1.1.1 most historians aim to give ἡδὺ, while at 1.1.3 Herodian merely talks of his work being οὐκ ἀτερπῆ.

[25] Thuc. 1.23; cf. H. 1.1.3. The example of Polybius (3.1.9–10; cf. 1.1.5), of course, was available to Herodian for this change (see below, n. 51, for a possible example of Herodian using Polybius). It can not be said that Herodian uses his Thucydidean model without thought. He not only alters (in Thucydides cities are captured by Greeks and barbarians, in Herodian the cities are 'ours' or barbarian – for nowhere in his narrative is a city

it will be a fast moving story of kings and tyrants, and great events. It will be colourful, paradoxical, and inspire wonder[26], and, based on true *paideia*, it will evoke pleasure in its audience. A possible reading thus exists (and existed) in which Herodian's *prooemium* is more than an unthinking echo of Thucydides inappositely tacked onto the front of a narrative with which it had little contact.

II. Problems with Intertextuality

Quellenforschung dominates modern studies of Herodian, and the source study is, unsurprisingly, dominated by Cassius Dio. Every possible theory of intertextuality has been advanced[27]; Herodian did not know Dio[28], Herodian and Dio used the same source (and thus Herodian was not drawing on Dio)[29], Herodian knew Dio's work but preferred to use another source[30], and Herodian used Dio as one source among others[31]. F. KOLB in his important monograph 'Literarische Beziehungen zwischen Cassius Dio, Herodian und der Historia Augusta' argued with great ingenuity that Cassius Dio was the *Hauptquelle* of Herodian[32]. KOLB's thesis has been advanced or followed by

captured by barbarians), but also suppresses those items which do not fit his text (resettlement of cities, exiles, eclipses, drought and famine), while adding others which do (succession of reigns, provincial disturbance, kings and tyrants).

[26] Ποικίλας ... παραδόξους ... Θαύματος 1.1.4–5.

[27] No one has yet argued that Dio follows Herodian. Despite relative uncertainty over the dates of composition of the two texts Dio's *cursus* makes this at least impossible. For various arguments on the dates of Dio's history see M. M. EISMAN, Dio and Josephus: parallel analyses, Latomus 36 (1977), 657–673; C. LETTA, La composizione dell'opera di Cassio Dione: cronologia e sfondo storico-politico, in: E. GABBA (ed.), Ricerche di storiografia antica I. Ricerche di storiografia greca di età romana (Pisa, 1979), 117–189; T. D. BARNES, The Composition of Cassius Dio's Roman History; Phoenix 38 (1984), 240–255; all of which are in response to the seminal work of F. MILLAR, A Study of Cassius Dio (Oxford, 1964), 28–32; 193–194. For uncertainty on the date of Herodian's composition see above, n. 14.

[28] E. HOHL, Die Ermordung des Commodus. Ein Beitrag zur Beurteilung Herodians, Philologische Wochenschrift 52 (1932), 191–200.

[29] E. BAAZ, De Herodiani fontibus et auctoritate (Diss. Berlin, 1909), 15–62; cf. recently A. M. GONZÁLEZ-COBOS and L. GONZÁLEZ-COBOS, Fuentes de Herodiano, SZ (hist.) 7 (1986), 367–381, which I have been unable to consult.

[30] J. C. P. SMITS, Die vita Commodi und Cassius Dio. Eine quellenanalytische Untersuchung (Leiden, 1914), 29–31; see also ID., De Fontibus e quibus res ab Heliogabalo et Alexandro Severo gestae colliguntur (Diss. Amsterdam, 1908); and ID., De geschiedschrijver Herodianus en zijn bronnen. Een poging tot analyse van zijn werk (Leiden, 1913), neither of which I have been able to consult.

[31] CASSOLA, fonti, 165–172; WHITTAKER I, lxi–lxxi; T. D. BARNES, The Sources of the Historia Augusta, Coll. Latomus 155 (Brussels, 1978), 84–85.

[32] (Bonn, 1972), hereafter cited as KOLB. The thesis of KOLB followed the lead of A. G. ROOS, Herodian's method of composition, Journal of Roman Studies 5 (1915), 191–202.

several scholars[33], but rejected by others[34]. T. D. BARNES in an influential review attacked the methodological basis of KOLB's arguments[35]. This has led some scholars to reject any use of Dio by Herodian[36].

A theory that both Herodian and Dio regularly copy a lost original source cannot be seriously entertained. Dio tells us he spent ten years collecting his information and a further twelve writing it up[37]. That he should when researching contemporary history, in which he had held prominent positions, change his whole technique and fall back on copying one book appears highly unlikely[38].

A view that Herodian did not know of Dio's work seems equally untenable. Dio wrote works on the dreams and portents which foreshadowed Septimius Severus' rise to the throne and on Severus' wars, both of which he sent to Severus before incorporating them into his 'Roman history' (73.23.1–4). Herodian attacked the "many historians and poets" who, exaggerating to flatter, had made the life of Severus their entire theme, going into great, and in Herodian's view unnecessary, detail about his campaigns and the supposed manifestations of the divine. It seems wilfully perverse not to read the latter as a sly attack on the former[39].

In appears certain that Herodian both knew and, at least on occasion, used Dio's work. A couple of examples will suffice. Herodian (4.8.6) and Dio

[33] G. ALFÖLDY, Bellum Desertorum, Bonner Jahrbücher 171 (1971), 367–376, repr. in: ID., Die Krise des Römischen Reiches (Stuttgart, 1989), 69–78, with *addenda* at 79–80 (hereafter cited as ALFÖLDY, Bellum with the original pagination); ID., Cassius Dio und Herodian über die Anfänge des Neupersischen Reiches, Rheinisches Museum für Philologie 114 (1971), 360–366, also reprinted in Die Krise, 229–235, with *addenda* at 235–237; ID., Cleanders Sturz, 81–126; A. R. BIRLEY, Review of KOLB in: Journal of Roman Studies 64 (1974), 266–268; ID., op. cit. (n. 2), 204–205 (with some reservations expressed); E. KETTENHOFEN, Die Syrischen Augustae in der historischen Überlieferung. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Orientalisierung, Antiquitas 3.24 (Bonn, 1979), 21; MARTINELLI, 343–356; SCHEITHAUER, 335–356.

[34] BOWERSOCK, 229–236; ID., op. cit. (n. 2), 710–713; F. GASCÓ, Las fuentes de la Historia de Herodiano, Emerita 52 (1984), 355–360; ŠAŠEL-KOS, op. cit. (n. 2), 286–292.

[35] Gnomon 47 (1975), 368–373.

[36] RUBIN, op. cit. (n. 18), 89–90; D. S. POTTER, Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire. A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle (Oxford, 1990), 371, n. 4. They seem to go further than BARNES, whose review, while attacking the methodology of KOLB, does not, as far as I can see, explicitly deny any use of Dio by Herodian.

[37] 73.23.5, in the numbering of the Loeb edition of E. CARY (1914–1927) which is used in this article for convenience. The books of contemporary history are numbered one higher than in the edition of U. P. BOISSEVAIN (3 vols., 1895–1901), whose reference here, for example, is 72.23.5.

[38] It is possible that Dio could have turned to a book, which Herodian was to use as a source, to refresh or fill gaps in his memory, thus CASSOLA, fonti, 170. Possible, but entirely lacking in proof.

[39] Cf. ŠAŠEL-KOS, op. cit. (n. 2), 290–292. It could be objected that Herodian's attack is specifically only on those who made Severus' life the entire theme of their work, and thus Herodian is only attacking Dio's two early works. But they were incorporated into the 'Roman History' with the extant explanation, and other evidence (see below) supports the position taken in the text.

(78.22.1) both give Caracalla's reasons for visiting Alexandria. Herodian says that Caracalla's excuse was that he longed to see the city founded in honour of Alexander and to sacrifice to the God worshipped there. Then, rather than (as we would expect) giving us the real reason (in a phrase with δέ to answer the above μέν), he repeats himself: two reasons, to worship the God and to worship the hero. Dio says Caracalla went to Alexandria concealing his anger (at the Alexandrians' ridicule of him) pretending that he longed to see them. Not only is there a verbal parallel, but Dio's "concealing his anger" provides the antithesis for the unanswered μέν phrase in Herodian. Herodian is thus following Dio, but both failing to include the real reason for the visit and adding extra detail, which he could have extrapolated from what follows in Dio (the Alexandrian sacred symbols of 78.22.2), transposed from another book of Dio (Augustus' pretexts for mildness to Alexandria at 51.16.4), based on genuine information, or invented on the grounds of plausibility[40].

Even where close verbal parallels are lacking it is at times hard to believe that Herodian's text has not been influenced by that of Dio. Herodian and Dio give similar accounts of Commodus' appearance in the amphitheatre in AD 192, at which both claim to be present[41]. It flies in the face of modern studies which show the unreliability and incompatibility of eye witness accounts[42] to believe that two independent witnesses to a series of complex events spread over 14 days should, when writing them up several decades later[43], produce such broadly similar accounts, even selecting some of the same points of detail with only minor variations[44].

It appears certain that Herodian knew and at times used Dio's work, but can it be proved that Dio's work was the *Hauptquelle* of Herodian? When examined the arguments which support the *Hauptquelle* theory appear to rest on the non-existence of certain material, and to be completely circular[45]. If Herodian and Cassius Dio are similar, then Herodian follows Cassius Dio[46]. If

[40] For slightly different analyses of these passages see KOLB, 99; and WHITTAKER I, lxvii–lxviii; 419, n. 4.

[41] CD 73.17.1–21.3; H. 1.15.1–8. Eyewitness claims at CD 73.21.1–2; H. 1.15.4. For an analysis of these passages see KOLB, 25–37.

[42] See WOODMAN, op. cit. (n. 21), 15–23. His survey (18–23) of the unreliability of eyewitness accounts in wartime is particularly evocative. Watching violent death may not have the same deleterious effect on memory as being in danger of becoming a participant (although CD 78.20.2–21.2 claims the audience did have just that fear), but the games were a large, noisy, and confusing variety of spectacles drawn out over two weeks.

[43] See above, n. 27, for references to modern studies of Dio's date of composition. Herodian, whose date is uncertain (above, n. 14), was writing at the earliest some fifty years after these events.

[44] Same details: Commodus killing dangerous animals from a raised platform and the non-dangerous from the ground (CD 78.18.1; 19.1; H. 1.15.2–3), the killing of one hundred of one species of dangerous animal (CD 78.18.1 [bears]; H. 1.15.6 [lions]), the decapitation of ostriches (CD 78.21.1–2 [with a sword]; H. 1.15.5 [with a special arrow]).

[45] For what follows cf. BARNES, op. cit. (n. 35), 368–373.

[46] This appears sound if there are close verbal parallels and/or a significant number of the same details (which beg the questions how to define 'close' and 'significant number'),

Herodian and Dio differ when telling of the same events, Herodian is again shown to be following Dio: in this case altering Dio by suppressing elements Herodian is not interested in (e.g. the Senate, or sex), expanding elements he is interested in (e.g. religion), changing details[47], transposing elements from other contexts in Dio[48], or adding elements of pure invention[49]. If Herodian

although the possibilities should be kept in mind of either a third source which both follow (above, n. 38), or of both being influenced by a concept of common currency in third century Greek culture: e.g. the idea that Sassanid Persia claimed all the territory once ruled by the Achaemenids, see POTTER, op. cit. (n. 36), 370–380; refuting ALFÖLDY, op. cit. (n. 33), 360–366; cf. E. KETTENHOFEN, Die Einforderung des Achämenidenerbes durch Ardasir: Eine Interpretatio Romana, Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica 15 (1984), 177–190.

47 At times this may well be caused by Herodian's desire to disguise his dependence on Dio, for example Commodus' games AD 192 (above, n. 44). But in other cases Herodian seems to be consciously correcting Dio (although if on grounds of genuine information, or Herodian's view of historial plausibility is debatable), for example the reaction to Severus' entry into Rome (H. 2.14.1–4; cf. CD 75.1.3–2.1), Niger's attempted flight (H. 3.4.6; cf. CD 75.8.3), and Severus' actions at Lugdunum (H. 3.7.3; cf. CD 76.6.6–7) – possibly it is important that these examples all concern sections in Dio's 'Roman History' which derive from his earlier work on Severus' wars.

48 The best known example is the story of 'the small boy, the writing tablet, and the death of the emperor'. Herodian (1.17.1–7) is said to have found this in Dio ([Xiph.] 67.15.3–4) about Domitian and transposed it to the death of Commodus: thus ROOS, op. cit. (n. 32), 192–195; KOLB, 38–47; cf. MARTINELLI, 343–356. It is possible, but other views can be held. That a mistake was made not by Herodian, but by one of his sources was one of the views suggested by HOHL, op. cit. (n. 28), 191–200; ID., Kaiser Commodus und Herodian, Sitzungsberichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften I (Berlin, 1954), 3–46. That the story, which was not in Dio, was found in Herodian by Xiphilinus who transposed it to Domitian in his épitome of Dio was advanced by CASSOLA, Sull'attendibilità dello storico Erodiano, 195–198. BARNES, op. cit. (n. 35), 368–373, considered that the story ("surely apocryphal") first circulated about Commodus, and was later transfered (by Dio?) to Domitian. J. GAGÉ, L'assassinat de Commode et les sortes Herculis, Revue de Études Latines 46 (1968), 280–303, believed that a small boy depicted on a relief from Ostia proved the existence of Philocommodus and the truth of Herodian's account. Other supposed transpositions are even less convincing. That Herodian (5.3.6; 5.5.3–4; 5.5.10) would need to turn to a passage or passages of Dio (73.17.3 [79.3.2–3; 80.11.2]) to draw a picture of an effeminate easterner wearing a long-sleeved tunic (thus SCHEITHAUER, 351–352) is very inprobable (see below, n. 57).

49 With no third source to act as a check, the identification of elements in Herodian as fiction is uncertain. For example, the philosopher who denounces Perennis to Commodus in the theatre (1.9.2–5) is dismissed as "a romantic yarn ... probably complete fiction" by BIRLEY, op. cit. (n. 2), 74, n. 16, following HOHL, op. cit. (n. 48), 16–17. Although the scene of the philosopher before the ruler was an often favoured one for fiction, SIDEBOTTOM, op. cit. (n. 24), 327, a summary dismissal of Herodian's story seems unsafe. Herodian nowhere else creates fiction around the role of the philosopher (with the partial exception of 5.2.3–4), and neither the setting nor the behaviour of the, probably Cynic, philosopher is unprecedented or implausible, cf. CD 65.15.5 (a follower of the *Hauptquelle* theory could, of course, use this passage to show Herodian transposing and altering a passage of Dio). In fact Herodian's story of the fall of Perennis, caused by "certain soldiers" from the Illyrian army (1.9.7), appears *a priori* more plausible than Dio's (73.9.2–3) 1,500 soldiers marching from Britain on their own initiative: witness the

contains material which is not in the extant text of Dio at all, Herodian is still shown to be following Dio. In such a case the bits of Herodian the modern scholar finds plausible were in Dio but are now lost, while the bits which are not considered to ring true are either transposed (and much altered) from other sections of Dio or are free invention[50]. Thus any passage which seems to show Herodian's text independent of Dio can be forced into line with the *Hauptquelle* theory.

One example will suffice. Dio (79.26.4–8) and Herodian (4.15.1–5) give accounts of Macrinus' battle with the Parthians. In Dio (here the original text, although with *lacunae*) the battle is brought about by a fight over a water hole. The Romans nearly lose their camp, which is saved by the actions of the camp servants. The unexpectedness of the servants' attack convinces the Parthians that they are faced with soldiers (79.26.5–6). The concluding three sections are full of *lacunae*, in which the words "night" (της νυκ ...) and "the enemy, the noise" (το καὶ οἱ πολέμιοι τὸν θόρυβον) appear (79.26.6–7). The battle narrative concludes that overcome by numbers and the flight of Macrinus they (the Romans) were conquered (79.26.7–8).

Herodian's account is very different. At sunrise the Parthians hail the sun, then, with barbarian noises, charge. The Roman dispositions are orderly: cavalry and Moors on the wings, light troops in gaps in the centre (4.15.1). The barbarians caused casualties at the longer ranges, by archery or downward thrusts of the long spears of their cataphracts, both cavalry and camelry, but the Romans have the better of the hand-to-hand fighting (4.15.2). If overpressed by the size of the horses or the numbers of the camels, the Romans feign retreat, throwing down caltrops which unseat the cataphracts, causing especial harm to the soft pads of the camels. The unhorsed barbarians put up no further fight, because they only fight bravely when mounted, and cannot flee on foot because of their loose clothing (4.15.2–3). The battle continued for two days, each night both sides retired to camp thinking they had won. On the third day the barbarians attempted to use their superior numbers to encircle the Romans, who, however, responded by extending their line by thinning the depths of their units (4.15.4). Now the mounds of dead men and animals prevented both movement and sight across the battlefield, and so both sides retired to camp (4.15.5).

attempt by BIRLEY, 74, to improve the plausibility of Dio's account by suggesting the 1,500 were already in Gaul. P. A. BRUNT, The Fall of Perennis: Dio-Xiphilinus 72.9.2, Classical Quarterly 23 (1973), 172–177, thinks that, while certainty is unattainable, both accounts may contain an element of truth; see also ŠAŠEL-KOS, op. cit. (n. 2), 342–352.

[50] ALFÖLDY, Bellum, 367–376 provides a clear example of such argumentation on the deserter Maternus (1.10.1–7). As Maternus is a plausible name for a man from the northern provinces, Herodian found him in a lost section of Dio. As a 'deserters' revolt' encompassing Gaul and Spain seems implausible, this is invention, based on events in Germany which Herodian found in the lost section of Dio (AE [1956], 90, dated AD 186, attests troubles in Germany). As a descent into Italy by the deserters seems implausible, this is Herodian transposing and altering the 1,500 soldiers who in Dio (73.9.2–3), march into Italy to overthrow Perennis.

There are only two possible points of contact between the two accounts: the night and the noise in, as fate has it, the damaged section of Dio. Leaving aside the historicity of the accounts[51], Herodian's account appears independent of that of Dio and, as it is far fuller and more detailed than his normal 'formulaic' battle narrative (see below, section V), possibly based on some other source than merely free invention. But with the argumentation used by the *Hauptquelle* theory even these passages could 'show' Herodian dependent on Dio. Picking up on the two details obscured in the *lacunae*, it could be argued that Herodian found some of his details in the lost section of Dio. The objection that the whole *lacunae* are too short for all Herodian's details, most of which anyway are incompatible with what we have of Dio, could be countered with the argument that Herodian has taken some details from the lost section of Dio and expanded and altered them by transposing details from another battle in Dio, now also lost, and/or free invention, probably drawing on a classical model (in this case, Polybius, see above n. 51). Once again, unpromising material could be used to 'prove' that Dio was Herodian's *Hauptquelle*.

The *Hauptquelle* theory relies on the paucity of our sources. In specific instances it invokes sections of Dio lost either in épitome or in *lacunae*. Generally it rests on the unavailability of a third source to act as a check and control on the intertextuality between Dio and Herodian[52]. It is also completely circular: first the similarities, then the differences 'show' Herodian following Dio[53]. It goes beyond the boundaries of accepted academic discourse, being no longer susceptible to proof or refutation. Which is not, of course, to say its conclusion may not be correct. But certain factors create doubt.

[51] There seems little to choose in the plausibility of the two, unless one starts with the presupposition that 'Cassius Dio is a better historian than Herodian, therefore when they differ, and no third source is available, Cassius Dio is always correct'. Several elements in common (the Roman heavy infantry deploying interspersed with light infantry and flanked by north African cavalry, wild barbarian noises, the Romans extending their line by thinning its depth, and the piles of corpses impeding movement) suggests that Herodian to some extent copied Polybius' description of the battle of Zama (15.9–14). Yet this is not enough to undermine the historicity of Herodian's account. The writing of battle narratives is always difficult, and always depends on some kind of model; J. KEEGAN, The Face of Battle. A Study of Agincourt. Waterloo and the Somme (London, 1976), esp. 35–45; 61–77; see below, section V, for Herodian's normal 'formulaic' battle narrative. WHITTAKER I, 464, n. 1, seems to go too far in calling this a "fantastic battle". It is hard to see which elements he regards as fantastic. Several battles in antiquity lasted for two or more days: for example Asculum (Plutarch, Pyrrhus 21; but cf. Diod. Sic. 20.1–3) and Ilipa (Polybius 11.20–24; Livy 28.12–16). The dead and wounded did impede movement in ancient and medieval battles (KEEGAN, op. cit. 100–101). While piles of corpses high enough to prevent all movement and vision are an impossibility, they are a frequent embellishment to accounts of non-fantastic battles (ID., 106–107).

[52] Among various Greek sources known to have existed, but no longer extant, which could have filled this role were Septimius Severus' 'autobiography' (quite possibly in Greek, *contra* RUBIN, op. cit. [n. 18], 26, n. 29), Aelius Antipater's 'Life of Severus' (Phil. VS 2.24 [607]), Aelian's 'Indictment of Gynnis' (Phil. VS 2.3.1 [625]), and (possibly) Quadratus' 'Thousand Years' (FGH 97).

[53] Cf. BARNES, op. cit. (n. 35), 372–373.

Herodian claims to know sources other than Dio: the speeches and writings of Marcus Aurelius (1.2.3), the many wise men who have written of the deeds and character of Marcus (1.2.5), the autobiography of Septimius Severus (2.9.4), the many historians and poets who, exaggerating to flatter, made the life of Severus their theme (2.15.6–7), and the contemporary writers who gave an unbiased report of the battle of Lugdunum (3.7.3), leaving aside the many statements introduced with an expression such as 'it is said'[54]. Herodian could be less than honest and might be indulging in a spurious multiplication of his authorities. We have already seen that the reference to the many historians and poets who wrote on Severus is probably a covert attack on Dio. Again, the extant writings of Marcus leave no trace in Herodian[55]. Yet as we lack a single verifiable phrase of Severus' autobiography, it seems unsafe to assert that it had not been consulted by Herodian. All students of Herodian have perforce studied the 'Augustan History'. We should be aware of the danger that study of the most mendacious author surviving from antiquity encourages a climate of suspicion, which induces us to dismiss all of Herodian's citations of sources as fraudulent (cf. below, section V).

Herodian can be seen using sources other than Dio, interestingly among them artistic sources. Herodian appears to have constructed his narrative of Maximinus' war with the Germans (7.2.1–8) from huge pictures the emperor ordered to be set up in front of the Senate House[56]. He describes (5.5.6–7) the enormous picture sent by Elagabalus from Nicomedia to Rome to hang in the Senate House[57]. An equestrian statue of Severus is described (2.9.6). Herodian places this statue where in fact the triumphal arch of Septimus Severus stood[58]. It has been argued that Herodian derived his account of Severus' Parthian war from viewing this same arch, albeit with a confused reading of the monu-

[54] Expressions such as λέγουσι, or φασί, are listed by WHITTAKER I, lxiii, where 6.6.9 should read 6.9.6. These 'sources' could be oral or literary, or may not exist: it may mean no more than 'this is the sort of thing people say'. Where Herodian indicates more than one source, it need not mean exactly that. Likewise, where he provides more than one explanation it does not prove more than one source. Yet some of these statements probably come from literary sources: for example, the antiquarian information. BAAZ, op. cit. (n. 29), 11–15, argued that all the antiquarian information came from the non-extant Verrius Flaccus. This idea was justly criticised by WHITTAKER I, lxii, but has recently been resuscitated by GONZÁLEZ-COBOS and GONZÁLEZ-COBOS, op. cit. (n. 29), 367–381. On this see also RUBIN, op. cit. (n. 18), 223–224.

[55] The attempt by J. ZÜRCHER, Commodus. Ein Beitrag zur Kritik der Historien Herodians, in: M. BÜDINGER (ed.), Untersuchungen zur Römischen Kaisergeschichte, vol. I (Leipzig, 1868), 230–231, to detect traces of Marcus 'Meditations' in Herodian has not convinced; WHITTAKER I, lxiv, n. 1.

[56] 7.2.8; WHITTAKER II, 166, n. 1.

[57] That Herodian may be inaccurate in his description of the picture's resting place within the senate (KOLB, 11, n. 76) does not invalidate the existence of the picture itself (cf. BOWERSOCK, 234). See above, n. 48, on the theory that Herodian created his description of Elagabalus' costume by transposing a section of Dio on Commodus.

[58] WHITTAKER I, 200, n. 1.

ment[59]. Bearing in mind the flourishing genre of Ecphrasis in the Second Sophistic[60], it may be that Herodian's descriptions of such artefacts are based on the descriptions of others: who are unlikely (in one case above impossible) to have included Dio.

Herodian used literary sources other than Dio. We have already seen Herodian drawing on Thucydides for his introduction, and Polybius for his account of Macrinus' battle with the Parthians[61]. That Xenophon's 'Cyropaedia' provided a model for Herodian's deathbed speech of Marcus has long been noted, and so on[62]. Some or all of these classical texts might have been mediated to Herodian by others. But it is extremely unlikely that the mediator was always Cassius Dio.

Herodian can occasionally be seen to possess information which is both true and authentic, and does not derive from Dio. For example, Herodian (5.3.3) gives the original names of the emperors Elagabalus and Severus Alexander: Bassianus and Alexianus respectively. Dio (79.30.2–3), however, calls Elagabalus Varius Avitus and Alexander Gessius Bassianus. BOWERSOCK (231–234) argued that Herodian's information was correct. Subsequently BIRLEY (op. cit. [n. 2] 221, no. 34; 224, no. 49) convincingly argued that both Herodian and Dio were correct, the boys were polyonymous: Varius Avitus Bassianus (Elagabalus) and Gessius Alexianus Bassianus (Alexander). As Dio is extant in the original here, Herodian is revealed to be in possession of genuine information which does not derive from Dio; although we cannot begin to tell from what source it was derived.

That no historical sources survive, apart from Dio, which Herodian could have used for the subject matter of his narrative has not inhibited modern scholars from identifying them. Z. RUBIN argued, with great ingenuity, that Herodian used three sources for Severus' wars against Niger and Albinus; a pro-Severus tract, a pro-Albinus tract, and first-hand information (including oral reports)[63]. Herodian, according to RUBIN, was fundamentally opposed to Severus and in favour of Niger. Thus all favourable mentions of Severus must come from a work of

[59] Z. RUBIN, Dio, Herodian, and Severus' Second Parthian War, Chiron 5 (1975), 419–441. On the arch and Herodian's account of the war now see G. M. KOEPPEL, Die historischen Reliefs der römischen Kaiserzeit, VII: Der Bogen des Septimius Severus, die Decennalienbasis und der Konstantinsbogen, Bonner Jahrbücher 190 (1990), 3–7; 9–32.

[60] D. P. FOWLER, Narrate and Describe: The Problem of Ekphrasis, Journal of Roman Studies 81 (1991), 25–35, offers a stimulating introduction to the theoretical problems of 'linearization' and 'non-linearization' raised by *ekphrasis*. In such terms, Herodian creating his narrative from descriptions of works of art, or works of art themselves was possibly attempting 'relinearization'.

[61] Above, section I on Thucydides; n. 51 on Polybius.

[62] NORDEN, op. cit. (n. 17), 397, n. 4; see also G. ALFÖLDY, Herodian über den Tod Mark Aurels, Latomus 32 (1973), 345–353, esp. 349–351, repr. in: ID., Die Krise des Römischen Reiches (Stuttgart, 1989), 14–22, with *addenda* at 22–24, hereafter cited with the original pagination; and J. J. TORRES ESBARRANCH, Herodiano, Historia del Imperio romano después de Marco Aurelio (Madrid, 1985), 93, n. 26.

[63] Op. cit. (n. 18), 85–131; 215–234.

Severan propaganda, which Herodian attempts to obscure by rhetoric; although happy to mention any fact he can find favourable to Niger. When he reaches the war against Albinus, he finds information damaging to Severus, thus this must come from a work of propaganda on behalf of Albinus. RUBIN even tabulates which sections of Herodian come from which source[64].

Only a view which makes unacceptable presuppositions can credit the existence of RUBIN's hypothetical sources. That Herodian has some sections favourable and some hostile to both Severus and Niger indicates that he is using different sources, is the first presupposition. The second is that Herodian is incapable of extracting a fact from a source without extracting the bias that surrounds it[65]. The final presupposition is that anyone would have written tracts of pro-Albinus propaganda after the defeat and death of Albinus[66]. The true explanation of Herodian's varying depictions of Severus and Niger is not to be found in the bias of hypothetical sources, but in the highly rhetorical schemes, underpinned by *paideia*, by which Herodian constructs his history (below, section IV).

If the illusory *ignoti* of modern scholars do little to undermine the theory that Dio was the *Hauptquelle* of Herodian, the juxtaposition of two incontrovertible facts evokes more profound doubts. Dio's history stops with the early years of Severus Alexander. Herodian's history, in its present condition[67], continues until the accession of Gordian III. If Dio was in truth the *Hauptquelle* of Herodian we would expect to find a discernible difference in his history when Herodian had to change his entire working method. If Herodian was, as the modern orthodoxy has it[68], a *„kleiner Mann"*, if he was thrown back on his own memories when his authoritative consular guide failed him[69], we would expect the standard of his history to decline. But modern scholars find an improvement: "in terms of greater immediacy and more details"[70]. In which

[64] Op. cit. (n. 18), 130. But note RUBIN's caution: "an ultimate proof of this hypothesis is impossible" (106), and "like every hypothesis this one may be dismissed as pure guesswork" (119, my emphasis).

[65] Similar presuppositions underpin other chimerical sources for Herodian created by modern scholars: the two sources for book six of Herodian, one pro-Severus Alexander and one hostile of K. DÄNDLIKER, Die drei letzten Bücher Herodians, in: M. BÜDINGER (ed.), Untersuchungen zur Römischen Kaisergeschichte, vol. III (Leipzig, 1870), 205–229; or one anti-Alexander and one anti-Mamaea for R. V. N. HOPKINS, The Life of Alexander Severus (Cambridge, 1907), XII.

[66] There is no reason to postulate that the contemporary writers referred to at 3.7.3 were authors of pro-Albinus propaganda. There would be little point, and a great deal of danger, in writing pro-Albinus pamphlets about the battle in which Albinus was killed. Herodian in fact says they were unbiased.

[67] See below, section V, on the possibilities that Herodian's work is unfinished or that some is lost from the end of his text.

[68] See below, section VI, on Herodian's status and class outlook.

[69] ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 432.

[70] ŠAŠEL-KOS, op. cit. (n. 2), 300; cf. A. H. MCDONALD, in: OCD² s. v. Herodian (2): "value increases with contemporary knowledge". Herodian's account of AD 238 is judged accurate by K. DIETZ, Senatskaiser und ihre μοναρχίας ἐπιθυμία. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Jahres 238 n. Chr., Chiron 6 (1976), 381–425.

case possibly we should begin to look for a second *Hauptquelle* for Herodian?[71] In fact the striking thing about the last three books of Herodian is how little they differ from the first five[72].

'Immediacy' is not the best criterion to judge the historicity or the sources of an ancient historian's work. For the 'novelistic touches' which create the feeling of immediacy are freely invented by Herodian; a completely acceptable procedure in ancient historiography[73]. For what it is worth, the 'levels of immediacy' do not seem to differ in books six to eight from those in one to five. A good example of a scene with 'immediacy' in the last three books is that of the young men of Africa offering the throne to Gordian I (1.5.1–8): it is mid-day when they arrive at Gordian's house (1.5.2), they force their way past the guards in the outer courtyard to where Gordian is resting on a couch (1.5.3), Gordian, suspecting a plot on his life, throws himself off the couch to beg at their feet (1.5.4), and then the speech making starts. The 'levels of immediacy' appear little different from those in the scene, of which the above is intended as a conscious contrast, where Pertinax is offered the throne by Laetus and Eclectus (2.1.5–10): it is the dead of night when they arrive at Pertinax's house, the house is locked so they have to raise the watchman, who, recognizing the prefect, is trembling with fear when he announces their presence to Pertinax (2.1.5), but Pertinax tells them to come in, and, despite assuming a plot against his life, is so calm that he does not get up from the couch (where he had been sleeping) or change his expression (2.1.6), and then the speech making starts.

The last books of Herodian are said to be marked by an increase in detail. The personal names given in a work of history are a form of detail which can reveal much about the historian's methods[74], and are amenable to a quantitative analysis and tabulation.

If we leave aside the names of members of the imperial family, without whom it would have been difficult to construct any sort of history of the empire[75], the foreign monarchs who appear, sometimes muddled, when the narrative requires, and the historical and mythical *exempla*, and instead concentrate

[71] The source connected to the military postulated by WIDMER, op. cit. (n. 19), 66, could be pressed into service. WIDMER did not care to rule out the idea that Herodian's source for AD 238 was in Latin.

[72] It is argued below, section V, that Herodian continued to shape his material with the same narratological devices.

[73] For example, in the scene at Marcus' deathbed: Commodus standing, the hushed audience, Marcus raising himself up (1.4.1), Marcus fainting, some of the audience groaning aloud, and the pseudo-specific day and a night Marcus lingers (1.4.7) all create 'immediacy', and all are complete fiction because Marcus did not make a deathbed speech (above. n. 62).

[74] It was from his study of names in the 'Historia Augusta' for PIR that H. DESSAU, Über Zeit und Persönlichkeit der Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Hermes 24 (1889), 337–392, reached the conclusion that was to engender such controversy, and finally to become orthodoxy, R. SYME, Emperors and Biography (Oxford, 1971), 1.

[75] This procedure ignores a possible change in one of Herodian's methods, the crediting of dramatic roles to women, especially imperial princesses (see KETTENHOFEN, op. cit. [n. 33]). No women appear in books seven and eight. But it may be of no great significance: only one woman appears in book two and none in book three.

on the lesser figures from contemporary history, we can form a rough and ready guide to the amount of historical detail, and thus possibly research, Herodian put into each book of his history.

In his first book Herodian names eleven people who are not imperial, foreign royalty, or historical/mythical *exempla*. They are: Pompeianus, the marshal of Marcus, Perennis, the praetorian prefect, Quadratus and Quintianus, the conspirators, Maternus, the brigand leader, Cleander, the influential freedman, then three more conspirators, Marcia, mistress of Commodus, Laetus, the praetorian prefect, and Eclectus, the freedman, then the boy Philocommodus, and, finally, the athlete Narcissus[76].

In book two there are five non-royal contemporaries. The three conspirators reappear, Marcia, Laetus and Eclectus. The throne is offered to a senator called Glabrio, but another senator, Sulpicianus, fails to buy it at auction[77].

In book three there are four relevant characters: Niger's general Aemilianus, Severus' general Laetus, Severus' praetorian prefect Plautianus, and one Saturninus, despatched by Plautianus to kill the imperial family[78].

There are six non-royal contemporaries in book four: Plautianus reappears; a cousin of Caracalla's called Severus, an imperial freedman called Festus, the praetorian prefect Adventus, Caracalla's agent in Rome Maternianus, and Martialis who strikes down the emperor[79].

Only one relevant figure appears in book five: Macrinus' praetorian prefect Julianus[80].

Book six (during which Dio runs out) has not a single relevant person.

Book seven (the first book for which Herodian has nothing of Dio) has eight non-royal contemporaries. First, Magnus, a senator who plots against

[76] (Ti. Claudius) Pompeianus, 1.6.4 (only the first mention of each person in each book is noted); PIR^2 c 973. – (Sex. Tigidius) Perennis, called Perennius by Herodian, 1.8.1; G. M. BERSANETTI, Perenne e Commode, Athenaeum 29 (1951), 151–170. – (Ummidius) Quadratus, 1.8.4; RE Suppl. 9 (Ummidius 8), 1832–1833; R. SYME, The Ummidii, Historia 17 (1968), 102–103, repr. in: R. SYME (E. BADIAN [ed.]), Roman Papers II (Oxford, 1979), 689–690. – (Claudius Pompeianus) Quintianus, 1.8.5; HOHL, op. cit. (n. 48), 15. – Maternus, 1.10.1; above, n. 50. – (M. Aurelius) Cleander, 1.12.3; ALFÖLDY, Cleanders Sturz, 81–126. – Marcia, 1.16.4; PIR^2 M 261. – Laetus, 1.16.4; A. R. BIRLEY, The coups d'état of the year 193, Bonner Jahrbücher 196 (1969), 252–253. – Eclectus, 1.16.4; PIR^2 E 3. – Philocommodus, 1.17.3; above. n. 48. – Narcissus, 1.17.11; CD 73.22.5; PIR^2 N 26.

[77] Laetus, Electus, and Marcia, 2.1.3; above, n. 76. – (M. Acilius) Glabrio, 2.3.3; PIR^2 A 69. – (Flavius) Sulpicianus, 2.6.8; PIR^2 F 373.

[78] (Asellius) Aemilianus, 3.2.3; BIRLEY, op. cit. (n. 76), 270. – (Julius) Laetus, 3.7.3; PIR^2 J 373; PIR^2 L 29. – (C. Fulvius) Plautianus, 3.10.6; BIRLEY, op. cit. (n. 2), 221, no. 32. – Saturninus, 3.11.4; cf. CD 77.3.2.

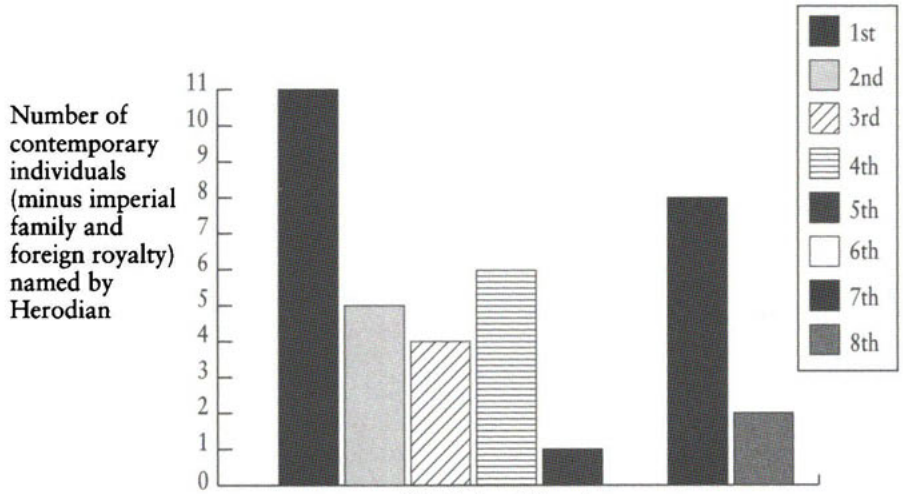
[79] Plautianus, 4.6.3; above, n. 78. – Severus, 4.6.3; probably L. Septimius Aper: on whom see BIRLEY, op. cit. (n. 2), 214, no. 14. – (Marcius) Festus, 4.8.4; CIL XIV 2638; PIR^2 M 234. – (M. Oclatinus) Adventus, 4.12.1; L. L. HOWE, The Praetorian Prefect from Commodus to Diocletian (Chicago, 1942), 73, no. 26. – (Flavius) Maternianus, 4.12.4; PIR^2 F. 317. – (Julius) Martialis, 4.13.1; WHITTAKER I, 447, n. 3; PIR^2 I 412.

[80] (Ulpius) Julianus, 5.4.3; HOWE, op. cit. (n. 79), 73.

Maximinus. Then another senatorial conspirator, Quartinus, this time reluctant, led on by one Macedo, who then betrays him. Maximinus' chief supporter in Rome, Vitalianus, is killed. Then so is the urban prefect Sabinus. Capellianus crushes the revolt in Africa. Finally, the senators Gallicanus and Maecenas strike down soldiers in Rome[81].

Finally, book eight has only two of the figures we are concerned with: the defenders of Aquileia, Crispinus and Menophilus[82].

The figures can be tabulated



[81] (C. Petronius) Magnus, 7.1.5; G. BARBIERI, L'Albo senatorio da Settimio Severo a Carino (Rome, 1952), 223–224, no. 1125; K. DIETZ, Senatus contra principem. Untersuchungen zur senatorischen Opposition gegen Kaiser Maximinus Thrax (Munich, 1980), 188, no. 56. – Quartinus, 7.1.9; probably Titus Quartinus, PIR² C 327; BARBIERI, op. cit., 226, no. 1144; J. A. CROOK, Consilium principis: Imperial councils and counsellors from Augustus to Diocletian (Cambridge, 1955), 181, no. 282; DIETZ, op. cit. 209, no. 73. – Macedo, 7.6.4; PIR² M 10; DIETZ, op. cit., 311. – Vitalianus, 7.6.4; possibly P. Aelius Vitalianus; AE (1957), 278; HOWE, op. cit. (n. 79), 77, no. 40; DIETZ, op. cit., 178; no. 484. – Sabinus, 7.7.4; a difficult figure to pin down, see F. CASSOLA, La morte del prefetto Sabino (238 d. c.), Atti dell'Accademia Pontaniana 6 (1956–7), 1–7; WHITTAKER II, 201, n. 3; DIETZ, op. cit., 227, no. 77. – Capellianus, 7.9.1; BARBIERI, op. cit., 200, no. 983; DIETZ, op. cit., 109–120, no. 18. – (L. Domitius) Gallicanus (Papinianus), 7.11.3; PIR² D 148; BARBIERI, op. cit., 206–207, no. 1016; DIETZ, op. cit., 140–143, no. 32; G. ALFÖLDY, Review of DIETZ, op. cit., in: Gnomon 54 (1982), 481–482. – Maecenas, 7.11.3; possibly P. Messius Augustinus Maecianus, WHITTAKER II, 235, n. 2; DIETZ, op. cit., 185–187, no. 53.

[82] (Rutilius Pudens) Crispinus, 8.2.5; BARBIERI, op. cit. (n. 81), 227–228, no. 1147; CROOK, op. cit. (n. 81), 182, no. 287a; DIETZ, op. cit. (n. 81), 210–226, no. 75. – (Tullius) Menophilus, 8.2.5; BARBIERI, op. cit. (n. 81), 216, no. 1071; DIETZ, op. cit. (n. 81), 233–245, no. 81.

It is obvious at a glance that there is no correlation between the availability of Dio's text and the number of named individuals (an easily tabulated type of detail) in Herodian's text.

It is precisely the lack of any significant change discernible in Herodian's history when Dio ends[83], which must cast some doubt on the theory that Herodian used Dio as his *Hauptquelle* for the first five and a bit books of his history.

Herodian claimed to have consulted various sources. He can be seen to have used contemporary art and classical literature to construct his narrative. That Herodian used Cassius Dio's history is incontrovertible. However, the modern theory that Dio was the *Hauptquelle* for the first five and a bit books of Herodian in the light of the current evidence and argumentation must remain unproven; and certain factors, above all the lack of any discernible change in Herodian's history when Dio's ends, evoke doubts about its validity.

III. Problems with Krisenbewußtsein

GÉZA ALFÖLDY, the most interesting modern commentator on Herodian, has advanced the theory that the key to Herodian's text is the perception of the third-century crisis it exhibits and its attempt to analyze the playing together of different factors which constituted the crisis[84]. At first glance it appears paradoxical that ALFÖLDY should credit Herodian, whom he thinks a very poor historian indeed (really a novelist who takes all the information in his first five and a bit books from Cassius Dio)[85], with such perception. But the paradox is only apparent, for ALFÖLDY considers that a perception that the Roman empire of the third century was undergoing a profound crisis was common among contemporaries: "not only did they record symptoms of that crisis with astonishing realism and without failing to note changes even in the social and economic structure, but they also recognized that a general transformation of the Empire was in progress"[86]. All this needs re-examination.

[83] One change that has been discerned is that Herodian tends to refer to the emperor as αὐτοκράτωρ in books seven and eight and as βασιλεύς in the previous books, BAAZ, op. cit. (n. 29), 12–14; cf. WIDMER, op. cit. (n. 19), 11–13. If this has any significance (which may be doubted), it would point away from Dio as Herodian's *Hauptquelle* for books one to six. In the last two books Herodian continued to shape his narrative by the same narratological devices he had employed in his earlier books, see below, section V.

[84] Zeitgeschichte, *passim*.

[85] See above, n. 33 for references.

[86] The Crisis of the Third Century as seen by Contemporaries, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 15 (1974), 89–111; repr. in: ID., Die Krise des Römischen Reiches (Stuttgart, 1989), 319–341, with *addenda* at 341–342, hereafter cited as ALFÖLDY, Crisis with the original pagination, quote in text at 109. See also ID., Der heilige Cyprian und die Krise des Römischen Reiches, Historia 22 (1973), 479–501, also reprinted in Die Krise, 295–317, with *addenda* at 317–318, hereafter cited as ALFÖLDY, Cyprian with the original pagination; and ID., Review of R. MACMULLEN, Roman Government's Response to

Many are the forces shaping the crisis which ALFÖLDY claims Herodian sees, but the most important lesson of contemporary history for Herodian is said to be the realization of the predominance of the Danubian military[87]. But to support this conclusion ALFÖLDY has to treat the evidence of Herodian's text in an extremely strange way. The speeches which an ancient historian puts into the mouths of characters in his text cannot be seen as a clear and undistorting window onto the opinions of the historian. Any ancient historian would try to make the speeches in his text appropriate to the speaker. When a historian wrote a pre-battle speech for a general to give to his army, we would expect the general to praise the courage, training and the like of his troops. Herodian writes speeches for Septimus Severus to make to the Danubian army before the wars against Julianus and Niger (2.10.2–9) and Albinus (3.6.1–7). It is precisely here that ALFÖLDY finds statements praising the 'unbeatable' Danubian army (2.10.5; 2.10.8; cf. 3.6.6). Such statements cannot be considered unambiguous evidence of Herodian's views. Yet when they are removed[88], there is little evidence left to support ALFÖLDY's argument, and some which contradicts it. In the narrative Niger's makeshift army is said to be inferior to Severus' Danubian force (3.4.1). In an authorial aside, Herodian says that the Pannonians have a good physique, but are slow witted (2.9.11). But, again in the editorial voice, Herodian says that "the bravery and bloodthirsty courage of the British are certainly not inferior to that of the Illyrians" (3.7.2, tr. WHITTAKER I, 299)[89]. In Herodian's narrative the Danubian army is losing the battle of Lugdunum until the intervention of Laetus (3.7.3–6), and the penultimate large event of the last book is the failure of the Danubian army to take the city of Aquileia (8.5.1–9). From all of which it seems far from clear that for Herodian the single most important lesson of contemporary history was the predominance of the Danubian military[90].

Crisis AD 235–337 (New Haven and London, 1976), in: Hispania Antigua 6 (1976), 341–346, again reprinted in Die Krise, 343–348, with *addenda* at 348, hereafter cited as ALFÖLDY, Response with the original pagination.

87 Zeitgeschichte, 439–440; 448; ID., Crisis, 100; ID., Herodians Person, Ancient Society 2 (1971), 204–233, at 215–216, repr. in: ID., Die Krise des Römischen Reiches (Stuttgart, 1989), 240–269, with *addenda* at 269–272, hereafter cited as ALFÖLDY, Person with the original pagination.

88 In a speech to the Praetorians Severus is made to praise the intelligence of the Pannonians, 2.13.5. This is an example of the irony often found in Herodian's speeches, see below, section V.

89 Other ethnic troops are praised: Moors, 3.3.4–5; 6.7.8; Numidians, 7.9.3.

90 That Herodian recognised the increasing power of the army as a whole in the third century (thus ALFÖLDY, Zeigeschichte, 439. ID., Crisis, 99–100) is not totally clear. Herodian does say that the death of Pertinax and the accession of Julianus was the first time the soldiers had been corrupted and the resulting indiscipline was to have grave results, 2.6.14. Yet the soldiers' discipline already appears undermined by the tyrant Commodus, 2.2.5, and is later said to be undermined, again for the first time, by Severus, 3.8.5. For Herodian the cause of this problem lay not in the third century, but with Augustus, who Herodian said (2.11.5) had forbidden Italians to carry arms (which is unhistorical) and had hired mercenaries instead. That the emphases on the 'first times' are to be read as a rhetorical strategy, not a genuine appreciation of the crisis, is argued below.

Herodian is said to be aware of the growing importance of the provinces, and the corresponding decline of Italy, in the third century[91]. Yet the ἐθνῶν κινήσεσιν which is invoked to support this turns out to be a feature of lists of events to boost the importance of Herodian's history[92], and refers to Greek inter-city rivalries, which are specifically said to be a long standing weakness of the Greeks, which first led to Macedonian domination[93].

The changing nature of the Roman monarchy is said to be recognized by Herodian; his terminology of ἀριστοκρατία and τυραννίς is seen as equivalent to the modern historians' principate and dominate[94]. But again the hard evidence for this is drawn from speeches. Pompeianus stressed to Commodus popularity, and having the senate with him (on which see below), as well as the army and money as the basis of the monarchy (1.6.6). Severus advising his sons omitted popularity and the senate (3.13.4)[95]. In his introduction Herodian makes it quite clear that he sees no change in the nature of the institution of monarchy since Augustus introduced it (1.1.4).

Herodian the clear observer of social change is also advanced[96]. For him the most meaningful change is said to be the decline into impotence of the senatorial order[97]. However, neither Severus insulting his patrician rival Albinus in a speech to the army (3.6.7), nor Macrinus justifying his actions, taking the throne when still an equestrian, in a letter to the senate (5.1.5–6) can be used to prove that Herodian realized that the senatorial order was in decline[98]. Herodian's text is generally hostile to rich patrician (eupatrid) senators. It is good that Marcus chose his sons-in-law from those of good character in the senate, not from the rich patricians (1.2.2). The *novus homo* Pertinax's poverty, despite his tenure of an extraordinary number of offices, both saved his life and enhanced his reputation (2.1.4). The moral failings of the rich patricians (rich and patrician appear nearly synonymous in Herodian) are exemplified in Herodian's depiction of Albinus. He was born a patrician, and brought up in wealth and luxury (2.15.1), which underlies his vanity and stupidity (2.15.3), as well as his indolence (3.7.1). That the patrician emperor Balbinus was less than intelligent (7.10.4), was proved by his fatal mistake (8.8.5). The rich ex-consular Julianus led an intemperate, drunken life as a private citizen (2.6.7),

[91] ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 440–441; ID., Crisis, 100.

[92] 1.1.4; 3.7.7 (6.3.2 is not in fact relevant).

[93] 3.2.7–9; 3.3.3–5. The recognition of the downgrading of Italy is seen to be witnessed in Herodian's portrayal of its defencelessness in the face of Danubian forces, ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 441. Which seems odd in the light of the outcome of the siege of Aquileia. The provinces are important in the sense that the provincial armies are composed of provincials (3.4.1; 3.7.2), and thus civil wars are to some extent wars between provinces. But this is not a new phenomenon for Herodian (2.11.5).

[94] ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 435–438; ID., Crisis, 98–99.

[95] Herodian (2.2.5) calls Commodus' reign tyranny: hardly an equivalent of any modern historian's concept of the dominate.

[96] ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 441–445; ID., Crisis, 100–101.

[97] ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 441; ID., Crisis, 100.

[98] As they are by ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 443; ID., Crisis, 100–101.

which failed to improve when he became emperor (2.7.1). That Herodian is usually, although not always (2.6.5), hostile to rich patrician senators does not show that he recognized, or attempted to analyze, their growing impotence, let alone the decline of the senatorial order as a whole.

When senators, especially rich patricians, appear in Herodian's text they seem far from impotent. Instead, they are powerful, active and often dangerous. They are considered to pose a threat to emperor after emperor. As an excuse for his desire to return to Rome Commodus gave the danger of a senatorial plot[99], and Quadratus and Quintianus proved his fears were not unfounded (1.8.3–6).

Pertinax also fears the reaction of the patricians to his accession (2.3.1–2), although in his case without justification. The patricians write to Albinus urging him to seize Rome while Severus is in the East (3.5.2). The plot of the patrician Magnus encourages the brutality of Maximinus (7.1.4–5), and the senators Gallicanus and Maecenas provoke a civil war in Rome (7.11.3–7). Sometimes their actions have happier outcomes. An unnamed young senator (said to be both brave and tough) travels from Africa to kill Maximinus' agent in Rome (7.6.4–9), and the consulars Crispinus and Menophilus successfully thwart the Danubian army at Aquileia (8.2.5–5.9). None of which suggests an awareness on Herodian's part of a decline in the role of the senatorial order[100].

Although unable to evaluate it, Herodian is said to allude to the economic aspect of the crisis[101]. Yet, while Pertinax's measures indicate unfarmed land in Italy (2.4.6), both the area around Aquileia (8.2.3–4) and Africa (7.4.4) are portrayed as flourishing. Both the latter suffer in the civil wars of AD 238 (7.9.11; 8.4.2; 5; 8), but in neither case is it implied that the damage was irreparable[102], nor are any generalizations drawn about the whole empire.

"Difficulties in the financial situation of the Empire ... were a problem treated again and again ... by Herodian"[103] is true in certain senses, but implies rather more than Herodian delivers. That some extravagent emperors squander the contents of the treasuries which had been built up by their prede-

[99] 1.6.3. Herodian makes Pompeianus, in a speech to Commodus, counter this fear by the significant argument that the senators cannot rebel in Rome because they are all at the front with the army, 1.6.6.

[100] Other social changes leave little, if any, trace in Herodian. He has little to say on the local élites of the empire, as noted by ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 442. The élite of north Africa cause the revolt of Gordian I when oppressed by the agents of Maximinus (7.4.1–5.6). But Herodian betrays no awareness of a continuing pressure on the curial class, which causes many to drop out of that class, while the 'ten men' of each city become richer. That Herodian says the young landowners of north Africa were followed by their tenants (7.4.4) does not amount to a recognition of the intensification of the exploitation of the peasantry. On these social changes see below.

[101] ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 435.

[102] The descriptions of 7.4.4 and 8.2.3–4 imply these areas are flourishing as Herodian writes. It should be noted that at the end of the seige, Aquileia was able "to sell any amount of every commodity, all kinds of food and drink, clothes and shoes – all the things a prosperous, flourishing city might offer", 8.6.4, tr. WHITTAKER II, 287.

[103] ALFÖLDY, Crisis, 101; See also ID., Zeitgeschichte, 435.

cessors[104], while others indulge in confiscations motivated by greed, although they claim other motives[105], could have been (and indeed was) said at any period of imperial history, and hardly shows an awareness of the new and particular difficulties experienced by the state in the third century.

It is far from certain Herodian recognized that the danger posed to the Roman empire by barbarians in the third century was of an altogether different order of magnitude from that of earlier centuries[106]. The rhetoric of a 'war for survival' which Herodian puts into the mouth of Macrinus in a speech to the army (4.14.6) or a letter to the senate (5.1.4) should not be seen as a straightforward exposition of Herodian's views[107]. Herodian does seem to consider the Sassanid Persians a greater threat to Rome than the Parthians had been. He gives the standard (and in fact incorrect) Roman interpretation that the Sassanids claimed all the territory once ruled by the Achaemenids[108], and stated that fugitives from Niger's army had for the first time taught the eastern barbarians the manufacture and use of hand-to-hand weapons (3.4.8–9). However, the danger he considered threatened from the east should not be overrated. In the narrative the Parthians (4.15.2) and then the Sassanids (6.5.9–10) continue to use their traditional tactics[109]. The Roman defeat by the Sassanids is first solely ascribed to Severus Alexander's cowardice (6.5.8–9), then to illness in the army as well (6.6.1–2). Even in defeat the Romans inflict substantial losses on the Sassanids, forcing them into inactivity for three or four years (6.6.5–6). The Sassanid army is hard to assemble, for in Herodian's view it is less an army than a horde of individuals (6.7.1).

Herodian says that the emperor's advisors considered the Germans a greater threat than the Sassanids, for the simple reason that they were nearer Italy (6.7.4). At one point Herodian may have said that the Germans were at times equal to the Romans in hand-to-hand combat, but they were definitely inferior at a greater range[110]. At another point Herodian applies to the Ger-

[104] Commodus, 2.7.2; Caracalla, 4.4.7.

[105] Septimius Severus, claiming revenge as a motive, 3.8.7; Mamaea, claiming to need the money for the troops, 6.1.8; and Maximinus, with the same 'excuse', 7.3.1–6. On greed as an important motive in Herodian's text see below, section V.

[106] *Contra* ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 445–446; ID., Crisis, 102–103.

[107] Nor should the arguments contained in a diplomatic letter of Caracalla proposing marriage to the Parthian king's daughter, which Herodian claims to reproduce in reported speech, 4.10.1–4; esp. 4.10.2.

[108] 6.2.2. For Herodian on Parthians and Sassanids see F. UNRUH, Das Bild des Imperium Romanum im Spiegel der Literatur an der Wende vom 2. zum 3. Jh. n. Chr., Habelts Dissertationsdrucke: Reihe Alte Geschichte 29 (Bonn, 1991), 157–160. On the *Interpretatio Romana* see above, n. 46.

[109] Also in the 'letter of Caracalla', 4.10.3–4.

[110] 6.7.8, the text is suspect, and may refer to Roman auxiliaries, WHITTAKER II, 130, n. 1. See also 7.2.2. There seems a neat symmetry in Herodian's views on Roman warfare against northern and eastern barbarians. In the north the Romans are superior at a distance, but are sometimes held to equality in close encounters. In the east the Romans are superior in close encounters, but can suffer casualties at a distance. In either case Roman discipline gives them an advantage in durability.

mans a standard ethnographical *topos* of barbarians at war: good in the first shock, but lack staying power[111]. Herodian betrays no awareness of anything novel about the Germans in contemporary history. If there had not been a rebellion in AD 238, Herodian assures us that Maximinus would have conquered them as far as the ocean (7.2.9; see also 1.5.6; 1.6.6; cf. UNRUH, op. cit. [n. 108], 45–6).

It has been suggested that Herodian's fondness for *Neuigkeiten* ("this was the first time", "never before", etc.) shows his awareness of and attempt at an analysis of the third-century crisis[112]. Certainly Herodian is very fond of labelling events novel or unique. Commodus was the first emperor born in the purple (1.5.5). Herodian's was the first generation to see the "statue of Pallas" (1.14.4–5; cf. 5.6.3). Commodus was the first emperor to be seen to fight as a gladiator (1.15.1). At the games of Commodus the Romans saw certain species of animals for the first time (1.15.4). The death of Pertinax saw the first corruption of the soldiers (2.6.14). Septimius Severus was the first man to achieve so much without bloodshed (2.14.1). His civil wars were greater than any before (3.7.7–8). He was the first to undermine the discipline of the soldiers (3.8.5). Never before him was there an emperor so obsessed with money (3.8.7), or who was so successful in civil and foreign wars (3.15.3). And so on and on goes the relentless list of novelty[113]. It would be tedious to detail which of the *Neuigkeiten* are unhistorical, or at best tendentious assertions, and pointless to ask if Herodian was aware of this. To read the repetitive *Neuigkeiten* as dispassionate attempts to chronicle change in contemporary history is to ignore the rhetorical and literary purposes of Herodian's text. Following a Thucydidean model (see above, section I; and WOODMAN, op. cit. [n. 21], 30–32), Herodian's introduction placed great emphasis on the novelty of scale and frequency of the events which he would narrate (1.1.4–6). This novelty partly underpins the importance of the events, and it is the importance of the events coupled with the truth and accuracy of their telling which, it is claimed, will give the audience pleasure (1.1.1–3; see above, section I). Herodian's text can scarcely have expected that its audience would derive pleasure from the work if it was explaining to them a crisis which threatened to destroy society[114].

Herodian on occasion betrays an awareness of what modern scholars consider to be distinctive features of the third-century crisis. He saw the period his history covered as one of greater political instability than the previous two centuries of the principate (1.1.4–5): "in a period of sixty years (cf. 2.15.7) the Roman empire was shared by more rulers than the years warranted" (1.1.5,

[111] 8.1.3. Herodian puts the same *topos* into the mouth of Severus Alexander concerning the Persians, 6.3.7.

[112] ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 434–435; ID., Crisis, 104.

[113] 3.4.7–9, the first time eastern barbarians learn to fight hand-to-hand; 4.6.4, Caracalla the first emperor to set troops on the crowd at the races; 4.8.8, Caracalla's welcome in Alexandria such as never before; 6.5.10, Alexander's defeat as great as any before; 7.1.1, Maximinus the first to rise to the throne from a very humble position; 7.6.4, Gordian I promises a donative larger than any before.

[114] Cf. MACMULLEN, op. cit. (n. 86), 10.

tr. WHITTAKER I, 7). Although the fundamental cause lay at the start of the monarchy (2.11.5), Herodian said that the discipline of soldiers worsened in his period (2.6.14; 3.8.5). Herodian considered that the provincial armies were composed of provincials (3.7.2, although this was not new, 2.11.5), and thus civil wars were, in some senses, wars between provincials[115]. These civil wars were, unsurprisingly, seen to damage the economy of the areas they were fought over (7.9.11; 8.4.5; 8). Herodian repeated the interpretation common in the empire that the Sassanids claimed the empire of the Achaemenids, and were thus likely to make more aggressive neighbours than the Parthians (6.2.2). Yet the above can hardly be inflated to form an awareness of a general crisis throughout the empire in all areas of life (political, military, social, economic, and ideological) let alone an attempt to analyze the playing together of the various underlying forces which were shaping the crisis. The 'great crisis' of the empire and the supposed ensuing *Krisenbewußtsein* of contemporaries seem to have almost entirely escaped Herodian's notice.

Herodian should not be blamed too strongly for his lack of *Krisenbewußtsein*. No contemporary can unambiguously be shown to have had an awareness of the totality of the crisis. Indeed certain habits of thought can be argued to have tended to preclude such an awareness[116].

First, there was a lack of knowledge of conditions in other parts of the empire. Herodian assures us that the inhabitants of the empire's eastern territories hardly hear about Italy (6.7.4). Second, and most importantly, there was an almost complete lack of interest in conditions in other parts of the empire. The principal author of the 'Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle', a member of the Greek élite of northern Syria[117], devotes twelve lines to an ephemeral bandit called Mariades active in Syria in the reign of Decius (lines 89–100), but only two to the defeat and death of that emperor on the Danubian frontier (lines 101–102); and these betray no awareness of where Decius was or what he was doing when he met his end.

This lack of interest in what was considered peripheral to the individual included not only the geographical, but also the social and ideological, as can be clearly seen in the statements of Dionysius of Alexandria mediated to us by Eusebius. When the Christians in Alexandria were being persecuted under Vale-

[115] Cf. ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 441.

[116] The following brief stretch is in broad agreement with the analysis of MACMULLEN, op. cit. (n. 86), 1–23; and thus is opposed to that of ALFÖLDY, Crisis. While ALFÖLDY, Response, is undoubtedly correct to insist that contemporary analytical systems were 'rational' for contemporaries, his attempted refutation of MACMULLEN ultimately does not convice. The significant point is not if we judge contemporary explanations of the crisis 'rational' or not, but if contemporaries were aware of the totality of the crisis or merely generalized from specific events which happened to affect them. MACMULLEN restated his view with elegant brevity in Corruption and the Decline of Rome (New Haven and London, 1988), 1.

[117] POTTER, op. cit. (n. 36), 151; 153. On the lack of *Krisenbewußtsein* of the two authors see S. C. R. SWAIN, Macrianus as the "Well-Horned Stag" in the 'Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle', Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 33 (1992), 376–377; 381.

rian Dionysius thought the empire in a very bad way: the sea and air polluted by corpses, war, famine and plague (Eusebius, History of the Church 7.21.1–22.10). "Men see the human race upon earth constantly shrinking and wasting thus, yet they do not turn a hair, while its complete destruction comes daily nearer" (Id., 7.21.10, tr. G. A. WILLIAMSON). But after Gallienus' edict of toleration Dionysius became, in the words of ALFÖLDY (Crisis, 96), "astonishingly optimistic". Astonishing indeed was Dionysius' judgement on the state of the monarchy in the 260s: "as if it had cast off its old age and purged away its former dross, the monarchy flourishes now as never before, is seen and heard over a wider sweep, and spreads in all directions"[118].

Contemporaries judged the state of the empire purely on the conditions affecting their own social and/or ideological group, and usually only in their own locality. For a member of the Greek élite in Syria if a bandit or the Persians were ravaging the estates of the Greek élite in Syria then the whole empire was in chaos. If a local dynast restored order then all was well with the whole empire (Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle, lines 150–154; 164–171). Likewise, for a Christian in Alexandria if the Christians of Alexandria were suffering persecution the end of the world was nigh, with all its habitual adjuncts. When the persecution ended, then the whole empire was considered to be enjoying the most profound peace: in the reign of Gallienus, the very time judged the nadir of the empire by modern historians.

That no contemporary individual broke the shackles of parochial thinking and saw the third century crisis in its entirety, as we see it, might not be the fault of the contemporaries. The fault may be ours. The empire-wide crisis affecting all areas of life might be a modern creation. That there was such a crisis is a modern orthodoxy, but on the importance of many of the different factors which are said to make up the crisis consensus fails[119].

There is no doubt, nor can there be, that the time between the death of Severus Alexander (AD 235) and the accession of Diocletian (AD 284) was one of political instability: too many emperors in too few years; with an average reign of two and a half years for the "legitimate" ones[120]. It cannot be denied that it was a time of military instability: more civil wars than before, two emperors crushingly defeated by barbarians (Decius and Valerian), and

[118] Eus. HE 7.23.3, tr. G. A. WILLIAMSON. Earlier Apolinarius judged the reign of Commodus one of profound peace, seemingly because heresy appeared dormant, Eus. HE 5.16.19. That the determinant of Cyprian's views was pastoral needs see MACMULLEN, op. cit. (n. 86), 7–8; *contra* ALFÖLDY, Cyrian; ID., Crisis, 96–97.

[119] In the following consciously heretical sketch I draw again and again on three standard works. They were chosen deliberately. All of them have a section on the crisis, but are not specialized studies of it. In one the section serves as an introduction: A. H. M. JONES, The Later Roman Empire 284–602, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1964). The other two are works of synthesis aimed at students: F. MILLAR, The Roman Empire and its Neighbours, 2nd ed. (London, 1981); and G. ALFÖLDY, The Social History of Rome, Eng. tr. of 3rd ed. (London and Sydney, 1985) (hereafter cited as ALFÖLDY, Social History). In such places we expect to find modern orthodoxies conveyed. That they differ surely is significant.

[120] JONES, op. cit. (n. 119), 23; MILLAR, op. cit. (n. 119), 240.

increased barbarian invasions[121]. Yet how destructive all this military activity was is debatable[122].

Unlike the fragile ecology of Central Asia which was destroyed at a stroke by the Mongols[123], the dominant agricultural systems of the Roman empire based on the trinity of cereals, olive and vine, were not especially susceptible to sporadic attacks. There were definite technico-military limits on how much destruction a raiding force could inflict[124]. Frequent repeated raids (or the single-minded application of a nomadic ideology[125]) were necessary to cause long term damage.

The more the Roman army campaigned, the more it cost[126]. The increased military activity of the third century both increased taxation and changed its emphasis from cash payments to requisitioned goods and services. Yet the overall effect of this is uncertain. "It may be doubted whether the actual bulk of taxation was excessive ... The requisitions which in effect superseded the regular taxation were arbitrarily levied where and when they were required, and might prove ruinous to some provinces, while others escaped lightly"[127]. The severe tax-increases which may or may not be a root cause of the decline of the empire in the west, were implemented in the reign of Diocletian and especially in the fourth century, well after the putative crisis[128].

Hand-in-hand with changes in taxation there usually goes a general economic crisis, held to be witnessed by debasement of the coinage and inflation[129]. But modern scholars seem agreed that inflation only hurt a small section of the population; maybe "craftsmen", or possibly only "the small creditor class and urban professional (a teacher for instance)", but neither the peasant nor the magnate suffered[130]. Whatever stratum of society suffered, it did not

[121] Yet the novelty of the military instability should not be overestimated, as it habitually is by commentators on the crisis. G. WOOLF, Roman Peace, in: J. RICH and G. SHIPLEY (eds.), War and Society in the Roman World (London, 1993), 171–194, has recently pointed out that modern scholars have taken at face value the ideology of *pax Romana* for the first two centuries AD: during which the internal provinces of the empire suffered more military activity than is generally admitted.

[122] It was "devastating" according to JONES, op. cit. (n. 119), 25–26. But its long-term effects were questioned by MILLAR, op. cit. (n. 119), 240–241. For ALFÖLDY, Social History, 162, it worst affected the decurion class.

[123] T. J. BARFIELD, The Perilous Frontier. Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757 (Cambridge, Mass. and Oxford, 1989), 202.

[124] Cf. V. D. HANSON, Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece (Pisa, 1983).

[125] BARFIELD, op. cit. (n. 123), 202–206.

[126] G. E. M. DE STE CROIX, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests (London, 1981), 469; POTTER, op. cit. (n. 36), 67–68.

[127] JONES, op. cit. (n. 119), 32. The burden of the state on the decurions is emphasised by ALFÖLDY, Social History, 169.

[128] JONES, op. cit. (n. 119), 61–68; 130–131; 145–148; MACMULLEN, op. cit. (n. 86), 129–152; ID., op. cit. (n. 116), 41–44.

[129] MILLAR, op. cit. (n. 119), 241–242.

[130] "Craftsmen", ALFÖLDY, Social History, 159. "Small creditor class", MACMULLEN, op. cit. (n. 86), 118; ID., op. cit. (n. 116), 37. Cf. JONES, op. cit. (n. 119), 26–32, who denied that craftsmen suffered.

do so across the whole empire. The Roman empire was never a unified economy; each province followed its own economic trajectory[131]. In his recent, magisterial survey RAMSEY MACMULLEN (op. cit. [n. 116], 15–35) found very different economic conditions prevailing in various parts of the empire in the third century. It was a bad time for areas of Gaul and Germany (Ib., 21–26). But in Italy "the third century saw no abrupt collapse of the peninsula as a whole" and Sicily was booming (Ib., 15–17). Britain "experienced no third century crisis. Indeed, signs of prosperity in the course of the third century slowly multiply both for cities and the countryside" (Ib., 26–27). In Spain cities decline, but the countryside thrives (Ib., 27–28). The majority of North Africa appears to stagnate (Ib., 29–31), yet agriculture appears prosperous in Palestine (Ib., 31–32), and episodic evidence from Egypt and Asia Minor shows the evident prosperity of some cities on the rise throughout the third century (Ib., 31; 33).

The third century has been seen as a time when "great changes ... occurred in the structure of society"[132]. But these too may have been overstressed. After the crisis the senatorial class remained the richest, most prestigious class, with the same ethnic composition, and with no change in its ideals or behaviour[133]. Military commands, however, were now seldom entrusted to its members. This hardly amounts to a class in decline, for "the majority of senators no longer sought after demanding military service"[134]. That the emperors in medieval Germany gave military command to unfree-knights (*ministeriales/Dienstmänner*), very much against the wishes of the nobility is not considered to equal a decline in the noble class as a whole[135].

The curial class is often seen as among the chief victims of the third century crisis[136]: the 'first ten' men of each city get richer and 'float free', while the majority drop out of the bottom of the class. Yet the 'first ten' are known from the first century AD in Greek cities, and they do not begin to receive legal privileges until the fourth century, when, it has been argued, more significant pressure begins to fall on the curial class[137].

The supposed 'total crisis' is seen oddly to fall least heavily on the poor: "the lower population of the cities and the countryside were so poor that little could be taken from them"[138]. Be that as it may, DE STE CROIX has shown that

[131] Thus R. DUNCAN-JONES, Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy (Cambridge, 1990), 30–47; 187–198; cf. F. MILLAR, The Mediterranean and the Roman Revolution: politics, war and the economy, Past and Present 102 (1984), 3–24. Both are responses to K. HOPKINS, Taxes and Trade in the Roman Empire, Journal of Roman Studies 70 (1980), 101–125.

[132] ALFÖLDY, Social, 159.

[133] Ib., 162–163.

[134] Ib., 166.

[135] M. BLOCH, Feudal Society, vol. II, 2nd ed. of Eng. tr. (London, 1962), 342–344.

[136] As they are by ALFÖLDY, Social, 168–170.

[137] DE STE CROIX, op. cit. (n. 126), 465–474; esp. 466; 471.

[138] ALFÖLDY, Social, 169.

the intensification of exploitation of the poor had already occurred before the start of the 'crisis'[139].

One area in which the 'total crisis' of the third century is especially hard to prove is ideology. If the Roman empire really experienced an "ideological and moral vacuum", in ALFÖLDY's phrase, we might expect it to leave some trace in contemporary literature. But so lacking in distinctiveness is third century literature that there is no modern consensus on whether several works were written in that century or not: some examples are Pseudo-Longinus 'On the Sublime'[140], (Pseudo-)Aristides' 'Oration 35', 'Eis Basilea'[141], Commodian's 'Carmen apologeticum'[142], and Heliodorus' 'Aethiopica'[143]. In his influential study of Dexippus FERGUS MILLAR saw no "violent break in the life of the rhetorical schools of Athens between Callinicus' time and the early fourth century"[144]. When in the late fourth and early fifth centuries Themistius and Synesius wished to advise the emperor, they were able to draw on, at times copy almost verbatim, the ideologies expounded in the late first or early second century works 'Peri Basileias' of Dio Chrysostom[145]. It is possibly an unconscious christianizing assumption that the 'conversion of Constantine' should have been preceded by a general ideological crisis. This may be true for Christian ideology, but continuity not crisis is the distinctive feature of pagan mentalité through the third century.

The 'total crisis' of the third century may have been caused by modern scholars. We think we know what the empire was like in the second century, and we think we know what it was like in the fourth, but in between all is

[139] Op. cit. (n. 126), 455–460. It is interesting that in the Marxist analysis of DE STE CROIX the third century crisis largely vanishes.

[140] First/Second century or under Gallienus, see MACMULLEN, op. cit. (n. 86), 11, n. 34 for references.

[141] Dated to AD 144 by C. P. JONES, Aelius Aristides ΕΙΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΑ, Journal of Roman Studies 62 (1972), 134–152, followed by T. D. BARNES, Review of MACMULLEN, op. cit. (n. 86), in: Classical Philology 73 (1978), 244. Dated to the mid-third century by MACMULLEN, op. cit. (n. 86), 10, n. 32; and L. DE BLOIS, The Eis Basilea of Ps.–Aelius Aristides, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 27 (1988), 279–288. (The work is eccentrically dated under Trajan by D. LIBRALE, L' 'Εἰς βασιλέα' dello pseudo-Aristide e l'ideologia traianea, ANRW II. 34.2, ed. W. HAASE [Berlin–New York, 1994], 1271–1313.)

[142] Dated to the third, fourth or fifth centuries, see MACMULLEN, op. cit. (n. 86), 9, n. 30, for references.

[143] See above. n. 17.

[144] P. Herennius Dexippus: The Greek World and the Third-Century Invasions, Journal of Roman Studies 59 (1969), 19.

[145] J. R. ASMUS, Synesius und Dio Chrysostomus, Byzantinische Zeitschrift 9 (1900), 91–104; J. SCHAROLD, Dio Chrysostomus und Themistius (Berghausen, 1912); V. VALDENBERG, Discours politiques de Thémistius dans leur rapport avec l'antiquité, Byzantion I (1924), 558; 572–580; G. DAGRON, L'Empire Romain d'Orient au IV^e Siècle et les traditions politiques de l'Hellénisme. Le Témoignage de Thémistios, Travaux et Mémoires. Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation Byzantines 3 (1985), 85–87; SIDEBOTTOM, op. cit. (n. 24), 66–72.

uncertainty. In a popular image the second and fourth centuries are well-lit areas linked by the 'dark tunnel' of the third. To us the fourth century appears very different from the second. There is thus a temptation to find a series of profound changes amounting to a 'total crisis' lurking in the 'dark tunnel' of the third century. To indulge this temptation may be to ignore the quality of the illuminating light. The vast majority of our sources for the second century are pagan, whereas for the fourth century they are predominantly Christian. The possibility should be entertained that the empire was much the same, but the cultural filters through which our sources viewed it led to very different descriptions.

This section has presented a detailed argument that *Krisenbewußtsein* is not to be found in Herodian's text. It has also sketched lines of argument that *Krisenbewußtsein* generally did not exist in the third century, as well as suggesting that the totality of the third century crisis might have been overstated by modern scholars. It should go without saying that the first argument is not dependent on the latter two, nor the second on the third.

IV. Herodian's Understanding of History

Herodian was realistic in his appraisal of political organizations. The Greek historiographical tradition within which Herodian worked countenanced no history without political autonomy[146]. For Herodian the Greeks had lost any political autonomy a long time ago. Their long-standing indulgence in inter-city feuding had weakened them, and led first to Macedonian domination, then to Roman enslavement[147]. While aware of its constitutional fictions[148], Herodian was under no illusions about the nature of the political organization of the Roman empire. The Romans had lived under what Herodian terms either a *demokratia* or a *dynasteia*[149], until Augustus had established a *monarchia*; which it is clear Herodian considered to have continued unchanged to his own day[150]. Herodian makes the emperor Maximus reveal the "sacred mystery" of the Roman empire (8.7.4). It is the military oath to the emperor (8.7.4) taken by Rome's soldiers; who are in Herodian's view barbarian mercenaries (above,

[146] BOWIE, op. cit. (n. 7), 181–182.

[147] 3.2.7–10; cf. 7.7.5. On Herodian's attitude to Rome see below, section VI.

[148] Herodian places the concept that power stems from the Roman people in the mouths of various characters in the text: 2.8.4, Niger's speech to the Syrians; 4.15.7, Macrinus' letter to the Parthians (in reported speech); 8.7.5, Maximus' speech to the army. See UNRUH, op. cit. (n. 108), 104.

[149] *Demokratia* at 2.9.6; 2.11.4; *Dynasteia* at 1.1.4. Herodian's use of the latter probably indicates that he thought of the Roman Republic as a closed hereditary oligarchy, as DE STE CROIX, op. cit. (n. 126), 323, suggested.

[150] 1.1.4; 2.11.5.

n. 90). Herodian's contemporary history of the empire after Marcus was thus a history of an alien monarchy[151].

In his introduction Herodian tells us what was important in the history of such a monarchy: the succession of rulers, civil and foreign wars, disturbances in the provinces, the destruction of cities, both those of the barbarians and "ours" (Greek or "within the empire"?), earthquakes, plagues, and (with almost a ring composition) back to tyrants and kings, with unexpected careers, some ruling for a long time, some a very brief time (1.1.4–5). In such a monarchy what mattered was the character of the ruler: the good ruler was old not young, controlled himself and his subjects (both characteristics of the older ruler), and did not introduce innovations (a characteristic of younger rulers, 1.1.6)[152]. Not only did political stability depend on the character of the ruler[153], so did private morality; for subjects always model themselves on their ruler[154].

It has often been observed that the character of Marcus Aurelius which Herodian constructs serves as a paradigm of the good emperor against which

[151] Herodian's close focus on the Roman monarchy possibly may explain his unusual choice of *exempla*. Most Greek writers of the Second Sophistic frequently refer back to figures from classical Greek history before Alexander (BOWIE, op. cit. [n. 7]; SIDEBOTTOM, op. cit. (n. 24], 172–180). Although he summons up figures from Greek myth (Ilus, Tantalus and Ganymede, 1.11.2; Achilles and Patroclus, 4.8.4; Jocasta, 4.9.3), Herodian names few classical figures (Dionysius and Alexander, 1.3.2 [Alexander also at 3.4.3; 4.8.1; 5.7.3; 6.2.2]; Darius and Cyrus, 6.2.2; 3.4.3). Instead, Herodian employs figures from late republican and imperial Roman history (Augustus, 1.1.4; 3.7.8; 6.2.4; Nero and Domitian, 1.3.4; 4.5.6; Caesar, Pompey, Antony, Sulla, and Marius, 3.7.8 [Sulla also at 4.8.5]; Germanicus, Titus, Lucius and Marcus, 4.5.6 [Lucius also at 6.2.4]; Hannibal, 4.8.5; Trajan, 6.2.4), occasionally figures incorporated into Roman myth (Aeneas, 2.3.3; Anchises, 2.3.4; Romulus, 4.5.5; Dido, 5.6.4), as well as a couple of Alexander's successors (Ptolemy and Antigonus, 1.3.2). Possibly the political instability of the monarchy in this period (1.1.4) made Roman dynasts and Alexander's successors appear more apposite for Herodian than figures from the classical past: cf. the comments of POTTER, op. cit. (n. 36), 75–77, on Dexippus' 'Events After Alexander'. Which is not to say that Herodian's *exempla* necessarily appear apposite to us (Dionysius and Antigonus as young rulers corrupted by power?, 1.3.2–3), or reveal much real knowledge about earlier history (Germanicus the brohter of Nero, 4.5.6 – although this is from a speech of Caracalla, and may be deliberately wrong to show Caracalla's character; he goes on to claim Marcus murdered Lucius).

[152] It could not be less remarkable that for Herodian the good ruler is a *basileus,* his reign a *basileia* under which *eleutheria* (presumably both freedom from unjust confiscation, exile and death, and free speech) flourishes, while the bad ruler is a *tyrannos* and his rule a *tyrannis*. It is slightly more interesting that Herodian equates *basileia* with *aristokratia* (presumably because the *arete* of the *basileus* creates *arete* in those around him). On Herodian's terminology see WIDMER, op. cit. (n. 19), esp. 11–14.

[153] It is implicit in 1.1.4–5 that it is the number of tyrants which has caused the political instability; see also 1.4.4–5. It was a commonplace of Hellenistic political philosophy that tyrants do not reign for long, e.g. Dio Chrysostom 2. 65–78; SIDEBOTTOM, op. cit. (n. 24), 281.

[154] 1.2.4. A common idea in antiquity, e.g. Isocrates, ad Dem. 3.6; Pling, Pan. 45.5. But others took a different, and to our way of thinking less naive, view, e.g. CD 72.33.4; 72.34.4; 72.35.2.

later emperors are tested[155]. After a section which serves as an introduction, arguing that for Marcus, and thus for Herodian, only spiritual possessions were real possessions (1.2.1–2), Herodian begins his portrait of Marcus with the emperor's possession of complete virtue (*arete*, 1.2.3). This is immediately followed by, and underpinned by, Marcus' love of ancient writings (*logoi*) both Roman and Greek (Ib.). In a text where the authorial posture is that of a Greek explaining the Romans to other Greeks (below, section VI), the emphasis falls on the Greek writings. The modern commentator's training as a classicist or ancient historian, his or her conscious entry into the world of Greek culture (*paideia*), might tend to obscure the strangeness of Herodian's judgement. The attributes a society values in its rulers are always culture-specific. Few cultures have judged the worth of their rulers on their devotion to old books. Yet in the logic of Herodian's text all Marcus' more practical, good qualities, being merciful and fair, receiving petitioners and curbing his bodyguards, his philosophy manifesting itself not in words but in his dignified and sober manner, his bravery and moderation, and his military and political virtues, come from his possession of complete virtue (*arete*), which in turn comes from the culture (*paideia*), which is inculcated in him by ancient (Greek) literature (*logoi*). In Herodian's text later emperors are judged by how closely they approach the character of Marcus, and the character of Marcus is determined by *arete* and *paideia*. A reading thus can be made in which the key to the text's understanding of contemporary history is seen to be based on the ruler's closeness to, or distance from, *paideia*[156]. What follows thus constitutes not only an analysis of the logic of Herodian's text, but also a recreation of an available contemporary reading of it.

Marcus' son and successor Commodus is not depicted by Herodian as a straighforward tyrant[157]. Commodus is first mentioned in the text in the section which argues that for Marcus the only real possessions are spiritual ones (1.2.1–2). Marcus brought up Commodus with great care, summoning men honoured for their *logoi* from their provinces and paying them large fees (1.2.1). Irony is present here, for the text's reader knows that things will not turn out as Marcus wished[158]. Commodus next appears in his father's deathbed

[155] WHITTAKER I, lxxii–lxxv; cf. WIDMER, op. cit. (n. 19), 16–27.

[156] The link between *paideia* and *arete* (and connected moral qualities) was, of course, a commonplace, see the list of inscriptions given by E. L. BOWIE, Hellenes and Hellenism in writers of the early Second Sophistic, in S. SAID (ed.), 'ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΣ. Quelques Jalons Pour une Histoire de l'Identité Grecque (Leiden, 1991), 189. n. 16. This is not to agree with a reading of the text which sees it as a type of narrative 'Peri Basileias', D. BOWDER, (ed.) Who Was Who in the Roman World (Oxford, 1980), 108, s. v. Herodian. It is argued below, section VI, that what political implications the text can be considered to carry are very different.

[157] For some analyses of Herodian on Commodus very different from that offered here see, HOHL, op. cit. (n. 28); ID., op. cit. (n. 48); U. ESPINOSA RUIZ, El reinado de Cómmodo. Subjetividad y objetividad en la antigua historiografía, Gerión 2 (1984); ALFÖLDY, Cleanders Sturz.

[158] Indeed the mention of large fees can evoke suspicions of charlatanism.

thoughts. Marcus worries that unchecked power acting on Commodus' youth might divert him from *paideia* to a life of pleasure (1.3.1). Herodian (we must presume with no ironic intent) peoples Marcus' thought-world with a string of *exempla* mainly of striking inappositeness (1.3.2–4). Marcus then voices his fears in a deathbed speech modelled on Xenophon's 'Cyropaedia'[159].

That Marcus' fears were not to prove groundless is shown straight after his death. For a few days Commodus was kept busy with the funeral. Then his advisors brought him before the army to make a speech (1.5.1). Herodian paradoxically puts a small speech 'Peri basileias' in the mouth of the emperor (1.5.3–8)[160]. Much of what Commodus says could appear in any such work composed by a man of *paideia*: the emperor as 'fellow-soldier', Marcus' teaching of *arete*, and the firmness needed in dealing with barbarians. But Commodus' basing his right to rule on his birth (1.5.5), shows that his expensive education in *paideia* has not had time to produce complete *arete*.

For "a short time" after this speech Commodus continued to be guided by his father's friends, until he was corrupted for the first time by members of the Imperial household, who induced in Commodus a desire for pleasure and a wish to leave the war and return to Rome (1.6.1–2). Commodus' corruption, however, was not yet profound, for he was ashamed of his real motive (the desire for pleasure, 1.6.3), and a speech by his father's friend Pompeianus (1.6.4–6) shamed him into changing his mind (1.6.7). When, after further corruption by the imperial household, Commodus did decide to return to Rome, the text implies that it is to his credit that his sense of shame made him announce his decision by letter not in person (1.6.8).

After the return to Rome, Herodian tells us that Commodus continued to be guided by his father's friends for a few years, until he was again corrupted, this time by the Praetorian prefect Perennis (1.8.1)[161]. The rest of Commodus' reign is constructed by Herodian to consist of a series of plots which drive the emperor further and further from *arete* and *paideia*. The plot of Lucilla, Quadratus and Quintianus upset what moderation and control (σῶφρον καὶ κόσμιον 1.8.3) he had so far shown (1.8.3–8). The plots of Perennis (1.9.1–10) and Maternus (1.10.1–7) follow, before the plot of Cleander (1.12.3–13.8)[162] finally leads Commodus to abandon his interest in moral studies and give himself over to pleasure (1.13.7). He became the enemy of *paideia* (1.13.8). From

[159] See above, section II.

[160] For more on this speech, and speeches in Herodian generally see below, section V.

[161] Perennis, an intriguer for Herodian, was a good man for Cassius Dio (73.9.1–11.2), whose assessment modern scholars tend to follow: BERSANETTI, op. cit. (n. 76), 151–170; HOHL, op. cit. (n. 48), 14–15; F. GROSSO, La lotta politica al tempo di Commodo, Memorie dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino ser. 4, no. 2 (Turin, 1964), 139–145; ALFÖLDY, Person, 211, n. 26. There are problems with Dio's judgement. Dio admits Perennis was to blame for the downfall of his colleague Paternus (73.10.1), and it emerges that the upright Victorinus assumed Perennis wished to have him killed (73.11.1).

[162] See ALFÖLDY, Cleanders Sturz, for a very negative assessment of the historicity of Herodian's account.

now on Commodus is portrayed as no more than a mad tyrant (1.14.8; 15.8), although he could still feel shame at his actions (1.17.2).

Herodian's depiction of Commodus as a man of promise (cf. 1.7.1) who was progressively corrupted by external circumstances playing upon his youth is more psychologically interesting than a picture of an out-and-out tyrant. Whatever its authenticity, Herodian's understanding of the history of the reign of Commodus, a series of plots driving a young emperor to tyranny, has proved extremely influential[163].

After Marcus the emperor Herodian most approved of was Pertinax[164]. Although there is no explicit authorial discussion of Pertinax's possession of *paideia* and *arete*, it is implicit in the text[165]. Pertinax is said to have had a distinguished career, both civil and military, the latter including victories over both the Germans and the eastern barbarians, during which he had kept to a respectable poverty (2.1.4). Pertinax's moderation (σωφροσύνη) and age are praised by the Praetorian prefect Laetus: Pertinax is said to exhibit *arete* in action (2.1.9; 2.2.7). Pertinax attempts to copy Marcus, and older men are pleased by the way he reminds them of Marcus (2.4.2). In the world of Herodian's text the unexpectedness of Pertinax's rule (1.1.4) is that a malign fate cuts it so short (2.4.5). When the mutinous soldiers come to the palace, Pertinax exhibits his *arete* in the narrative (2.5.3–5). The power of Pertinax's words (2.5.6–8), his *paideia* in action, persuades some of the soldiers, but others strike him down, showing their complete alienation from *paideia* and *arete* (2.5.8).

Of the four emperors who came to the throne in the aftermath of Pertinax's death, the characters of two are summarily dealt with by Herodian. Neither Julianus or Albinus have any hint of *paideia* or *arete*. Julianus, drunk when

163 For example, in his excellent biography of Septimius Severus BIRLEY, op. cit. (n. 2), is very critical of Herodian as an historian (204–205). Yet, despite noting a warning by ALFÖLDY against uncritical acceptance of Herodian's picture of Commodus' reign (60, n. 10), BIRLEY still constructs his narrative of Commodus on the lines laid down by Herodian, as a series of plots against the emperor (60; 84).

164 For criticism of the historicity of Herodian's treatment of Pertinax see E. HOHL, Kaiser Pertinax und die Thronbesteigung seines Nachfolgers im Lichte der Herodiankritik, Sitzungsberichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2 (Berlin, 1956), 3–32. M. PHILIPPIDES, Herodian 2.4.1 and Pertinax, Classical World 77 (1984), 295–297, gives the correct reading of a passage on Pertinax.

165 Herodian does not always make explicit his judgement of emperors by *paideia*. To borrow a term used by CLIFFORD GEERTZ discussing SIR E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD (in turn borrowed from DENIS DONOGHUE on Dame HELEN GARDNER). Herodian is indulging in 'gunboat linguistics'. The text offers the reader a contract based on the assumption that both are cultured 'insiders': the reader does not need the point spelt out, a nod will do. The reader is presumed to be flattered by such a text-building strategy. C. GEERTZ, Works and Lives. The Anthropologist as Author (Stanford, 1988), 58: "a very strictly drawn and very carefully observed narrative contract between writer and reader. The presumptions that connect the author and his audience, presumptions that are social, cultural, and literary at once, are so strong and so pervasive, so deeply institutionalized, that very small signals can carry very big messages".

first met in the text (2.6.6), is depicted as a man with no self-control, who abandons himself to idleness and vice when he comes to the throne (2.7.1). The rich eupatrid Albinus was vain and simple enough to be easily tricked by Septimius Severus (2.15.1–5). Later the approach of Severus terrified Albinus, who was wasting his time in idleness (3.7.1).

Herodian's portrayal of Severus and Niger is more complex and interesting[166]. Both implicitly claimed *arete* and *paideia*; Severus claimed to take Marcus and Pertinax as models (2.14.3), while Niger's reputation made it appear that he modelled himself on Pertinax (2.7.5). But the claims of both are shown to be false. Herodian constructs the characters of the two emperors in conscious contrast to each other. Severus is drawn as a man with the virtues of war: physically tough (2.11.2; 3.6.10), prompt to take decisions, and quick in acting on them (2.9.2; 2.11.3; 3.2.1; 3.14.3). Yet he lacks those of peace: he is deceitful (2.9.11; 2.14.4; 2.15.3–5; 3.5.3–7), avaricious (3.8.7–8), harsh and revengeful (3.4.7; 3.8.1; 3.8.3). Niger, by contrast, has the virtues of peace. He is gentle, fair (2.7.5) and mild (2.7.9). Yet he lacks those necessary for war. He is idle, fond of luxurious living (2.8.9–10; 2.14.6), and panics at the approach of Severus' army (3.1.1). Each possesses some of the virtues that would be the property of the man whose *paideia* had led him to *arete*, but neither possesses all the virtues, and thus their implicit claims to *arete* and *paideia* are to be read as false.

With Caracalla and Geta the judgement of emperors by *paideia* again becomes explicit. At first there seems little to choose between the brothers. Severus trains his sons in self-control (3.10.2) – which does not fill the reader with confidence. Both are corrupted by luxury and mutual antagonism, which their attendants encourage (3.10.3–4). Severus removes both from Rome for their moral good (3.13.1–2), but to little avail (3.13.3–6). Severus' main motive for the British campaign is said to be his desire to improve the life of his sons (3.14.1–2). In Britain Caracalla, who it has already been hinted was worse than Geta (3.11.1; 3.13.2), attempts to win over the army (3.15.1), and unsuccessfully tries to persuade Severus' doctors and attendants to hasten his end (3.15.2). After Severus' death, Caracalla executes members of the imperial entourage and fails to win over the army to his sole rule (3.15.4–5), before being compelled to accept a reconciliation with Geta (3.15.6–7). On their return to Rome both suspect the other of attempts on his life (4.1.1), and after the deification of their father each plots against the other (4.3.1).

Although Carracalla has been portrayed as worse than Geta, nothing in the text has prepared the reader for the sudden revelation that Geta is after all in possession of various good qualities. He behaves with mildness, and gentle moderation to those who are around him (4.3.2). He has serious interests, includes men of *paideia* in his entourage, and devotes his energies to sports

[166] For very different analyses of Herodian on Niger and Severus from that offered here see FUCHS, op. cit. (n. 17), 222–234; G. M. BERSANETTI, Sulla guerra fra Settimio Severo e Pescennio Nigro in Erodiano, Rivista di Filologia n. s. 16 (1938), 357–364, RUBIN, op. cit. (n. 18), esp. 91–93.

suitable to the free (4.3.3). Yet despite this, Geta continues his antagonism to his brother (4.3.4), to which he gives more weight than the claims of justice (4.4.1), and attempts to poison him (4.4.2). Geta is closer to *paideia* than his brother. But his *paideia* is, as it were, second-hand. He associates with men of *paideia* and displays some of the characteristics of a man of *paideia*, but his continuing murderous antagonism to his brother shows that what *paideia* he can claim has not led to *arete*. In Herodian's text Caracalla is the enemy of *paideia*[167]. He affects a soldier's life and will have nothing to do with the cultural activities of his brother (4.3.3–4). When he has murdered his brother, he destroys his brother's associates and "everything that Geta enjoyed watching or listening to" (4.6.1–2, tr. WHITTAKER)[168].

As Caracalla had been delineated as a stranger to *paideia* at the outset of his sole rule, it is unsurprising that *paideia* does not underpin Herodian's account of this reign. Instead, Herodian describes various activities carried out by Caracalla as he moves around the empire, all of which could usually be considered commendable, but which are in every case undercut in Herodian's account by an ironic 'sting in the tail'. Caracalla's guilty conscience and his desire to deal with military administration and inspect provincial affairs sent him to the Danube. Where, although quick to make a suitable judgement, he spent little time on legal cases and much on chariot racing and fighting wild animals (4.7.1–2). His winning over the northern barbarians is ridiculed by the revelation that he wore a blond wig (4.7.3). His playing the role of a fellow soldier is undercut by the final sentence ironically praising the efforts of one so small (4.7.4–7)[169]. His imitation of Alexander is made farcical by the two-faced pictures he has exhibited (4.8.1–3)[170]. His imitation of Achilles is both murderous, when "according to some" he poisons a freedman to have a suitable Patroclus, and ridiculous, as the bald emperor seeks a lock of hair to throw upon 'Patroclus'' pyre (4.8.4–5). His trip to Alexandria, for which he claimed religious motives, ends in a massacre of the inhabitants (4.8.6–4.9.8), and his 'war' against Parthia, inspired by a misplaced desire for glory, ends in a bungled massacre (4.10.1–4.11.9).

In Herodian's text Caracalla brings on his own downfall by a series of actions which would not have been undertaken by a man of *paideia*: prying

[167] In reality Caracalla appears to have valued *paideia*. Cassius Dio tells us that Caracalla had received an excellent education, and still went to teachers and studied philosophy when emperor (78.11.2–3). Dio, however, like Herodian attempts to depict Caracalla as antipathetic to higher things: he forgot his learning and was arrogantly obstinate (78.11.2–5).

[168] G. ALFÖLDY, Der Sturz des Kaisers Geta und die antike Geschichtsschreibung, Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1970 (Bonn, 1972), 19–51, repr. in: ID., Die Krise des Römischen Reiches (Stuttgart, 1989), 179–211, with *addenda* at 212–216, is strongly critical of the historicity of Herodian's account of Geta.

[169] Although usually commendable, the emperor playing the role of 'fellow-soldier' was not considered an unambiguously good thing by everyone, see SIDEBOTTOM, op. cit. (n. 24), 151–156.

[170] While sometimes praiseworthy, imitation of Alexander could justly be regarded with suspicion by the upper classes, see SIDEBOTTOM, op. cit. (n. 24), 204–220.

into the affairs of the gods (4.12.3–5), neglecting his duties in favour of chariot racing (4.12.6–7), and needless cruelty and lack of tact (4.12.1–2; 4.13.1–2).

Unlike Cassius Dio, Herodian does not condemn Macrinus for taking the throne as an equestrian[171]. It is character failings that Herodian condemns. Macrinus claims that his reign will be like those of Marcus and Pertinax (5.1.8). But, despite some good measures, his claims are false: his reign brings only a "semblance of freedom" (εἰκόνι ἐλευθερίας, 5.2.2). For Macrinus only adopts the trappings of a man of *arete* and *paideia* (a cultivated beard, slow walk, and a slow and hushed voice), while neglecting government duties to live a life of idleness and luxury (5.2.3–6).

The figure of Elagabalus in Herodian's text, unsurprisingly, has nothing to do with *paideia*[172]. The emperor has, if anything, received the wrong sort of *paideia*: an alien *paideia*. He is dedicated to the sun god of whom he is a priest (5.3.3; 5.3.6). Herodian's depiction of his reign concentrates on his "ridiculous" and "barbarian" worship (5.5.3–10; 5.6.1–10), with only the ironic aside that although the emperor seemed to spend all his time dancing, he still executed many distinguished men (5.6.1). Elagabalus shows his dedication to his alien *paideia* and his opposition to Greek *paideia* when, after adopting his cousin, he wishes him to be trained in his own pursuits of leaping and dancing (5.7.4–5), and persecutes Alexander's teachers of *paideia* (5.7.6).

Alexander Severus' relationship with *paideia* is one of the most interesting in Herodian's text[173]. Elagabalus wished Alexander to be trained as a priest of the sun god (5.7.4–5), but Mamaea in private summoned teachers of all *paideia*, and had him trained in self-control and manly activities like wrestling (5.7.5). Elagabalus persecutes Alexander's tutors (5.7.6), but Mamaea and Maesa protect Alexander (5.8.2–4). As the tutors were summoned in private and Elagabalus is said to banish them from court, the implication is left open that Alexander's education in *paideia* continued. That it did so is made clear when the soldiers, in what is for them an extremely unusual attitude, turn to Alexander because of the modest and serious education he was receiving (παιδὶ κοσμίως καὶ σωφρόνως, 5.8.2)[174].

After his accession Alexander is said to be dominated by the imperial women (6.1.1). When Maesa dies, Mamaea continues to attempt to protect the character of her son (6.1.4–6). In some respects Alexander's reign was comparable with that of Marcus (6.1.7). The problem lay with Mamaea's avarice (6.1.8) and jealousy, about which Alexander did nothing (6.1.9). For Alexander

171 CD 79.11.1; 79.15.3; 79.41.1–4.

172 See SCHEITHAUER, 335–356, for a recent appreciation of Herodian on Elagabalus. See also KETTENHOFEN, op. cit. (n. 33), esp. 21–28; 33–43.

173 On Severus Alexander and Herodian see A. JARDÉ, Études critiques sur la vie et le règne de Sévère Alexandre (Paris, 1925); SYME, op. cit. (n. 74), 146–162; KETTENHOFEN, op. cit. (n. 33), 43–56.

174 If the *Hauptquelle* theory, criticized above in section II, was accepted, it could probably be shown that the theme of the relationship with *paideia* of Elagabalus and Alexander had been originated by Herodian, for there is nothing of the sort in what we have of Cassius Dio.

was dominated, over-mild (6.1.10) and devoted to comforts and peace (6.2.3). When he has to go to war in the east, he lingers (6.3.1), and fails to advance, either through fear or the influence of his mother (6.5.8). When mutiny breaks out while Alexander is reluctantly (6.7.5; 6.7.9) at war on the northern frontier he panics (6.9.1) and blames first the troops (6.9.2–3) then his mother (6.9.6). Herodian's picture of Alexander is an interesting one of *paideia* paradoxically undermined by the person who tried to instill it but did not possess it herself.

Although not always depicting him in the worst possible light[175], Herodian said that Maximinus had the bloodthirsty nature of a barbarian[176]. Plots against Maximinus (real or imagined) made his character still worse (7.1.4; 7.1.8; 7.1.12). So far from *paideia* was the semi-barbarian emperor that he had to get others to compose his speeches for him (7.8.3)[177].

Despite their (probable) Greek origins, and a family interest in *paideia*[178], Herodian does not portray the Gordians favourably. Although his ability had been proved by his earlier achievements (7.5.2), there is little hint of *paideia* or *arete* in the elder Gordian[179]. He begs not to be put on the throne (7.5.4), but is secretly ambitious (7.5.7). Herodian recounts two stories of his suicide. One is extremely discreditable. Gordian in a panic hanged himself before the battle (7.9.4). For Herodian Gordian was a "pretend emperor" (εἰκόνι βασιλείας, 7.9.10).

Herodian's text offers no simple reading of the characters of Maximus and Balbinus[180]. They are not particularly amenable to an analysis in terms of

[175] Maximinus is said to be conscientious, 6.8.2. He may have been forced to take the throne, 6.8.4–5 (although the oracles at 6.8.6 rather undermine this). He acts promptly, 6.8.6–7, and, at least, is successful against the barbarians, 7.2.3–9.

[176] 7.1.2, although here Herodian accepts that Maximinus' barbarian birth was just a scandalous story; cf. 6.8.1, where it appears as fact.

[177] On Maximinus and Herodian see recently BURIAN, op. cit. (n. 2), 230–244. Maximinus II has no character in Herodian: made Caesar at 8.4.9, he shares in his father's bad rule at 8.5.9.

[178] Philostratus dedicated his 'Lives of the Sophists' to either Gordian I or II. He claimed (Preface, 479–480) that he had discussed sophists with his cultured honorand, a descendant of the great Herodes Atticus (but see V. NUTTON, Herodes and Gordian, Latomus 29 [1970], 725, who suggests that Philostratus means not a linear descent but a sophistic one). Much has been written on the origins of the Gordians and the nature (or existence) of their links with Herodes. Important among which are: T. D. BARNES, Philostratus and Gordian, Latomus 27 (1968), 581–597; NUTTON, op. cit. 719–728; SYME, op. cit. (n. 74), 166–670; K. D. GRASBY, The Age, Ancestry, and Career of Gordian I, The Classical Quarterly 25 (1975), 123–130; A. R. BIRLEY, The Fasti of Roman Britain (Oxford, 1981), 181–186; F. KOLB, La discendenza dei Gordiani. Fizione e storicità nella Historia Augusta, Annali della Facoltà di lettere e Filosofia, Università di Macerata 31 (1988), 69–85. All possibilities seem to remain open.

[179] Gordian II has no character in Herodian: hailed emperor by the senate (7.7.2), he commands the Carthaginian army in battle (7.9.5), and his body is never found (7.9.7).

[180] For some prosopographic studies of AD 238: P. W. TOWNSEND, The Revoution of 238: The Leaders and their Aims, Yale Classical Studies 14 (1955), 49–105; DIETZ, op. cit. (n. 70), 381–425; ID., op. cit. (n. 81). For doubts, which I share, about the usefulness of such prosopographical studies see A. J. GRAHAM, The limitations of prosopography in

paideia and *arete*. In general the authorial voice is well disposed towards them. They are said to have had distinguished careers (7.10.4 – Maximus' severity and unpopularity with the plebs are far from bad things in Herodian, 7.10.6), and their rule is described positively (8.8.1). They are said to have come to power through their own merits, and not to have deserved their end (8.8.8). Yet the attitude of the text is not uncomplicated, and at times the narrative seems to undermine the text's explicit judgements. Balbinus, who is both a eupatrid and is said to be rather simple (7.10.4), is ignored by everyone in Rome (7.12.2–3). Maximus disappears from the text when he marches off against Maximinus (7.12.1). He only reappears, safe behind the lagoons of Ravenna, after the defeat of Maximinus (8.6.5). Which can lead the reader to the impression that Maximus did little in the war, leaving the fighting to Crispinus and Menophilus (8.2.5). Back in Rome, Maximus and Balbinus are mutually suspicious: rightly so, for each schemes for sole power (8.8.4). Balbinus' suspicions contribute to their downfall (8.8.5). There is a temptation to read their mutual suspicions and scheming as evidence of a lack of *arete*, but here the authorial voice appears to justify their actions: sole power is indivisible (8.8.4). Maximus and Balbinus remain somewhat enigmatic.

Herodian's text appears unrevised, and probably unfinished[181]. By the time it ends the character of Gordian III has not been developed. But what little there is does not appear promising. Gordian is so young he is playing at home when he is proclaimed Caesar (7.10.8). His elevation to Caesar comes about because of mob violence and a senatorial trick (7.10.6–7), and his elevation to Augustus for want of anyone else (8.8.7). If the final book or books of Herodian turned up on papyrus, it would not be a great surprise to discover that Gordian III did not match up to the *paideia* and *arete* of Marcus, but the present emperor did.

The understanding of history displayed in Herodian's text is easily stated. Contemporary history is a history of monarchy[182]. What matters above all in the monarchy is the character of the monarch, and what above all shapes the character of the monarch is his affinity to Greek culture (*paideia*). If he has *paideia*, he will have virtue (*arete*), from which all specific virtues follow. He will be a king (*basileus*), and his rule (his *basileia* or *aristokratia*) will be stable and long-lasting, unless a malign fortune (*tyche*), acting through its usual agents, the barbarian mercenaries who make up Rome's soldiery, cut it short. If the ruler does not have *paideia*, he will be a tyrant (*tyrannos*), and men will soon find it necessary to end his tyranny (*tyrannis*).

Herodian's understanding of history is neither profound nor original (to our eyes it is also not particularly useful), but at least it is coherent.

Roman imperial history (with special reference to the Severan period), ANRW II.1, ed. H. TEMPORINI (Berlin–New York, 1974), 136–157.

181 See below, section V.

182 Herodian thought that in a succession-crisis the consuls took over, 2.12.4. There is no suggestion that it would be either possible or desirable to attempt to introduce any other form of government, for example the *demokratia* or *dynasteia* the Romans previously lived under (1.1.4; 2.9.6; 2.11.3). If the new ruler is a good ruler his rule can be considered both *basileia* and *aristokratia* (above n. 152).

V. Herodian's Historical Methods

On one reading Herodian appears not to be in control of his material or text. The history seems disfigured by unkept promises, omissions, mistakes and inventions. While it should be kept in mind that the text is almost certainly unrevised, and probably incomplete[183], it cannot be denied that there are a number of straightforward mistakes[184], although scholars seem over-ready to find Herodian in error[185], and what seem to us significant omissions and inven-

[183] The arguments for hasty, incomplete or non-existant revision, and incompletion rest on the following evidence:
(i) the unkept promises in the text: the punishment of the tribunes who supported Macrinus "which will be described later", but is not, 4.14.2; Capellianus waiting to make a bid for the empire, which is never described, 7.9.11; the transfer of troops from Emesa "which we will see", but we never do, 5.3.9 (they are not referred to at 6.4.7, *contra* F. CASSOLA, Sulla vita e sulla personalità dello storico Erodiano, Nuova Rivista Storica 41 [1957], 7).
(ii) the lack of a conclusion to the whole work at the end of book eight. With the obvious exception of book one, each book has at the start a brief summary of the previous book (2.1.1; 3.1.1; 4.1.1; 5.1.1; 6.1.1; 7.1.1; 8.1.1), and, with the exceptions of books two and four, a summing up of its own contents at the end (1.17.2; [2.15.6–7 = a 'second introduction']; 3.15.8; 5.8.10; 6.9.8; 7.12.9; 8.8.8). This does not prove, *contra* CASSOLA, op. cit. (above), 7–8, that any of the books of Herodian were published separately. The resumptive technique was at least as old as Herodotus, WHITTAKER I, 252, no. 1; ALFÖLDY, Person, 206–207.
(iii) the conflict between the claim in the introduction (1.1.5) to be a history of 60 years, and that of the "second introduction" (2.15.7) to be one of 70 years. The attempt of WHITTAKER I, xi, to explain away the difference has been refuted by ALFÖLDY, Person, 204–205. See K. S. SACKS, Diodorus Siculus and the First Century (Princeton, 1990), 169–172, for debate on a similar problem in another historian (Diod. Sic. 1.4.7; 1.5.1).
(iv) the smaller number of speeches, especially short dramatic dialogues, in the later books compared with the earlier ones: WHITTAKER I, lviii–lxi (see below on speeches). To be evidence for hasty/incomplete revision, this has to assume that Herodian's working method was to write the narrative with some speeches included, then return to the start and go through the narrative again inserting more speeches. This fits well with the common view that Herodian wrote the main narrative, then returned to the beginning to write the introduction (J. BLAUFUSS, Observationes ad Herodiani rerum Romanarum scriptoris libros V et VI [Diss. Erlangen, 1893], 4; WIDMER, op. cit. [n. 19], 69–70; ALFÖLDY, Person, 206–207). There is in fact no proof for any of this. It is just as possible that Herodian began by writing the introduction, intending to cover 60 years of history, then when writing the ensuing narrative decided to expand his history to cover 70 years, and to reduce the number of speeches included in each book: old age, death or whatever stopped him at the end of book eight.

[184] Two examples: 3.9.10, Artabanus named instead of Vologaeses IV, CD 76.9.3; 3.9.3 Arabia Felix named instead of the province of Arabia or the Arabians east of Mesopotamia (confusion of the Arabias was not confined to Herodian, G. W. BOWERSOCK, The Three Arabias in Ptolemy's Geography, P.-L. GATIER, B. HELLY, and J.-P. REY-COQUAIS (eds.), Géographie historique au proche-orient, Notes et Monographies Techniques 23 [Paris, 1988], 47–53).

[185] For example: 1.9.2, the date of the festival of Capitoline Jupiter; criticized by HOHL, op. cit. (n. 48), 16–17; 74; defended by WHITTAKER I, 53, n. 3.

tions. Yet to see all such incidents as merely the result of Herodian being a 'bad historian' removes any need for analysis. A reading which sees the text working within its understanding of history, and employing various narratological and rhetorical devices to further the reader's engagement, exposes some of the omissions, mistakes and inventions as purposeful.

Herodian often constructs his history in a 'linear' fashion. The focus of the history moves around the empire with individuals, armies, messages or 'the news'[186]. The reader is usually led through the history not by techniques of cutting from one scene to another ('meanwhile in another part of the empire'), but in a sequential way, which can sometimes alter historical facts. The treatment of the events of AD 193 after the accession of Julianus is a clear example of this. In Rome the people call for Niger (2.7.3–5). The focus of the text then travels with 'the news' of this to Niger in the east (2.7.6). After his proclamation Niger should have visited the Illyrian armies, but he did not even send them a messenger (2.8.10). The focus of the text then travels from the east with 'the news' of Niger's proclamation to reach Illyria and Septimius Severus (2.9.1). After Severus' proclamation the reader travels back to Italy with Severus' army, moving faster than the news (2.11.3). After the defeat of Julianus and some measures in Rome, the focus leaves Rome to travel to the east with Severus (2.14.5). Then Herodian breaks this neat 'linear' progression of his history to recount Severus' dealings with Albinus (2.15.1–5), before focusing again on Severus hurrying to the east (2.15.5). After the 'second introduction' which serves as a 'summing up' of book two (see above, section IV), and the recapitulation of book two at the start of book three, the focus of the text this time outruns Severus' army with 'the news' of its coming reaching Niger (3.1.1). Herodian's narrative of these events is clear and easily comprehended. It is also in at least one sense unhistorical. Herodian's text has Severus proclaimed after the news of Niger's proclamation reached Illyria, which historically was not the case[187]. Assuming Herodian knew the truth, the text has sacrificed accuracy (it has 'made a mistake') to make itself more readable and accessible[188].

[186] In Herodian's text the empire appears to be full of "short cuts" or "unfrequented routes", 1.9.8; 1.10.3.

[187] BIRLEY, op. cit. (n. 2), 97–98. Despite WHITTAKER's attempt (I, 199, n. 1) to clear Herodian of this error, various passages (2.8.10–9.1; 2.9.3; 2.10.6–8) make it clear that Herodian's text does place Severus' proclamation after the arrival of news of Niger's proclamation.

[188] Historical accuracy is also sacrificed to make the story more exciting and easily understood on Severus Alexander's eastern campaigns. Unexpected news of the rise of Artaxerxes comes from the east, 6.2.1 (see A. R. BIRLEY, Virius Lupus, Archaeologia Aeliana 4th ser. 50 [1972], 179–189, esp. 187–188, on unhistorical nature of this favoured *topos*); Alexander sends a letter to the east, 6.2.3–4; more news from the east to Alexander, 6.3.1; Alexander to the east, 6.4.3; Alexander's letter to the Persians, and the Persian ambassadors to Alexander, 6.4.4; the first column to the east, 6.5.5; the focus then 'cuts' to the second column which has already gone to the east, 6.5.6–7; news from which travels to Alexander, 6.6.1; who moves to Antioch, 6.6.2.

Herodian is not always completely bound by his 'linear' shifts of focus. His narrative of AD 238, which is often highly regarded by modern scholars (above, n. 70), is partly constructed along the usual lines of moving the focus of the text from one area to another sequentially with individuals and 'news' or the like, but at times 'cuts' or 'fades' from one scene to another. At the start of book seven (7.1.1) the focus is on the northern frontier. The focus is then expanded to include the whole empire (7.3.1), before being closed in on Africa (7.4.1). The focus moves from Africa to Rome with Gordian's letters (7.6.3), which provokes a time shift to recount the death of Vitalianus before the letters are delivered (7.6.4–9). The focus then moves with the Senate's letters out to the provinces (7.7.5), and then with the news to Maximinus in the north (7.8.1), who moves towards Italy (7.8.9–11). The text then 'cuts' from the north to Africa (7.9.1). The focus moves back from Africa to Rome with 'news' (7.10.1), before it 'cuts' from there back to Maximinus (7.12.8). From the start of book eight (8.1.1) the focus remains closed on Maximinus and the siege of Aquileia until the death of the emperor (8.5.9). This lack of events from anywhere else is explained at 8.5.4–5: the Senate had set up a blockade of the area around Maximinus' army, allowing no news to reach it. Herodian's text has placed its reader in the same position as Maximinus' army. It has suppressed certain events (what was happening in Rome, the other provinces, etc.) to make it easier for the reader to understand the crucially important events (the state of mind and the actions of Maximinus' army).

Herodian often resorts to 'formulaic' decriptions of certain events. In these 'formulaic' descriptions the historical record can be distorted, frequently by the text's suppression of details. A revolt tends to follow the same pattern in Herodian. The would-be emperor first talks to selected officers, and sometimes men, of his army[189], hoping they will spread the word to the rest of the soldiers[190]. Then follows, not necessarily in the same order, a speech to the army, the proclamation, and diplomacy with other provinces or foreign rulers[191]. It is noticeable that in these 'formulaic' revolt-narratives details tend to be edited out, above all the roles played by anyone other than members of the imperial family. In Macrinus' plot we are first told only of Macrinus and Caracalla's killer, one Martialis (4.13.1). Later it becomes clear that certain tribunes were in the plot as well (4.14.2). In Maesa's revolt, which brings Elagabalus to the throne, the role of Eutychianus-Gannys, so prominent in Cassius Dio, is completly suppressed[192]. These omissions partly serve to make the narrative simpler

[189] 2.7.7, Niger; 2.9.7, Severus; 4.13.1, Macrinus; 5.3.9, Maesa; 7.1.4, Magnus.

[190] 2.7.7–8, Niger; 2.9.10, Severus; 4.14.2, Macrinus; 5.3.10, Maesa.

[191] Niger: speech (2.8.1–5), proclamation (2.8.6), diplomacy (2.8.7–8).
Severus: proclamation (2.9.11); diplomacy (2.9.12–13), speech (2.10.1–9), second proclamation (2.10.9).
Macrinus: war and pre-battle speech breaks pattern (4.14.3–15.9).
Maesa: proclamation (5.3.12), then civil war breaks pattern (5.4.1–12).

[192] On this KETTENHOFEN, op. cit. (n. 33), 23–28, is fundamental.

and more exciting, but possibly also serve to keep in sharp focus what the text considers important (the character of the ruler and the influences upon it) at the expense of what it considers ephemeral.

Another 'formulaic' narrative which re-appears in Herodian is 'the trap' which emperors spring on unsuspecting groups. This *topos* is probably inspired by Cassius Dio's account of Carracalla 'trapping' the Alamanni (78.13.5)[193]. It appears in Herodian when Septimius Severus traps the Praetorian guard (2.13.1–12), Caracalla the Alexandrians (4.9.1–8), the same emperor attempts to trap the Parthian king (4.10.1–11.9), and when the Praetorians suspect Maximus and Balbinus of it (8.8.2). With its account of Caracalla and the Alexandrians Herodian's text appears to do considerable damage to its historicity – it is very different from Cassius Dio's account (78.22.1–23.4) – to make it fit the 'formulaic pattern'. With its account of Caracalla and the Parthians the 'formulaic' pattern underpins free invention[194]. The violence done to history by the reduction of complicated events to relatively simple 'formulaic' patterns should be off-set against the increased ease of understanding of the audience. Having been through one 'formulaic trap', the reader is well equipped to understand what is happening in any number of ensuing ones[195]. The 'formulaic' patterns also might be considered to highlight without obfuscation what the text considers is of fundamental importance: the character of the emperor. Caracalla's treacherous wedding party might expose the falsity of that emperor's claims to martial prowess more clearly than would an account of the political and military manœuvring which in reality made up his Parthian campaign.

Various rhetorical devices are employed to encourage the reader's engagement with the text. Herodian, unsurprisingly, includes a reasonably large number

[193] ROOS, op. cit. (n. 32), 195–200; KOLB, 103–111.

[194] In Cassius Dio's account Caracalla proposed marriage to the Parthian king's daughter, it was rejected, and that was the end of the matter, 79.1.1; see D. TIMPE, Ein Heiratsplan Kaiser Caracallas, Hermes 95 (1967), 470–495; KOLB, 111–115.

[195] This is probably especially true of Herodian's 'formulaic' battle-narratives: Niger and Severus, 3.4.1–6; Albinus and Severus, 3.7.2–7; Macrinus and Elagabalus, 5.4.5–10; Gordian II and Capellianus, 7.9.3–9 (Macrinus and the Parthians, 4.15.1–9, and Maximinus and the Germans, 7.2.1–9, seem very different, see above, section II, as does Alexander and the Persians, 6.5.9–10). 'Trival' details are avoided (cf. 2.15.6) as Herodian constructs battles by rearranging items from a small stock of *topoi*: scant geographical details (3.4.2; 3.7.2; 5.4.6; 7.9.3); comparison of the sides by criteria of numbers, enthusiasm, and quality of the troops (3.4.1; 3.7.2; 5.4.5–6, with 5.4.8; 7.9.3–6); ferocity of the fighting (3.4.4; 3.7.2; 5.4.6 and 8); duration of the combat (3.4.5; 3.7.2; 3.7.6; 7.9.7); rout of one side (3.4.5; 3.7.3; 3.7.6; 7.9.7); heavy casualties during pursuit (3.4.5; 3.7.6; 7.9.7–8); the emperor's flight (3.4.6; 3.7.3; 5.5.7–8) or death (3.7.7; 7.9.4; 7.9.7; 7.9.9); and involvement of civilians (3.4.5; 3.7.7; 7.7.9). In essence Herodian's historical battles are not constructed differently from the mythical combat of Ilus and Tantalus: fought at Pessinous, the two sides were evenly balanced, the fight lengthy, and the casualties heavy (1.11.2). See above, n. 51, on the difficulty of writing battle narratives, and the necessity for some kind of formula.

of speeches in his history[196]. We are not here primarily concerned with the historicity of the speeches[197], their literary models[198], or their technical structure[199], except in so far as these affect the speeches' functions as rhetorical devices which promote the reader's involvement with the text. The speeches fulfil several roles. They give Herodian a chance to indulge in fine writing, and thus attempt to please the reader[200]. They allow Herodian to illuminate the characters of the speakers, and sometimes the audiences[201]. Their commonly ironic tone (which, as far as I know, has not been the subject of any extensive commentary) also lets them function as devices which help to create the fiction of the reader's mastery over the text[202]. The reader of Herodian's text is frequently privileged over the audiences and the speakers in frame. For the reader is almost always put in a position of knowing more than the characters in the history. If a speaker in Herodian refers to the past or present, he or she is frequently lying, or sometimes mistaken[203].

[196] 1.4.2–6; 1.5.3–8; 1.6.2; 1.6.4–6; 1.9.4; 1.13.2–3; 1.17.5 and 6; 2.1.7–10 (an exchange of four short pieces of dialogue); 2.2.6–8; 2.3.4; 2.3.5–10; 2.5.6–8; 2.8.2–5; 2.10.2–9; 2.13.5–9; 3.6.1–7; 3.11.5–7; 3.12.2; 3.12.5; 3.12.11; 4.3.8; 4.5.2–7; 4.14.4–8; 5.1.2–8 (a letter); 6.3.3–7; 7.5.5–6; 7.8.4–8; 8.3.4–6 (partially indirect); 8.7.4–6. That the lesser number of speeches in the later books compared with the earlier is not a straightforward indication of the unrevised nature of the text is argued above. n. 183. On the inadvisability of taking out of context statements from the speeches as evidence of Herodian's own views see above, section III.

[197] The historicity of Herodian's speeches has long been attacked: for example by J. V. POBLOCKI, De Herodiani vita ingenio scriptis (Diss. Münster, 1864), 24–25; HOHL, op. cit. (n. 48), 10–11. A partial defense is offered by WHITTAKER I, lviii–lxi.

[198] See above, n. 62.

[199] ALFÖLDY, Cleanders Sturz, 94–100, sees the speeches as the centres of pieces of "ring composition". Not all his arguments are convincing. That a deathbed speech is preceded by a statement that the speaker is dying, and followed by his death hardly amounts to a significant "ring composition", ID., 96, on 1.3.1–1.4.8; cf. ID., 97. on 2.5.1–9.

[200] The speeches, of course, are Herodian's own free composition, and have no relationship with what might have been said by any of the speakers; cf. WOODMAN, op. cit. (n. 21), 11–15. The desire to see speeches in ancient historians as, in some way, reflections of the words of the 'original speaker' runs deep. WHITTAKER, despite holding that "it goes without saying that Herodian, in common with almost every other Greek and Roman historian, felt no problem about freely inventing words for his speakers" (I, lix), is reluctant to dismiss ("out of hand") Marcus' deathbed speech as unhistorical, because "there is nothing offensively improbable said" (I, 16, n. 2).

[201] For example, Septimius Severus' speeches to the Pannonian army (2.10.2–9; 3.6.1–7) illustrate both his duplicity, as he lies to them (2.10.2, he had never entertained hopes for the throne; 3.6.2–5, Albinus' treachery to Severus), and their stupidity (cf. 2.9.11), as they are taken in by him (2.10.9; 3.6.8). Similarly, Niger's speech to the Syrians (2.8.1–5) illustrates both the Syrians' readiness to upset established rule (2.7.9; 2.8.6), and Niger's unfitness to rule; because he seeks advice from such people (2.8.3; 2.8.5).

[202] Those speeches in which no irony can be detected are: 1.6.2, imperial household to Commodus; 1.17.5 and 6, Marcia's complaint about Commodus; 2.3.4, Glabrios's renunciation of the empire; 3.12.5, Saturninus' second speech to Severus; 3.12.11, Caracalla to Plautianus; 8.3.4–6, Crispinus to the defenders of Aquileia.

[203] 1.13.3, Fadilla exaggerates to Commodus the army's support for Cleander; 2.2.6, Laetus tells the Praetorians that Commodus has died of apoplexy; 2.5.7, Pertinax claims he

The reader, having read the preceding narrative, knows this, but the audience in frame usually does not[204]. Speakers are often misguided when they refer to the future[205]. The reader either already knows what will happen, or has a strong suspicion which will soon be confirmed[206]. Occasionally speakers utter prophecies, which the reader knows will come true[207]. The reader is usually aware that the hoped-for effect of a speech will not come to pass[208]. Speeches in Herodian are usually cases of frustrated hopes.

Two examples will suffice. In his speech to the Praetorians, Laetus (2.2.6–8) says that Commodus has died of apoplexy (2.2.6). The reader, obviously, knows this to be untrue, but the audience in frame does not. Laetus claims that the Praetorians will welcome Pertinax as emperor (2.2.8). The reader has already been told that the Praetorians will not be happy with Pertinax (2.2.4–5). The reader, unlike Laetus, knows that the hoped-for effect of the speech, the reconciliation of the Praetorians, will not come about.

In his speech to the army (6.3.3–7), Severus Alexander tells them that the news he will give will be a surprise (6.3.3). In this case it is no surprise to either the reader or the audience in frame (6.3.2). The irony of the speech lies in Alexander exhorting the army that "we" must be brave, and not hesitate or falter (6.3.4–6): failings which Alexander has already displayed (6.2.3; 6.3.1),

knows as little about the death of Commodus as do the Praetorians; 2.10.2, Severus tells the Pannonians that previously he had not hoped for the throne; 2.13.7–8, Severus boasts of his mildness to the Praetorians; 3.6.1–5, Severus speaks of Albinus' treachery; 3.12.2, Saturninus lies about his motives to Severus; 4.5.4, Caracalla claims Geta attacked him; 4.14.4–5, Macrinus speaks of the sadness of Caracalla's death; 7.8.7, Maximinus lies about the life of Gordian I; 8.7.6, Maximus is wrong about the present state of harmony.

[204] The soldiers who Severus Alexander says (6.3.3) will be surprised by his news, already know it (6.3.2). So also Maximinus and the soldiers (7.8.4; cf. 7.8.2).

[205] 1.4.6, the *amici* will produce a good emperor; 1.5.4, Commodus will win loyalty easily; 1.5.6, Commodus will advance to the Ocean, again at 1.6.6; 2.2.8, Pertinax will be welcomed by the Praetorians; 2.8.4, Niger will win the empire easily; 2.10.5–8, Severus will win the empire easily; 3.6.6, the Pannonians will easily defeat the British; 3.11.6, it will be easy for Saturninus to kill the emperors; 4.14.8, Roman discipline will defeat the Parthians; 7.5.5, the grounds for Gordian I to be optimistic; 7.8.6; 18, Pannonians' easy victory; 8.7.4, the soldiers will remain quiet.

[206] The reader usually knows because the outcome has already been hinted at in the text: e.g. the discontent of the troops at 8.7.3, before Maximus predicts they will remain quiet at 8.7.4; again, the previous depictions of Caracalla (above, section IV) make the reader suspicious of his claim that sectarian feelings are at an end (4.5.7) – a suspicion which is immediately confirmed (Ib.).

[207] For example, Pertinax's warnings that those who like living under a tyranny will not be happy with his rule (2.3.9) is a prophecy of his murder by the Praetorians (2.5.1–9), an event which, if the reader did not know about it anyway, has been hinted at earlier (2.2.9).

[208] Hoped for effects which do not happen are: Marcus' speech will ensure Commodus is a good ruler (1.4.2–6); Pompeianus' speech will keep Commodus at the war (1.6.4–6); the philosopher's speech will bring him rewards (1.9.4); Laetus' speech will reconcile the Praetorians (2.2.6–8); Pertinax's speech will save his life (2.5.6–8); Plautianus' speech will induce Saturninus to kill the emperors (3.11.5–7); Domna's speech will reconcile her sons (4.3.8); Macrinus' speech will inspire the army (4.14.4–8).

which will lead to disaster in the eastern war (6.5.8), and ultimately to the emperor's death (6.8.3).

The dissonance between what the reader knows and what the characters in the text know at any given point, the irony that we the readers usually know the truth or falsity of statements when their original audience or even speakers do not, helps to create the reader's fictional mastery of the text. This in turn helps to create a fictional mastery over the history the text narrates. The reader is led to the feeling that he or she knows more about what is happening than do emperors and their advisors.

Herodian also plays with the reader's involvement in the text by anticipatory glimpses of what is going to happen in the narrative. It is frequently hinted that the emperor is going to die some time before he does. The following are clear examples. The portents of Commodus' death are recounted at 1.14.1–7, and events after his death are spoken of at 1.15.1, but he does not die until 1.17.1–11. The evil chance which ends Pertinax's rule appears at 2.4.5, before the emperor is killed at 2.5.1–9. The end of Severus Alexander is mentioned at 6.1.7, long before the emperor is murdered at 6.9.6–7. The "trivial event" which provokes the downfall of Maximinus appears at 7.4.1, but the emperor does not die until 8.5.8–9[209]. In one sense these are just illustrations of the 'paradox of fortune': one day this man is emperor, the next a corpse[210]. But in another sense they are rhetorical devices which reinforce the fiction of the reader's mastery of the text, and thus of the history. While the emperor is blissfully unaware of his fate, the reader knows it is approaching. The reader knows more of what is happening in the history than does the principal player.

At another level the device of the anticipatory glimpse into the narrative questions the reader's control over the text and history, although probably only in order to reaffirm it. The reader knows that the emperor will die soon. It raises the question, how will the emperor die? There seem to have been various versions of the deaths of emperors in the popular imagination. Herodian gives two versions of the death of Gordian I (7.9.4; 7.9.7). The 'Twelfth Sibylline Oracle' thought that Tiberius either fell in battle or was violently murdered (line 47), Vespasian killed by the army (lines 115–116), Titus killed in battle (lines 121–123), Nerva murdered (line 145–146), Avidius Cassius (?), whom it seems to have considered an emperor, died in a riding accident (lines 185–186), and Elagabalus fell in a war (lines 273–275)[211]. The reader of Herodian may be induced to ask if the version of the emperor's death to which

[209] See also: hints of Niger's death at 2.7.6; 2.9.1; 3.1.7 (death at 3.4.6); hints of Severus' end at 2.15.4; 3.11.1; 3.14.2–3 (death at 3.15.1–2). Caracalla's end is said to be inevitable at 4.12.3, it occurs at 4.13.1–8; at 5.2.6 we are told that the troops are looking for any excuse to get rid of Macrinus, whose end is said to be inevitable at 5.3.1, and it finally occurs at 5.4.11–12.

[210] 2.2.6, "all lead to the same end"; 2.5.6. The paradox of fortune should not be discounted for the speeches discussed above. That the reader knows the falsity of predictions in the speeches illustrates the moral that the best laid plans go astray.

[211] It may also imply that Julianus fell in battle, lines 248–249.

he or she subscribed would turn out to be the 'true' one in Herodian's text. Before usually, one imagines, being reassured it was. The author of the 'Twelfth Sibylline Oracle', had he read Herodian, would have only found his version was not the 'true' one for Elagabalus[212]. The reader's mastery over the text and history may have been questioned in order to be reaffirmed[213].

In his introduction Herodian stresses his devotion to truth and sound research: only first-hand information or second-hand information which has been checked will do (see above, section I). Yet, as we have seen, he frequently suppresses[214], alters, or invents material to fit his narrative and rhetorical devices. It is his inventions which most urgently raise the question of Herodian's attitude to historical truth: inventions such as Marcus' deathbed speech (1.4.1–8), Caracalla and Geta's plan to split the empire (4.3.5–9), Caracalla's wedding party (4.11.1–8), or Macrinus' ill-fated attempt to escape by boat (5.4.11–12). Were we able to question Herodian on such incidents would he reply, "the statements in the introduction are a meaningless literary flourish, who cares if these incidents are true or not, for they make a good story", or would he argue "the introduction is meaningful, these events must be true, for such were the characters of those involved"?[215]. In our terms, would Herodian claim to be sacrificing or attempting to reconstruct historical truth?

[212] And possibly for Julianus. It is a pity that the 'Twelth Sibylline Oracle' ends with the death of Alexander, and the Thirteenth starts with Gordian III, so we do not have a Sibylline version of the death of Gordian I, of which Herodian gives two versions.

[213] This does not exhaust the possible implications of these anticipatory glimpses. The reader knows more than the actors (the emperor does not know he is going to die soon), but less than the author (the reader does not know how soon in the narrative the emperor will die). Emperors do not always die neatly at the end of a book in Herodian (some do: Commodus, 1.17.11; Severus, 3.15.1–2; Elagabalus, 5.8.8–9; Alexander, 6.9.6–7; and Maximus and Balbinus, 8.8.7–8; but most do not, Pertinax, 2.5.8; Julianus, 2.12.7; Niger, 3.4.6; Albinus, 3.7.7; Geta, 4.4.3; Caracalla, 4.13.5; Macrinus, 5.4.11; Maximinus, 8.5.9; Gordian I and II, 7.9.4; 7; 9 – i.e. no emperor dies at the end of books 2, 4 and 7). An element of suspense may be generated: "how soon in the narrative will the emperor die?", or "is this the incident which will cause the death of the emperor?".

[214] It is difficult to show Herodian deliberately suppressing material; he may just not have known it. But the text betrays itself here and there. At 4.14.2 Herodian knows of certain tribunes who were thought to have been involved in Macrinus' plot, but they had not been mentioned in the narrative of the plot, 4.12.1–13.8. Again, at 6.6.1–2 Herodian tells of the sickness affecting Alexander and his army, but this had been suppressed earlier at 6.5.8–9. See also Praetorian's fight, 5.4.8–10; cf. 5.4.6–7; and Persian casualties, 6.6.5–6; cf. 6.5.9–10.

[215] As far as I know there is no satisfactory study of the motivation of characters in Herodian's history. Apart from Marcus and Pertinax, who can be assumed to be motivated by *arete* inspired by *paideia* (above, section IV), Herodian seems to take a rather cynical view of human motivation: self-preservation, Fadilla (1.13.2); Marcia (1.17.1–6); Laetus and Eclectus (1.17.6–8); Plautianus (3.11.1); Macrinus (4.13.1); honest treasury officials (7.4.2); Africans (7.4.3; 7.5.1); preservation of status, Lucilla (1.8.3–4); Plautianus (3.11.2–3); Maesa (5.3.11); Mamaea (6.1.9); greed, Perennis (1.8.2); philosopher (1.9.5); Cleander (1.12.3); Severus (3.8.7); Plautianus (3.10.6; 3.11.1–2); Mamaea (6.1.8); soldiers (4.4.4; 5.3.2; 5.8.1; 6.8.3–4); Macedo (7.1.11); Maximinus (7.3.3); desire for pleasure, imperial attendants (1.6.1–2); Commodus (1.6.3); ambition, procurator

Our problem is that most of Herodian's material is amenable to either interpretation. Marcus' worries, and Caracalla and Geta's plan make for poignant and ironic scenes. Caracalla's wedding is a good action story, and Macrinus' attempt to reach Europe by boat is genuinely exciting (the fugitive emperor within sight of safety, then swept back to his death). On the other hand, Marcus was a man of *paideia* and *arete*, and so must have been aware of the dangers facing the empire, and must have tried to do something about them. Caracalla and Geta's mutual hatred must have led them to think of dividing the empire. Caracalla's treacherous nature and the falsity of his claims to martial prowess must have caused him to attempt to win the Parthian war in an underhand way. Having reached Asia Minor, and knowing that safety lay in Europe, the cowardice of Macrinus must have impelled him to attempt to escape by boat.

We can, however, relax the rigour of the dichotomy between sacrificing or reconstructing truth, and do so without arguing that the conception of historical truth of ancient historians such as Herodian was very different from ours[216]. Instead, it can be considered if the attitude to historical truth of Herodian is similar to that which PELLING has argued applies for Plutarch: the concept of 'true enough'[217]. Herodian is not wholly indifferent to historical truth. Unlike the author of the 'Augustan History'[218], there are strict limits to Herodian's inventions. Herodian does not invent people[219], let alone emperors. But rather, he appears to give to historical personages plans and actions they, in reality, did not have. It seems significant that all Herodian's 'big inventions' are dead ends: Caracalla and Geta do not split the empire; Caracalla does not capture the Parthian king; Macrinus does not escape; come to that, Marcus does not secure a good ruler for the empire. Given the understanding of history exhibited in the text (above, section IV), it is possible that Herodian considered material 'true enough' for his history, even though he knew, or strongly suspected, the events had not actually happened, if they did not do too much violence to the truth of historical events, and if they illuminated the character of the emperor. The level of truth of such stories would be 'checked' against grounds of general plausibility[220], and what Herodian thought he knew of the

(7.4.2); Gordian I (7.5.7); shame, Caracalla (4.7.1); regret archers (7.1.9); revenge, Martialis (4.13.1–2). Interestingly the bandit Maternus is partly motivated by a desire for fame and glory (1.10.3). As WIDMER, op. cit. (n. 19), 59–60, noted Herodian seldom falls back on *tyche* as a motive force, although RUBIN, op. cit. (n. 18), 46–48, held that where it is present it is malign.

216 Cf. the comments of PELLING, op. cit. (n. 5), 42, n. 65, on the theory of a different conception of historical truth put forward by WOODMAN, op. cit. (n. 21), esp. 73–74; 82–83; 92–93.

217 Op. cit. (n. 5), esp. 35–43.

218 Cf. above, section II, on the 'climate of suspicion' caused by study of the 'Historia Augusta'.

219 With the possible exception of the boy Philocommodus, see above, n. 48.

220 Cf. T. P. WISEMAN, Clio's Cosmetics. Three Studies in Greco-Roman Literature (Leicester, 1979), 48–53.

characters of the participants. Herodian thus may not have had conceptions of what constituted historical truth very different from ours. Where he differed (although possibly not as much as we would like to think)[221] was in where he placed the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable falsehood. In other words, material was 'true enough' for inclusion which 'sacrificed' to some extent certain levels of historical truth, if it clearly illuminated (or 'reconstructed') what the text set up as deeper and more profound levels of historical truth: the emperor's character, and his relationship with *paideia* and *arete*[222].

VI. Herodian's History as Political Literature

Herodian's text is best understood operating within a specific class[223]. The text's normal hostility to rich patricians, and its lack of interest in, and knowledge of, senatorial affairs probably indicate that Herodian was not a senator[224]. It is possible, and it has often been argued, that Herodian himself was

221 "On a cool estimate historians and biographers still regard different sorts of rigour as appropriate for different sorts of material", PELLING, op. cit. (n. 5), 43. PELLING's argument (43–45) that modern biographers widen the boundary of acceptable falsehood when dealing with their subjects' childhood is completely convincing. An example offers from one of the works used in this study. In his excellent biography of Septimius Severus, BIRLEY (op. cit. [n. 2], 33–34) accepts without an explicit caveat an anecdote from the 'Historia Augusta' (Severus 1.4) for the childhood of his subject ("it is said that his favourite game was 'judges'") of a type which it is unthinkable he would have accepted for the mature emperor.

222 Put yet another way: Herodian might have worked to neither "it is not true, but I don't care, it is a good story", nor "this person was such that it must be true", but to a position somewhat in between "it is not strictly true (it did not happen), but it is true enough (it does not do too much harm to the historical record), because it illustrates the more important truth of the emperor's character".

223 I am thus not in agreement with WHITTAKER I, xxiii, "to a certain extent ... it is unreal to interpret Herodian's opinions from a specific class angle". But WHITTAKER is talking of social groups in Rome (senators, equestrians etc.), and investigating the possibility of placing Herodian within them, whereas I place Herodian's text in a Greek context.

224 For Herodian's hostility to patricians see above, section III. Herodian's lack of interest in senatorial affairs is shown by his failure to name any senator in books five or six (above, section II); which rather vitiates the theory of WHITTAKER (I, lxxxi) that Herodian's history was "to some extent a history of the Antonine families". Lack of knowledge of the Senate is witnessed by Herodian's ignorance of the lay out of the Senate house: KOLB, 10, n. 76a; cf. H. A. POHLSANDER, Victory: The story of a statue, Historia 18 (1969), 591–592. Nevertheless in the past Herodian has been thought to have been a senator: M. PLATNAUER, The Life and Reign of the Emperor Septimius Severus (Oxford, 1918), 1; E. SOMMERFELDT, Zur Frage nach der Lebensstellung des Geschichtschreibers Herodian, Philologus 73 (1914/1918), 568–570.

from the lower class[225]. But if true, this should not lead us blithely to assume that Herodian's text has a lower class stance, or that it was read by a lower class audience[226]. For both the editorial position in the text, and the attitudes and values within which the text moves appear to belong firmly to the élite.

Herodian's text shows no sympathy whatsoever with the lower class. Given half a chance the lower class exhibit a distressing hostility to their betters. The lower class seize the opportunity to loot the homes of the rich (7.12.7). They are indifferent to the sufferings of the élite; some through envy go so far as to welcome them (7.3.4–6). In this text it is good that Maximus was firm with the unstable rabble of the lower class (7.10.6). Herodian's text wheels out the character failings commonly attributed to the lower class by those with an élite attitude. They lack political insight (1.15.7). They are inconstant (7.7.1), and excessively gullible (8.3.4). Herodian's text completely identifies with the monied classes. The destruction of the Temple of Peace at Rome was a disaster of the first magnitude because "everyone used it as a deposit for his possessions" (1.14.3). Herodian thus equates "everyone in Rome" with those rich enough to need banking services. The text's judgement of emperors by their possession of *paideia* was an option only available to the élite (above, section IV).

The text's élite stance is explicitly and repeatedly Greek not Roman. Numerous 'Roman' things are explained to an audience said to be Greek (1.11.1). Some examples, drawn from book one, are the practice of giving donatives to the troops at imperial accessions (1.5.1), the Romans' festivals of Jupiter (1.9.2) and of the mother of the gods (1.10.5; 1.11.1–5), overcrowding at Rome (1.12.1), the Temple of Peace at Rome (1.14.2–3), the Colossus at Rome (1.15.9), the Roman festival of local gods (1.16.1–3), and the Roman emperors' practice of taking an antidote to poison before each meal (1.17.10)[227]. Most of the 'Roman things' explained are so staggeringly obvious that we are led to assume that most educated Greeks would have known them already. This, however, should not lead to the further assumption that Herodian wrote

[225] This has been argued most cogently by ALFÖLDY, Person, 227–233. It is a popular view (BOWERSOCK, op. cit. [n. 2], 711; DIETZ, op. cit. [n. 81], 33–34; RUBIN, op. cit. [n. 18], 88; ŠAŠEL-KOS, op. cit. [n. 2], 276–278), but not a unanimous one (B. FORTE, Rome and the Romans as the Greeks saw them [Rome, 1972], 364; P. PETIT, Histoire générale de l'Empire romain [Paris, 1974], 372). In essence all hinges on one phrase in Herodian, ἐν βασιλικαῖς ἢ δημοσίαις ὑπηρεσίαις 1.2.5. In Herodian ὑπηρεσία normally denotes low offices (ALFÖLDY, Person, 228–229), although not always (3.5.6). Yet, given Herodian's general imprecision of language, and the self-deprecating tone of the introduction (above, section I), it seems unsafe to press this one phrase too hard.

[226] *Contra* ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 431–432.

[227] A partial list is given by WHITTAKER I, xxix, who notes that any such list is "somewhat arbitrary". To his list I would add: 1.5.1; 1.14.2–3; 1.17.10; 2.6.3; 2.11.3–5; 2.11.8; 2.12.4; 2.14.2; 3.7.8; 3.8.10; 3.9.1; 3.11.2; 3.13.3; 5.2.4; 5.5.7; 5.5.9; 6.3.2; 6.5.4; 7.5.8; 7.6.5; 7.6.8; 7.6.9; 7.7.5; 7.9.1; 7.11.3; 7.12.5; 7.12.7; 8.2.4; 8.3.7–9; 8.4.2; 8.7.1; 8.7.4; 8.8.5.

for an ill-educated lower class audience. Although, as we have seen (above, section III), knowledge of the rest of the empire among the élites of the Greek cities in the east was probably not profound, the supposed 'ignorance' of 'Roman things' of Herodian's audience should be seen largely as a pretence. Despite speaking of Latin as if it were unknown to his audience (7.5.8; 8.3.7), Herodian casually betrays that he knows Latin, and also that he expects his audience to know Latin, when he gives an etymology unintelligible to those without Latin (1.12.2). The 'obviousness' of the 'Roman things' explained in the text is best interpreted as an offer by the text to its reader to join it in a collusive game: "let us pretend we know nothing about the Roman empire". As such it is analogous to the game offered by most of the Greek novels to their élite audience: "let us pretend the Roman empire does not exist".

Herodian does not easily fit into the modern orthodoxy that under the principate Greeks were reconciled to, or even identified with, Rome[228]. Herodian does not identify with the Romans[229]. For Herodian the Roman empire was an alien monarchy (1.1.4; 2.11.5; see above, section IV). In the text an emperor reveals its secret: the military oath taken by the soldiers (8.7.4). Herodian was completely alienated from Rome's soldiers[230], for they were barbarian mercenaries (see above, n. 90). In one passage Herodian explains Rome's rise to empire as being due to all her citizens bearing arms under her previous political organisation (2.11.4; see above, n. 149). He alludes to the Roman belief that the empire was divinely ordained (1.11.3). But he also offers an explanation of Rome's acquisition of her empire far more acceptable to a Greek. It was not Roman power, virtue or whatever, but a Greek failing. The Greek penchant for inter-city feuds, which had continued to Herodian's day, weakened the Greeks, and led first to Macedonian domination then to Roman enslavement (Μακεδόσιν εὐάλωτα καὶ Ρωμαίοις δοῦλα, 3.2.8). While there

228 *Contra* ROQUES, op. cit. (n. 2), 13, *«l'attachment à l'Empire d'écrivains grecs comme ... Hérodien ne fait aucun doute»*. J. PALM, Rom, Römertum und Imperium in der Griechischen Literatur der Kaiserzeit, Acta Soc. hum. Litt. Lundensis 57 (Lund, 1959), 82–83, gives only a few lines to Herodian.
The modern orthodoxy needs re-examination; H. SIDEBOTTOM, Review of D. A. RUSSELL, Dio Chrysostom. Orations VII, XII and XXXVI (Cambridge, 1992), in: Journal of Roman Studies 84 (1994), 265–266. A thorough re-assessment is provided in S. C. R. SWAIN, Hellenism and Empire, Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50–250 (Oxford, 1996) (on which however, see the critical review by G. W. BOWERSOCK, International Journal of the Classical Tradition 4.1 [Spring 1997], forthcoming).

229 Herodian's reference to the Alps as being bigger than any mountains in "our part of the world", 2.11.8, probably refers to the Greek world (thus WHITTAKER I, 20, n. 1), not to the whole Roman empire (thus ALFÖLDY, Person, 220, n. 62); cf. the reference to "our" cities, 1.1.4 (see above, section IV). "Our" generation being the first to see the Palladium (1.14.4) or some exotic animals (1.15.4) hardly amounts to an identification with the Romans (cf. above, section III, on *Neuigkeiten*).

230 See H. SIDEBOTTOM, Philosophers' attitudes to warfare under the principate, in: J. RICH and G. SHIPLEY (eds.), War and Society in the Roman World (London, 1993), 250–254, for a discussion of the effects on civilian attitudes of the separation of Greek society from the armed forces.

is no suggestion that it would be either practical or desirable for the Greeks to get rid of Roman rule[231], it cannot be said that Herodian's text was particularly in favour of the foreigners who had enslaved the Greeks[232].

It should go without saying that all cultural activity is to some extent political activity. It is worth asking what political implications Herodian's text could have had for the Greek élite. In an extremely important article EWEN BOWIE convincingly argued that in the Second Sophistic the Greek élite's preoccupation with its own past was largely caused by the distressing contrast between its contemporary cultural and economic prosperity, and its political dependence[233]. In the words of FERGUS MILLAR the concentration on the past was "a means of flight from an oppressive and inglorious present"[234]. Herodian's text offered another way to dull the contrast[235]. The contemporary world was rewritten and recreated to make it more acceptable to the Greek élite. In the world of Herodian's text the possession or lack of Greek *paideia* largely shaped the character of the Roman emperor, and the character of the emperor, in turn, largely shaped both the political stability of his reign, and the morality of his subjects (above, section IV). Greek *paideia* was centralized, and revealed as the true basis of all the good that could be hoped for from the Roman empire. *Paideia* was, of course, the possession of the Greek élite, which could via the distorting mirror of Herodian's text see itself as in some way controlling the destiny of the Roman empire. Philostratus, Themistius and others made the Roman empire more acceptable to the Greek élite by crediting emperors with Greek advisors they in reality never had[236]. At a pinch the Roman emperor was revealed as little more than the agent of the Greek advisor[237]. Herodian's

[231] In the logic of Herodian's text to argue for Greek independence would be pointless: if the Greeks achieved 'freedom', their continuing inter-city feuds presumably would lead them to be enslaved again, either by a resurgent Rome or some other 'barbarian' power. On this passage (3.2.8) cf. UNRUH, op. cit. (n. 108), 145.

[232] It seems significant that in his explanations of Roman religion (and these make up the majority of his explanations of 'Roman things') Herodian never states his own acceptance of the Roman view. He tells why the Romans especially venerate the mother of the gods (1.11.1), but for him, and for his audience, it is only an (implicity untrue) interesting story (1.11.5). It is not impossible to read into Herodian's descriptions of such things as the Roman belief that the eagle released from the emperor's pyre carried his soul to the heavens (4.2.11), or the especial faith that Italians place in divination from entrails (8.3.7) the tone of a Greek pretending to be Herodotus recounting the strange superstitions of a barbarian people (compare 1.14.6 on the Romans, with 3.3.8 on Pannonians, and 5.3.5 on Phoenicians).

[233] BOWIE, op. cit. (n. 7), 166–209, esp. 205–209.

[234] MILLAR, op. cit. (n. 144), 12. The phrase actually is offered as one of a series of seemingly mutually exclusive explanations.

[235] Which is not to say that were we able to question Herodian he would go beyond the statements analysed above in section I. What follows are possible readings of Herodian's text which could have been made by the Greek élite.

[236] E. RAWSON, Roman Rulers and the Philosophic Adviser, in: M. GRIFFIN and J. BARNES (eds.), Philosophia Togata (Oxford, 1989), 233–257, esp. 248–257.

[237] E. BOWIE, Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality, ANRW II. 16.2, ed. W. HAASE (Berlin–New York, 1978), 1660.

text offered a less personalized, but more pervasive way of making the present somewhat less oppressive, inglorious and distressing.

This does not exhaust the possible political implications of Herodian's text for the Greek élite. The centrality of *paideia* in the imagined world of Herodian not only gave the Greek élite a way of feeling better about its political subservience to Rome, but also provided it with a legitimation of its own position in Greek society. Apart from exceptional circumstances[238], the Greek élite considered itself the sole owner of *paideia* in Greek society. As the élite, at least in its own eyes, possessed and the non-élite did not the very thing which could give practical and moral well-being to the Roman empire, little further justification was needed of the élite's position in Greek society.

VII. Conclusions

This article has attempted to move the emphasis of modern academic discourse on Herodian from sources and reliability to the text's interest and intentions, as well as to the possible evocations and uses of the text for contemporary or near-contemporary readers. Modern *Quellenforschung* has been seen to produce no very clear results. Herodian appears to have used a variety of sources, among them, interestingly enough, contemporary art. That Herodian knew and used Cassius Dio's history is incontrovertible, but the level of dependence is more debatable. On the current state of evidence and argumentation, the theory that Dio was the *Hauptquelle* of Herodian must remain unproven, and certain factors, above all the lack of a discernible change in Herodian's history when Dio runs out, seem to cast doubt on it (section II).

The most interesting modern theory about Herodian's intentions, the view of ALFÖLDY that Herodian saw and attempted to analyse the third century crisis, has been argued to be mistaken. That it is so possibly should not surprise, for it has been suggested that no contemporary saw the crisis, possibly because the crisis, at least as the all-embracing phenomenon perceived by modern scholars, may not have existed (section III).

It has been argued that Herodian's text exhibits a coherent understanding of history. Contemporary history was a history of an alien monarchy. What was of crucial importance in the history of the monarchy was the character of the ruler, on which depended the political stability of the empire and the morality of its subjects. In the world of Herodian's text what above all shaped the character of the ruler was whether or not he possessed Greek *paideia* (section IV).

[238] Such as a philosopher re-defining *paideia* to mean a divine education which anyone could receive, or an intellectual claiming to find true *arete* and *paideia* out among the rustics (e.g. Dio Chrysostom in 'Oration One. On Kingship').

Herodian's text has been argued to be a reasonably sophisticated work. The introduction could be read not as an unthinking echo of Thucydides, but as a fairly skilled piece of writing, which gave a good impression of the narrative to come (section I). The text has been seen to employ a variety of narratological (what have been labelled 'linear' and 'formulaic' narrative constructions) and rhetorical (anticipatory glimpses and the ironic tone of the speeches) devices to further the reader's engagement with the text; fostering the fiction of the reader's mastery over the text and thus the history. The employment of these devices can lead to falsification of history. But it has been argued that Herodian's text was not completely indifferent to the claims of historical truth. Rather than working to a conception of historical truth radically different from ours, it is suggested that Herodian used a criterion of 'true enough': that he placed the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable falsehood in a place different from where we conventionally consider we place it. Certain levels of historical truth could be 'played with' or sacrificed in order to reveal more clearly what the text sets up as more profound levels of truth: the character of the emperor and his relationship with *paideia* (section V).

Herodian himself may have been from the lower class, but both the attitude and audience of his text are to be understood in a Greek élite context. Herodian's text is not particularly well-disposed to Rome; which is treated as an alien thing needing explanation. The text's reconstruction of the Roman empire with the centralization of Greek *paideia* allows the text to fulfil two political functions for the Greek élite: to make their subservience to Rome more acceptable, and to justify their position as the élite in Greek society (section VI).

The attempt to move the discourse from sources and reliability to interests, intentions and ancient reader responses cannot avoid the question of how we should value Herodian as an historian. Yet such value judgements are difficult. A brief comparison of attitudes to Dexippus and Herodian shows how such value judgements tend to shed more light on trends in contemporary historiography than on their putative subjects. A recent study comes to the conclusions that "there is no evidence to suggest that Dexippus made a conscientious effort to interview witnesses or consult a wide range of documents", and that he "was little, if at all, better informed than the authors of the '13th Sibylline Oracle"[239]. Dexippus appears to have made mistakes[240], and to have happily trotted out fanciful 'information'[241]. His descriptions of sieges in the 'Skythika' are characterised as "no more than artful arrangements of *strategemata*, just as the speeches are no more than artful collections of topoi"[242]. Yet Dexippus is commonly more highly rated than Herodian as an historian. Two reasons

[239] POTTER, op. cit. (n. 36), 86–87, and 82.

[240] In the 'Chronika' he thought Gallus' son Volusianus was the son of Decius, FGH 100 F 22; POTTER, op. cit. (n. 36), 88.

[241] In the 'Skythika' the Romans defeat 300,000 "Skyths", FGH 100 F 25; POTTER, op. cit. (n. 36), 85.

[242] POTTER, op. cit. (n. 36), 86.

for this can be found[243]. First, Dexippus' *corpus* is largely lost, thus allowing the modern scholar to project back into it whatever he or she wishes to find. Second, among his works, Dexippus wrote a 'Chronika'. This 'Chronika', a very different thing from a true history for either an ancient or a modern theoretician[244], was by definition full of names, dates and places. Thus, a positivist modern historian, for example one who saw, or still sees, prosopography as a valid, if not the most valid, way of reconstructing the past can regret the loss of Dexippus, and find the extant Herodian far less amenable. Our judgements of the value of historians working in other cultures are thus often little more than a record of the kind of history we want to write.

Instead of a 'sober' chronicle, Herodian gives us a highly rhetorical narrative. He has often been condemned for this[245]. But the places of both rhetoric and narrative in historiography are under revision. Rhetoric, in its broader sense of using words to persuade, is unavoidable in historiography[246]. While, as PELLING has recently suggested, rhetoric in its ancient Greek sense is not necessarily a bad thing for the writing of history[247]. It can help to order material, see both sides of an argument, suspect bias, argue a point, and enhance enjoyment. Similarly, the importance of narrative in historical discourse has recently been reaffirmed, particularly in the works of HAYDEN WHITE[248]. Herodian cannot be condemned out of hand as a bad historian because he offers us a rhetorical narrative.

An attempt at a judgement of Herodian as an historian that has any pretences to be anything other than anachronistic and culture-specific has to face up to the wide gulf between the desires a modern historian conventionally takes to the text of a work of history, and those which an ancient reader took. We want a large number of 'hard core' facts – names, dates, places. We want the historian to reveal his working methods. We want narrative mixed with, or replaced by analysis. Yet we want the text to, at least partly, conceal its rhetoric – we are suspicious of fine writing. To risk a broad generalization, the ancient reader of a history, as opposed to a chronicle, wanted much the opposite.

[243] A possible third reason is that Dexippus (quite correctly) is recognised to have an élite viewpoint (e.g. R. CALABRESE, La concezione della storia in Dexippo di Atene, Sileno 4 (1978), 129–143), while Herodian (mistakenly) is not.

[244] Lucian, How to write history, 27.4–6; H. V. WHITE, The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality, Critical Inquiry 7 (1980), 10–27.

[245] For example by ŠAŠEL-KOS, op. cit. (n. 2), 282: "he was a mediocre recorder of the recent past and his own times who was caught in the rhetoric of the second sophistic" (my emphasis). Rhetoric, we are told, leads to "superficiality", "imprecision", "numerous nebulous statements and factual errors". Such a view presupposes that rhetoric is a thoroughly bad thing, and that there is some form of "true historiography" untainted by it (ID., 316).

[246] This is one of the themes of H. V. WHITE, Metahistory: the historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe (Baltimore, 1973); ID., Tropics of Discourse: essays in cultural criticism (Baltimore, 1978).

[247] PELLING, op. cit. (n. 5), 23.

[248] See, The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory, History and Theory 23 (1984), 1–33; and the works cited above in notes 244 and 246.

Possibly we can partly bridge the gulf, and engage our imagination in something closer to empathy with the ancient readers' desires, if we consider the desires the historically minded modern reader takes to a very different sort of text dealing with history: the modern historical novel[249]. When approaching an historical novel we are quite ready to sacrifice certain levels of truth; to collude with the text in the fictionality of characters and incidents (these people did not exist and/or these incidents did not happen to these people, in this way, at that time, in that place, etc.). But we are not ready to abandon other levels of historical truth. We expect J. G. FARRELL to have told us the 'truth' about the dynamics of a siege in the Indian Mutiny or PATRICK O'BRIEN to do the same about, say, the logistics of Nelson's navy. At a deeper level, we expect their narratives to not only entertain, but to lead us to an enhanced understanding of the attitudes and values of the societies they describe[250]. The analogy is far from exact, but here we are probably closer to the desires of an ancient reader than we are when reading 'conventional' history.

Ironically Herodian has been condemned precisely for being like a modern historical novelist[251]. Yet the boundaries between 'straight' history and the historical novel appear to be more fluid now than they have been for over a century and a half. For example, the eminent historian of China JONATHAN SPENCE has cast a recent work, The Question of Hu (New York, 1988), in a form virtually indistinguishable from a novel. He employs the present tense throughout, and eschews analysis for a supple narrative which leads its reader to construct his or her own analyses of the book's themes: such as the difficulties that different cultures have in understanding each other's concepts of such things as madness or duty[252].

Given the debate about the place of rhetoric, narrative, and novelistic forms in current historiography, we can venture a new formulation of the value of Herodian as an historian: not (with KOLB and ALFÖLDY) "Herodian is like a historical novelist, and is thus a bad historian": nor (with BOWERSOCK) "Herodian is not like a historical novelist, and is thus not such a bad historian"; but (a possibly more ambiguous, but certainly more thought-provoking position)

[249] I take as examples the novels of J. G. FARRELL, especially The Siege of Krishnapur (London, 1973), and the continuing series of novels by P. O'BRIEN, from Master and Commander (London, 1970) to The Wine Dark Sea (London, 1993).

[250] That the narratives of these novels do this is hard to prove. But, by way of illustration that they do, when I read N. A. M. RODGER's enjoyable work of 'conventional history', The Wooden World. An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy (London, 1986), I found that, for example, I already 'knew' much of the social gradations and attitudes of naval officers (ID., 252–327) from reading the novels of O'BRIEN.

[251] Condemned by KOLB, 161; and ALFÖLDY, Zeitgeschichte, 431; and defended from this charge by BOWERSOCK, op. cit. (n. 2), 712.

[252] See also the experiments with novelistic forms in S. SCHAMA, Dead Certainties (Unwarranted Speculations) (London, 1991). For similar debate in a related discipline see GEERTZ, op. cit. (n. 165). While GEERTZ decides that anthropologists do not write fiction ("in a strict sense", 6), in his readings they seem to come very close to it (13; 15).

"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".

Bibliography

Note: MARTINELLI, op. cit. (n. 2), gives a bibliography of Herodian from 1883 to 1987. Despite this, I have tried to be reasonably inclusive, especially of works published since 1987 (up to 1994 when this article was written). Some works where treatment of Herodian is tangential and/or unilluminating have been passed over, although the critical reader may judge that some which fall into one or both the above categories have been included. Other, better studies have no doubt escaped me. The bibliography is divided into three parts: I, texts and translations; II, modern works which (at least in part) deal with Herodian; and III, other modern works cited in this study.

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Erodiano e la crisi dell'impero

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Sommario

I. Premessa

Fonte essenziale circa la crisi che l'impero romano subì fra il II e il III secolo è Erodiano, autore di un'opera storica in greco che tratta il periodo dalla morte di Marco Aurelio alla proclamazione di Gordiano III (180–238 d. C.). La valutazione di tale opera, che ebbe grande popolarità[1], ha suscitato forti

[1] Cfr. SIEVERS 1867, pp. 31–3; BAAZ, 1909, pp. 65–80; DOPP 1912, col. 959; WHITTAKER 1969–70, I, p. XXXVII. In particolare, per la conoscenza da parte di Ammiano Marcellino, BROOK 1966–67; per i rapporti con le biografie della 'Historia Augusta', KOLB 1972, passim; LIPPOLD 1991, pp. 17 e 59 ss. con bibliografia. Interessante è pure l'imitazione da parte di Eunapio: cfr. G. GIANGRANDE, Herodianismus bei Eunapius. Ein Beitrag zur Beleuchtung der imitatio in der späteren Gräzitat, Hermes LXXXIV 1956, pp. 320–31.

dissensi fra gli studiosi, poichè, mentre alcuni considerano Erodiano storico di scarsissime capacità, portato ad inventare e colorire episodi senza alcun rispetto per la verità[2], altri ne hanno invece difeso l'attendibilità, offrendo un giudizio complessivamente positivo della sua informazione e del suo scrupolo per la verità[3], soprattutto per quel che riguarda la narrazione del regno di Massimino[4]; in ogni caso, l'opera di Erodiano s'impone all'attenzione per il suo carattere di testimonianza di un contemporaneo, che fu anche spettatore di alcuni degli eventi che narra, in un periodo agitato sul quale, con l'eccezione del racconto di Cassio Dione, conservato in frammenti, e delle biografie della 'Historia Augusta', la documentazione letteraria è estremamente scarsa.

Nato con tutta probabilità in una città greca dell'Asia Minore[5], verso l'epoca della morte di Marco Aurelio[6], Erodiano, forse liberto, ricoprì uffici minori nell'amministrazione imperiale, che gli permisero una diretta conoscenza e partecipazione alle vicende politiche[7]. La sua posizione sociale, in quanto

[2] Cfr. in particolare HOHL 1932, coll. 1143–44 (*„Es dürfte sich ergeben haben, daß uns Hdn. über das Ende des Commodus einen für den Historiker ungenießbaren Geschichtsroman auftischt"*); ID. 1950, p. 176; ID. 1954, pp. 5 ss.; ID. 1956, pp. 3 (*„... der Geschichtsroman des Levantiners Herodians"*); BURROWS 1956 (in partic. pp. 21, 39 e 41–43); GRAHAM 1966, p. 106–07; REARDON 1971, pp. 216–19; ALFÖLDY 1971b, p. 431; KOLB 1972, p. 161; ALFÖLDY 1973, pp. 350–52; BARNES 1978, p. 82–3; RUBIN 1980, pp. 85 ss.; LE GALL-LE GLAY 1987, p. 538; BIRLEY 1988, pp. 172 e 204–05.

[3] Cfr. ad es. ALTHEIM 1948, pp. 165–74; CASSOLA 1956–57, pp. 195 ss.; GROSSO 1964, pp. 30 ss., 45–7 e passim; WHITTAKER 1969–70, I, pp. XXVIII–XXIX; BOWERSOCK 1975; ŠAŠEL KOS 1986, pp. 294–300.

[4] Cfr. in particolare FUCHS 1896, pp. 182 e 209; ROSTOVZEV 1933, pp. 507, 512, 529–30, n. 31; BERSANETTI 1940, pp. 73 ss.; CASSOLA 1957, p. 221; GAGÉ 1970, pp. 323 ss.; LORIOT 1975, pp. 660–61; DIETZ 1976, pp. 381–82; ID. 1980, pp. 35–6; GASCÓ 1984, pp. 359–60.

[5] Cfr. in partic., anche contro le ipotesi che egli fosse nativo di Alessandria, della Siria (cfr. ad es. BAAZ 1909, p. 80–81; ancora STEIN 1957, p. 72; ECHOLS 1961, pp. 3 ss.; OLIVA 1962, p. 16; MAZZARINO 1966, p. 204; FORTE 1972, p. 364 e, in forma dubitativa, BOWERSOCK, 1975, p. 236, n. 35), o della Grecia, CASSOLA 1957, pp. 213 ss.; WIDMER 1967, pp. 68–9; ALFÖLDY 1971a, 219–225; dubbi sono comunque espressi dal WHITTAKER (1969–70, I, pp. XXIV–XXVII) e dal GASCÓ (1982), che considerano la questione irrisolta. Contro l'interpretazione dell'accenno alle Alpi (Herodian. II 11, 8) come prova che egli non fosse originario dell'Italia cfr. comunque WHITTAKER 1969–70, I, pp. XXIV e 220, n. 1; ALFÖLDY 1971a, p. 220, n. 62.

[6] Cfr. CASSOLA 1957, p. 217; poco prima del 177 secondo il GROSSO (1964, pp. 30–32; cfr. WHITTAKER 1969–70, I, pp. XI–XII; LIPPOLD 1991, p. 59, n. 1). Sul problema cfr. inoltre ALFÖLDY 1971a, pp. 205–06 con bibliografia.

[7] Herodian. I 2, 5: ... ἔστι δ'ὢν καὶ πείρᾳ μετέσχον ἐν βασιλικαῖς καὶ δημοσίαις ὑπηρεσίαις γενόμενος. Lo scetticismo del BARNES (1978, p. 83) è ingiustificato. Sugli incarichi di Erodiano nell'amministrazione imperiale e sulla sua condizione sociale cfr. in partic., DOPP 1912, coll. 954–55; SOMMERFELDT 1914–16; H.-G. PFLAUM, Rev. Ét. Lat. XXXII, 1954, p. 450; HOHL 1956, pp. 44–5, n. 24; CASSOLA 1957, p. 221, n. 2, WHITTAKER 1969–70, I, pp. XIX–XXIV; ALFÖLDY 1971 a, pp. 227–30. L'ipotesi (cfr. soprattutto DOMASZEVSKI 1908, p. 237, n. 1; GROSSO 1964, pp. 34–5 e 42; ŠAŠEL KOS 1986, p. 278; DIHLE 1989, p. 356) che egli fosse un liberto è comunque considerata dubbia dal SOMMERFELDT (1914–16) e dallo STEIN (1957, p. 73; cfr. anche WHITTAKER 1969–70, I, pp. XXI–

esponente di una classe agiata[8], ma estranea alla nobiltà[9], ne fa inoltre un osservatore prezioso, in quanto estraneo all'antitesi, che caratterizza la tradizione di quell'epoca, fra la storiografia di corte, della quale egli stigmatizza la costante tendenza all'adulazione[10], e quella senatoria, rappresentata soprattutto da Cassio Dione e dalle biografie della 'Historia Augusta'[11], che interpretava i fatti in base agli interessi, alle simpatie e ai rancori di una classe che si sentiva sempre più estromessa dalla guida dello stato.

Infine, l'epoca stessa in cui Erodiano compose la sua opera si riflette sulle caratteristiche di essa: scrivendo infatti all'epoca di Filippo l'Arabo (244–249 d. C.)[12] o sotto Decio[13], quindi circa tre decenni dopo Cassio Dione[14], Erodiano rifletteva l'atteggiamento e il giudizio della generazione successiva e, soprattutto, poteva avere una visione ben più completa della crisi in cui si trovava l'impero, delle sue cause e della sua ampiezza[15]. Ciò risulta di particolare importanza, se si considera che alcuni aspetti essenziali della crisi nell'interpretazione di Erodiano, come l'ascesa degli imperatori imposti dall'esercito, l'opposizione fra quest'ultimo e il senato e la nomina di imperatori bambini, ebbero sviluppi essenziali proprio nell'epoca di Massimino e dei Gordiani, successiva a Cassio Dione.

Per questi motivi, la testimonianza di Erodiano resta preziosa e, se gli studiosi hanno sottolineato il carattere retorico della sua opera[16] e la mancanza di una riflessione originale sui problemi politici[17], converrà esaminare, in parti-

XXIII; FORTE 1972, p. 364). L'ALFÖLDY (1971a, p. 229; cfr. anche DIETZ 1980, p. 34) lo ritiene piuttosto figlio di un liberto imperiale.

[8] L'ipotesi (CALDERINI 1949, p. 4; PIGANIOL 1954, p. 411; SALAMA 1964, p. 338) che egli sia divenuto cavaliere resta comunque indimostrata.

[9] L'ipotesi del VOLCKMANN (1859, pp. 66 ss.; cfr. anche POBLOCKI 1864, pp. 5–6; PLATNAUER 1918, p. 1) che Erodiano fosse senatore è generalmente e giustamente respinta (cfr. ad es. STEIN 1957, pp. 72–3 e 190, n. 90; MAZZARINO 1966, p. 206; WHITTAKER 1969–70, I, pp. XIX–XX).

[10] Herodian. I 1, 2; II 15, 7.

[11] Per questa fondamentale differenza di prospettiva cfr. in partic. riguardo a Cassio Dione MAZZARINO 1966, pp. 205–08; riguardo alla 'Historia Augusta' JOHNE 1969. Circa le tendenze filosenatorie della storiografia latina del IV secolo sulla crisi del secolo precedente cfr. POLVERINI 1976.

[12] Cfr. CASSOLA 1957, pp. 216–18; GROSSO 1964, pp. 31 e 35; MILLAR 1964, pp. 14–5; WIDMER 1967, pp. 70–71; WHITTAKER 1969–70, I, pp. XIV–XIX; RUBIN 1980, p. 87.

[13] Cfr. ALFÖLDY 1971a, pp. 209–19; DIETZ 1980, p. 34; GASCÓ 1982, p. 165, n. 2; LIPPOLD 1991, p. 59. *Contra* ŠAŠEL KOS 1986, p. 280.

[14] Per la composizione della massima parte dell'opera di Cassio Dione negli anni 218–219 cfr. in partic. MILLAR 1964, pp. 119–20 e 194; si vedano comunque i dubbi dello STANTON (1975, p. 484).

[15] Argomento, questo, ottimamente evidenziato dall'ALFÖLDY (1971b, p. 432–33).

[16] Cfr. ad es. FUCHS 1895, pp. 244–48; 1896, pp. 218–29; PETER 1897, pp. 102, 290–92 e 322; NORDEN 1898, p. 397 e n. 4; PETER 1911, pp. 397–98; DOPP 1912, col. 955–56; BERSANETTI 1938, pp. 361–62; STEIN 1957, pp. 91–120; SYME 1971, p. 184; WHITTAKER 1969–70, I, pp. LII–LVIII; REARDON 1971, pp. 216–18; KOLB 1972, p. 161; DIETZ 1980, p. 34.

[17] Cfr. WHITTAKER 1969–70, I, p. LXXII.