Speech and Narrative Setting in Herodian's *History*: Marcus Aurelius and Pertinax

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THIS ARTICLE ANALYZES the 'narrative settings' in the speeches of Herodian's *History of the Empire*. By narrative setting I refer to a complex structure with three levels (the terms immediately preceding the speech itself, the sentence that contains them, and the broader oratorical context) used by Classical-era historians, such as Thucydides, to introduce speeches in their narratives.[1] These settings serve crucial goals: they define where and when a speech is uttered, characterize the speaker, and create a referential and pragmatic framework that aims to condition the readerly response. Unlike these introductory, highly elaborated sections, the closing settings that

[1] On the narrative setting in Greek historiography, with special attention to the work of Thucydides, see J. E. Harrison, "Thucydides' Mode of Presenting his Speeches," *PCPhS* 79–80 (1908) 10–13; G. T. Griffith, "Some Habits of Thucydides When Introducing Persons," *PCPhS* N.S. 7 (1961) 21–33; H. D. Westlake, "The Settings of the Thucydidean Speeches," in P. A. Stadter (ed.), *The Speeches of Thucydides* (Chapel Hill 1973) 90–108; J. C. Iglesias-Zoido, "El sistema de engarce narrativo en los discursos de Tucídides," *Talia dixit* 1 (2006) 1–25; J. V. Morrison, "Interaction of Speech and Narrative in Thucydides," in A. Rengakos et al. (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* (Leiden 2006) 251–277; M. Pavlou, "Attributive Discourse in the Speeches in Thucydides," in A. Tsakmakis et al. (eds.), *Thucydides between History and Literature* (Berlin 2013) 409–424. I use in this study the concept developed by Westlake. Cf. also A. Laird, *Powers of Expression, Expressions of Power. Speech Presentation and Latin Literature* (Oxford 1999) 87–115.

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follow a speech are simpler, being focused instead on the intradiegetic audience's reaction to and the consequences deriving from it. I argue that analysis of Herodian's systematic but underacknowledged use of the narrative settings for his speeches can shed new light on the rhetorical style and narratological strategies of a historian who has traditionally been misunderstood by critics and whose speeches have been criticized as poorly elaborated and evidence of a second-rate author.

Studying how Herodian used narrative settings for his speeches affords a unique opportunity to further our knowledge of Imperial historiography and rhetoric. While the scholarship has paid close attention to how Thucydides created the blueprint for the use of narrative settings and how Classical historians followed his example, the presence of this device in Imperial historiography remains understudied.[2] Broadly speaking, most scholars agree that speeches (*logoi*) are not stand-alone features within a historiographical work; on the contrary, the *logoi* actively interact with the narrative that frames them (*erga*).[3] That said, these narrative frames have attracted relatively scant attention, notwithstanding two important factors: first, that their existence is clearly conditioned by the speeches they introduce; and second, that they afforded ancient historians an opportunity to play with a literary and rhetorical device of important consequences. Thus, these narrative settings have the dual mission of contextualising the speeches for the reader (pro-

[2] On narrative settings in historians of the Imperial era, the importance of the Thucydidean model, and the use of literary allusions, see J. C. Iglesias-Zoido, "Narrative Settings and *actio* in Greek Historiography: The Thucydidean Model," in I. Moreno et al. (eds.), *La representación de la Actio en la historiografía griega y latina* (Rome 2016) 1–25.

[3] Cf. J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge 1997), and *On Writing History from Herodotus to Herodian* (London 2017) lviii–lx; L. Pitcher, "Herodian," in M. de Bakker et al. (eds.), *Speech in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative* (Leiden 2022) 344–345 ("Speech and Narrative").

viding key evidence for the historiographer's point of view in so doing) and bridging the gap between narration and speech, in keeping with the given work's methodology.[4] Some scholars have studied the settings unsystematically, approaching them as just another narrative section which offers occasional information about the speaker, the content of a speech, or its context.[5] Instead, I contend that a different approach to these sections, halfway between speech and narration *sensu stricto*, is in order: we should study the narrative settings systematically and comparatively to better judge their functions, their multi-level structures, and their 'unwritten rules'—especially in the works of Imperial authors whose *modus operandi* is constrained by the imperatives of imitation.[6] In fact, it can be argued that these settings, being fertile ground for intertextuality and allusion,[7]

[4] Cf. Laird, *Powers of Expression* 87–115 ("Speech modes for presenting discourse").

[5] Cf. Westlake, in *The Speeches of Thucydides* 90–108, who has studied the settings of Thucydides' Books V and VIII in relation to those used in the rest of the work with the intention of shedding light on the historian's methods and compositional stages.

[6] On these concepts in ancient historiography see R. Brock, "Versions, 'Inversions' and Evasions: Classical Historiography and the 'Published' Speech," *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* 8 (1995) 209–224; R. Nicolai, *La storiografia nell'educazione antica* (Pisa 1992), and "Polibio interprete di Tucidide: la teoria dei discorsi," *SemRom* 2 (1999) 281–301; Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*. These historiographical rules cannot be found anywhere (in fact, no technical historiographical *techne* is preserved), but they are followed with extraordinary precision by subsequent historians in a process of *imitatio* with regard to the most influential models.

[7] On the keys of the genre during the Antonine era see G. Zecchini, "Modelli e problemi teorici della storiografia nell'età degli Antonini," *CS* 20 (1983) 3–31; A. Kemezis, "Lucian, Fronto and the Absence of Contemporary Historiography under the Antonines," *AJP* 131 (2010) 285–325, and, applied specifically to Herodian, *Greek Narratives of the Roman Empire under the Severans* (Cambridge 2014) 227–272; J. Marincola, "The Rhetoric of History: Allusion, Intertextuality, and Exemplarity in Historiographical Speeches," in D. Pausch (ed.), *Stimmen der Geschichte: Funktionen von Reden in der antiken*

may even have conditioned the success of a historiographical work during the Imperial period, a time characterized by the erudite scope of the authors and the readers' deep knowledge of the Classical models.[8]

In this context, the speeches of Herodian's *History* provide a case-study of great interest.[9] These speeches have long attracted the attention of the scholarship, albeit for reasons different from those that occupy me here.[10] Traditionally, critics such as

Historiographie (Berlin 2010) 259–289.

[8] On the way in which narrative settings offer the author's perspective and condition the reader's reception and determine the typology of the discourse or its form of utterance, see Iglesias-Zoido, in *Actio* 1–25. Cf. D. Carmona, *La escena de la epipólesis. De la épica a la historiografía* (Rome 2014), who has studied the role played by the narrative settings in introducing a specific type of military harangue, the *epipolesis*, in which the allusive element is essential.

[9] On Herodian's work see W. Widmer, *Kaisertum, Rom und Welt in Herodians Meta Markon Basileias Historia* (Zurich 1967); F. Kolb, *Literarische Beziehungen zwischen Cassius Dio, Herodian und der Historia Augusta* (Bonn 1972); H. Sidebottom, "Herodian's Historical Methods and Understanding of History," *ANRW* II 34.4 (1998) 2775–2836; M. Zimmermann, *Kaiser und Ereignis: Studien zum Geschichtswerk Herodians* (Munich 1999); B. Kuhn-Chen, *Geschichtskonzeptionen griechischer Historiker im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Frankfurt 2002); T. Hidber, *Herodians Darstellung der Kaisergeschichte nach Marc Aurel* (Basel 2006); A. Galimberti, *Erodiano e Commodo. Traduzione e commento storico al primo libro della Storia dell'Impero* (Göttingen 2014); Kemezis, *Greek Narratives*; A. Galimberti, *Erodiano. Tra crisi e transformazione* (Milan 2017); and, especially, two works that offer a renewed vision of the historian, A. Galimberti (ed.), *Herodian's World. Empire and Emperors in the III Century* (Leiden 2022), and C. S. Chrysanthou, *Reconfiguring the Imperial Past: Narrative Patterns and Historical Interpretation in Herodian's History of the Empire* (Leiden 2022). I am using C. R. Whittaker's Loeb edition and translation of Herodian (1969–1970); I also take into account, where appropriate, the Greek text edited by C. M. Lucarini, *Herodianus: Regnum post Marcum* (Berlin 2005).

[10] On Herodian's speeches cf. Whittaker, *Herodian* I lviii–lxi; C. Castelli, "Tempo narrativo e discorsi diretti in Erodiano 1.16–2.23," in P. F. Moretti (ed.), *Debita dona: Studi in onore di Isabella Gualandri* (Naples 2008) 103–122; Kemezis, *Greek Narratives* 252–260; Pitcher, in *Speech in Ancient Greek Literature*

Platnauer and Whittaker judged Herodian's speeches, and especially those in *oratio recta*, to be poorly elaborated and almost irrelevant displays of oratory.[11] According to this perspective, these speeches would evince Herodian's lack of either interest in the Classical models or education in rhetoric, leading some to consider that the *History of the Empire* should be read as a historical novel rather than a historiographical work in its own right.[12] This view persisted until the past couple of decades, when the work of Sidebottom and Kemezis has sought to rehabilitate the perception of Herodian's work and his speeches as being representative of the genre's standards during the Imperial era.[13] According to these scholars, the speeches' sup-

329–349; C. Mallan, "Speeches and Speech Units in Herodian," in *Herodian's World* 47–69. On the speeches and the influence of the rhetorical instruction in ancient historiography see F. W. Walbank, *Speeches in Greek Historians* (Oxford 1965); C. W. Fornara, "The Speech in Greek and Roman Historiography," in *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley 1983) 142–163; A. J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography* (Sidney 1988); J. Marincola, "Speeches in Classical Historiography," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Malden 2007) 118–132. In particular, with regard to "the cultural *milieu* in which Herodian composed his history," see Whittaker, *Herodian* I lii–lviii.

[11] M. Platnauer, *The Life and Reign of the Emperor Lucius Septimius Severus* (Oxford 1918) 2: "the insertion of long, tedious, and pointless speeches in imitation of Greek models." Cf. Whittaker, *Herodian* I lx, on different interpretations of these *oratio recta* speeches, usually criticized for their lack of appropriateness and their doubtful historicity.

[12] Cf. G. Alföldy, "Zeitgeschichte und Kriseempfindung bei Herodian," *Hermes* 99 (1971) 429–449, at 431: "sie ist mehr eine Art historischen Romans als ein Geschichtswerk." Concurring with Alföldy, authors like Hohl and Kolb have also contended that Herodian's work is closer to fiction than history: E. Hohl, *Kaiser Commodus und Herodian* (Berlin 1954); Kolb, *Literarische Beziehungen.* On a similar note, L. de Blois, "Emperor and Empire in the Works of Greek-speaking Authors of the Third Century A.D.," *ANRW* II 34.4 (1998) 3415–3423, affirms (3416): "Herodian's work is a mixture of history, *enkomion*, novel, and biography."

[13] G. Marasco, "Erodiano e la crisi dell'impero," *ANRW* II 34.4 (1998)

posed faults would be explained either by their ironical tone or by their goal of staging a given speaker's rhetorical inefficacy, rather than being failures in and of themselves.[14] These efforts have led to a renewed interest both in narrative structure and in the speeches of Herodian's *History* as examples of Imperial rhetoric, as evinced by the recent work of Chrysanthou, Mallan, and Pitcher.[15] These critics have brought into sharper focus how Herodian's contemporary readers would have positively reacted to his work. For such an audience, the speeches would have been perceived as more appropriate and better integrated into the historical narrative than the more extensive and complex works of other authors that today seem to us to be exemplary.[16] Thus, scholarship is pivoting away from the dismissal and incomprehension of those in the past century who did not read Herodian's speeches through a rhetorical lens, towards a greater understanding of his rhetorical-pragmatic context, thereby reappraising how he makes use of rhetoric to shed new light on a topic that was then well known and had been treated by previous authors.

Building on this work, I suggest that a deeper and more systematic analysis of Herodian's use of narrative settings for his

2837–2927; Sidebottom, *ANRW* 2775–2836; Zimmermann, *Kaiser und Ereignis*; Hidber, *Herodians Darstellung*; and Kemezis, *Greek Narratives*—fundamental in promoting the value of Herodian's work. On speeches, Kemezis (252–253) holds that Herodian keeps his allocutions "within traditionally accepted length and subject matter" and that, generally speaking, they are "orthodox speeches for ancient Historiography, and contain rhetorical arguments more or less appropriate to their situation."

[14] Sidebottom, *ANRW* II 34.4 (1998) 2817; Kemezis, *Greek Narratives* 252–254.

[15] Chrysanthou, *Reconfiguring the Imperial Past*; Mallan, in *Herodian's World* 47–69; Pitcher, in *Speech in Ancient Greek Literature* 329–349.

[16] Mallan, in *Herodian's World* 66, has suggested that "aesthetically at least, one may suspect that Herodian's coevals found his short, well-integrated speech units more congenial than the often lengthy and convoluted speeches of Dio or Thucydides."

speeches not only enhances our critical understanding of his rhetorical *modus operandi* and his position vis-à-vis his predecessors, but also allows us to historicize how a contemporary audience may have responded to the *History*. Here I will limit attention to some key speeches at the beginning of the *History* as a launching pad for further discussion. I focus on the speeches of Marcus Aurelius and Pertinax, two emblematic characters of the *History* who are often regarded as referents for the emperors who succeeded them.[17] Herodian fashions these two emperors as true 'mirrors for princes', thereby providing standards against which all the other emperors are measured in the *History*. Marcus and Pertinax embody both the σωφροσύνη and the παιδεία which is often found lacking in the later emperors, who are in turn led astray by their ὕβρις.[18] However, there is a striking contrast with respect to the importance of these figures in the *History*: their speeches are characterized neither by their length nor by their rhetorical elaboration. I argue that the narrative settings of these speeches would not only offer crucial information that helps the reader better understand their context and circumstances, but also, and more importantly, would provide crucial clues about Herodian's decision to make such distinguished characters give less elaborated, sometimes even truncated, speeches.

[17] On Marcus Aurelius in Herodian see G. Alföldy, "Herodian über den Tod Mark Aurels," *Latomus* 32 (1973) 345–353; de Blois, *ANRW* II 34.4 (1998) 3415–3423. On Pertinax, Hohl, *Kaiser Commodus*; J. A. Garzón Blanco, *El emperador Publio Helvio Pertinax y la transformación política del año 193* (Málaga 1990); S. Elliot, *Pertinax: The Son of a Slave who Became Roman Emperor* (Barnsley 2020).

[18] Cf. Hdn. 2.1.3 on the reasons for the choice of Pertinax by the assassins of Commodus: πρῶτον δὲ ἔδοξεν αὐτοῖς ἐπιλέξασθαι ἄνδρα πρεσβύτην τινὰ καὶ σώφρονα τὸν διαδεξόμενον τὴν ἀρχήν. On these concepts and, in particular, the antithesis σωφροσύνη/ὕβρις, see M. A. Rodríguez Horrillo, "Moral popular en las *Historias* de Herodiano: ὕβρις, σωφροσύνη, τύχη y el *princeps* ideal," *Myrtia* 24 (2009) 117–141.

Narrative setting in the speeches of Marcus Aurelius and Pertinax

Sidebottom's observations on the "ironic tone" of many of these speeches serve as my starting point for studying these settings, specifically his view that such a tone "lets them function as devices which help to create the fiction of the reader's mastery over the text."[19] As a result of this strategy, the readers become privileged witnesses of events whose context they know with greater precision than the protagonists. Indeed, the protagonists neither adequately analyze what is happening nor foresee correctly what is going to happen—hence the characterization of these speeches as "cases of frustrated hopes" (2828). Kemezis concurs by noting that "the speeches either fail to persuade their immediate audience, or they do persuade, but their reasoning and predictions regarding the future are shown in the subsequent narrative to be completely wrong. Herodian's world is one in which rhetoric seems to have lost its power to describe or influence reality."[20] These two characteristics—the ironic tone and the persuasive impotence—of the speeches stem precisely from the clash between the allocutions with their narrative context.

Pitcher and Mallan have recently done work in this direction by underscoring the importance of both the preambles and the postscripts of Herodian's speeches. However, despite their valuable contributions to the study of Herodian, neither carries out a full assessment of the role played by the settings. On the one hand, Pitcher focuses especially on the more stereotypical aspects of the settings, i.e. the deictics and the *verba dicendi* that introduce the speeches.[21] Thus, he underscores the more clearly formulaic elements and their use or absence in specific parts of the work. To this end, he rightly differentiates between what he

[19] Sidebottom, *ANRW* II 34.4 (1998) 2817.

[20] Kemezis, *Greek Narratives* 252.

[21] Pitcher, in *Speech in Ancient Greek Literature* 329–335 ("Direct Discourse and Attributive Discourse").

calls "ἔλεξε τοιάδε speeches" (the most elaborated speeches, generally uttered either by emperors or by pretenders to the throne) and "ἔφη speeches" (shorter allocutions, sometimes accompanied by a conversation between characters). This is a general classification which I observe here. However, his approach precludes him from developing a more systematic view of the setting that would allow him to analyze the deeper interrelations between speech and narrative.[22] On the other hand, Mallan assigns a central role to the setting, already from the title of his paper, where he distinguishes between "Speeches" ("text presented in *oratio recta*"), "Framing Narrative" ("text surrounding the speech"), and "Speech Units" ("the combined speech and framing narrative"). On this basis, he analyzes the military harangues of Book 2, which features the greater number of speeches in Herodian's *History*. His commentaries on these "Speech Units" are more centered upon analyzing the specific thematic nodes of the narrative or the characterization of the *personae* than upon studying how the settings effectively work and what is their relationship to the harangues which they introduce.[23]

In this paper I try to offer a more in-depth analysis of the narrative context of Herodian's speeches, considering the earlier use of the setting as a technique in the historiographic genre from Thucydides onwards. I refer to the 'unwritten rules'[24] which ancient historians followed more systematically than has been thought in designing their speech settings, in fact

[22] Pitcher 335 ("Speech Modes in Herodian").

[23] See the treatment of the "Speech Unit" of Laetus' speech to the Praetorians (2.2.6–8): Mallan, in *Herodian's World* 56–58. On military harangues in ancient historiography and their relation to rhetoric see J. C. Iglesias-Zoido, "The Battle Exhortation in Ancient Rhetoric," *Rhetorica* 25 (2007) 145–165.

[24] Cf. n.6 above.

an indispensable constituent of the genre.[25]

We can distinguish three levels in the narrative settings that precede the speeches, where the historiographers usually put the bulk of their attention. The first level is constituted by the words in direct contact with the speech, tasked with introducing the direct style—i.e. deictics and *verba dicendi*. The second is made up of the opening and closing sentences, where the historian usually characterizes the speaker, describes the audience and the location, and specifies the concrete way the speech is uttered. The third deals with the 'oratorical context', i.e. the larger narrative sections (sometimes expanding over a full chapter before the speech itself) whose raison d'être is in fact determined by the speeches they introduce. In this third level the author aims to supply concrete information deemed necessary to properly understand a speech's specific circumstances and consequences. The greater the proximity to the body of the speech, the greater the consistency in terms of formal expression—this is what distinguishes these three levels. First fully developed by Thucydides, this tripartite structure is observed and replicated by later authors who imitate him.[26]

[25] Cf. the traditional opinion on the Thucydidean narrative settings, expressed e.g. by Westlake, *The Speeches of Thucydides* 100: "There seems to me to be some evidence … that the links between these two elements are somewhat tenuous … In some instances, a certain lack of harmony is discernible." By contrast, studies over the last fifteen years stress the importance of the narrative setting; cf. n.1 above.

[26] The reminiscences in Herodian, especially of Thucydides' speeches, have been noted: F. J. Stein, *Dexippus et Herodianus rerum scriptores quatenus Thucydidem secuti sint* (diss. Bonn 1957); Zecchini, *CS* 20 (1983) 30–31; Kuhn-Chen, *Geschichtskonzeptionen* 256–260; Hidber, *Herodians Darstellung* 72–115; Galimberti, *Erodiano e Commodo* 31–35; and Mallan, in *Herodian's World* 63–64, who relates the beginning of Severus' speech (Hdn. 2.10.2 and 2.10.6) to the first words of the Corinthian ambassadors in Book I of Thucydides (1.68.1 and 1.70.4). Cf. Iglesias-Zoido, in "*Actio*" 1–25, for an analysis of concrete examples of the influence of the Thucydidean narrative settings on authors of the Imperial era such as Josephus, Cassius Dio, or Appian.

The best example is the narrative setting of Pericles' epitaph in Thuc. 2.34.[27] Moreover, this model makes these narrative settings a perfect place to put into practice a series of literary allusions.

Against this backdrop, it can be argued that Herodian provides truly emblematic examples of multilevel settings with a close relationship to the speeches they introduce, evincing in so doing not only his familiarity with this form of historiographical praxis but also the personal way in which he has put it into practice.

Marcus Aurelius

Herodian's handling of the narrative setting is especially remarkable in the first of the speeches analyzed here, Marcus Aurelius' famous address to his advisors and his son before his death (1.4.2–6).[28] Critics have tended to pay particular attention to Herodian's goal of offering an exemplary death or to the speech itself.[29] The speech is generally regarded as an archetypal farewell address that must be seen in relation to similar allocutions, such as the final words of Cyrus to his friends and family before his death (Xen. *Cyr.* 8.7.6–28) or the speeches uttered by Micipsa (Sall. *BJ* 10) and Hadrian (Dio 69.20).[30] For instance, according to Mallan this speech belongs to a select

[27] Cf. Iglesias-Zoido, *Talia dixit* 1 (2006) 22–23.

[28] Cf. Chrysanthou, *Reconfiguring the Imperial Past* 205–207 and 252–254, who offers a good summary of previous studies of these passages.

[29] Cf. Kuhn-Chen, *Geschichtskonzeptionen* 266–270: Marcus Aurelius' character is seen as "das platonische Ideal des Philosophenkönigs."

[30] The most recent listing of previous models is in Chrysanthou, *Reconfiguring the Imperial Past* 205–207, who adds Titus' speech to Vespasian in Tac. *Hist.* 4.52.1 in *oratio obliqua*. See also Zimermann, *Kaiser und Ereignis* 30–31; Hidber, *Herodians Darstellung* 198–201; Mallan, in *Herodian's World* 49; C. Davenport and C. Mallan, "Hadrian's Adoption Speech in Cassius Dio's *Roman History* and the Problems of Imperial Succession," *AJP* 135 (2014) 637–668.

group of Herodian's allocutions which "could operate equally well as stand-alone rhetorical *meletai*."[31] In my view, the capital importance which Herodian gives to Marcus Aurelius as a reference point for all the emperors who succeeded him must have led the historian to supplement his last address with an over-extended setting, in this case conditioned by the significance of its third level. Marcus' speech would then be aligned with other representative examples, such as Pericles' epitaph in Thucydides (2.34), where Thucydides considered it necessary to describe the collective burial of the first fallen of the war in order to highlight the transcendence of Pericles' words.[32] In the case of Marcus Aurelius, we first find the following setting (Hdn. 1.4.1):

> κυμαίνουσαν οὖν ἔχων τοσαύταις φροντίσι τὴν ψυχήν, συγκαλέσας τοὺς φίλους ὅσοι τε παρῆσαν τῶν συγγενῶν, καὶ τὸν παῖδα παραστησάμενος, ἐπειδὴ πάντες συνῆλθον, ἡσυχῇ τοῦ σκίμποδος κουφίσας ἑαυτὸν τοιούτων λόγων ἤρξατο·
>
> With a heavy heart because of these worries, Marcus summoned his advisers and the relatives that were with him and made his son stand beside him. When everyone was assembled, he raised himself up quietly from his sick-bed and began a speech, saying…[33]

This sentence before the speech functions as a 'preamble' and provides the first two levels of a setting with important allusive elements. On the first level, there are references to the words

[31] Mallan, in *Herodian's World* 55: "This select group of speeches may be confined to the speech of Marcus, the speech of Pompeianus, the letter of Macrinus, and the speech of Pupienus."

[32] This mode of presenting the epitaph has been interpreted as one of the consequences of intended reception by a Panhellenic audience, which would need information about the funeral ceremony.

[33] Compare to Whittaker's translation that of J. J. Torres Esbaranch, *Herodiano, Historia del Imperio Romano* (Madrid 1985) 93: "Cuando todos estuvieron reunidos se levantó tranquilamente de su lecho y comenzó a dirigirles estas palabras."

that were uttered (τοιούτων λόγων) and to the verb that introduces the speech (ἤρξατο). Previous analyzes have highlighted the peculiarity of this initial formula compared to the widespread use of ἔλεξε τοιάδε in Herodian, but they have not explained the ultimate reasons for this choice.[34] I suspect that Herodian is echoing the initial setting of Cyrus' speech on his death bed in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (8.7.5): "when they were all come, he began to speak as follow" (παρόντων δὲ πάντων ἤρχετο τοιοῦδε λόγου). Unlike Cyrus' long, calm, and uninterrupted speech, Herodian's astute word choice seems to anticipate that Marcus is beginning a speech that will be interrupted towards the end because of his frail health. On the second level, Herodian provides information about the speaker's actions before the speech (συγκαλέσας, παραστησάμενος: he summons his advisors and relatives as his audience). Again, Herodian's Marcus Aurelius seems to echo Xenophon's Cyrus (8.7.5): "he summoned his sons … he summoned also his friends and the Persian magistrates" (ἐκάλεσε τοὺς παῖδας … ἐκάλεσε δὲ καὶ τοὺς φίλους καὶ τὰς Περσῶν ἀρχάς). The difference in this case is that Herodian's setting also highlights Marcus' bodily state, which conditions and adds pathos to his delivery: "he raised himself up quietly from his sickbed" (ἡσυχῇ τοῦ σκίμποδος κουφίσας ἑαυτόν) to deliver the speech. The setting conveys that the ill emperor did not need help to sit up and give his speech sitting upright—a qualification that would hardly go unnoticed by an audience educated in the importance of *actio*.[35]

The closing setting reinforces the dramatic stakes of the speech by focusing on the emperor's ensuing physical collapse and silence: "After this Marcus fainted and said no more as he fell back on his bed, weak with exhaustion" (1.4.7, τοσαῦτα εἰπόντα τὸν Μάρκον ἐπιπεσοῦσα λιποθυμία κατεσίγασεν ὑπὸ δὲ

[34] Cf. Pitcher, in *Speech in Ancient Greek Literature* 330–331.

[35] Cf. Iglesias-Zoido, in *Actio* 1–25, on the importance of the Thucydidean settings for informing about aspects of the *actio* in the speeches.

ἀσθενείας τε καὶ ἀθυμίας αὖθις ὑπτίαζεν). Here Herodian dialogues once again with Xenophon's closing setting to Cyrus' speech (8.7.28): "After these words, he shook hands with them all, covered himself over, and so died" (ταῦτ' εἰπὼν καὶ πάντας δεξιωσάμενος ἐνεκαλύψατο καὶ οὕτως ἐτελεύτησεν). And yet, while Xenophon opted for an understated description, Herodian heightens the pathetic charge of the scene: Marcus, wholly exhausted by his effort, lies back down. In a sleight of rhetorical and narrative decorum, the setting would then explain why the emperor's speech could not be as elaborated nor as brilliant as a reader of ancient historiography may have otherwise expected, thus justifying its brevity by recourse to the inner logic of the action.

The setting's third level, which presents the broader context surrounding the speech, further buttresses Herodian's rhetorical strategy by thrusting the speaker's physical and mental state into the limelight. This third level is summarised: "With a heavy heart because of these worries" (κυμαίνουσαν οὖν ἔχων τοσαύταις φροντίσι τὴν ψυχήν). After the resumptive οὖν and the dramatic description of the emperor's inner state as being shaken by waves of worry, the transition holds the key to the whole setting: τοσαύταις φροντίσι. With these words Herodian explicitly refers the reader back to the entire previous chapter (1.3), where the setting's third level is given extended development. There Herodian pays close attention to Marcus Aurelius' inner state and reveals the concerns that led the emperor to deliver his final words. It must be noted that the historian is following a standard procedure of ancient historiography. The reader would only need to recall other transitional expressions, such as the one that announces the description of the funerary customs of the Athenians in Pericles' epitaph: τρόπῳ τοιῷδε (Thuc. 2.34.1).[36]

[36] In Herodian there are other such cases, e.g. the setting of Niger's speech to the soldiers, where the expression ἅπερ εἰδώς appears (2.8.1), a

The content of this third level is therefore of utmost importance. Throughout chapter 1.3, Herodian describes the speaker's physical and mental condition in detail. First (1.3.1) he underlines the emperor's old age (γηραιὸν ὄντα Μᾶρκον).[37] Next he highlights that the emperor was exhausted by his illness (νόσος χαλεπὴ καταλαμβάνει), but also by his preoccupations (φροντίσι τετρυχωμένον). Herodian especially emphasizes Marcus' unquiet thoughts about the future behavior of his heir, who would become an orphan in his youth (δεδιὼς μὴ νεότης ἀκμάζουσα καὶ ἐν ὀρφανίᾳ), and how this could make him turn away from good habits and give in instead to disorder and drunkenness.[38] The historian then offers (1.3.2–4) the source of the emperor's worries, rooted in the memory of the behaviour of those who rose to power in their youth and became tyrannical rulers: Dionysius II of Syracuse, Ptolemy, Antigonus, Nero, and Domitian. The setting then strengthens the idea that the emperor, as a learned man (1.3.2, οἷα δὴ ἄνδρα πολυίστορα), would have kept these examples very present in his mind "when he recalled rulers in the past who had succeeded to power as young men" (μνήμη τῶν ἐν νεότητι βασιλείαν παραλαβόντων), and that this memory caused him a great deal of anxiety (μάλιστα ἐτάραττε).[39] The key is given at the point when Herodian de-

reference to what was developed in 2.7.3–10; or the narrative setting of Septimius Severus' speech, in which we find "when he heard about this" (3.6.1, Γνοὺς δὲ ταῦτα), which refers to the facts related in the preceding chapter.

[37] Cf. Xen. *Cyr*. 8.7.1, μάλα … πρεσβύτης ὤν.

[38] Whitaker, *Herodian* I liv, defines this section as "a set piece on the dangers of corruption of a young heir, with classical models to illustrate the theme and an almost verbatim quotation from Sallust's famous speech of Micipsa," and notes that "the speech is known to have been popular in the Severan period." Cf. *SHA Sev*. 21.10.

[39] Cf. Kuhn-Chen, *Geschichtskonzeptionen* 299–300: "Kurz vor seinem Tod ruft sich Mark Aurel historische *exempla* ins Gedächtnis, die belegen, dass sehr junge Herscher oft hochmütig und gewalttätig werden." Sidebottom,

scribes how Marcus Aurelius would "contemplate" the future with fear (ἐδεδίει) whenever he depicted images of these tyrants in his mind (1.3.5, τοιαύτας δὴ τυραννίδος εἰκόνας ὑποτυπούμενος). The emperor's speech is therefore conditioned by the rational fear stirred by his predictions about the future of the empire under his heir.

This contextualization of the speech is essential, especially in comparison to its precedents within the subgenre of farewell speeches in ancient historiography—not only Cyrus' lengthy speech (8.7.6–28), but also the briefer one uttered by Micipsa (Sall. *BJ* 10) or Hadrian (Dio 69.20).[40] Dio's speech is particularly salient as referent since its initial setting also shows a reclining, terminally ill Hadrian (69.20.1): "Hadrian became afflicted by a wasting disease (φθόῃ) (caused by his steady loss of blood), and as a result of this he developed consumption (ὑδρωπίασεν) … as he lay on his bed (κατακείμενος), he spoke to them with these words."[41] Nonetheless, analysis of the settings makes clear that, despite those similarities, it is in fact Cyrus' speech that is the most important point of reference for Herodian. On the one hand, Xenophon offers the most influential example of resignation and calmness before the ideal leader's death in the historiographical tradition.[42] On the other hand,

ANRW 2.34.4 (1998) 2806, considers that these would have been unwise choices: "Herodianus (we must assume without any ironic intention) populates Marcus' thought-world with a string of exempla mainly of surprising inopportunity."

[40] Cf. n.30 above.

[41] Cf. Davenport and Mallan, *AJP* 135 (2014) 640–641. However, this speech is problematic. As they point out (638–639), "*Prima facie*, the emperor's speech emphasizes the advantages of selecting and adopting the best and most suitable man as successor," but also Hadrian is characterized by Dio as resentful of men of excellence, so that this speech "is an unlikely mouthpiece to transmit the principle of adoption as producing the best man to lead the state."

[42] Cf. D. L. Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia: Style, Genre, and Literary Technique* (Oxford 1993) 115–120.

any reader of Xenophon would remember how Cambyses, the son appointed by Cyrus to succeed him, led the empire to disaster.[43] Against this backdrop, the setting of Herodian's speech is thus designed to make his would-be reader, acquainted with the learned referent and the turn of the events, share in Marcus Aurelius' unease about the succession. This setting is also designed to stage the speaker's state of mind and health—a crucial factor which not only conditions the nature of the speech (clearly based on previous models pointed out by critics), but also explains its brevity and conciseness compared with the most important model in Greek historiography, Cyrus' lengthy address. Thus Herodian successfully blended the Greek model for farewell speeches with the briefer ones of the Latin tradition, such as Micipsa's speech (Sall. *BJ* 10).

Marcus Aurelius' speech highlights several central points that reveal an intimate connection between the speech itself and its introductory section. If the setting foregrounds the emperor's illness and prostration, Marcus likewise begins his speech by referring to the "sorrow" that the sight of his pitiful physical state would inspire in those present: "if the suffering takes place before their eyes, it excites even more sorrow" (1.4.2, τά τε δεινὰ ὑπ᾽ ὄψιν πεσόντα οἶκτον προκαλεῖται μείζονα). Second, most of the speech is not really a farewell speech but an exhortation to the advisors, who should guide young Commodus towards the virtuous behavior expected of a good ruler and steer him away from the siren chants of tyranny, which in turn casts a long shadow over the speech. Again, if the narrative setting focused on Marcus' fears about the possible tyrannical behavior of his heir, the speech in turn emphasizes the need to further instruct Commodus: "Here is my son … who stands in need of guides through the tempest and storm of life" (1.4.3, ὁρᾶτε δή μοι τὸν υἱόν … δεόμενον ὥσπερ ἐν χειμῶνι καὶ ζάλῃ τῶν κυβερνησόντων)—

[43] Cf. P. W. Sage, "Dying in Style: Xenophon's Ideal Leader and the End of the *Cyropaedia*," *CJ* 90 (1995) 161–174.

hence the appeal to his advisors: "you who are many must be fathers to him in place of me alone" (1.4.4, γένεσθε δὴ οὖν αὐτῷ ὑμεῖς ἀνθ' ἑνὸς ἐμοῦ πατέρες πολλοί).

Accordingly, nodding to Xenophon's *Cyropedia*, Herodian recreates throughout the remainder of Marcus Aurelius' speech several commonplaces on the education of young rulers, such as the idea that only the combination of the subjects' love and the ruler's goodness can prevent the dangers associated with tyranny (1.4.4, cf. Xen. *Cyr.* 7.7.13–14); or the notion that "it is difficult to regulate and put a limit to one's desires if power is at one's disposal" (1.4.6, χαλεπὸν δὲ μετριάσαι τε καὶ ὅρον ἐπιθεῖναι ἐπιθυμίαις ὑπηρετούσης ἐξουσίας). Finally, the speech's epilogue stresses again the idea that there is still a lot to do on these fronts. Using the future tense, Herodian emphasizes that Commodus is not yet ready and thus still requires extensive training: "In this way … you will provide yourselves and everyone else with an excellent emperor" (τοιαῦτα δὴ συμβουλεύοντες αὐτῷ … ὑμῖν τε αὐτοῖς καὶ πᾶσιν ἄριστον ἀποδείξετε βασιλέα).

It follows that only Herodian's care in elaboration of the narrative setting, and especially its third level, allows us to fully understand the fear that is hidden behind Marcus Aurelius' last words. It is not a mere farewell speech or the conventional advice of a father, but a freighted and anxious warning about the future. In short, Herodian writes a speech that is characterized by its brevity, in keeping with the physical condition of its speaker, mirroring the words and the thoughts of the emperor regarding the future behavior of his heir. In so doing, Herodian explicitly avoids crafting a lengthier, more rhetorically elaborated speech along the lines of previous authors, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who would have turned this occasion into an excellent occasion to showcase his rhetorical skills. Instead, Herodian seeks dramatic over rhetorical effect in order to stage Marcus' deep fears about the looming dark future of Rome.

In short, analysis of the narrative setting of Marcus Aurelius' speech reveals that these passages are much more than a

representation of an "exemplary death."[44] The setting provides necessary information to correctly understand not only the aims of Marcus with respect to his son, but also, and more importantly, the true meaning of this speech. Herodian thus deployed the narrative setting as a highly versatile device that allowed him to dramatize the emperor's mental and physical condition whilst performing a sophisticated game of literary allusion.

Pertinax

Herodian deploys this strategy once again in his account of the speeches given by Pertinax and his supporters, the protagonists of one of the tensest episodes of the *History*. After the conspirators led by Laetus and Eclectus murder Commodus, Herodian introduces two speeches. The first showcases Laetus, who was chosen to speak on behalf of Pertinax because of Laetus' ascendancy over the troops (2.2.6–8). His purpose is to inform the imperial guard of the facts and urge that they accept a new emperor after Commodus' murder. Laetus thereby circumvents the problems posed by the assassination of a tyrant held in high esteem by the Praetorians by delivering a speech which other authors, such as Cassius Dio, had attributed to Pertinax.[45] The second speech, on the other hand, is given this time by Pertinax, who seeks to legitimize himself as emperor (2.3.4–10). Here Herodian describes how the Senate had already accepted the political change and his official appointment as emperor and the solutions proposed by Pertinax

[44] Cf. Chrysanthou, *Reconfiguring the Imperial Past* 251–254 ("Marcus' Exemplary Death").

[45] Dio 74[73].1.2 (Xiph.). This is also the case in *SHA Pert.* 10.8–10: see Mallan, in *Herodian's World* 56–57. Without going into the thorny question of Herodian's sources, his *modus operandi* would be in line with the way in which he works with the information provided by previous sources, such as Cassius Dio, through changes and modifications. Cf. C. S. Chrysanthou, "Herodian and Cassius Dio: A Study of Herodian's Compositional Devices," *GRBS* 60 (2020) 621–651.

to get the empire back on the right path. Laetus' and Pertinax's speeches are both ἔλεξε τοιάδε speeches, unlike Pertinax's final and very brief speech to the Praetorians who are about to murder him (2.5.6–8), which would belong to the group of ἔφη speeches and which cannot be considered as a speech because of its extreme brevity—an exhortation in direct style that basically seeks to show the dignity of Pertinax before his murderers in his last moments.

The first speech following Commodus' murder is given by Laetus (2.2.6–8). It is so brief and rhetorically unsophisticated that it only touches upon two topics. The first (2.2.6) is announcing Commodus' death to the group he had favored the most: the army. Laetus does not hesitate to lie to his military audience, stating that Commodus had died because of fate-determined apoplexy and that "he has got the fate that was in store for him" (τὸν μὲν οὖν κατέλαβε τέλος τὸ πεπρωμένον). With this statement, Laetus seeks to exculpate the men who murdered Commodus and to avoid retaliation from an army which had been indulged by the emperor. The second topic is introducing Pertinax to the soldiers as "a man who is respected for his age, who is moderate in his way of life and who knows the meaning of virtue in action" (2.2.7, ἄνδρα τὴν μὲν ἡλικίαν σεμνὸν τὸν δὲ βίον σώφρονα, ἀρετῆς δὲ τῆς ἐν ἔργοις ἔμπειρον). In order to keep decorum and appease the troops, the future emperor thus relies on Laetus, who significantly and in clear connection to the narrative setting, presents himself in the first-person plural as a spokesman for the people of Rome: "we and the Roman people bring for your approval" (ὑμῖν ἄγομεν ἡμεῖς τε καὶ ὁ δῆμος τῶν Ῥωμαίων). This presentation acquires its full meaning as a conveyor of the 'general feeling' when the speaker resorts to praise: "Our good fortune is not bringing us simply an emperor, but a kind father too" (2.2.8, δίδωσί τε ὑμῖν ἡ τύχη οὐ βασιλέα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ πατέρα χρηστόν). This is a specific wish expressed by Laetus which some chapters later will indeed be

attributed by Herodian to the people of Rome (2.4.1).[46]

Laetus' speech is a military exhortation that really is not intended to persuade the soldiers but only to convey information.[47] In fact, it does not employ any of the commonplaces of this type of speech. This address is very different from other examples of military speech found throughout Herodian's work, which are much more rhetorically elaborate, e.g. the harangues pronounced by figures like Septimius Severus (2.10.2–9, 3.6.1–7), Macrinus (4.14.5–8), or Alexander Severus (6.3.3–7), that appropriately use the so-called τελικὰ κεφάλαια in their argumentation.[48] These παρακλήσεις reveal Herodian's good knowledge of the rhetorical keys for this type of speech,[49] to the extent that they even merited the honor of being selected as examples of military exhortation in Byzantine times.[50] In a way, it is as if the historian, who is very familiar with this kind of speech, had opted in Laetus' case for a type of speech that does not seek genuine persuasion before an unfavorable military audience but a simple conveying of a *fait accompli*. In fact, in a manner obviously coordinated with the rhetorically unrefined form of this speech, Herodian himself in the setting

[46] Cf. the points of contact between this statement made by Laetus and the final setting of Pertinax's last speech (2.4.1), where the historian, acting as narrator, highlights the people's hopes of having "a respected and mild constitutional ruler and father, rather than an emperor," σεμνὸν καὶ ἤπιον ἄρχοντα καὶ πατέρα, οὐ βασιλέα ἕξειν ἐλπίζοντες.

[47] Along the lines of the "persuasive impotence" advocated by Kemezis, *Greek Narratives* 252.

[48] Cf. J. Albertus, *Die parakletikoi in der griechischen und römischen Literatur* (Strasbourg 1908).

[49] These speeches have soldiers as their audience and could be defined, in the first instance, as παρακλήσεις: Hdn. 1.5.3–8, 2.2.6–8, 2.5.6–8, 2.8.2–5, 2.10.2–9, 2.13.5–9, 3.6.2–7, 4.14.4–8, 6.3.3–7, 7.8.4–8, 8.3.4–8, 8.7.4–6.

[50] See I. Eramo, "Ὦ ἄνδρες στρατιῶται. Demegorie protrettiche nell' *Ambrosianus* B 119 sup.," *AFLB* 50 (2007) 127–165.

makes very clear that the success of this brief address was not due to what was said but to the context that surrounded it.

In cases such as Laetus' exhortation, the communicative context is more important than the harangue itself in view of the perspective that readers of the work would have on this episode. Hence, the historian puts more effort into conveying the background and circumstances that conditioned the allocution than into the content of a speech given by a secondary character. Unsurprisingly, in Laetus' harangue to the Praetorians and the people of Rome (2.2.6–8), we find again an oversized setting whose raison d'être is Herodian's need to inform his readers of the specific circumstances surrounding the delivery of this speech. The sentence before the speech provides only very basic information about the words it introduces (2.2.5):

> ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐγένοντο ἐν τῷ στρατοπέδῳ, ὁ Λαῖτός τε καὶ Ἔκλεκτος εἰσῆλθον ἄγοντες τὸν Περτίνακα· συγκαλέσας τε τοὺς στρατιώτας ὁ Λαῖτος ἔλεξε τοιάδε·
>
> When the crowds were in the camp, Laetus and Eclectus came in with Pertinax, and Laetus assembled the soldiers. Then he addressed them saying…

Herodian signals where the speech takes place when referring to the characters (the conspirators, Laetus and Eclectus, accompanying Pertinax) and the Praetorian camp. He also uses a stereotypical collocation, ἔλεξε τοιάδε, which includes the most common *verbum dicendi* in historiography, as well as the deictic which, since Thucydides, indicated that the words that follow are an approximate (even not particularly faithful) reconstruction of what may have actually been uttered. Furthermore, this is not only Herodian's most used formula, but also one that perfectly fits the situation at hand.[51] Significantly, as if he did

[51] Pitcher, in *Speech in Ancient Greek Literature* 330: "Thirteen of Herodian's DD speeches (that is to say, a little under half) are introduced by ἔλεξε τοιάδε, a locution which, like much else in Herodian, has its ultimate origin in Thucydides (e.g., Thuc. 1.79.2)." This formula is present throughout the

not take into account the character who speaks, Herodian does not give us more specific information about the physical place which Laetus occupies in front of the troops.[52]

The key to the rhetorical construction, then, is offered by the setting's third level, which, again, occupies the previous chapter in its entirety (2.2.1–5). This chapter has a closed structure which not only links the first and the last sentences but also connects with the first and second levels of the setting by adding information about the speaker:

> 2.2.1: καὶ πρῶτον ἀρέσκει προελθεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ στρατόπεδον καὶ πεῖραν τῆς γνώμης τῶν στρατιωτῶν λαβεῖν· πείσειν δὲ αὐτοὺς ὁ Λαῖτος ὑπισχνεῖτο, ἐπείπερ αὐτῷ ἐπάρχῳ ὄντι μετρίαν ἀπένεμον αἰδῶ.
>
> As a first move they decided to go to the praetorian camp and test the feelings of the soldiers. Laetus undertook to bring them over, since they had a certain amount of respect for him as prefect.
>
> 2.2.5: ἐσομένην γὰρ σώφρονα μὴ πάνυ τι ἀποδέξεσθαι τοὺς στρατιώτας προσεδόκων τυραννίδι δουλεύειν εἰθισμένους ἁρπαγαῖς τε καὶ βίαις ἐγγεγυμνασμένους. ἵν' οὖν αὐτοὺς ἐκβιάσοιντο ὑπακοῦσαι, πανδημεὶ συνῆλθον.
>
> They were expected to be totally against accepting a rule of moderation since they had grown used to a tyrant as their master and were experts in pillage and violence. So the people went *en masse* to the camp to force the praetorians to submit.

Both sentences justify why Herodian selected Laetus as speaker on such a momentous and delicate occasion, instead of Pertinax: not only is he a man respected by the soldiers, but his

work: 1.5.2, 2.2.6, 2.3.5, 2.8.1, 2.10.1, 2.13.5, 3.6.1, 4.5.2, 4.14.4, 6.3.3, 7.5.4, 7.8.4, 8.7.3.

[52] Throughout Herodian's *History*, the speaker who delivers a harangue in a military camp usually occupies an elevated position in front of the troops: Niger in 2.8.1, Septimius Severus in 2.10.1 and 2.13.4, Severus Alexander in 6.3.2, Maximinus Thrax in 7.8.3. Laetus, although a prefect, seems to deliver the speech at the same level as the soldiers.

role will also be mediated by the active intervention of the *demos*. In fact, Herodian inserts between these sentences a digression describing the people's reaction to Commodus' murder (2.2.2–4). In so doing, Herodian implies that the true protagonist of this episode was the *demos*, which explains in turn the predicted success of Laetus' speech.[53]

This moment is key for the narrative; indeed, Herodian describes how "as the word quickly spread the people went practically mad with excitement" (2.2.3, διαδραμούσης δὲ τῆς φήμης πᾶς ὁ δῆμος ἐνθουσιῶντι ἐοικὼς ἐξεβακχεύετο). Feeling free again, the *demos* unleashed all the opinions that they had once repressed out of fear. Furthermore, the people ran (δρόμῳ) to the Praetorian camp because "they were very much afraid that the soldiers would be rather reluctant to acknowledge Pertinax's rule" (2.2.4, δεδιότες, μή πως ἄρα οἱ στρατιῶται ὀκνηρότερον ὑπακούσωσι τῇ τοῦ Περτίνακος ἀρχῇ). It is worth noting that the idea of being spurred by rational fear, already present in Marcus Aurelius' speech, is now embodied by the people of Rome, elevated to the status of protagonist in their role to pressure the Praetorians to accept Pertinax as the new emperor. Quite unusually, we find a collective protagonist who is more important than the speaker himself, who is relegated to a secondary role in the action.[54] This imbalance could therefore explain why Herodian chose Laetus instead of Pertinax to first address the Praetorians, safeguarding Pertinax's unblemished image in the eyes of the reader.[55]

[53] Mallan, in *Herodian's World* 58: "Laetus effectively disappears from Herodian's narrative at this point … In other words, the speech provides no basis for a developed characterization of Laetus."

[54] Thus the moment in which the speaker refers to the decisive role played by the *démos* (2.2.7, ὑμῖν ἄγομεν ἡμεῖς τε καὶ ὁ δῆμος τῶν Ῥωμαίων).

[55] Cf. Mallan, in *Herodian's World* 57: "by having Laetus address the troops, rather than Pertinax, Herodian is able to maintain the image of Pertinax as the reluctant ruler."

This situation is confirmed by the speech's closing setting (2.2.9):

> τοιαῦτα δὴ λέγοντος τοῦ Λαίτου μὴ κατασχὼν ἑαυτὸν ὁ δῆμος μελλόντων καὶ ὀκνούντων ἔτι τῶν στρατιωτῶν Σεβαστόν τε ἀναγορεύει καὶ πατέρα καλεῖ πάσαις τε γεραίρει εὐφημαῖς. τότε καὶ οἱ στρατιῶται οὐχ ὁμοίᾳ μὲν προθυμίᾳ τῇ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ παρόντος πλήθους ἀνάγκῃ (καὶ γὰρ ἦσαν πανταχόθεν ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου περιειλημμένοι ὀλίγοι τε καὶ ἄνευ τῶν ὅπλων ὡς ἐν ἱερομηνίᾳ).
>
> When they heard Laetus making this speech the people were unable to restrain themselves from proclaiming Pertinax as Augustus and giving him the name of Father and all the other honorific titles, although the soldiers were still cautious and hesitant. Then, although they did not react with equal enthusiasm, the soldiers felt compelled to join in and salute Pertinax as Augustus, because of the large number of people present who were hemming them in on all sides. Furthermore, there were not many soldiers, and they were unarmed because of the festival.

Once again, we have a truncated speech—in this case, truncated by the circumstances. Like Marcus Aurelius, who could not finish his address because of his illness, Laetus is unable to carry his harangue to the end because of the people's reaction.[56] The inconsistency and the brevity of the speech are rather consistent with Herodian's art: the speaker barely has time to introduce the new emperor as a venerable (τὴν μὲν ἡλικίαν σεμνόν), wise (τὸν δὲ βίον σώφρονα) and brave (ἀρετῆς δὲ τῆς ἐν ἔργοις ἔμπειρον) man.[57] Little more can be added by the speaker, given the circumstances surrounding the speech. The closing evinces that the very kernel of this episode is the *demos*'

[56] For the interruption of the speech as a factor that justifies its brevity, compare the allocution by Pertinax before dying in front of the Praetorians, which is also interrupted by his murderers (2.5.8, ἔτι δὲ λαλοῦντα τὸν πρεσβύτην ἐπιπεσόντες φονεύουσι).

[57] Hdn. 2.2.7, a passage that conveys the essence of this brief speech.

unconditional support, which precludes Laetus from confirming the *fait accompli* in the face of a Praetorian Guard who stood by and were forced to abide by the decision of the people—a factor that particularly distinguishes this exhortation from others in which the speaker's actions are conditioned by military audiences.[58] The context therefore explains that this speech is less important than the narrative setting that introduces it; hence, Laetus' words are more an extension of what the historian has already told the reader in the previous chapter than a military exhortation or παράκλησις in the strict sense.[59] Both the opening and the closing settings therefore manifest the careful construction of this episode so as to allow the readers to imagine what actually had happened, setting precious information before their eyes about the true events of that crucial day.

There is a different situation in the second speech of this episode, delivered by Pertinax in the Senate (2.3.4–10). This speech belongs to the deliberative genre and is a good example of a type of allocution that appears throughout the work.[60] In this case, the sentence that introduces the speech offers only limited information about the new emperor's words (2.3.4):

[58] On the role played by military audiences in the declining authority of Herodian emperors, de Blois, *ANRW* 2.34.4 (1998) 3416 ff., points out how Herodian often describes the attitude of the soldiers and Praetorians as a real tyranny.

[59] According to Polybius on the three kinds of historiographical speeches (12.25a.3), the following speeches of Herodian have soldiers as their audience and could be defined as παρακλήσεις: 1.5.3–8, 2.2.6–8, 2.5.6–8, 2.8.2–5, 2.10.2–9, 2.13.5–9, 3.6.2–7, 4.14.4–8, 6.3.3–7, 7.8.4–8, 8.3.4–8, 8.7.4–6. But the argumentative content of an important part of these harangues fits with difficulty the traditional model of παρακλήσεις.

[60] Cf. other speeches in Herodian given in front of assemblies and councils (δημηγορίαι): 4.5.2–7 (Caracalla before the Senate); 5.1.2–8 (Macrinus' Letter/Speech to the Senate).

> τότε δὲ πάντων αὐτὸν ἐκβιασαμένων ἐκλιπαρησάντων τε ὀκνῶν καὶ μόλις ἀνελθὼν ἐπὶ τὸν βασίλειον θρόνον ἔλεξε τοιάδε.
>
> After this everyone brought pressure to bear on Pertinax by their entreaties, so that in the end with great reluctance he took his place upon the imperial throne and addressed them with these words.

As on previous occasions, the preamble provides only the first two levels of the setting—the stereotypical, introductory collocation ἔλεξε τοιάδε together with some information about delivery and *actio*: a reluctant Pertinax is forced to speak at the senators' insistent behest (πάντων αὐτὸν ἐκβιασαμένων ἐκλιπαρησάντων τε) and does so from the imperial throne (ἀνελθὼν ἐπὶ τὸν βασίλειον θρόνον).[61] So far, nothing out of the ordinary. What sets this speech apart is its specific context, which explains the emperor's reluctance in the face of the difficulties of the task to be carried out. Herodian weaponizes the setting's third level again to depict the psychological state of Pertinax in two stages: first, on the night before the speech; second, on the day of the event. At night, the emperor is haunted by his fear in the face of his present circumstances (τὰ παρόντα ἐφόβει, 2.3.1)—i.e., the sudden change in the tyrannical status quo and his doubts about whether his modest origins would bar him from the throne. On the day, he marches to the Senate without allowing any form of imperial pomp "until he discovered the senate's mind" (πρὶν ἥ μαθεῖν τὴν γνώμην τῆς συγκλήτου βουλής, 2.3.2). Once there, he insists that others of higher status, such as Glabrio, ought to occupy the imperial throne, an offer that is rejected (2.3.3–4). In this way Herodian presents an orator who, unlike his allies, is not a conspirator and is humbly aware

[61] The emperor always speaks from an elevated position, be it the βασίλειον θρόνον in his addresses to the Senate (Caracalla in 4.5.1) or the raised tribune (βῆμα) installed in the military camps. This is another element that reminds us of Pericles' epitaph, uttered from an elevated position: προελθὼν ἀπὸ τοῦ σήματος ἐπὶ βῆμα ὑψηλὸν πεποιημένον, ὅπως ἀκούοιτο ὡς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον τοῦ ὁμίλου (Thuc. 2.34.8).

of his own shortcomings, which explains his attempts at handing power to others and the nature of his speech. Thus the historian cunningly manipulates the readerly perception of Pertinax through the setting, which frames him as an honorable man who, despite having benefited from the conspiracy that ended the life of Commodus, is not interested in seizing power and is fully aware of the great difficulties of the task he faces. It goes without saying that Herodian's treatment of his character is designed to fashion the new emperor as a role model whose respectability acutely contrasts not only with Commodus but also with those who will succeed him after his assassination.

In fact, the narrative setting's goal is to present in the most favorable light possible the persuasive words of the emperor to the Senate as he tries to reverse Commodus' tyrannical policies. In so doing, Herodian creates a counterpoint to Laetus' unconvincing speech: Pertinax "made an attempt to change the whole administration to sound, orderly government" (2.4.1). In the closing setting, this change is presented as being welcomed by all the people of Rome except the imperial guard, who will eventually murder the emperor (2.4.2). Indeed, the setting emphasizes the latent danger in the negative context facing the speaker—i.e., the adverse circumstances he fears. In this way Herodian underscores the enormous difficulties hindering Pertinax's imperial reforms; the readers, in turn, would easily locate the root of those difficulties and his eventual failure in the soldiers' greed; hence the uneasiness of the speaker. And yet, this does not prevent Pertinax from delivering a laudable speech about the need for imperial reform, even when his fears would prove to be well founded. Pertinax thus lays down the measures required to solve the empire's terrible economic situation and to avoid military insurrections, which had caused so much injustice in the past. For this reason, Herodian opts to include a more elaborate, deliberative speech than in previous cases.

Furthermore, through a strategic use of allusion, Pertinax's words take on even more value for an experienced reader by

being presented as spoken by a model statesman. In the initial part of the speech (2.3.6–7), the emperor highlights two core themes. First, the difficulties of adequately responding to the favors previously received from the senators; and second, the fact that people quickly forget about one's successes. In my view, these laments crucially allude to two of Pericles' speeches in Thucydides: the epitaph (2.40.4–5) and the last speech before the citizens of Athens (2.61.2).[62] As to the first, there is an evident reference to the behavior of the Athenian citizen who previously has received a favor and "feels less keenly from the very consciousness that the return he makes will be a payment, not a free gift" (2.40.4, εἰδὼς οὐκ ἐς χάριν, ἀλλ' ἐς ὀφείλημα τὴν ἀρετὴν ἀποδώσων). As to the second, there is a clear overlap between Pertinax's words and Pericles' assertion that the Athenian *demos* is fickle and easily forgets why a decision has been taken: "I am the same man and do not alter, it is you who change, since in fact you took my advice while unhurt, and waited for misfortune to repent of it; and the apparent error of my policy lies in the infirmity of your resolution" (2.61.2, καὶ ἐγὼ μὲν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι καὶ οὐκ ἐξίσταμαι· ὑμεῖς δὲ μεταβάλλετε, ἐπειδὴ ξυνέβη ὑμῖν πεισθῆναι μὲν ἀκεραίοις, μεταμέλειν δὲ κακουμένοις, καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον ἐν τῷ ὑμετέρῳ ἀσθενεῖ τῆς γνώμης μὴ ὀρθὸν φαίνεσθαι).

Just as Pericles' words in his last two speeches can be interpreted as the exposition of both the exemplary city represented by Athens and the strategy to achieve victory in the Peloponnesian War, Herodian weaponizes Pertinax's speech to foreground the last opportunity the empire had to return to the project devised by Marcus Aurelius. In the speech, this project is built on two basic ideas. First, the importance of living in freedom as opposed to slavery (2.3.8); and second, the need for measured administration and the avoidance of tyranny (2.3.9).

[62] See n.26 above on the reminiscences of Thucydides' speeches in Herodian.

This culminates in the speech's epilogue (2.3.10), where Herodian, seemingly alluding to Pericles once again, names the proposed system as an aristocratic government that implies the rejection of tyranny (ἀριστοκρατίαν τε ἀλλ᾽ οὐ τυραννίδα ὑπομενοῦντας). In short, Herodian presents a Pertinax who, turned into a kind of Pericles, defends an ambitious program of reform that was doomed to fail because of external circumstances. For this reason, the entire narrative setting highlights the doubts and difficulties which Pertinax faced and was fully aware of.

Conclusions

To sum up, I have suggested that to better understand Herodian's rhetorical art, it is necessary to pay close attention to the important role played by the narrative settings of the speeches of the *History*. These settings not only contextualize the *oratio recta* speeches, but also, and more importantly, justify essential aspects of their delivery, such as brevity and apparent lack of elaboration (in the case of Marcus Aurelius' fearful speech). The settings also explain the choice of speaker (as exemplified by Laetus' ineffectual exhortation). Likewise, they highlight the difficulties in carrying out the task at hand (in the case of Pertinax's more elaborate deliberative allocution). In this sense, the conciseness or apparent simplicity of some of Herodian's speeches should not be understood in a negative way, as some critics believe, but rather as part of a broader rhetorical strategy in which the narrative settings play a crucial role.

This close interaction between shorter speeches and more elaborate narrative settings, as we have seen in the examples analyzed here, underscores the differences between Herodian and his predecessors. It is reasonable to think that if Herodian had introduced longer speeches in keeping with the most established models of the genre in order to demonstrate his rhetorical skills, as we can see in Dionysius of Halicarnassus'

Roman Antiquities or Cassius Dio's *Roman History*,[63] he would have gone against one of the sacred laws of historiography: the primacy of τὸ πρέπον.[64] Although Herodian does not hesitate to introduce more extended speeches elsewhere in his *History* when suitable,[65] this would have been particularly inappropriate in the case of Marcus Aurelius' speech, given his frail health. Nor, for example, would it be appropriate for a character like Laetus to exhort the troops in a way that affords him undeserved dignity given his previous behavior, especially in an episode where the people's pressure was more decisive than the speaker's words.[66] The speeches of Marcus Aurelius and Laetus here analyzed would therefore conform to what would be expected of an orator in situations such as those showcased with precision by Herodian. In my view, considering the important role played by the narrative setting, the speeches' brevity and conciseness are part of their verisimilitude and of their perfect integration in the narrative.[67] Likewise, the setting can indeed

[63] See for example the extended speech episodes in Books 36–50. Cf. J. Rich, "Speech in Cassius Dio's *Roman Historia*, Books 1–35," in C. Burden-Strevens et al. (eds.), *Cassius Dio's Forgotten History of Early Rome* (Leiden 2018) 217–284.

[64] On τὸ πρέπον as rhetorical criterion in the historiographical genre in the Imperial age see G. Avenarius, *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung* (Meisenheim am Glan 1956) 150, and W. K. Pritchett, *Dionysius of Halicarnassus. On Thucydides* (Berkeley 1975) XXVI–XXX.

[65] Cf. Pertinax's speech in 2.3.5–10 or Septimius Severus' exhortation in 2.10.2–9.

[66] In this sense, there is a clear contrast with the authority demonstrated by Septimius Severus haranguing his troops: 2.10.2–9, 2.13.5–9, 3.6.1–7.

[67] Cf. the criticisms expressed by Diodorus Siculus (20.1) on the excessively rhetorical speeches that interrupt the rhythm of the narrative: τοῖς εἰς τὰς ἱστορίας ὑπερμήκεις δημηγορίας παρεμβάλλουσιν ἢ πυκναῖς χρωμένοις ῥητορείαις δικαίως ἄν τις ἐπιτιμήσειεν: οὐ μόνον γὰρ τὸ συνεχὲς τῆς διηγήσεως διὰ τὴν ἀκαιρίαν τῶν ἐπεισαγομένων λόγων διασπῶσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν φιλοτίμως ἐχόντων πρὸς τὴν τῶν πράξεων ἐπίγνωσιν μεσολαβοῦσι τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν.

explain why Pertinax's most elaborate deliberative speech was doomed to failure, showcasing that his persuasiveness was of no avail in the face of resistance from the military establishment. Furthermore, the settings allow Herodian to perfectly harmonize *erga* and *logoi*, so much so that the full meaning of the speeches here analyzed only comes to the fore when accompanied by their respective settings.

On the other hand, as to the way in which these settings have been elaborated, I have also shown how Herodian provides truly emblematic examples of multilevel settings which evince his familiarity with this honed form of historiographical praxis. In this regard, my analysis reveals that Herodian is rather systematic in his approach to levels 1 and 2. The only purpose of these levels is to create a simple enunciative frame that provides essential information devoid of rhetorical enrichment—hence their formulaic nature, as highlighted by Pitcher.[68] Herodian also seems to assign a more important role to the final settings than do other historians, as he coordinates them directly with their respective preambles. But where Herodian truly stands out with respect to his predecessors is in his treatment of the setting's third level. There he showcases his art and depicts very elaborated situations which materialize not only the psychology of the speakers but also the factors that determine the audience's reaction or the difficulties that make a project's success impossible. His treatment of this third level provides tangible evidence of his attentive engagement with earlier historiographical models both rhetorically and thematically, especially Xenophon and Thucydides. And, above all, Herodian's construction of the setting's third level allows him to develop a game of ironic contrasts between what the speakers

On this see I. Achilli, *Il proemio del libro 20 della Biblioteca storica di Diodoro Siculo* (Lanciano 2012).

[68] Pitcher, in *Speech in Ancient Greek Literature* 329–349.

say and what they truly think. This, in turn, allows us to qualify and enrich Sidebottom's comments on this matter.[69]

In sum, Herodian's systematic deployment of the narrative setting not only renders his work much more interesting and complex than his critics usually give him credit for, but also provides a coherent explanation for some of the most striking features of his speeches and their relationship to the most emblematic models of the historiographical genre.[70]

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[69] Sidebottom, *ANRW* II 34.4 (1998) 2775–2836.

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