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A NOTE ON THE *THEIASMOS* OF NICIAS IN THUCYDIDES

By Nanno Marinatos

Summary: Thucydides criticises Nicias for being too partial to divination (7.50.4). It is suggested here through the examination of the linguistic nuances of θειασμός and the verb προσκείμενος, that Thucydides assessed him negatively primarily because he took the side of the army-seers. Yet, this criticism ought not to be blown out of proportion. Thucydides' portrait differs significantly from Plutarch's who describes Nicias as a diffident man easily gripped by fear and addicted to prophecies. Consequently, Thucydides' criticism is a small parenthesis in his overall presentation of the Athenian general's career whose decisions were based on skill, rational criteria and experience (5.16.1).

> καὶ ὁ Νικίας (ἦν γάρ τι καὶ ἄγαν θειασμῷ τε καὶ τῷ τοιούτῳ προσκείμενος) οὐδ' ἂν διαβουλεύσασθαι ἔτι ἔφη πρίν, ὡς οἱ μάντεις ἐξηγοῦντο, τρὶς ἐννέα ἡμέρας μεῖναι, ὅπως ἂν πρότερον κινηθείη (Thuc. 7.50.4).
>
> And Nicias (who was a bit too partial to *theiasmos* and the like), said he would not consider moving before they stayed still for three times nine days as the seers advised.

In this often-cited passage, Thucydides is clearly somewhat critical of Nicias. The purpose of this note is to assess the nuances of his reproach by examining the broader context of the passage and the connection between *theiasmos* and the verb πρόσκειμαι. It will be argued that Nicias is not criticized because of his personal theological beliefs but because of his softness towards the seers, the ones who undertook to interpret the divine will.

NARRATIVE CONTEXT

The context is the highly dramatic situation of the Athenians after they suffered a major defeat before Syracuse. The generals have just taken the decision to withdraw and even Nicias, who on a previous occasion had expressed doubts about the wisdom of open departure, now agreed.

A few words ought to be said about Nicias' initial reluctance to withdraw openly. His reasoning was that when a besieging army decides to withdraw, it inevitably sends messages of weakness to the enemy and may invite pursuit. Thucydides writes:

> Nicias, without denying the bad state of their affairs, was unwilling to avow their weakness (ἀσθενῆ ἀποδεικνύναι), or to have it reported to the enemy that the Athenians in full council were openly voting for retreat; for in that case they would be much less likely to effect it when they wanted without discovery (7.48.1; trans. Crawley).

The historian additionally mentions that Nicias had accurate information that the Syracusans were running out of money and would capitulate soon (7.48.2). The generals' decision to hold out a bit longer was thus reasonable; however, as time went by and no offers of Syracusan surrender came forth, and as the condition of the Athenian army kept deteriorating, the generals unanimously made up their minds to depart in secrecy.

This much about the context. Then, Thucydides recites, something entirely unexpected occurred: "just as [the Athenians] were ready to sail the moon eclipsed; for it *happened* (ἐτύγχανεν) to be full (7.50.4; italics mine)." The incident of the eclipse is presented dramatically by the historian, as if it expressed an intrusion of the incalculable into the rational plans of man, a stroke of bad luck at a moment when escape still seemed possible. This lost opportunity has been amply pointed out by Hans Peter Stahl, Timothy Rood and others.[1] To make things worse, the eclipse was viewed as ominous by the seers who accompanied the expedition and

1 As shown by Stahl 2003: 218-19. Rood 1998: 176 notes that 'the Athenian defeat could have been averted' had it not been for the delay after the eclipse.

they advised that the army ought to stay immobile for 27 days. This advice must have been made in public because Thucydides writes that the soldiers were urging (ἐκέλευον) the generals to heed these warnings. Next, comes the crucial passage where Thucydides remarks that Nicias was "a bit too partial to *theiasmos* and the like" and that he refused to move (7.50.4). In other words, Nicias agreed with the seers and the historian seems to be critical of this fact.

Plutarch took a more extreme view of the same event almost five centuries later when presenting his own version of Nicias' character. The latter's portrait does not match that of Thucydides since it clearly attributes the failure of the entire expedition to Nicias.

PLUTARCH'S DESCRIPTION OF NICIAS' REACTION TO THE ECLIPSE

Plutarch's account of the eclipse contains details which are not found in Thucydides and which may have been picked up from later authors who were far more distant from the events of 415 than Thucydides.[2] As time went by, reality may have fused with legend and interpretation. Plutarch writes:

> But just as everything was prepared for this and none of the enemy was on the watch, since they did not expect the move at all, there came an eclipse of the moon by night. This was a great terror to Nicias and all those who were ignorant or superstitious (δεισιδαιμονίας) enough to quake at such a sight. The obscuration of the sun towards the end of the month was already understood, even by the common folk, as caused somehow or other by the moon; but what it was that the moon encountered, and how, being at the full, she should on a sudden lose her light and emit all sorts of colours, this was no easy thing to comprehend. Men thought it uncanny, – a sign sent from God in advance of diverse great calamities (Plu. *Nic.* 23.1; Perrin).

2 For a critical assessment of N.'s portrait and its divergence from that of Thuc. see Nikolaidis 1988: 328-29.

Plutarch sketches a man who was not only superstitious but totally terrified as were also his men. This interpretation goes far beyond what Thucydides writes since the Athenian historian makes no mention of fear.[3] Moreover, the latter's criticism is mitigated by the small particle 'somewhat' (τὶ), as first noted in 1975 by Stewart Irwin Oost, who went so far as to suggest that the phrasing presupposes that Thucydides accepted as reasonable "a degree of devotion to *theiasmos* and the like."[4]

Another important difference between Thucydides and Plutarch is that the latter contrasts the alleged superstition of Nicias with the enlightened attitude of Pericles. In order fully to understand this comparison we must look at both biographies of Plutarch, his *Pericles* and his *Nicias*, and make a synthesis of his thoughts about enlightened attitudes and superstitious ones.

In his *Pericles*, Plutarch writes:

> These were not the only advantages Pericles had of his association with Anaxagoras. It appears that he was also lifted by him above superstition (δυσειδαιμονίας δοκεῖ γενέσθαι καθυπέρθερος), that feeling which is produced by amazement at what happens in regions above us" (Plu. *Per*. 6; trans. Perrin).

Anaxagoras appears also in the *Nicias* in the context of the moon eclipse which supposedly had terrified Nicias.

> The fist man to put in writing the clearest and boldest of all doctrines about the changing phases of the moon was Anaxagoras. But he was no ancient authority, nor was his doctrine in high repute. It was still under a seal of secrecy, and made its way slowly among a few only, who received it with a certain caution rather with implicit confidence ... Anaxagoras was with difficulty rescued from imprisonment by Pericles ... (Plu. *Nic*. 23.2-3; trans. Perrin).

Plutarch was obviously impressed by Anaxagoras' scientifically based doctrines and used them as a criterion to judge the level of rationalism

3 Nikolaidis 1988: 328-29; Pelling 1992; 1999.

4 Oost 1975: 192.

of statesmen; and he thought of Pericles as a very progressive and rational leader who was not only a fan of Anaxagoras but saved him from imprisonment. By contrast, he considered Nicias a superstitious man who was gripped by terror at the occurrence of irregular (but still natural) phenomena which he did not quite grasp. This portrayal of Nicias is not evident in Thucydides' work and the reasons will be explained below.

NICIAS AS A RATIONAL PLANNER AND STRATEGIST

Contrary to Plutarch, Thucydides presents Nicias as an excellent general, one of the best of his times (Νικίας ὁ Νικηράτου, πλεῖστα τῶν τότε εὖ φερόμενος ἐν στρατηγίαις, 5.16.1). He is also presented as an utterly logical planner whose strategic choices were based on calculation and reason. For example, when Nicias delivers his two speeches against the Sicilian Expedition before the Athenian assembly in 415, he does not once evoke religious omens or the gods.[5] On the contrary, it is others who turn to prophecies (θειάσαντες, 8.1) predicting success for the expedition and it is they who discard Nicias' warnings. Conclusion: if Thucydides wanted to present Nicias as superstitious, he would certainly have attributed to him some religious arguments in his two speeches against the expedition.

In his first speech Nicias makes the following three arguments which are solely based on reason:

- The city profits most by foresight (προνοίᾳ δὲ πλεῖστα, 6.13).
- He says that he wishes to leave as little as possible to chance (ἐλάχιστα τῇ τύχῃ παραδούς, 6.23.3).
- He claims that decisions ought to be based on hard facts and not on matters that are invisible and lie in the future (ἀφανῶν καὶ μελλόντων, 6.9.3).

5 N. speaks about the ill-will of the gods in his last speech (7.77-78), and this has been assessed as a theological statement inappropriate to the occasion (Hornblower 2008: 716). But at this point, the Athenians have already been defeated and N. needs to reassure them that the worse is already behind them by giving hope; divine justice is the last tool a general has at his disposal to build morale.

In his second speech, he likewise uses reason as the foundation for his arguments. By now, he has realised that the people of Athens are keen on the expedition and attempts to dissuade them by presenting his calculations of the huge cost which the supplies will entail. This assessment serves the dual purpose of (hopefully) deterring the Athenians from voting in favour of the expedition, and of providing insurance against failure, in case the expedition is undertaken. The author later shows that these calculations were exact, and that the army was well prepared for a full siege of Syracuse.[6] It ought to be added that Nicias did not underestimate the force of accident since, in his first speech, he states that an enterprise as far away as Sicily involves risks and dangers which could not be entirely calculated or controlled (6.20).

Coming now to the episodes of the expedition, Nicias and Lamachus remained in charge after the recall of Alcibiades but Thucydides focuses mostly on Nicias. A fact (which many modern historians pass over hastily) is that he planned a very successful siege of Syracuse and was on the verge of taking it by executing a speedy assault and by employing bold tactics of surprise. It is rarely emphasised that the enemy was at the point of capitulation when Gylippus arrived, and that the Syracusans had begun negotiations with Nicias concerning the terms of their surrender (6.104.4). The portrait which Thucydides paints is that of a skilled and experienced general who calculated the situation with precision and who acted with exceptional speed.

That Gylippus and the Corinthians arrived at the exact moment when Syracuse was about to be taken is presented as a fatal coincidence. However, some historians claim that it was Nicias' fault because he failed to foresee the arrival of the enemy, especially since Gylippus' ships had been spied at sea. For example, John H. Finley goes so far as to state that Nicias made "his second although not the last of his famous mistakes"

6 Stahl 2003: 173-91.

when he failed to send a dispatch to intercept the nineteen Peloponnesian ships of Gylippus.[7] *Pace* Finley and other historians, a careful examination of Thucydides' text suggests that the situation was uncertain in many respects. How could Nicias have guessed that Gylippus was about to invade the Athenian contingent since Gylippus was himself unsure about which course of action to follow? The author explicitly says that he had given up on Sicily:

> Gylippus abandoned all hope of Sicily, and wishing to save Italy, rapidly crossed the Ionian Sea to Tarentum with the Corinthian, Pythen, two Laconian, and two Corinthian vessels, leaving the Corinthians to follow him after manning, in addition to their own ten, two Leucadian and two Ambraciot ships (6.104.1; trans. Crawley)

A key passage follows:

> Nicias heard of his [Gylippus'] approach, but, like the Thurians, despised the scanty number of his ships (ὑπερεῖδε τὸ πλῆθος τῶν νεῶν), and set down piracy as the only probable object of the voyage, and so took no precautions for the present (6.104. 3; trans. Crawley).

Given the fact that the reader is made aware that Gylippus toured Italy with only a few accompanying vessels and no definite purpose, Nicias' misperception seems justified (why else would Thucydides have provided such detail and why would he have mentioned that the Thurians made the same mistake unless he wanted to explain Nicias' mistake)? Historians have judged the Athenian general from the point of view of the end-result without assessing what information he had at his disposal at the time. It seems preferable to conjecture that Thucydides attributes

7 Finley 1963: 233-34. See also Westlake 1941: 58-65; Edmunds 1975: 117; Kallet 2001: 157-58; Kagan 2009: 199; Gribble 1999: 82; the latter speaks of the timorous prevarication of N. More recently: Tompkins 2017: 100-11; Nichols 2017: 470. Note that many of the above scholars adopt Demosthenes' view that Nicias procrastinated (7.42.3) but this judgment is explicitly attributed to D. by Thuc. both at the beginning and the end of the paragraph and cannot be taken as an objective assessment of the situation by the author. For bibl. see Hornblower 2008: 622-23.

Nicias' mistake to an accident, namely that just a few ships were reported to him.

In short, Gylippus' appearance was indeed unexpected since he arrived at the exact point of time when the circumvallation wall was almost (but not entirely) complete, and Syracuse was about to be taken. As already mentioned, the author presents the arrival as a bad coincidence: "it so happened" (ἔτυχε 7.2.4). Stahl has poignantly argued that this coincidence tipped the scales of victor and defeated: had Gylippus arrived just a few days later, Syracuse would have been in the hands of the Athenians.[8] Thucydides, then, presents Nicias' operation not only as rational but well executed and speedy (διὰ τάχους 6.98.2) confirming this fact by citing Syracusan thoughts: 'they [i. e. the Syracusans] were amazed at the speedy pace of the work (ἔκπληξιν παρέσχον τῷ τάχει τῆς οἰκοδομίας, 6.98.2). Finally, the historian describes how efficiently the Athenians cut-off the water supplies of the Syracusans and how subsequently the Athenian fleet sailed into the harbour once they felt secure in doing so. Everything had gone as Nicias planned: he had brought the Syracusans very close to utter danger (7.2.4).

The point of the above discussion is to make clear that Thucydidean Nicias is presented as a rational general and tactician and that he has no relation to Plutarch's fearful and superstitious character. Given this, we must consider again what the *theiasmos* of Nicias consisted in.

THE NUANCES OF ΘΕΙΑΣΜΟΣ AND ΠΡΟΣΚΕΙΜΕΝΟΣ

The exact meaning of *theiasmos* is difficult to determine. Thomas Hobbes in his 17th-century translation of Thucydides renders it as "superstition" and this meaning is adopted by LSJ, although frenzy is also given as an alternative.[9] Superstition is clearly a mistake, as was noted already by K.J. Dover in *Historical Commentary of Thucydides* (although this realisation did not stop the great scholar from labelling Nicias as unenlightened: "an

8 Stahl 2003: 91.

9 Hobbes 1989: 474.

educated man in such a position [as Nicias] should have paid less attention to the seers").[10] Dover adopts Plutarch's opinion of Nicias despite his admission that *theiasmos* cannot be translated as superstition.

A more common rendition of *theiasmos* is divination, thus given in the older translations by Richard Crawley and Benjamin Jowett. Likewise, Simon Hornblower translates it as divination in his *Commentary on Thucydides*:

> Nicias, who was rather excessively given to divination and that kind of thing (ἄγαν τὶ ... θειασμῷ προσκείμενος), said that he would *not* consider moving before the time prescribed by the *manteis* had passed" (7.50.4).[11]

Slightly different is the Modern Greek translation by the early twentieth century Greek statesman, Eleutherios Venizelos, who translates it as omens "οἰωνοὺς καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ..." This is an imprecise rendition, but it is evocative of the fact that the eclipse was perceived as a bad omen.

The slight variation in the translations illustrates the opaqueness of the nuances of *theiasmos* and hence the puzzle concerning the nature of the historian's criticism. What exactly was Thucydides annoyed about? After all, divination in battle was a standard practice to which the historian himself must have been subjected many times.[12]

LSJ cites the possibility that *theiasmos* designates a particular type of prophecy related to frenzy or ecstatic behaviour, but neither meaning is supported by Thucydides' text since it is hard to imagine that the seers in the Athenian army were frantic, or in a state of ecstasy, when they gave their interpretation of the moon eclipse. Finally, Dionysius of Halicarnassus speaks of women prophets who predicted catastrophes.[13] This gender-specific frenzy cannot possibly apply to the situation in Sicily.

10 Gomme, Andrewes & Dover 1970: 429.

11 Hornblower 2008: 642.

12 For the examination of the entrails and other portents by seers (as attested in ancient authors) see Burkert 1985: 113; Flower 2008: 154-56. The word *theiasmos* is not used in this connection.

13 D.H. 7.68.

The question that needs to be asked next is whether *theiasmos* is referring to the institution of divination practiced before battle, or if it is just a derogatory name discrediting the habit of practitioners who predicted the future, thus claiming a precise understanding of the divine will. It is proposed here that it is the latter since *theiasmos* is referred to only once in the text and the participle θειάσαντες clearly points to human agents who are negatively assessed (8.1). Possibly also τῷ τοιούτῳ alludes to the seers who shaped the opinion of the army after battle.

Hornblower thinks otherwise, implying that Thucydides' scepticism is applicable to the concept of prophecy in general. He correctly points out to a parallel passage about the plague where prophecies are referred to with contempt: "divinations, and so forth *which they used* and which were found equally futile (μαντείοις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐχρήσαντο, πάντα ἀνωφελῆ ἦν (2.47.2; Crawley modified, italics mine). Hornblower concludes that Thucydides' negative judgment on Nicias, who was excessively given to divination and "that kind of thing," has been "long held back" in the narrative.[14] However, the sentence which Hornblower cites clearly points to the people who utilised the oracles (ἐχρήσαντο) for their own purposes. The subject of ἐχρήσαντο is probably the *manteis* and similar religious practitioners, and it is against them that the criticism of the historian is directed.

There is a further aspect to consider: Nicias was not habitually susceptible to prophecies since when the oracle mongers predicted success in Sicily, he was clearly not on their side. After the disaster, the false predictions of the seers incited the anger of the Athenians: "... χρησμολόγοις τε καὶ μάντεσι καὶ ὁπόσοι τι τότε αὐτοὺς θειάσαντες ἐπήλπισαν ὡς λήψονται Σικελίαν (8.1)." Jowett sharply renders the nuances of the Greek in his translation: "reciters of oracles and soothsayers, and all other omen-mongers of the time (8.1)."

In short, *theiasmos* does indeed mean divination, or better said, the divine side of a situation,[15] but the context points also to agency, the seers who interpreted the divine will. If so, Thucydides is saying that Nicias had the inclination to accept whatever the seers suggested, whereas

14 Hornblower 2008: 642.

15 Parker 2000: 299-314. I thank Prof. Parker for his elucidating remarks about *theiasmos* meaning the divine aspect of a situation in an oral communication.

he, namely the author (who had also been a general of the Athenian army), felt that it was not the job of the seers to make strategic decisions since this was the role of generals. Note that Plato attempts to correct this impression (perhaps intentionally addressing Thucydides' criticism) in his *Laches*. There, Nicias is made to say that the soothsayer is obliged to diagnose the signs (ἐπεὶ μάντιν γε τὰ σημεῖα μόνον δεῖ γιγνώσκειν τῶν ἐσομένων,) but someone else (e.g., a general) will need to decide what is the best action-plan (Pl. *Laches* 195e-196a).[16] In this manner, Plato rehabilitates the reputation of Nicias' judgment.

Returning now to Thucydides, the case becomes stronger if we consider that the historian chooses the word προσκείμενος to describe the specific attachment of Nicias to *theiasmos*; because, as it will be argued subsequently, the verb connotes taking sides in an issue or siding with particular persons.

According to LSJ, πρόσκειμαι has both a physical and metaphorical meaning. Literally, it means to be close to an object, as a stone lies next to another stone in a wall, or as when a man is in proximity of a door. In the metaphorical sense, it means devotion or addiction, which is how the verb is often translated in connection with Nicias. And yet, another metaphorical meaning may be more precise: taking the sides of a person, or a group of persons, or even endorsing an idea. Herodotus, for example, writes that he prefers one version of a Scythian legend over others: "There is another story which I myself think the most likely" (ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλος λόγος ἔχων ὧδε, τῷ μάλιστα λεγομένῳ αὐτὸς πρόσκειμαι (4.11). Alternatively, the verb may mean attachment to a particular human being. Again, Herodotus writes that the Spartan king Ariston had a friend to whom he was especially attached (ἦν οἱ φίλος τῶν Σπαρτιητέων ἀνήρ, τῷ προσέκειτο τῶν ἀστῶν μάλιστα ὁ Ἀρίστων (6.61.2). Another use which Thucydides makes of πρόσκειμαι is partisanship:

> It was for motives of personal ambition that most of them were following (προσέκειντο) this political preference that is most disastrous to oligarchies when they take over from democracies (8.89.3; Warner).

16 In the same dialogue, Nicias makes a distinction between thoughtless fear (the instinctual reaction to danger as experienced by animals or small children) and courage, which entails knowledge (197b).

In this case, προσέκειντο means to take the side of one political party over another, although the author notes that the real motivation was satisfaction of personal ambitions. In another passage, Alcibiades tells the Spartans that he hopes not to be suspected of being politically and ideologically attached to the *demos* (διότι καὶ τῷ δήμῳ προσεκείμην μᾶλλον, 6.89.3). Once again, the verb designates a political/ideological preference and attachment to a group, in this case the *demos.* At another place, Alcibiades is described as being close to Tissaphernes and of doing all he could to gain his favour: "So Alcibiades ... was eagerly flattering Tissaphernes and was close to him" (προθύμως τὸν Τισσαφέρνην θεραπεύων προσέκειτο, 8.52). On another occasion, when Alcibiades was in Sparta, he took the side of the Spartans and their allies against his own people, the Athenians, urging the Spartans to fortify Deceleia and not to relax the war with Athens (καὶ ὁ Ἀλκιβιάδης προσκείμενος ἐδίδασκε τὴν Δεκέλειαν τειχίζειν καὶ μὴ ἀνιέναι τὸν πόλεμον, 7.18).

If we apply these nuances of προσέκειτο to the passage under discussion, Thucydides is saying that Nicias – perhaps habitually – took the side of the *manteis*. On his part, the historian shows elsewhere that he had severe reservations about their character and considered them unreliable, self-seeking and capable of promoting their own agenda instead of the common good. Indeed, such people could inflict damage on the democracy.[17]

MANTIS AND GENERAL

Why might Nicias have taken the side of the *manteis*? This is an important question, and it will be proposed here that his choice was likely dictated by pragmatism rather than superstition or addiction to prophecy.

The relationship between *mantis* and general was a sensitive one working best when the two did not disagree but formed a unified front with the purpose of building up the morale of the soldiers. The subject has been thoroughly explored by Michael Flower, who points out that when general and seer disagreed, the morale and indeed mental health

17 Marinatos 1981: 51-52 cf. Thuc. 2.8.2, .21.3; Furley 2006: 415-38.

of the army could be endangered.[18] There are even plenty of mythical paradigms in Greek literature reflecting the same, namely they describe the disastrous results that ensued from dissention: consider the conflict between Agamemnon and Calchas in *Iliad*; Teiresias and Oedipus in *Oedipus King;* Calchas and Agamemnon in Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*. In light of this information, Nicias' decision to side with the seers may have been a rationally based choice with the aim of avoiding mutiny in his army – a mutiny which would have proven fatal to their survival.[19] These pragmatic considerations were surely understood by Thucydides;[20] even so he seems to have wished that Nicias had, on this occasion at least, intervened more forcefully and had not sided with the *manteis*. This taking of sides, I think, is what the historian criticises by ἄγαν τι προσκείμενος.

Are we splitting hairs? Does it make much difference if *theiasmos* points to the agents of divination rather than the concept itself? It does matter, I believe, if our aim is to assess Thucydides' portrait of Nicias. If the historian considered him an irrational man, then he certainly did not appreciate him as a general because military men must be capable of calculating their strategies precisely and soberly. Indeed, Thucydides demonstrates in his narrative that Nicias recognized opportunities and assessed situations correctly during the Archidamian War when he practically had zero failures (5.16.1),[21] whereas in Sicily he acted prudently taking his time to gather allies and supplies and acted suddenly by landing near Syracuse in darkness and speedily capturing Epipolai. Moreover, the historian shows profound admiration of Nicias in a funerary epigram in which he praises the latter as a man of exceptional *arete*. This word surely does not solely refer to moral integrity but also military acuity and valour (7.86.5).[22] True, Nicias' partiality to the *manteis* was considered a weakness by the historian, but it was a tiny part of his overall positive

18 Flower 2008: 156-58 and 16.

19 Piccirilli 1997: 1-8.

20 Greenwood 2017: 167, reasonably says that the failure of the Sicilian expedition may have been a result of pragmatic decisions.

21 Geske 2005: 177-79.

22 Adkins 1975: 379-92; Ossipova 2001: 113-18; Steinbock 2017: 109-70. But see Tompkins 2017: 120-2.

presentation: we might call it a mere parenthesis, rather than a judgment long held back, as the authoritative commentator puts it.[23]

TRANSLATIONS

Crawley = *The Complete Writings of Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War*. The unabridged Crawley translation with an introduction by J.H. Finley, Jr. New York 1951.

Hobbes = *The Peloponnesian War, Thucydides. The complete Hobbes Translation*, ed. D. Grene. Chicago & London 1989.

Perrin = *Plutarch's Lives* III, ed. and trans. B. Perrin. London 1916.

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FORESEEING THE PAST: PROBABILITY AND ANCIENT GREEK DECISION-MAKING

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"Probability does not exist."
– Bruno de Finetti

Summary: The article explores the concept of probability in ancient Greece from a non-scientific perspective and shows how ancient decision-makers used historical data to make calculated decisions and speculate about the future. First, the paper considers how quantitative data was used by ancient Greek communities to make economic projections. It then shows how ancient Greek generals used the same conceptual tools to determine their odds of victory by tallying up and comparing the number and composition of armies and resources available to them and their enemy. In the third section, the paper examines how qualitative probability was articulated through the language of hope and likelihood to formulate chances of success in moments of crisis. Finally, the paper shows that ancient decision-makers implemented "power laws" to adapt to changing circumstances and the flow of new information, as they sought to improve their odds of success relative to their rivals.

INTRODUCTION

In his published conversations with Christopher Pierson, sociologist Anthony Giddens contends that human history turned "modern" when the mathematical discoveries of the 16th century set the foundations of the sciences of statistics and probability.[1] For the first time in human

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history, human actors could quantify uncertainty and think about the future through the modern concept of risk. Giddens could thus announce that "risk has replaced *fortuna*," [2] confident that the "modern" enlightened world has finally managed to shed the old superstitions of "traditional" societies by relying on the rational and "novel" sciences of statistics and probability to quantify, predict, and control an otherwise dangerous future.

Giddens' thesis has been influential in the study of sociology, and has also impacted the way classicists approach ancient decision-making. Notably, Mary Beard has characterized the Graeco-Roman world as an "aleatory society," where the model of gambling luck governed the way the ancients approached danger. For Beard, "Rome was a culture that looked danger in the eye. It did not attempt to avert or calculate danger, but rather to assert (almost celebrate) the uncertainties, chances and dangers of human existence."[3] Her interpretation takes the form of a verdict that relegates ancient considerations of danger to the narrow and morally-charged concern with daring, "[facing] danger head-on," since "anything like a calculation of the probability of danger, let alone a recognisable risk agenda,"[4] was absent in antiquity.

In fact, recent scholarly attempts to talk about ancient "risk-taking" have been countered by the same scientific argument pointing to the absence of mathematical probability in antiquity. For instance, Esther Eidinow's (2007) non-quantitative approach to ancient Greek

my argument. Finally, I benefited from conversations on ancient risk with Anna Francesca Bonnell-Freidin, Esther Eidinow, Stephen Kidd, and Brent Shaw.

1 Giddens describes the modern world as "vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order. It is a society – more technically, a complex of institutions – which unlike any preceding culture lives in the future rather than in the past." Giddens & Pierson 1998: 94. Similar arguments for a conceptual divide between antiquity and modernity have been promoted by Christian Meier (1990), who argued that the modern concept of "the State" was absent in antiquity. Also, Reinhart Koselleck (2006) has argued that the modern idea of "crisis" referring to a political and economic event was not found in the ancient notion of κρίσις; the argument has been disputed by Kuin & Klooster 2020: 3-14.

2 Giddens 1990: 30.

3 Beard 2011: 98.

4 Beard 2011: 91, 98.

perceptions of risk has been critiqued by classically-trained sociologist of religions Kim Beerden (2013), who questions Eidinow's use of the term "risk" as a modern imposition upon antiquity. Referencing Giddens' work, Beerden considers risk as intimately linked to the modern sciences of statistics and probability, whereas "all [ancient Greek] expressions of thinking about the future differ crucially from modern conceptions of risk: there was no calculation of the chances or probability of disaster or success"; the ancients had to content themselves only with divination.[5]

However, this modernist sociological attitude to risk and decision-making carries with it an insidious claim: namely, that the modern world's response to crisis is, in some sense, original, where contemporary issues have contemporary solutions. It follows that ancient experiences and crisis-solving mechanisms are no longer helpful, being relegated to the categories of superstition and credulity. What is more, this sociological insistence on technological progress as a marker of cognitive ability is less than truly explanatory, if not morally dubious, and attracts simplistic value judgments. Take, for instance, sociologist and philosopher Niklas Luhmann's (1991) comment on the seeming absence of mathematical probability in antiquity, that Greek ingenuity had finally reached its limits, unable to explore futurity beyond the use of cosmology and a passive acceptance of divine agency.

Likewise, economist Peter Bernstein (1996) deemed the failure of "the Greeks" to engage with probability theory as "astonishing," concluding that "despite the emphasis that the Greeks placed on theory, they had little interest in applying it to any kind of technology that would have changed their views of the manageability of the future." Bernstein adds that only after the mathematical revolution sparked by Pascal and Fermat did views about gambling move beyond ancient and outdated conceptions of chance: "The act of risk-taking floated free, untrammeled by the theory of risk management."[6] Consequently, ancient societies are denied a fundamental level of cognitive rationality, institutional complexity, and individual agency to anticipate, assess, and mitigate potential dangers.

5 Beerden 2013: 202.

6 Bernstein 1996: 11, 16.

And yet, as I will show in this article, the extant evidence pertaining to ancient decision-making counteracts these primitivist sociological attitudes towards the ancient world. Indeed, if we expand our enquiry beyond the narrow constraints of ancient mathematics, we find different strategies by which ancient decision-makers formulated and applied probabilistic thinking to quantify uncertainty and inform collective economic, social, and military decisions. To do so, I specifically focus on literary evidence from the 4th century BCE onwards when ancient thinkers started theorizing about probabilistic thinking in a systematic way by prescribing codes of behavior and systems of knowledge to calculate the future. I first show that in the absence of conclusive evidence pertaining to ancient mathematical probability, we nevertheless have instances where ancient decision-makers used abstract numbers to express odds of success about economic and military risks. I then assess the qualitative language of likelihood used by ancient decision-makers to assign gradations of risk to dangerous events. Finally, I turn to the use of the past by military leaders to imagine historical precedents to present circumstances as a way to generate statistical data and shape collective expectations about the future. In doing so, I bridge the conceptual divide between antiquity and modernity by highlighting the culturally-specific character of the concept of probability.

1. ANCIENT PROBABILITY AS A METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEM

The narrative that probability is an inherently modern product of Enlightnement mathematicians has recently been dismissed by statistician Glenn Shafer (2018) as mere legend. Schafer assigns responsibility to the work of Ian Hacking (1975 and 1990) for further popularizing the notion that these polymaths were responsible for combining, for the first time, the philosophical ideas of belief and frequency.[7] He points to pre-existing evidence collected by Marie-France Bru and Bernard Bru (2018), some from Arabic texts, discussing dice games and contracts that express probabilistic logic. An imporant

7 Shafer 2018: 279.

instance is the famous 13th century CE poem *De Vetula*,[8] whose author is clearly aware that some arrangements in dice games do not have the same force or frequency, whose complexity has been deemed by the Brus (2018) a veritable "calcul de chances."[9] For Shafer, such texts indicate an understanding of the character of probabiliy as the union between belief (betting) and frequency (outcome).[10]

Nevertheless, Hacking has often defended his thesis from such criticisms by stating that "what is important is not the occurrence of a few probability ideas in antique texts but a use for them, a use that spans morals, politics, economics and social affairs, and which engenders a new era of conjecturing on the one hand and a new mode of representing reality on the other."[11] This statement, however, is unfair to both ancient and modern thinkers alike because the act of choosing a "birth moment" for a concept is a misleading exercise.[12] For the sake of argument, one could just as easily claim that the real revolution in statistics and probability theory came not in the 17th century, but much later in 1933, when Andrei Kolmogorov laid the axiomatic foundations of probability theory by publishing his *Grundbegriffe der Wahrscheinlichkeitsrechnung*.[13] Kolmogorov's achievement eventually allowed the application of probability theory to solve economic problems, but only after World War II, when it was gradually employed in the modern financial system. That, however, would deny Cardano, Pascal, Fermat and all of Kolmogorov's predecessors the cognitive capacity to think axiomatically about probability theory, which would be both unfair and misleading.

And yet, while medievalists have been quick to take up Hacking's challenge by highlighting the complex probabilistic character of so-

8 For a discussion on calculating permutations in ps.-Ovid's *De Vetula,* see Kidd 2020: 19-20.

9 Bur & Bru 2018: 306.

10 Shafer 2018: 280.

11 Hacking 1975: 108.

12 Similar arguments have been made against the presumed modern origin of concepts like "crisis" (Kuin & Klooster 2020), "intuition" (Struck 2016), "landscape" (Zientek 2014) and "risk" (Vădan 2018).

13 Shafer & Vovk 2001: 39: "Among mathematicians, its simplicity, clarity, and power made it the easy victor in the spirited debate on the foundations of probability that took place in the 1930s."

called "aleatory contracts,"[14] classicists have instead limited themselves to justifying the ostensibly rudimentary character of ancient theoretical mathematics. In a recent article on ancient gambling, Stephen Kidd (2020) has sought to account for the apparent absence of mathematical probability in antiquity by looking at the character of games that ancient gamblers played: whereas modern gamblers play games that require them to take individual risky bets based on personal calculations, ancient gamblers, by contrast, played games with previously agreed-upon group wagers, which rendered risk a communal affair. The result, Kidd explains, is that "the incentives to calculate such probable outcomes were not at all glaring, since there was simply no gambling game to which such calculations would have been applicable."[15] According to this argument, we would have to wait until the 16th century when gamblers finally had the incentive to calculate their individual gambling risks for profit, which would eventually lead them to ponder the theory of probability: "with new games to play, people began to think in a new way. That new form of thinking gave rise to mathematical probability and the related field of statistics."[16]

Kidd's analysis of ancient games is impressive and highlights the importance of incentives to finding new solutions to old problems. He is also right to point out the cumulative, rather than individualistic, character of technological progress. But as is often the case, the presumed absence of a certain kind of technology does not necessarily

14 Hald 2003: 32: "The basis of such contracts became the specification of conditions for the equity of the parties involved, which required assessment of risks combined with the possible gains and losses." For the theological and legal aspects of risk-taking in the development of the concept of expectation in probability theory, see also Coumet (1970), Daston (1980), and Schneider (1980).

15 Kidd 2020: 3, 5. It is worth noting that while Kidd (n. 16) acknowledges that ancients tried to get an advantage in dicing through cheating, he does not connect this phenomenon with the possibility of probabilistic thinking. However, Jerzy Neyman (1976: 152) has interpreted tampered dice as an awareness by the cheater of the important phenomenon of long-run frequency. He mentions loaded dice found in Egyptian Pharaonic burial chambers, suggesting that such an understanding of dice is as old as dicing itself.

16 Kidd 2020: 22.

entail the absence of ideas about it.[17] In fact, scholars have recently made the case that even modern technological industrial discoveries generally rely on non-scientific rather than scientific processes.[18] Likewise, the absence of evidence poses a methodological challenge to historians because it does not automatically discard the possibility that such evidence did – or does – exist. Kidd's argument thus needs to be considered with caution because it relies in part on the (supposed) silence of the evidence. To this point, Shafer is confident that there remains the real possibility of discovering ancient manuscripts detailing probabilistic thinking, especially in the oft-ignored Arabic manuscripts. Indeed, Reviel Netz (2016) has estimated that "we have attested something like 20% of ancient mathematical authors, and have extant something like 3%-5% of ancient mathematical texts."[19] There thus remains the real possibility that some of them may have explored mathematical probability, as hinted at by a variety of philosophical works that touch on the subject, if only in a rudimentary way.[20] In fact, it has been argued that the rise and rule of Rome negatively impacted scientific innovation, with the number of mathematicians and scientists regularly decreasing during the Roman empire, until finally becoming

17 One notable example is the development of the abstract principles of thermodynamics by Nicolas Carnot in the 1820s, one century after the implantation of Newcomen's steam engine (Mokyr 2009: 124-44). From a different perspective on the ancient Greek world, John K. Davies (2003) approached Athenian democracy through systems analysis to explain its development in the 5th century BCE in the absence of a general Athenian political theory. Likewise, Josiah Ober (2008) showed how Athenian institutions allowed for the spread of knowledge needed by novice office holders to govern the state through "demotic clusters" of administrative memory, despite the absence of complex information networks.

18 Bresson 2014: 67. See also Clark 2012 for the "idealist" model, and Allen 2009.

19 Netz 2016: 85. Bru & Bru 2018: 302 also agree that we may yet unearth ancient Babylonian tablets or Egyptian papyri that explore the concept of probability.

20 Keyser & Scarborough 2018; Keyser & Irby-Massie 2002. For instance, we know of Xenokrates of Chalkedon's now-lost work on combinatorics, entitled *On Numbers.* In contrast, most claims on ancient statistics focus almost exclusively on the rudimentary observations of Cicero and Aristotle on dice and numbers, without considering the historical implications that these writers were not known as mathematicians, whose observations on the topic were perhaps influenced by other works. Cic. *Div.* 1.23, 2.48, 2.121; Arist. *Cael.* 2.12 (292a30), *PN* 463b19-23, 3.4.1407b1.

negligible in the fifth century CE,[21] leading Alain Bresson (2014) to describe the history of Greek science as an interrupted process.[22] We can thus imagine a scenario where diminishing interest in theoretical science would have discouraged further innovation, which then compounded the problem of manuscript preservation, some of whom still surviving in Arabic texts that have yet been discovered, read, or even translated.

Even so, I suggest that we can bypass the problem of missing mathematical evidence by looking at instances of probabilistic thinking beyond mathematics. To do so, we need to expand our understanding of probability beyond the notion of a closed system governed by symmetry and abstract logic where numerical odds can be objectively calculated. This so-called "classical symmetry" model implies that probability theory could have only developed in a very specific historical context like gambling, whereas statistician David Spiegelhalter (2011) explains that "classical symmetry" is but one way to think about assigning probabilities to events. When it comes to real-world circumstances, Spiegelhalter points out that another means to quantify uncertainty is to use historical data, the so-called "frequentist" method: "If the future follows the same pattern as the past, then frequencies of events in history should reflect reasonable probabilities for events in the future," thus rendering potential responses and outcomes to present circumstance rather predictable.[23]

Mathematician and philosopher James Franklin (2001) concurs that probability in the modern form did not develop earlier in part for the simple reason that dice and other "classical symmetry" tools are not a reliable model to tackle real-world situations.[24] Richard Thaler (2015) illustrates this problem succintly by distinguishing between "Econs" and "Humans," where Econs are fully "rational" optimizers when it comes to economic theory. By contrast, Humans "misbehave" according to beliefs, instincts, and patterns of thought that are decidedly non-optimal. And since we do not live in a world of Econs but in a world of Humans, Thaler

21 Keyser 2010.
22 Bresson 2014: 68-69.
23 Spiegelhalter 2011: 19.
24 Franklin 2001: 334.

asserts that culturally-specific Human behaviors and experiences need to be considered when building theoretical models. For our purposes, Thaler's approach is important because it also implies that one does not necessarily need to be versed in economic theory to behave economically by counting on historical data and personal experience, if not always precisely.[25] Accordingly, I will show that the nature and contents of our sources speak to a Hellenistic interest in using historical data in social, political, and economic contexts other than gambling, to make calculated decisions and speculate about the future. As such, in the presumed absence of an ancient theory of probability, we can interpret the ancient evidence through a frequentist approach to identify clear instances of the philosophical concept of probability.

2. QUANTITATIVE PROBABILITY AND THE ANCIENT ECONOMY

Ancient economic practices offer several illuminating instances of quantitative probability based on experience and historical data. At a fundamental level, agricultural production relied on risk-mitigating strategies meant to offset periods of wide climatic variation, with rainfall alternating sharply between wet and dry phases, which would have otherwise made it difficult to estimate yields and plan for the future.[26] As ancient economists have already pointed out, diversification of crops and polyculture, the building of waterworks, together with sharecropping contracts, were some of the ways in which landowners sought to control the uncertainty of an irregular climate.[27] These efforts

25 Thaler 2015: 2-12.

26 Sallares 1991: 393-95, building on the work of Peter Garnsey (1988), who has shown that despite regular crop failure, *poleis* generally did not experience famine due to various social and economic measures implemented. These included setting up reserves, price moderation, and patronage.

27 Thomas Gallant (1991) provides a general overview of the resource strategies that Greek households would implement to deal with shortfalls in production. He illustrates how an agricultural system could adapt to the pressures of land life cycles

were aimed at absorbing the potential risk of resource scarcity in the *chora*, which in turn helped a community make better predictions about future agricultural yields.

Following the same logic, ancient communities implemented various financial schemes to regulate public funds in an economic crisis. A somewhat morbid case study is offered by a Milesian inscription recording a public decision to create an annuity fund sometime in 211/210 BCE to incentivize wealthy individuals to facilitate public investment:

> The Milesians have voted that those male or female citizens who wish to give 3,600 drachmas on behalf of themselves or on behalf of others [...]. In return for the money given to the city, each of the donors shall receive thirty drachmas per month from the city, for as long as they live. This money shall be given each year by the treasurers, withdrawing and distributing the money, in the same way as is prescribed in the laws for the priests and those who have won contests in games with a prize of crowns.[28]

The initiative attracted no less than thirty-nine contributions from thirty-four individuals, who could recuperate their money within ten years.[29] There was, however, a catch: "If any of those who gave the proposed amount to the city depart from life, the people shall be released from repaying the donation and the reserved annuity, but one hundred

through strategies of crop diversification, intercropping, irrigation, and fragmentation of land holdings. On more detailed examples from the Roman world, see the more recent work of Bruce Frier (2007) and Dennis Kehoe (2007).

28 I. Milet. I.3 147, ll. 7-9, 18-22 ἐψηφίσθαι Μιλησίοις· | τοὺς μὲν βουλομένους τῶμ πολιτῶν ἢ πολιτίδων δοῦνα[ι] | τῆι πόλει δραχμὰς τρισχιλίας ἑξακοσίας ὑπὲρ αὑτῶν ἢ ὑπὲρ ἄλλων | [...] ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ δοθέντος τῶι | δήμωι λαμβάνειν παρὰ τῆς πόλεως δραχμὰς τριάκοντα κατὰ μῆν[α] | τῶν δόντων ἕκαστον, ἕως ἂν ζῆι. δίδοσθαι δὲ τοῦτο καθ' ἕκαστον ἔτος | ὑπὸ τῶν ταμιῶν, γινομένης τῆς ἐξαιρέσεως καὶ δόσεως τοῦ ἀργυ|ρίου, καθότι καὶ τοῖς ἱερεῦσι καὶ νενικηκόσι τοὺς στεφανίτας ἀγῶνας | ἐν τοῖς νόμοις συντέτακται. Trans. Sosin. According to the decree, it had not been possible for the city to collect an eisphora due to lack of funds and revenues; *contra* Franklin 2001: 259.

29 Recorded at Milet I.3 147, ll. 87-104.

and fifty drachmas shall be given to the relatives of each of them for their burial."[30] Joshua Sosin (2014) interprets this "death clause" in the annuity contract as an attempt at financial speculation: if the state bank were to invest the collected money at a common rate of 12% per year, "the fund would have yielded Miletos a meager 2,808 drachmas annually, until the beneficiaries started to die out; every death tipped the scale in the state's favor."[31] The *demos*, therefore, made a long-term bet whose value was directly correlated to the probability that older wealthier individuals would die before they would collect all the money they had made available for the public.

And while the study of ancient demography and mortality rates is beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting that we have evidence from the Roman Empire of early attempts to calculate annuities based on life expectancy. The so-called "Ulpian's Life Table" has been interpreted to represent the calculation of annuity premiums with an interest rate of about 1.5% based on age, which has helped scholars approximate a life expectancy of 40 years for someone aged 20.[32] These numbers have been disputed, but scholars agree that we are looking at a crude annuity table. Returning to the Miletos decree, it is clear from its clauses that rich Milesians were themselves aware of the unavoidable mortality problem. They took advantage of a special representation clause, which perhaps they themselves maneuvered to have included in the decree, which stipulated that:

> if anyone registers the name of another male or female citizen, he shall be given the resulting annuity for as long as those registered are

30 I. Milet. I.3 147, ll. 48-51 ἐὰν δέ τινες τῶν δόντων τῆι πόλει τὸ ἐκκείμενον πλῆθος ἐγλ[ί]|πωσι τὸμ βίον, τοῦ μὲν δοθέντος καὶ τοῦ ἐξαιρουμένου σιτηρεσίου | ἀπολελύσθαι τὸν δῆμον, δίδοσθαι δὲ εἰς ταφὴν τοῖς προσήκουσιν ὑ|πὲρ ἑκάστου δραχμὰς ἑκατὸν πεντήκοντα. Trans. Sosin.

31 Sosin 2014: 80.

32 Pflaumer 2015: 2677-78; though his numbers are slightly different from Duncan-Jones (1990: 94, 100-1), who suggests a life expectancy of 32 years from someone aged 25, and that the beneficiaries of the life-annuities were slaves or ex-slaves, and not Roman elites. See also Frier 1982 and 2018 for a close analysis of the Ulpian Life Table and the projected life expectancy for both Roman men and women. See also Cicero's observations on different mortality rates between youths and adults (Cic. *Sen.* 19).

> alive. If the one who registered the name dies first, then the one whose name was registered shall receive the reserved annuity for the remainder of the time.[33]

The clause was a way for rich families to bypass the "death clause" and recoup their investment within ten years and, furthermore, to continue to make a profit beyond that point. Sosin's analysis of the names of the benefactors and their beneficiaries highlights the point that "Milesians were not demographers, but they could do the math," explaining that "of all of the donations, roughly two thirds were made on behalf of a younger beneficiary or else by a young beneficiary on his or her own behalf."[34] The inscription, therefore, is a classic example of the rich getting richer at the expense of the state during times of general financial hardship. But the greater point is that both the state and its wealthy families used their understanding of life expectancy to make more predictable financial speculations.[35]

Financial incentives to quantify uncertainty also defined how ancient trade was conducted. Alain Bresson (2004 and 2016) has analyzed ancient insurance practices to show how investors quantified danger. He concludes that interest rates were directly correlated to the risk of

33 I. Milet I.3 147, ll. 72-75 ἐὰν δέ τις ἕτερον ἀπογράψῃ ὄνομα τῶμ πολιτῶν ἢ πολιτ[ί]|δων, δίδοσθαι αὐτῶι τὸ γινόμενον σιτηρέσιον ζώντων τῶν ἀπογεγραμ|μένων. ἐὰν δὲ προεγλίπῃ ὁ ἀπογράψας, λαμβανέτω τῶν ἐφεξῆς | χρόνων τὸ ἐξαιρούμενον ὁ ἀπογραφείς. Trans. Sosin.

34 Of the 39 donations, 22 were made on behalf of others, most probably sons and daughters, and of the 17 who contributed in their own names, two were females under the *kyrieia* of men not said to be their husbands, and so perhaps orphaned minors, and two were male minors. Sosin 2014: 81.

35 Other epigraphic examples of financial speculation include Austin 115, where the Olbians honor their benefactor Protogenes for, among other things, helping them purchase grain at a decent price, after correctly speculating that the price of a medimnos would increase exponentially: "Again in the priesthood of Plistarchus, when there was a severe shortage of corn and / grain was being sold at a *medimnos* and 60 two thirds for a gold coin, and it was clear that the price would rise further, and in fact the *medimnos* immediately reached the price of one gold coin and two thirds" (ll. 58-64). For an analysis of the financial crisis at Olbia, see Müller 2011. See also, Austin 118 where we get a glimpse into the public budget of Halikarnassos that includes a debt repayment plan and future funds to be earmarked for public works.

shipwreck, which was known to lenders from historical data.[36] Estimations were precise enough to not only evaluate total damages but also to distinguish the number of shipwrecks in connection to the time of the year: while at the beginning of the sailing season one could expect one ship in five to sink, at the end of the season the chances could be as high as one in three.[37] Literary evidence corroborates these finds, as we learn from the description of a maritime loan contract in Demosthenes' *Against Lakritos* that interest rates regularly changed in accordance with the time of the year: during the high sailing season, interest was estimated at 22%, while after the rising of Arktouros the rate could go as high as 30%.[38] Demosthenes thus provides us with a glimpse into the intricate ancient practice of putting numbers on uncertainty that determined the future behavior of traders and investors. Indeed, as Edward Cohen has shown, "maritime yields" were determined by contractual agreements that took into account the degree of risk and anticipated profitability of a trading venture.[39] Contracts thus anticipated a variety of circumstances and contingencies pertaining to the itinerary and the inter-personal trust involved in the trading venture.[40] Given that the entire maritime commercial infrastructure relied on credit, creditors made profits from transactions where high

36 On the economic and insurance information that can be teased out from shipwrecks, see Gibbins 2001; Bresson 2016: 89-90, 283-84.

37 The economic system was based on acquired experience and shared knowledge of everyone involved in maritime trading, making it possible to stimulate trade while also diminishing the inevitable risks of seafaring for everyone involved; a business practice now known as "risk pooling" (Bresson 2016: 280-83).

38 Bresson and Bresson 2004: 8-9. By also looking at grain trade prices, the Bressons further explain how the leverage investment system made borrowing preferable for the trader because he did not have to put his whole fortune at stake. We may also note the treatise *De Contractibus* by the Franciscan monk Olivi in the 13th century, that assigns numerical values to the perceived risk of maritime insurance contracts. For Marie-France and Bernard Bru, Olivi's calculations of gains and risk are comparable to those of the founders of the insurance science in the 20th century. Bru & Bru 2018: 320.

39 Cohen 1992: 53-55.

40 Using New Institutional Economics, Vincent Gabrielsen shows how the ancient Greek state promoted systems of trust and information sharing that resulted in lower transaction costs (Gabrielsen 2016: 87).

risks yielded high rewards, which in turn allowed them to absorb the risk of an individual disaster like the sinking of a ship.[41]

These trading ventures thus speak to the complex interplay between collective and individual risk. Like in a game of dice, the risk was indeed common to all investors but each investor still had to decide whether the venture was personally worthwhile in the first place. See, for instance, the investment plan recorded in one of the papyri in the Zenon Archive[42] dating from ca. 256-248 BCE, where a certain lender offers Zenon three investment propositions for the exploitation of a trade ship for the period of a year, where each option contained different financial obligations with respect to crew and taxes, as well as distinct opportunities for profit. Whereas it was in the interest of all parties that the ship be utilized to make a profit, it was left to Zenon to decide his preferred course of action and the financial risk he was willing to expose himself to use the ship. [43] Such instances further explain why Demosthenes accuses Lakritos of "not sharing in the danger because you put nothing on board [the ship]," as per the clause stipulating that any kind of payment is only made "upon the ship arriving safely."[44] Lakritos made a personal calculation and decided that he was not prepared to invest, but still tried to illicitly make a profit without taking on the collective financial risk of the venture. Therefore, ancient traders and investors not only had a personal incentive to quantify danger, but did so using historical data to determine the risk of an investment over time.

3. QUANTIFIABLE DEGREES OF DANGER

Demosthenes' use of the expression "sharing in the danger" is notable for its prevalence in political and military discourse. It pertains to the

41 Oliver 2007: 40-41.

42 P. Cairo Zenon IV 59649.

43 For a detailed financial analysis of the three investment propositions, see Gachet 1990.

44 Dem. 34.33 ἡ συγγραφὴ σωθείσης τῆς νεὼς αὐτὸν ἀποδοῦναι κελεύει τὰ χρήματα [...] οὐ γὰρ μετέσχηκας τοῦ κινδύνου διὰ τὸ μηδὲν ἐνθέσθαι.

deliberative process of ancient decision-makers,[45] and in some cases is linked specifically to ancient efforts at quantifying danger. Polybios, for instance, describes the Roman practice of "decimation," where members of a cohort accused of cowardice were severely punished with public humiliation and even fatal beatings. Polybios considers the practice a good deterrent against cowardice because "the danger and dread of drawing the lot hang over all equally, as the outcome is uncertain; and as the public disgrace of receiving barley rations falls on all alike."[46] The passage expresses what is commonly referred to as "relative perception of risk," where people are willing to accept a probability of harm up to a certain threshold, beyond which the risk is considered unacceptable – in this case 10%, or one in ten.[47] Such use of numerical "odds" is just one of the ways in which probabilities were expressed, and we have examples where one's risk threshold could be swayed towards taking more risks based on the increased amount of coined money promised to them.[48] While we do not always have detailed pay information, we can still glimpse into how individuals quantified danger in terms of money as they weighed the potential rewards against the risk of participating in collective action.

Nor was Polybios describing "decimation" as a uniquely Roman way of approaching danger - *pace* Beard - as we find other instances in ancient

45 For other telling examples of personal calculations for getting involved in collective risky initiatives, see Isoc. 4.97.7 on the Spartans' decision to join the Athenians against the Persians. Also, Xen. *Cyr.* 5.5.20 where one of the Persian King's men is excused from sharing in the danger because he did not think it was personally safe to pursue the enemy. Conversely, the Macedonian general Parmenion was willing to gamble his life over his plan to engage the Persians by sea, saying that "he was willing even to embark himself and share in the danger," only to be dismissed by Alexander as flawed in his judgement. Arr. *Anab.* 1.18.6-7.

46 Polyb. 6.38.3-4 λοιπὸν τοῦ μὲν κινδύνου καὶ φόβου τοῦ κατὰ τὸν κλῆρον ἐπ' ἴσον ἐπικρεμαμένου πᾶσιν, ὡς ἂν ἀδήλου τοῦ συμπτώματος ὑπάρχοντος.

47 For more on "relative perception of risk," see Vădan 2018: 42 n. 59.

48 Alexander the Great, for instance, was able to convince his tired Macedonians to continue campaigning eastward by promising them to "make them the objects of envy to those at home, and stir up the rest of the Macedonians to readiness for sharing the same dangers and hardships." Arr. 7.8.1 ἐπιδώσει δὲ <τοῖς> μένουσιν ὅσα αὐτούς τε ζηλωτοτέρους ποιήσει τοῖς οἴκοι καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους Μακεδόνας ἐξορμήσει ἐς τὸ ἐθέλειν τῶν αὐτῶν κινδύνων τε καὶ πόνων μετέχειν.

Greek literature of conveying degrees of danger in terms of numerical "odds." Diodorus Siculus tells us about the panicked call by Pancylus Paucus to his fellow Capuans to surrender to Hannibal during the Second Punic War:

> He was driven out of his mind for fear of Hannibal, and he swore to his fellow citizens a peculiar oath: 'If', he said, 'there were still one chance in a hundred for the Romans, he would not go over to the Carthaginians; but since the superiority of the enemy was clear and danger was at their gates, it was necessary to yield to superiority.'[49]

Pancylus' words are strongly rhetorical, highlighting fear as a driving force in shaping a group's risk calculations. But beyond the trope of emotions overcoming reason, the passage also suggests that the audience – and, by extension, Diodorus' readers – would have understood the strength of his message because they understood its probabilistic logic. Pancylus' calculation may not have been necessarily accurate but is nevertheless expressive of the cognitive ability to assign an abstract fraction to an outcome. Similarly, Xenophon in the *Anabasis* also uses fractions to underline the danger that his fellow Greeks were in during their journey back to Greece. He reports that the envoy of the Persian King snidely tells them that "if you have one chance in ten thousand to save yourselves by continuing to fight against the King, I advise you not to give up your arms."[50] Again, the odds given by the envoy were clearly rhetorical and were simply meant to suggest that in fact the Greeks had little chance of escape. Even so, for Spiegelhalter such basic expressions of numerical "odds" are sufficient to identify one's cognitive ability to understand and

49 Diod. Sic. 26.10 ὁ δὲ ἐκτὸς τῶν φρενῶν γεγονὼς διὰ τὸν Ἀννίβου φόβον ὤμοσε τοῖς πολίταις ἰδιότροπον ὅρκον. ἔφησε γάρ, εἰ τῶν ἑκατὸν ἐλπίδα μίαν εἶχεν ἐν τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις, οὐκ ἂν μετέστη πρὸς Καρχηδονίους· νῦν δὲ φανερᾶς οὔσης τῆς τῶν πολεμίων ὑπεροχῆς καὶ τοῦ κινδύνου ταῖς πύλαις ἐφεστῶτος, ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι ταῖς ὑπεροχαῖς εἴκειν.

50 Xen. *Anab.* 2.1.18-19 Φαλῖνος δὲ ὑποστρέψας παρὰ τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ εἶπεν· ἐγώ, εἰ μὲν τῶν μυρίων ἐλπίδων μία τις ὑμῖν ἐστι σωθῆναι πολεμοῦντας βασιλεῖ, συμβουλεύω μὴ παραδιδόναι τὰ ὅπλα· εἰ δέ τοι μηδεμία σωτηρίας ἐστὶν ἐλπὶς ἄκοντος βασιλέως, συμβουλεύω σῴζεσθαι ὑμῖν ὅπῃ δυνατόν.

represent probabilities without the need of complex mathematical models.[51]

Indeed, the probabilistic thinking expressed in these examples is underlined by the use of the term ἐλπίς to convey chances of success. Douglas Cairns (2016) reminds us that the word does not only mean "hope," as we are sometimes wont to translate it, but can also mean "expectation" in relation to rational deliberation and endurance.[52] The term itself, therefore, signals the futurity inherent in probabilistic thinking, as protagonists formulate expectations by resorting to observation and deliberation to determine what actions are likely to have higher odds of success. It is in fact telling that early modern mathematicians also resorted to ἐλπίς, so to speak, to explain observable probabilities. Indeed, in the wake of Blaise Pascal's publication of his *Usage du Triangle Arithmétique*, French mathematicians began using the phrase "espérance mathématique" to refer to quantifiable probabilities; literally "mathematical hope." That is not to say that the French word "éspoir" and the Greek ἐλπίς are causally linked, but that the probabilistic concept behind their usage is fundamentally the same, despite different technologies.

I would thus argue that the language of expectation is more useful than the metaphor of dice when accounting for probability in real sociopolitical circumstances. Crises and conflicts do not take place in a controlled environment but in a world of changing circumstances, and the language of expectation shows us how ancient decision-makers were able to communicate probabilistic variations. For instance, in one of the myriads of local conflicts that make the history of Hellenistic Anatolia a mire of confusion, the people of Pednelissos were being besieged by their neighbors the Selgians, during the summer of 218 BCE and were about to surrender. But after receiving positive news that the Seleukid general Achaios would send the help that they had earlier asked for, "The Pednelissans undertook the siege boldly, relying on their hopes (ἐλπίσι) of salvation, and Achaios, appointing Garsyeris to command the expedition, dispatched him with six thousand foot and five hundred horse to

51 Spiegelhalter 2011: 21-22.

52 Cairns 2016: 43-44.

the Pednelissans' assistance."[53] The timely promise of assistance thus led the defenders to alter their risk calculations, feeling confident that their chances of success were increased, which in turn induced them to persevere under siege. In the absence of game theoretical scenarios and equations, the Pednelissans speak to the cognitive ability of Hellenistic communities to articulate probabilities in culturally specific terms. The difference between ancient and modern probability, therefore, appears as one of form rather than substance.

4. QUANTIFYING WAR AND PEACE

As our previous examples show, "odds" of success were often correlated to concrete numbers. Since war was the most dangerous game to play, ancient military commanders were understandably concerned with determining their "odds" of victory. They did so in part by tallying up and comparing the number and composition of armies and resources.[54] Indeed, ancient historians offer many examples of commanders deciding on a course of action based on their (in)sufficient forces compared to

53 Polyb. 5.72.1-3 κατὰ δὲ τὴν αὐτὴν θερείαν Πεδνηλισσεῖς, πολιορκούμενοι καὶ κινδυνεύοντες ὑπὸ Σελγέων, διεπέμψαντο περὶ βοηθείας πρὸς Ἀχαιόν. τοῦ δ' ἀσμένως ὑπακούσαντος, οὗτοι μὲν εὐθαρσῶς ὑπέμενον τὴν πολιορκίαν, προσανέχοντες ταῖς ἐλπίσι τῆς βοηθείας, ὁ δ' Ἀχαιός, προχειρισάμενος Γαρσύηριν μετὰ πεζῶν ἑξακισχιλίων, ἱππέων δὲ πεντακοσίων, ἐξαπέστειλε σπουδῇ παραβοηθήσοντα τοῖς Πεδνηλισσεῦσιν.

54 For instance, the Punic Wars are described by Polybios as an arms race, where both sides initially thought that the contest was even, which in turn spurred each of them to acquire more ships and manpower. Polyb. 1.25.5. We are also told that, desperate to increase their odds of victory, the Romans "were so alarmed and anxious as to the future that they decided to bring into action not four legions but eight." See Polyb. 3.107.9 προέθεντο δὲ στρατοπέδοις ὀκτὼ διακινδυνεύειν, ὃ πρότερον οὐδέποτ' ἐγεγόνει παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις, ἑκάστου τῶν στρατοπέδων ἔχοντος ἄνδρας εἰς πεντακισχιλίους χωρὶς τῶν συμμάχων. On the numbers at the battle of Cannae, see also Polyb. 3.117. See also Polyb. 1.53.10 on the Carthaginians who considered themselves not strong enough to engage the Romans on account of their inferior numbers.

those of the enemy.[55] This has led me (Vădan 2018) to argue that Hellenistic decision-makers understood the concept of risk as a deliberative expertise, a τέχνη expressed through verbs like κινδυνεύω or κρίνω, based on one's experience, knowledge, and sagacity. [56] In turn, Roel Konijnendijk (2020) has recently shown that "Classical Greeks would not have accepted the gamble of battle in the open without careful deliberation."[57] This attitude, in turn, explains why Xenophon and Aristotle

55 Xen. *Anab*. 3.4.14, 7.1.20; Polyb. 1.53.10, 1.25.5, *Fr.* 6 (Suda α 1312). In this light, the wars of the Athenians and Macedonians against the Persian Empire are the exceptions that strengthen the rule, so to speak, where local communities and potential allies "had little respect for the small numbers of the [former] but were much impressed with the great size of the [latter], abandoned Alexander and came over to Dareios. They brought the Persians food and other materials with great goodwill, and based on their own decision they foretold the victory of the barbarians." Diod. Sic. 17.32.4 οἱ δ' ἐγχώριοι τῆς μὲν τῶν Μακεδόνων ὀλιγότητος καταφρονήσαντες, τὸ δὲ πλῆθος τῆς τῶν Περσῶν στρατιᾶς καταπεπληγμένοι καταλιπόντες τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον προσέθεντο τῷ Δαρείῳ καὶ τάς τε τροφὰς καὶ τὴν ἄλλην παρασκευὴν μετὰ πολλῆς προθυμίας ἐχορήγουν τοῖς Πέρσαις καὶ διὰ τῆς ἰδίας κρίσεως προεσήμαινον τοῖς βαρβάροις τὴν νίκην. On the size of the Persian Army, see also Hdt. 7.184-87 and later during the campaign of Alexander Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.3-6. At the same time, others sought to make their army seem larger so as to deter an enemy attack or to psychologically overwhelm the opponent to surrender, as in the case of the siege of Rhodes where Demetrios the Besieger made sure that "the whole space between the island and the opposite shore was seen to be filled with his vessels, which brought great fear and panic to those who were watching from the city." Diod Sic. 20.83.1 ὥστε πάντα τὸν ἀνὰ μέσον τόπον τῆς τε νήσου καὶ τῆς ἀντικειμένης παραλίας συμπεπληρωμένον φαίνεσθαι τοῖς πλοίοις καὶ πολὺν φόβον καὶ κατάπληξιν παρέχεσθαι τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως θεωροῦσιν. For this strategy, see also Xen. 3.4.13 and Plut. *Eum.* 15. We can think of such prognostications (προσημασίαι) as the "odds" calculated with concrete numbers that in turn informed the decisions of the many smaller factions caught between the two main antagonists.

56 Polybios believed that one's deliberative expertise could lead one to make seemingly "correct" decisions during a crisis; in other words, the κίνδυνος could be calculated and handled in any situation. Vădan 2018: 27-40.

57 Battle was considered a risk that was not always worth taking if necessity did not demand it, while "senseless" leaders were censured for "playing dice with the whole city at stake." Xen. *Hell. Oxy*. 1.2; Diod. Sic. 13.65.2. By contrast, someone like Phrynichos was praised by Thucydides for not "running a risk senselessly," but calculated carefully, weighing the potential rewards versus dangers 8.27.2-3 (Konijnendijk 2020: 183-84).

consider it imperative for a leader to know the resources and expenses of the state, its diplomatic standing, and the state's military capability to make correct estimations. In his *Memorabilia,* for instance, Xenophon offers an enlightening conversation between Sokrates and a young, ignorant Glaukon:

S. In order to advise about whom to fight, it is necessary to know the city's strength and the enemy's so that if the city is stronger one may recommend going to war, but if weaker, being cautious.
G. You are right.
S. First then, tell us the naval and military strength of our city, and then that of her enemies.
G. No, of course I can't tell you it out of my head.
S. Well, if you have made notes, fetch them, for I would greatly like to hear this.
G. But, I tell you, I haven't made any notes either.
S. Then we will postpone offering advice about war too for the present.[58]

The dialogue highlights the reliance on the numbers of troops and resources to quantify success in a possible conflict and shape foreign policy accordingly.[59] The detail that such information would have also been available in written form (γέγραπται) suggests that a seasoned

58 Xen. *Mem.* 3.6.8-9 Οὐκοῦν, ἔφη, τόν γε βουλευσόμενον, πρὸς οὕστινας δεῖ πολεμεῖν, τήν τε τῆς πόλεως δύναμιν καὶ τὴν τῶν ἐναντίων εἰδέναι δεῖ, ἵνα ἐὰν μὲν ἡ τῆς πόλεως κρείττων ᾖ, συμβουλεύῃ ἐπιχειρεῖν τῷ πολέμῳ, ἐὰν δὲ ἡ τῶν ἐναντίων, εὐλαβεῖσθαι πείθῃ. | Ὀρθῶς λέγεις, ἔφη. | Πρῶτον μὲν τοίνυν, ἔφη, λέξον ἡμῖν τῆς πόλεως τήν τε πεζικὴν καὶ τὴν ναυτικὴν δύναμιν, εἶτα τὴν τῶν ἐναντίων. | Ἀλλὰ μὰ τὸν Δί', ἔφη, οὐκ ἂν ἔχοιμί σοι οὕτω γε ἀπὸ στόματος εἰπεῖν. | Ἀλλ' εἰ γέγραπταί σοι, ἔνεγκε, ἔφη· πάνυ γὰρ ἡδέως ἂν τοῦτο ἀκούσαιμι. | Ἀλλὰ μὰ τὸν Δί', ἔφη, οὐδὲ γέγραπταί μοί πω. | Οὐκοῦν, ἔφη, καὶ περὶ πολέμου συμβουλεύειν τήν γε πρώτην ἐπισχήσομεν. See also the extensive education young Alexander received from some of the finest tutors that his father could hire to get him ready to rule. Plut. *Alex.* 5.

59 We may add as a further example Perikles' detailed account of Attic geography and Athenian naval forces to convince his fellow Athenians to persevere in their conflict with the Spartans and their allies: "to these Perikles added other arguments, such as he was accustomed to do, as proof of their superiority in war." Thuc. 2.13.7-9 ἔλεγε δὲ καὶ ἄλλα οἷάπερ εἰώθει Περικλῆς ἐς ἀπόδειξιν τοῦ περιέσεσθαι τῷ πολέμῳ.

commander like Xenophon would have made balance sheets comparing the two forces in an attempt to determine what military action to take. And in fact, he gives us such a balance sheet in his *Anabasis*, in a speech to his fellow Greeks that includes an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the two opposing forces:

> If anyone of you is despondent because we are without horsemen while the enemy have plenty at hand, let him reflect that your ten thousand horsemen are nothing more than ten thousand men; [...] moreover, we are on a far surer foundation than your horsemen: they are hanging on their horses' backs, afraid not only of us, but also of falling off.[60]

Xenophon goes on to tell his men that they should not worry either about the terrain or about the lack of guides. His address is obviously rhetorical to the point of absurdity insofar as having fewer men in a foreign country is touted as a benefit; logic is turned on its head. But it reveals two important points pertaining to ancient probability. On the one hand, Xenophon needed to address his men's fears because according to their own calculations their inferior numbers did decrease their chances of returning home to Greece. On the other hand, Xenophon's men also noted that not all troops were alike, and that horsemen had different uses and benefits in particular circumstances, thus demonstrating combinatorial thinking where not only the number but also the type of troops are used to calculate odds of victory.[61]

60 Xen. *Anab.* 3.2.17-19 εἰ δέ τις ὑμῶν ἀθυμεῖ ὅτι ἡμῖν μὲν οὐκ εἰσὶν ἱππεῖς, τοῖς δὲ πολεμίοις πολλοὶ πάρεισιν, ἐνθυμήθητε ὅτι οἱ μύριοι ἱππεῖς οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ μύριοί εἰσιν ἄνθρωποι· [...] οὐκοῦν τῶν γε ἱππέων πολὺ ἡμεῖς ἐπ᾽ ἀσφαλεστέρου ὀχήματός ἐσμεν· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐφ᾽ ἵππων κρέμανται φοβούμενοι οὐχ ἡμᾶς μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ καταπεσεῖν.

61 See also Polybios' verdict on the battle of Cannae (3.117.4-6) where about seventy thousand Romans died: "both on this occasion and on former ones their numerous cavalry had contributed to the victory of the Carthaginians, and it demonstrated to posterity that in times of war it is better to give battle with half as many infantry as the enemy and an overwhelming force of cavalry than to be in all respects his equal." τὴν μεγίστην χρείαν παρεσχημένου τοῖς Καρχηδονίοις εἰς τὸ νικᾶν καὶ τότε καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τοῦ τῶν ἱππέων ὄχλου. καὶ δῆλον ἐγένετο τοῖς ἐπιγινομένοις ὅτι κρεῖττόν ἐστι

To be sure, sheer numbers were certainly not the only criterion for deciding a battle. One's talents as a general, the soldiers' experience, their mental state, the character of the battleground, etc., all could prove decisive. But for Aristotle numbers were nevertheless a good indicator that allowed one to think probabilistically about the future and improve their odds of success. One long passage in the *Art of Rhetoric* is worth quoting:

> [A leader] should know all the expenses of the state, that if superfluous, it may be removed, or if too great, may be curtailed [...] of these matters it is not possible to acquire a general view from individual experience alone, but in view of advising about them it is further necessary to be well informed about what has been discovered among others. In regard to war and peace, the rhetor should be acquainted with the power of the state, how great it is already and how great it may possibly become, of what kind it is already and what additions may possibly be made to it; [...] These matters he should be acquainted with, not only as far as his own state is concerned but also in reference to neighboring states, and particularly those with whom there is a likelihood of war, so toward the stronger a pacific attitude may be maintained, and in regard to the weaker, the decision as to making war on them may be left to his own state. Again, he should know whether their forces are like or unlike his own, for herein also advantage or disadvantage may lie.[62]

πρὸς τοὺς τῶν πολέμων καιροὺς ἡμίσεις ἔχειν πεζούς, ἱπποκρατεῖν δὲ τοῖς ὅλοις, μᾶλλον ἢ πάντα πάρισα τοῖς πολεμίοις ἔχοντα διακινδυνεύειν. Polybios echoes Xenophon by highlighting how different configurations of troops can generate different results that can be quantified loosely in terms of casualties.

62 Arist. *Rhet.* 1.4.8-9 (1359b-1360a) Ὥστε περὶ μὲν πόρων τὸν μέλλοντα συμβουλεύσειν δέοι ἂν τὰς προσόδους τῆς πόλεως εἰδέναι τίνες καὶ πόσαι, ὅπως εἴτε τις παραλείπεται προστεθῇ καὶ εἴ τις ἐλάττων αὐξηθῇ, ἔτι δὲ τὰς δαπάνας τῆς πόλεως ἁπάσας, ὅπως εἴ τις περίεργος ἀφαιρεθῇ καὶ εἴ τις μείζων ἐλάττων γένηται· [...] ταῦτα δ' οὐ μόνον ἐκ τῆς περὶ τὰ ἴδια ἐμπειρίας ἐνδέχεται συνορᾶν, ἀλλ' ἀναγκαῖον καὶ τῶν παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις εὑρημένων ἱστορικὸν εἶναι πρὸς τὴν περὶ τούτων συμβουλήν. [...] οὐ μόνον δὲ τῆς οἰκείας πόλεως ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ὁμόρων ταῦτα ἀναγκαῖον εἰδέναι, καὶ πρὸς οὓς ἐπίδοξον πολεμεῖν, ὅπως πρὸς μὲν τοὺς κρείττους εἰρηνεύηται, | πρὸς δὲ

While echoing Xenophon's emphasis on the size and character of an army and its resources, Aristotle is particularly concerned with how this information could be manipulated to increase the calculable odds of success and help make decisions about the future. Notice, for instance, the correlation between addition and possible outcome as expressed by the use of the quantitative phrases πόσην ἐνδέχεται ὑπάρξαι (how great it may possibly become) and ἥτις ἐνδέχεται προσγενέσθαι (whatever it may be possible to add) relative not only to one's own power but also to that of their rivals. For Aristotle, even particular differences (ὅμοιαι ἢ ἀνόμοιαι) could be quantified, as shown through his use of the infinitives πλεονεκτεῖν (to claim more than one's share, to have an advantage, claim a larger share) and ἐλαττοῦσθαι (make smaller, diminish, reduce in amount). The moral meaning of the verbs expressing greediness and degradation comes from their more technical quantitative meaning expressing addition and reduction. In this particular case the infinitives signal advantage and disadvantage insofar as they increase or diminish one's odds of success.

Both Xenophon and Aristotle, then, prescribe how leaders armed with detailed information could quantify the (un)certainty of war and peace and plan their future steps accordingly. A case in point is Demetrios the Besieger's decision,

> though short of money, to double his army by new levies. And when some of his friends in surprise asked him, how he expected to pay them, when he found it difficult to support a smaller force; "the more powerful we are", he replied, "the weaker we shall find our enemies; and the more easily make ourselves masters of their country. From thence tribute and free gifts will come in, that will soon fill our coffers."[63]

τοὺς ἥττους ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς ᾖ τὸ πολεμεῖν. καὶ τὰς δυνάμεις, πότερον ὅμοιαι ἢ ἀνόμοιαι· ἔστι γὰρ καὶ ταύτῃ πλεονεκτεῖν ἢ ἐλαττοῦσθαι.

63 Polyaen. 4.7.1 s.v. "Demetrius" Δημήτριος χρήματα οὐκ ἔχων διπλασίους συνέλεξε στρατιώτας· καὶ δὴ θαυμάζοντός τινος, πόθεν ἡ μισθοφορὰ τοσούτοις, ὅπου μηδὲ τοῖς ἐλάττοσιν, 'ὅτι', ἔφη, 'βαρύτεροι ὄντες ἀσθενεστέρους τοὺς ἀντιπάλους ἕξομεν καὶ

The passage highlights the fascinating discrepancy in perception between Demetrios and his friends. Whereas the latter are solely focused on their present circumstances, Demetrios looks to the future by using probabilistic thinking to determine the best course of action. In other words, his financial gambling is in fact an investment into making his chances of possible victory stronger (βαρύτεροι) relative to his soon-to-be weaker (ἀσθενεστέρους) enemies, by a factor of two, which would in turn bring him a significant return on that investment. Demetrios' initiative, like our earlier examples, therefore, reveal that for ancient decision-makers statistical thinking became what psychologist Gerd Gigerenzer calls "a habit of mind."[64] They had the incentive and the inclination to convert various quantities into a single abstract value of uncertainty to make informed decisions about present and potential dangers.

5. QUALITATIVE PROBABILITY

Numbers are not the only means to express probability. Risk analysts Baruch Fischhoff and John Kadvany (2011) explain why estimative language plays a crucial role in communicating uncertainty in important socio-political contexts: because analytical judgements are inherently not certain, decision-makers use probabilistic language to reflect the estimates of the likelihood of developments or events.[65] Such language appears prominently in ancient philosophy and forensic oratory, though its use by ancient historians regarding practical decision-making has not received extensive attention. In fact, historians and local leaders use terms like εἰκός to express the probability of an outcome during the

τῆς τούτων χώρας κρατήσομεν, καὶ φόρους οἴσουσιν ἄλλοι, [ἄλλοι] καὶ στεφάνους πέμψουσι τὸ πλῆθος τῶν στρατιωτῶν δεδιότες ἤδη.'

64 Gigerenzer 2002: 245.

65 Fischhoff & Kadvany 2011: 126-27.

decision-making process.[66] In this regard, Thucydides's use of the term during the speech of the Korinthians on the eve of the Peloponnesian War is instructive: they explain to their Peloponnesian allies that "For many reasons it is likely (εἰκὸς) for us to prevail: firstly, because we are superior in numbers and military experience, then because we follow all orders ... so if we win a single victory at sea, [the Athenians] are most likely (κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς) defeated."[67] Beyond its rhetorical flavor, Thucydides uses this passage to point out that likelihood of success is not merely a matter of guesswork but the product of calculation that took into account perceived experience, general inclination, circumstances and, of course, the sheer number of troops, ships and resources.

Decision theorists interpret such estimations as expressions of "qualitative probability", which represents "a theory of probability based on qualitative ordering of events in terms of their likelihood of occurrence."[68] In times of crisis, ancient leaders and communities ultimately had to choose between a set of difficult options, each with their own dangers and consequences, that could often be reduced to a binary response

66 For detailed discussions and examples of argumentation through likelihood (εἰκός, εἰκότα) in forensic oratory, see the contributions by Michael Gagarin and Craig Cooper in *A Companion to Greek Oratory* (Gagarin 2007: 27-36 and Cooper 203-19, respectively). Consider the famous hypothetical example of whether a weak man is (un)likely to be charged with assaulting a strong man (and vice-versa) (Arist. *Rhet.* 2.24.11). On the one hand, the weaker man would have smaller chances of success against a stronger man, which would make him wary of committing such a crime. On the other hand, given such general expectations of success, the stronger man would also be unlikely to assault a weaker man because everyone would think him to be the likely suspect; Gagarin calls it "a reverse argument from likelihood." Gagarin 2007: 32. For the first uses of the language of probability in Greek literature, starting with the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, see Kennedy 1995: 11-29. On the extensive use of εἰκός by Attic rhetoricians to suggest likelihood of guilt based on character rather than forensic evidence, see further Kennedy 1995: 64-80.

67 Thuc. 1.121.4 κατὰ πολλὰ δὲ ἡμᾶς εἰκὸς ἐπικρατῆσαι, πρῶτον μὲν πλήθει προύχοντας καὶ ἐμπειρίᾳ πολεμικῇ, ἔπειτα ὁμοίως πάντας ἐς τὰ παραγγελλόμενα ἰόντας [...] μιᾷ τε νίκῃ ναυμαχίας κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἁλίσκονται.

68 Narens 2007: 29. Note also Meusnier's (2008: 108) observations on the assumed discontinuity in recent scholarship between qualitative and quantitative approaches to probability, which leads to the perceived "sudden" appearance of probability theory after its "discovery" by Pascal, Fermat, and Huygens.

– "yes" or "no", action or inaction, attack or defend, etc. Preferable courses of action could also be expressed through comparative adjectives. As with εἰκός, adjectives add "gradations" of risk to these kinds of binary contrasts. Diodorus Siculus, for instance, portrays the convoluted history of the Successor Wars that erupted immediately after the death of Alexander the Great, through a detailed description of the thought process of an otherwise unremarkable commander by the name of Peukestes. This Peukestes was one of the many Macedonian leaders who had been prominent at Alexander's court, and who now sought to carve the dead King's empire among themselves. When he was asked by several others to send help against an increasingly belligerent and powerful Antigonos Monophthalmos, who wanted to take it all for himself, Diodorus tells us that:

> At first [Peukestes] paid no heed to them [...] since he still bore a grudge for not receiving a generalship; but later, reasoning with himself, he conceded that should Antigonos be victorious, the result would be that he himself would lose his satrapy and thus also risked (κινδυνεῦσαι) losing his life. Agonizing, therefore, about himself, and thinking that he would be more likely (μᾶλλον) to gain the command if he had as many soldiers as possible, he brought forth ten thousand archers, as they requested.[69]

The passage's many verbs of pondering draw our attention on Peukestes' step-by-step thought process in a series of "if... then..." clauses, as we are privy to how he determines what his options are, along with their probable consequences. In this context, the comparative μᾶλλον points to Peukestes' deductive logic based on what scenario he deems more likely to occur.

69 Diod. Sic. 19.17.5-6 ὁ δὲ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον οὐ προσεῖχεν αὐτοῖς, μεμψιμοιρῶν ἐπὶ τῷ μὴ τετευχέναι τῆς στρατηγίας, ὕστερον δὲ δοὺς αὐτῷ λόγον συνεχώρησεν ὅτι κρατήσαντος Ἀντιγόνου συμβήσεται καὶ τὴν σατραπείαν αὐτὸν ἀποβαλεῖν καὶ περὶ τοῦ σώματος κινδυνεῦσαι. ἀγωνιῶν οὖν ὑπὲρ αὑτοῦ καὶ τῆς στρατηγίας μᾶλλον τεύξεσθαι νομίζων ὡς πλείστους ἔχων στρατιώτας προσήγαγεν, καθάπερ ἠξίουν, τοξότας μυρίους.

However, the full force of Diodorus' passage would be lost if we simply agreed that we are dealing with a "rational" actor who eventually makes the objectively "correct" choice. His account is not merely retrospective but captures the internal doubt and discomfort of Peukestes in having to make a difficult choice. We see the commander literally agonizing (ἀγωνιῶν) over the preferable course of action. Having to help others at the expense of Antigonos, even though likely more beneficial, is not a particularly comforting thought considering the agonistic character of Macedonian politics. Peukestes settles on a solution by conjuring up different potential futures, mirroring Aristotelian decision-trees, each with their own series of steps and possible consequences that take into account military capabilities, geo-political circumstances, but also the personal character of his rivals; an otherwise notoriously difficult factor to quantify using formal statistical analysis.

Expressions of preference might strike some as not indicative of "proper" probabilistic thinking. But Spiegelhalter reminds us that whatever probabilistic model we adopt – be it classical or frequentist – it remains true that "probabilities are constructed based on existing knowledge, and are therefore contingent,"[70] an admittedly controversial statement that informs Bruno de Finetti's famous quote at the beginning of this paper, "probability does not exist." Spiegelhalter takes this statement to mean that "probabilities are not states of the world [...], but depend on the relationship between the 'object' of the probability assessment, and the 'subject' who is doing the assessing."[71] The relational character of probability thus allows us some insight into how decision-makers can incorporate even subjective elements such as perceptions, experience, and emotions into their calculations by assigning to them qualitative values and priorities.

Indeed, the most generative strategy that ancient decision-makers used to assess the future was the conceptual linking of the past with the present through perceived historical precedents. Particularly in warfare, a record of past encounters was touted as indicative of likely outcomes.[72]

70 Spiegelhalter 2011: 20.

71 Spiegelhalter 2011: 20-21.

72 In the Latin context, we have examples from Caesar and Tacitus that express probability through precedent. Specifically, in Caes. *BCiv.* 3.73 Caesar gives a speech before

Returning to *The Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle further qualifies the reliability of numbers to calculate odds of success by relying on the historical dimension to add perspective to the assigned value of state power. He states succinctly that "with reference to these matters he must also have examined the results not only of the wars waged by his own state, but also of those waged by others; for similar results naturally arise from similar causes."[73] Aristotle understood that quantitative and qualitative probabilities can be brought together by decision-makers to generate helpful statistics informing the correlation between past outcomes and present circumstances. Polybios attributes such a statistical mindset to the Roman general's assessment of the Macedonian enemy before the battle of Kynoskephalai in 196 BCE, which would humble the Macedonian kingdom and establish a Roman presence in subsequent Greek affairs. Facing the professional army of Philip V, the Roman general Titus Quinctius Flamininus delivered a short speech to his troops in which he asked rhetorically:

> Are these not the same Macedonians whom, when they held that desperately difficult position in Epirus, you compelled by your valor to throw away their shields and flee, never stopping until they got home to Macedonia? What reason, then, have you got to be timid now when you are about to battle the same men on equal terms? Why not foresee the past instead of dreading an opposite outcome, and dare? So, my

his troops after the battle of Dyrrhachium, urging them "not to be discouraged, or give way to consternation, upon what had lately happened, but oppose their many successful engagements to one slight and inconsiderable check" (*ne ea quae accidissent graviter ferrent, neve his rebus terrerentur, multisque secundis proeliis unum adversum et id mediocre opponerent*). He was careful to point out that their single loss was due to their small numbers, as well as unprecedented circumstances and – alas – unfavorable fortune, which was bound to turn in their favor. Similarly, in Tac. *Ann.* 1.61-62. It is also worth noting Caecina's expertise; he was on his fortieth campaign. His experience of success and peril had made him fearless: Tac. *Ann.* 1.64.6 *quadragesimum id stipendium Caecina parendi aut imperitandi habebat, secundarum ambiguarumque rerum sciens eoque interritus.*

73 Arist. *Rhet.* 1.4.9 (1360a) ἀναγκαῖον δὲ καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα μὴ μόνον τοὺς οἰκείους πολέμους τεθεωρηκέναι ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς τῶν ἄλλων, πῶς ἀποβαίνουσιν· ἀπὸ γὰρ τῶν ὁμοίων τὰ ὅμοια γίγνεσθαι πέφυκεν.

> men, encouraging each other, dash on to the fray and put forth all your strength. For with the gods willing, I feel sure that this battle will end like the earlier dangers.[74]

Polybios uses the speech to bring attention to the morale boost that past victories gave the troops, a practice that many generals routinely used. But Polybios also touches on the deliberative process that informed the soldiers' confidence. In other words, precedent did not cause an automatic reaction, but was rationally consulted. Flamininus stimulates his men's observational skills to get them to realize that they are fighting the same enemy under comparable conditions, appealing to the image of the enemy's previous cowardice to drive home his point. He then encourages them to maintain their determination – based on past outcomes, there is no real reason for them to expect a different result. The interplay between past and future is elegantly highlighted by the call "to foresee the past." In using this phrase, Polybios stakes a claim that the Romans' stance was not merely a matter of courage and honor, but was the result of an informed decision based on previous encounters with similar outcomes, which in turn helped Flamininus calculate the projected risk of the battle.

Xenophon makes a similar pitch to his Greek companions at the outset of the *Anabasis.* He claims that he entertained – the gods willing – many and beautiful hopes of salvation,[75] not only because they themselves were righteous pious men fighting against perjurers, bound to incur the wrath of gods. He also relied on the record of the Greeks in their past encounters with the Persians, starting from the Persian Wars and

74 Polyb. 18.23.3-6 οὐχ οὗτοι Μακεδόνες εἰσίν, οὓς ὑμεῖς προκατέχοντας τὰς ἀπηλπισμένας ἐν Ἠπείρῳ δυσχωρίας ἐκβιασάμενοι ταῖς ἑαυτῶν ἀρεταῖς φεύγειν ἠναγκάσατε ῥίψαντας τὰ ὅπλα, τέως εἰς Μακεδονίαν ἀνεκομίσθησαν; πῶς οὖν ὑμᾶς εὐλαβεῖσθαι καθήκει, μέλλοντας ἐξ ἴσου ποιεῖσθαι τὸν κίνδυνον πρὸς τοὺς αὐτούς; τί δὲ προορᾶσθαι τῶν προγεγονότων, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ τἀναντία δι᾽ ἐκεῖνα καὶ νῦν θαρρεῖν; διόπερ, ὦ ἄνδρες, παρακαλέσαντες σφᾶς αὐτοὺς ὁρμᾶσθε πρὸς τὸν κίνδυνον ἐρρωμένως· θεῶν γὰρ βουλομένων ταχέως πέπεισμαι ταὐτὸ τέλος ἀποβήσεσθαι τῆς παρούσης μάχης τοῖς προγεγονόσι κινδύνοις.

75 Xen. *Anab.* 3.2.8 σὺν τοῖς θεοῖς πολλαὶ ἡμῖν καὶ καλαὶ ἐλπίδες εἰσὶ σωτηρίας. Notice again the emphasis on "beautiful hopes" to suggest good chance of success. (See Ch. 1).

on to their most recent encounters as part of their support in Cyrus' bid to the throne of Persia, when "you stood in formation against the descendants of those [ancient Persians], who far outnumbered you, and were victorious with [the aid of] the gods [...] proving to be brave men."[76] The repeated reference to τοῖς θεοῖς is noteworthy because it also echoes Flamininus' appeal to θεῶν βουλομένων to acknowledge the contingencies of war and the inherent dangers that lie therein.[77] But more importantly, Xenophon's mention of a tradition of victory against the Persians served not only to spur morale, but also to suggest that past encounters were instructive on how to deal with the same enemy:

> It is now more appropriate to be more daring to go against the enemy, for in the past you were ignorant about them, considering their host numberless, and nevertheless you dared to go against them with ancestral resolution. For now, when you have already had proof that they are unwilling to receive your charge even though they are many times more numerous, what reason is there for you to fear them?[78]

Xenophon's speech is a masterstroke in mass persuasion that discloses the great lengths to which commanders would go to equate present conditions to successful past enterprises, particularly in unfavorable situations. Yet despite the rhetorical character, its probabilistic logic persists because, as in Polybios' example, it is grounded on a cumulative gathering of information. Starting from a point in time when the Greeks were ἄπειροι (inexperienced, unused to, unacquainted with) vis-à-vis the enemy's military capabilities, their experiences gradually increase their

76 Xen. *Anab.* 3.2.15 καὶ τότε μὲν δὴ περὶ τῆς Κύρου βασιλείας ἄνδρες ἦτε ἀγαθοί.

77 I will explore this topic in a forthcoming article on Polybios' conceptualization of contingency planning.

78 Xen. *Anab.* 3.2.16 νῦν δ' ὁπότε περὶ τῆς ὑμετέρας σωτηρίας ὁ ἀγών ἐστι πολὺ δήπου ὑμᾶς προσήκει καὶ ἀμείνονας καὶ προθυμοτέρους εἶναι. ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ θαρραλεωτέρους νῦν πρέπει εἶναι πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους. τότε μὲν γὰρ ἄπειροι ὄντες αὐτῶν, τό τε πλῆθος ἄμετρον ὁρῶντες, ὅμως ἐτολμήσατε σὺν τῷ πατρίῳ φρονήματι ἰέναι εἰς αὐτούς· νῦν δὲ ὁπότε καὶ πεῖραν ἤδη ἔχετε αὐτῶν ὅτι οὐ θέλουσι καὶ πολλαπλάσιοι ὄντες δέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς, τί ἔτι ὑμῖν προσήκει τούτους φοβεῖσθαι;

knowledge of their enemy, as highlighted by the passage's many comparative adjectives. In such circumstances, a string of past successes is suggestive, at least in theory, of future victories.[79]

History, as such, was not merely didactic in a moral sense, but was thought to contain practical knowledge that could be consulted to determine one's odds of success, where numbers and attitudes were placed in a historical context to be consulted during ostensibly similar circumstances. This tried-and-tested method eventually developed into a standardized form of education that culminated in the production of technical manuals. Xenophon's *On Horsemanship*, Aeneas Tacticus' *On the defense of Fortified Positions*, Onasander's *On Strategy*, and Polybios' now-lost *On Tactics*, are replete with precedents in various situations that were meant to inform a decision-maker's choices in matters of war and local administration. Beside oracular consultation and divination, then, ancient thinkers also prescribed a probabilistic system of knowledge that rendered the future calculable and thus more imaginable.

6. PRECEDENT VERSUS ADAPTATION

Similarity is nevertheless not sameness, especially when statistics are involved. In fact, the logic that past successes necessarily translate into further victories is a probabilistic mistake, the so-called "hot hand fallacy." Especially in warfare, new encounters are independent events, and their odds of success will not depend strictly on the past; new conditions, information, and many other factors, can influence the outcome. Ancient historians were well aware of this logical fallacy and sought to render it intelligible for their contemporaries. Xenophon, for instance, expressed his support for the Common Peace of 371 BCE by equating the irredentism of Athens and Sparta to the compulsive behavior of gamblers and athletes:

79 A similar calculation was made by the Melians after having resisted the Athenians earlier in the war (Thuc. 3.91). But in the Melian dialogue Thucydides chooses not to emphasize this point and instead make an argument about the pitfalls of relying on hollow hope instead of rational calculation (Thuc. 5.116).

> I for my part do not commend those men who, when they have become competitors in the games and have already been victorious many times and enjoy fame, love winning so much that they do not stop until they are defeated and cease their training. Nor, on the other hand, do I commend those dicers who, if they win one success, throw double stakes (περὶ διπλασίων κυβεύουσιν), for I see that most (πλείους) of these people become utterly impoverished (ἀπόρους).[80]

This bullish attitude is well-known among psychologists and game theorists.[81] They agree with Xenophon that, while a lucky few might succeed, the great majority of those who adopt it are statistically bound to fail and become ἀπόρους, as Xenophon's use of the comparative adjective πλείους suggests. One must instead hedge their bets and be aware of circumstances and trends, and not "engage in a contest of such a sort that we either win all or lose all";[82] blind faith in past outcomes is not enough.

Xenophon is thus drawing attention to the essential skills of adaptation and improvement that decision-makers must possess. Otherwise, they will suffer the fate of the Spartans at the hands of Kallias son of Hipponikos just outside of Korinth in 390 BCE during the so-called Korinthian War. Xenophon recounts how, upon splitting up their forces and returning to Lechaion, "[the Spartans] were by no means unaware that there were many peltasts and many hoplites in Korinth, but on account of their previous successes they contemptuously thought that no one would attack them." Their enemies, on the other hand, "when they saw that [the Spartans] were few in number, but also unaccompanied by either peltasts or cavalry, thought that it was safe to attack them with their

80 Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.16 ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδ' ἐκείνους ἔγωγε ἐπαινῶ οἵτινες ἀγωνισταὶ γενόμενοι καὶ νενικηκότες ἤδη πολλάκις καὶ δόξαν ἔχοντες οὕτω φιλονικοῦσιν ὥστε οὐ πρότερον παύονται, πρὶν ἂν ἡττηθέντες τὴν ἄσκησιν καταλύσωσιν, οὐδέ γε τῶν κυβευτῶν οἵτινες αὖ ἐὰν ἕν τι ἐπιτύχωσι, περὶ διπλασίων κυβεύουσιν· ὁρῶ γὰρ καὶ τῶν τοιούτων τοὺς πλείους ἀπόρους παντάπασι γιγνομένους.

81 Konnikova 2020a; 2020b.

82 Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.17 ἃ χρὴ καὶ ἡμᾶς ὁρῶντας εἰς μὲν τοιοῦτον ἀγῶνα μηδέποτε καταστῆναι, ὥστ' ἢ πάντα λαβεῖν ἢ πάντ' ἀποβαλεῖν, ἕως δὲ καὶ ἐρρώμεθα καὶ εὐτυχοῦμεν.

force of peltasts."[83] Xenophon contrasts Kallias' observation (καθορῶντες) followed by his estimation (ἐνόμισαν) of the changed circumstances with the Spartans' contemptuous heedlessness (καταφρόνησις) to underline the importance of continually being mindful of changes and constantly striving to improve one's condition, especially in high stakes matters.

The example further indicates that in such real-time scenarios, like politics or sports, rivals learn from each other with every encounter, making the next clash all the more interesting because its outcome is not only determined by past results, but also by the changes that each side adopts in trying to predict the possible actions of the adversary; a really good team, for instance, is able to predict the opposition's predictions, as it were. The rise and rule of Rome offers a fascinating historical case study because Greek historians tend to explain it precisely as the result of the Romans' ability to learn from past failures and improve going forward. Their talent is apparent when they manage to overcome their more established Carthaginian rivals in the naval arena during the First Punic War. The war was rooted in the growing influence of the two Republics in the Western Mediterranean which made an eventual confrontation between the two powers virtually unavoidable. Polybios is particularly interested in this conflict and starts his *Histories* with it, because he interprets it as the first clear proof of the Romans' future greatness. He repeatedly mentions the Romans' traditional naval (in)experience, but adds that "When they once conceived of the project, they took it in hand so boldly, that before gaining any experience in the matter they at once engaged the Carthaginians, whose hegemony of the sea had been undisputed for generations."[84] The Romans, according to Polybios, knew that the key to eventual victory against the Carthaginians – or against

83 Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.12-13 καὶ ὅτι μὲν πολλοὶ ἦσαν ἐν τῇ Κορίνθῳ καὶ πελτασταὶ καὶ ὁπλῖται οὐδὲν ἠγνόουν· κατεφρόνουν δὲ διὰ τὰς ἔμπροσθεν τύχας μηδένα ἂν ἐπιχειρῆσαι σφίσιν. οἱ δ' ἐκ τῶν Κορινθίων ἄστεως, Καλλίας τε ὁ Ἱππονίκου, τῶν Ἀθηναίων ὁπλιτῶν στρατηγῶν, καὶ Ἰφικράτης, τῶν πελταστῶν ἄρχων, καθορῶντες αὐτοὺς καὶ οὐ πολλοὺς ὄντας καὶ ἐρήμους καὶ πελταστῶν καὶ ἱππέων, ἐνόμισαν ἀσφαλὲς εἶναι ἐπιθέσθαι αὐτοῖς τῷ πελταστικῷ.

84 Polyb. 1.20.12 τότε δὴ πρῶτον ἐν νῷ λαμβάνοντες οὕτως τολμηρῶς ἐνεχείρησαν ὥστε πρὶν ἢ πειραθῆναι τοῦ πράγματος, εὐθὺς ἐπιβαλέσθαι Καρχηδονίοις ναυμαχεῖν τοῖς ἐκ προγόνων ἔχουσι τν κατὰ θάλατταν ἡγεμονίαν ἀδήριτον.

any enemy, in fact – was beating them at their own game, which meant being prepared to accept many losses for the sake of improvement. Looking at the record between the two fleets, people would understandably be tempted to bet on the Carthaginians, based on past results. But those gamblers would be sorely disappointed as the Romans were eventually able to routinely defeat their Punic adversary.

This tension between precedent and improvement also governs Diodorus Siculus' account of the interaction between the Carthaginian and Roman envoys on the eve of the First Punic War. On their part, the Carthaginians appeal to precedent to suggest that they are bound to win any future encounter, "[as] they wondered how the Romans dared to cross into Sicily while the Carthaginians were the masters of the sea, for it was obvious to all that, should they not protect their friendship, they would no longer dare to even wash their hands in the sea."[85] By referring to their own record of success as φανερὸν πᾶσιν, the Carthaginians warned the Romans against trying to threaten their naval prowess. The Romans, by contrast, ostensibly emphasized the importance of accumulated experience to improve where they had failed in the past. Thus, while not denying the Carthaginians' present naval power, they issued a warning of their own, that the Carthaginians' prominence would ultimately prove their own undoing: "for the Romans have always turned out to be pupils stronger than their teachers."[86]

These passages reveal an ancient understanding of the probabilistic feature regarding incremental success currently known among economists as a "power law," representing a relationship between two quantities, like the chances of victory going into battle, where changes in one quantity lead to a proportional relative change in another. Whereas in a game of dice where statistical data is collected from dice throws with the same aleatory chance, this incremental model suggests that one result – say one battle between the Romans and the Carthaginians - will then pro-

85 Diod. Sic. 23.2.1 οἱ Φοίνικες θαυμάζειν ἔφασαν πῶς διαβαίνειν τολμῶσιν εἰς Σικελίαν Ῥωμαῖοι θαλαττοκρατούντων Καρχηδονίων· φανερὸν γὰρ εἶναι πᾶσιν ὅτι μὴ τηροῦντες τὴν φιλίαν οὐδὲ νίψασθαι τὰς χεῖρας ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης τολμήσουσιν.

86 Diod. Sic. 23.2.1 'μαθητὰς γὰρ τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ἀεὶ ὄντας γίνεσθαι κρείττους τῶν διδασκάλων.'

portionally impact the chances of the Romans during their next encounter, and so on. Sergio Da Silva, Raul Matsushita, and Eliza Silveira (2013) have looked at sports and war and have found that in both circumstances when antagonists compete, "there emerges stasis, as each adaptation by one in countered by an adaptation by the other. The co-evolution between the antagonistic sides eventually reaches equilibrium and a fairly regular power law takes place."[87] Eventually, since perfect counter-adaptation is unfeasible, one side is bound to gain the upper hand, which in turn furthers its chances of success with successive repetitions; provided, of course, that it remains focused on adapting to circumstances and learning how to do things better.[88] We find the same phenomenon in the case of Roman success, who became increasingly more difficult to defeat in any single subsequent encounter because they kept learning, adapting, and improving. By the Third Punic War, when Carthage was razed to the ground, the Romans only needed marginal refinement against their massively disadvantaged enemy.

Importantly, the Romans were not exceptional in this regard. Historians use the same logic of adaptation and refinement to explain the rise and fall of other erstwhile powers like Athens, Sparta, and Thebes. Xenophon explains Athens' long-term naval superiority through the voice of Prokles the Phliasian who observes that

> you already possess many triremes and it is your naval tradition (ναυτικὸν) to continually add to them. You likewise possess as peculiarly your own all the arts and crafts which have to do with ships. Again, you are far superior to other men in experience of nautical affairs, for most of you get your livelihood from the sea. [... As a result,] you have engaged in very many and very great combats by sea, you have met with an exceedingly small number of misfortunes and have achieved an exceedingly large number of successes. Therefore, it is likely that the allies would like best to share in such danger if they were under your leadership.[89]

87 Da Silva, Matsushita & Silveira 2013: 5382-83.

88 Da Silva, Matsushita & Silveira 2013: 5384-85.

89 Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.4-5 ἔτι δὲ τριήρεις κέκτησθε πολλάς, καὶ πάτριον ὑμῖν ἐστι ναυτικὸν ἐπικτᾶσθαι. ἀλλὰ μὴν τάς γε τέχνας τὰς περὶ ταῦτα πάσας οἰκείας ἔχετε. καὶ μὴν

The technical language used in the passage – ναυτικὸν, τέχνας, ἐμπειριᾳ ... περὶ τὰ ναυτικά – suggests that Athens' consistency is not merely the result of singular power, but also of military and logistical skills diligently refined over time, as implied by the terms πάτρικον and βίος. Experience and skill thus work together to create the likelihood (εἰκός) that more allies will "share in the danger" (κινδύνου μετέχειν), which will in turn further facilitate Athenian success. By contrast, Agesilaos' rigid Spartans ostensibly lost their supremacy at the hands of Epaminondas' Thebans, who proved much more malleable to learn by trial and error, adapt, improve, and finally surpass their enemy.[90] In these examples we find echoes of Thucydides' dictum on the importance of adaptation: "necessity states that, just as with a skill (τέχνης), improvements always prevail; and though unchanging customs may be best for undisturbed communities, constant necessities of action (ἀναγκαζομένοις) must be accompanied by the constant improvement of methods

ἐμπειρίᾳ γε πολὺ προέχετε τῶν ἄλλων περὶ τὰ ναυτικά· ὁ γὰρ βίος τοῖς πλείστοις ὑμῶν ἀπὸ τῆς θαλάττης· [...] πλείστους γὰρ καὶ μεγίστους ἀγῶνας ἠγωνισμένοι κατὰ θάλατταν ἐλάχιστα μὲν ἀποτετυχήκατε, πλεῖστα δὲ κατωρθώκατε. εἰκὸς οὖν καὶ τοὺς συμμάχους μεθ' ὑμῶν ἂν ἥδιστα τούτου τοῦ κινδύνου μετέχειν.

90 Plutarch has Antalkidas bitterly reproach Agesilaos for "having taught those who were neither willing, nor knowledgeable about how to fight." His first defeat was mockingly called "a fine tuition fee that you claim from the Thebans for teaching them how to fight when they did not wish it, and did not even know how." Plut. Ages. 26.2: ἦ καλὰ τὰ διδασκάλια παρὰ Θηβαίων ἀπολαμβάνεις, μὴ βουλομένους μηδὲ ἐπισταμένους μάχεσθαι διδάξας. Plutarch explains that having to regularly fight against the Lakedaimonians ultimately forced the Thebans to become more warlike, "such that they were trained (ἐγγυμνασαμένους) through the many campaigns of the Lakedaimonians against them." The use of the verb ἐγγυμνάζειν highlights a Theban mindfulness of past failures and, at the same time, a constant effort to improve one's chances of success. Purportedly, Agesilaos had contravened an ancient Lykourgan rhetra that specifically prohibited the Spartans to make frequent campaigns against the same enemy, in order that the enemy "might not learn how to make war" (Plut. *Ages*. 26.3).

(ἐπιτεχνήσεως)."[91] And since the world is forever bound to change, one must always remain vigilant, whether enjoying the height of glory or bearing the burden of defeat, because eventually one will be faced with opportunities as well as challenges to one's condition.

CONCLUSION

This article proposes an alternative approach to the problem of probability in antiquity. By adopting a "frequentist" model based on historical knowledge, we can trace a probabilistic mindset of decision-makers who developed conceptual tools to calculate the likelihoods of occurrence and odds of success in economic, social, and military initiatives. In turn, our discussion on ancient probability will further allow us to explore new avenues for research beyond the realm of ancient science about the formulation of risk in antiquity, and how ancient decision-making bodies understood and undertook contingency planning - both topics of future research. Finally, ancient probability invites us to reconsider the notion that the ancient Greeks were fundamentally "past-oriented", and instead consider a speculative attitude towards a future that could be scrutinized, and even foreseen. Metaphorically speaking, in the valley of ancient history the future was not a sudden and mysterious shout, but an echo carried by the winds of the present hitting the mountains of the past. The Greeks understood that only by knowing the environment could one hope to estimate the echo's path and the distances it traveled.

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91 Thuc. 1.71.3 ἀνάγκη δὲ ὥσπερ τέχνης αἰεὶ τὰ ἐπιγιγνόμενα κρατεῖν· καὶ ἡσυχαζούσῃ μὲν πόλει τὰ ἀκίνητα νόμιμα ἄριστα, πρὸς πολλὰ δὲ ἀναγκαζομένοις ἰέναι πολλῆς καὶ τῆς ἐπιτεχνήσεως δεῖ.

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FROM CATO TO PLATO AND BACK AGAIN: FRIENDSHIP AND PATRONAGE IN JOHN TZETZES' *LETTERS* AND *CHILIADES*

By Valeria F. Lovato

Summary: In many passages of his works, John Tzetzes likens himself to different figures from the Greek and Roman past in order to emphasise relevant features of his authorial persona. This strategy has been the subject of recent studies, which underscore the self-advertising agenda underlying Tzetzes' constant reference to – and identification with – Greek and Roman models. Drawing on and going beyond this strand of literature, this paper pursues two main goals. First, it aims to situate Tzetzes' references to these figures from the past within the broader sociocultural dynamics informing his self-fashioning strategy. To this end, it will focus on passages of his works dealing with friendship and patronage, two social practices that were crucial to any Byzantine writer. Second, the paper seeks to show that Tzetzes uses these figures to reflect upon his condition as a commissioned writer, skilfully employing them to create an authorial narrative that both spells out and plays with the constraints and contradictions stemming from his professional status.

INTRODUCTION[1]

> If someone wants to know what Cato looked like,
> he should look at me: I am the living portrait of Cato

1 I would like to thank Tommaso Braccini, Michael Grünbart, Elizabeth Jeffreys, Margaret Mullett, Ingela Nilsson and Aglae Pizzone for reading previous drafts of this paper or discussing specific aspects of it with me. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewer for insightful comments. Finally, I owe special thanks to Panagiotis Agapitos, Ingela Nilsson, Aglae Pizzone and Baukje van den Berg for allowing me to read forthcoming works.

Valeria F. Lovato 'From Cato to Plato and back again: Friendship and Patronage in John Tzetzes' *Letters* and *Chiliades*' *C&M* 70 (2022) 59-98.

> and Palamedes, the wise son of Nauplius.
> (...)
> Cato differed from me in that he was not easily angered,
> provided that the historical accounts do not lie.
> Indeed, temperaments such as ours are normally warm and
> irascible.[2]

This extract from the *Chiliades* perfectly exemplifies one of John Tzetzes' main self-fashioning techniques. In countless passages of his works, this prominent scholar and literatus of twelfth-century Byzantium likens himself to different figures from the Greek and Roman past in order to emphasise relevant features of his authorial persona. Several recent studies have underlined the self-advertising agenda behind Tzetzes' constant reference to – and identification with – Greek and Roman models. Building on the findings of these studies, this paper pursues two main goals. First, it aims to situate Tzetzes' references to these ancient figures within the broader sociocultural context informing his self-fashioning strategy. To this end, it will focus on passages of his works dealing with friendship and patronage, two social practices that were crucial to any Byzantine writer, especially in Komnenian Byzantium. Second, the paper seeks to show that Tzetzes uses these figures to reflect upon his condition as a commissioned writer, skilfully employing them to create an authorial narrative that both spells out *and* plays with the constraints and contradictions stemming from his professional status.

My analysis will be guided primarily by the recent work by Floris Bernard and Ingela Nilsson. Bernard considers authorship as a social act "ridden with moral tensions that authors attempted to resolve."[3] While his study focuses exclusively on the eleventh century, a moment when literati had to struggle both to realise and downplay their social ambitions, his framework also applies to twelfth-century intellectuals and to Tzetzes in particular. Indeed, Bernard's remark that (seemingly) contradictory conceptions of authorship often coexisted within a single author's corpus – if not within individual texts – provides an ideal key to

2 Tzetz. *Chil.* 3 hist. 70.173-75; 185-87. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

3 Bernard 2014b: 41.

interpreting Tzetzes' authorial persona, whose multifaceted-ness has not yet been fully explored. The present paper also engages with Nilsson's recent exploration of Constantine Manasses' authorial voice.[4] Not only does her study further elaborate upon the "flexibility" of Byzantine authorial voices, which were fluid but, at the same time, recognisable across different works and occasions, but she also focuses on Manasses' use of "fictional markers" as integral to his self-fashioning strategy. These fictional markers mainly consist of citations from – or allusions to – ancient sources and figures, be they Greek, Roman or Biblical. Interestingly, according to Nilsson, the constant and deliberate intermingling of fiction and reality in "the ambiguous Byzantine text" prevents readers from taking "one single interpretation, as demanded by philological practices."[5]

Taking my cue from these observations, I propose a reassessment of Tzetzes' authorial self-fashioning, with a special focus on his references to prominent ancient figures. I argue that, while the presence of these fictional markers is constant throughout Tzetzes' works, they emerge especially when it comes to discussions of friendship and patronage. In the competitive literary environment of Komnenian Byzantium, "the navigation of sponsorships and friendships was central for a successful career"[6] and it is therefore quite natural that these two social practices play a crucial role in contemporary discourses of authorship. At the same time, however, the often-asymmetric nature of the relationships Byzantine literati had with their friends and patrons could sharpen the very moral tensions and ostensible contradictions pointed out by Bernard. This is especially evident in Tzetzes' self-fashioning strategy: his references to and identification with Greek and Roman "heroes" allow him both to express these tensions and to come to terms with them. Furthermore, the constant blend of past and present, fact and fiction, prevents the reader from extracting a consistent picture of Tzetzes' authorial persona, which is characterised by a deliberate – and artfully staged – coexistence of opposites.

4 See Nilsson 2020: passim.
5 Nilsson 2020: 22.
6 Nilsson 2020: 14.

By considering the polyphony of Tzetzes' authorial voice as an essential component of his self-representation, the present paper complements existing research on the scholar's engagement with figures from the Greek and Roman past. As I hope to show, former studies have often failed to capture the complex dynamics informing Tzetzes' strategy of self-fashioning and have seen single-minded self-promotion[7] or self-marketing[8] as the main (or only) force behind Tzetzes' authorial persona.[9] A thorough investigation of Tzetzes' use of fictional markers in his discussions of friendship and patronage will lead to a better understanding of the contrasting forces informing his self-presentation. Throughout my analysis, I will not only be mindful of Nilsson's warning against trying to find a "single interpretation" for Byzantine texts, but I will also suggest that, in some cases at least, ambiguity is the very effect that Tzetzes tries to produce. Moreover, in addition to proposing a more nuanced picture of Tzetzes' authorial tactics, the present study will also provide new insights into Byzantine discourse on friendship as well as on the dynamics of Komnenian patronage, thus contributing to scholarship on Byzantine culture and society at large.

1. A LOYAL FRIEND

In the self-representations disseminated throughout his writings, Tzetzes likes to fashion himself as the living portrait of Palamedes and Cato the Elder.[10] If the former deserves a prominent place because of his

7 On Tzetzes' identification with Cato as an instrument for self-promotion, see Xenophontos 2014. On the importance of Cato for Tzetzes' authorial self, see Pizzone 2018, who, while being closer to the approach proposed in this paper, focuses on a different set of passages.

8 On the interpretation of Tzetzes' self-fashioning as a consistent strategy of self-marketing, see, most recently, Savio 2020: passim and especially 35-39, which focus especially on Plato and Simonides. While briefly considering the potential ambiguity of Tzetzes' identification with Plato, Savio does not explore this possibility further.

9 For a nuanced analysis of Tzetzes' identification with a Greek hero, see Pizzone (forthcoming a).

10 Apart from the passage quoted at the beginning of this paper, see also Tzetz. *All. Il.* prol. 724-39, now available in the English translation by Goldwyn & Kokkini 2015: 54-

intellectual excellence, the latter is especially (but not exclusively) appreciated for his incorruptibility and frugality. Cato's resistance to any form of bribery features also in a short but meaningful epistle (*Letter* 73) that Tzetzes addresses to John Basilakes.[11] This letter, which deals explicitly with friendship and gift-giving, will be the main focus of the present section and deserves to be quoted in some detail. From the context, we gather that Basilakes had recently sent his correspondent some kind of gift, which Tzetzes appreciates but refuses. Referring to the exemplary behaviour of both Cato and Epameinondas, Tzetzes declares that his affection is completely impartial and cannot be bought.

> (...) I am deeply grieved that you pay no heed to my injunctions, but instead you keep sending me gifts. May God, who himself is Truth, be witness to my words: I do not know how others consider gifts; as far as I am concerned, however, even if I would perhaps not go as far as to equate them to death, I certainly regard them as a grievous burden and a flesh-eating plague. The only thing I need is sincere affection, which I know you possess in great quantity. Let others care about gifts! For this reason, even if I am extremely thankful to your Lordship for the gifts you sent me, I will keep none of them. If I did not do this, you would never abide by my requests of your own accord. O saintly lord, know that Tzetzes is a faithful and thoroughly impartial friend, who, following the example of Epameinondas, Cato and every other such hero of the past, hates gifts. As they declared, Tzetzes, too, declares: "You will not persuade me to love someone as a friend by paying me" and "If you want me as a slave, then buy me off with gifts, but if you are looking for a friend, keep your gifts for yourself or use them to buy off those who are not free." The friendship I cultivate is pure and is therefore completely disinterested and utterly incorruptible.[12]

57. On the reasons behind Tzetzes' identification with Palamedes, see Lovato 2017a: 142-48.

11 According to Kazhdan (ODB, s.v. *Basilakes, John*) Basilakes was a nephew of Tzetzes. For a more cautious interpretation, see Grünbart 1996: 211. On the term ἀνεψιός, which did not necessarily refer to a real kin relationship, see Mullet 1988: 6-7, Grünbart 2005a: 416-17 and 2005b: 164; 174-75.

12 Tzetz. *Ep.* 73.107.3-22.

These references to Cato and Epameinondas can be better appreciated when considered alongside the *Chiliades*, a long verse commentary that Tzetzes composed, in part, to explain the learned allusions scattered throughout his highly sophisticated correspondence.[13]

Epameinondas receives only a short *historia* in the *Chiliades*.[14] The anecdotes recounted by Tzetzes inform the reader that the Theban general, who was "endowed with a free soul" (ἐλευθερόψυχος), refused the riches he was offered by an acquaintance. Instead, he suggested that they be given to someone in real need of them. As noted by Leone in his critical apparatus, in this case Tzetzes seems to have confused Epameinondas with Pelopidas, who was the protagonist of a very similar story in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*.[15] The *historia* devoted to Epameinondas ends with another episode recounting how he punished a soldier who was trying to extort money from a war prisoner.

Compared to the short text devoted to Epameinondas, the *historia* on Cato is much longer and more complex. Tzetzes goes to great lengths to demonstrate that his Roman alter ego was not only immune to luxury, but also completely incorruptible. To illustrate this latter point, which is particularly relevant to the exegesis of *Letter* 73, Tzetzes details how the censor reacted when offered rich presents by a delegation of foreign ambassadors who wanted to ensure his loyalty.

> When they learned that this was Cato, having honoured him as required,
> they said: "O Cato, general of the Romans who are descended from Aeneas,
> the kings of the Britons, desiring to have you as their friend,
> sent you these crates full of gold."
> And he replied: "Do they want to have me as their friend or as their slave?"
> When the ambassadors said, "as their friend," Cato added:
> "Then leave, and give them back their gold.

13 On the structure and aims of the *Chiliads,* see now Pizzone 2017.

14 Tzetz. *Chil.* 10 hist. 346.

15 See Leone 2007: 407 and Plut. *Pelop*. 3.4.

It is slavery, not friendship, that can be bought with riches.
I will be their loyal friend even without gifts."[16]

Before comparing this *historia* with *Letter* 73, it is worth remarking that, as with Epameinondas, Tzetzes alters his source, which is once again Plutarch's *Parallel Lives.* In the Plutarchean version of the story, it is not Cato who refuses the gifts, but his idol, the consul Manius Curius Dentatus.[17] Moreover, the foreign ambassadors were not Britons, but Samnites. Finally, and most importantly, in Plutarch's account there is no explicit mention of friendship. On the contrary, Manius Curius' short reply, which is briefly reported in indirect speech, completely rules out the option of a friendly agreement with the interlocutors: instead of receiving gold, he says, he prefers to conquer those who own it. Far from being a promise of loyal friendship, the words of Plutarch's hero sound like a not-so-covert declaration of war.

Therefore, in his rewriting of the anecdote, Tzetzes does not only alter the identity of the main characters, but he also modifies both the context and the outcome of the entire event: instead of being represented as a fearless general, Cato is depicted as the advocate of selfless friendship, an ideal that he carefully defines in his address to the Britons. Consequently, the censor's short monologue, artfully enlivened through the use of direct speech, is also a likely addition by Tzetzes. Like Epameinondas, Cato plays such an important role in Tzetzes' strategy of self-presentation that the scholar does not hesitate to modify his sources to suit his authorial agenda.[18]

A comparison between the *historia* just examined and the related passage of *Letter* 73 seems to strengthen this interpretation. In this epistle, Tzetzes not only paraphrases but literally repeats the words spoken by Cato in the *historia*. When he states that his friendship can be bought neither by gifts (δωρεαί) nor by payments (μισθοί), the scholar is truly acting as a living – and speaking – portrait of Cato. But what is the message that Tzetzes is trying to convey to his reader(s) by further insisting on

16 Tzetz. *Chil.* 10 hist. 347.652-60.

17 Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 2.2.

18 Tzetzes' modifications of the Plutarchean representation of Cato have partly been pointed out by Xenophontos 2014.

his identification with the censor? Why use an illustrious example of incorruptibility to define his relationship with Basilakes in particular and his conception of friendship in general?

A rhetorical game?

Of course, Tzetzes might simply be playing with a literary *topos* that is fairly widespread in the correspondence of eleventh- and twelfth-century literati. While the conventions of politeness required gifts to be gratefully accepted, refusing gifts was a sophisticated way for Byzantine intellectuals to stress the intimacy of the bond with their correspondent.[19] Indeed, only close friends knew when it was possible to act outside the prescriptions of social etiquette without offending each other.

The rejection of material gifts was often accompanied by a parallel motif, where the recipient asked for a different, more spiritual kind of present, that is a "gift of words."[20] This was common especially in epistolary exchanges between literati, who thus implicitly stressed the priceless of their intellectual work. Such a request could also be directed to influential addressees, who were not necessarily devoted to *hoi logoi*,[21] but were nevertheless invited to respond with further missives, rather than material goods. This formed part of a subtle strategy to reduce the inherent inequality between the two correspondents: by playing on the superiority of the gift of words, (supposedly) acknowledged by both parties, the literati strove – at least theoretically – to lessen the distance between themselves and their powerful "pen pals."

These motifs feature also in Tzetzes' letter to Basilakes. We find, for instance, the *topos* of the refusal of material gifts, which the scholar ostensibly considers as annoying burdens. Instead of material presents,

19 See Bernard 2015: 185-89 on the social freedoms characteristic of particularly close friendships.

20 On the development of this motif in eleventh-century literature and on its use by the intellectual elites as a tool of social distinction, see Bernard 2011, 2012, and 2014a: 330-33.

21 On the semantic complexity of this expression, see Drpić 2016: 23. In the present context, *hoi logoi* refers to what we may define as literature and literary production.

Tzetzes asks for a much more valuable kind of gift, namely pure affection. As the first section of the letter makes clear, the principal form of expression of such a sentiment is the composition and exchange of further missives.

Yet, despite these clear references to well-known epistolographic *topoi*, the missive to Basilakes also presents some interesting variations on the literary and social conventions that regulate this particular kind of letter exchange. These variations acquire further meaning when compared to the relevant extracts from the *Chiliades.*

Let us focus on the rather blunt passage where Tzetzes explicitly declares his disgust for any kind of material gift. It has been noted that the authors of most letters featuring the gift refusal motif do not in fact reject the gift.[22] Indeed, despite stating their preference for another, more spiritual kind of gift, they end up not only accepting the material present, but also expressing their gratitude towards the sender. Contrary to this common practice, in his letter to Basilakes, Tzetzes clearly and unequivocally *declines* the gifts offered to him. What is more, he even declares that, by doing so, he aims at finally convincing Basilakes to stop sending presents once and for all.

Of course, these statements were not meant to be taken at face value. Tzetzes is clearly playing with the epistolographic tradition, taking a (by then) long-established set of rhetorical strategies to the extreme. The humorous tone of the passage is conveyed by the hyperbolic images through which Tzetzes expresses his supposed revulsion towards material goods. Certainly, Tzetzes seems to unveil his own rhetorical game, when he states that equating gifts with death is too emphatic, but then qualifies them as "a grievous burden and a flesh-eating plague," thus introducing two further images that are almost as hyperbolic as the first. Similarly, the blunt exhortation to Basilakes to stop sending gifts is to be interpreted as a bold and playful variation on the gift refusal motif. The seemingly close relationship between the scholar and his correspondent allows the former to engage in this literary game with a certain audacity.

22 See e.g. Bernard 2011: 4-5, who focuses on Michael Psellos. There are, however, exceptions, such as those quoted by Cernoglazov 2011: 59-60 (especially John Mauropous' *Ep.* 37, which displays interesting thematic similarities with Tzetzes' *Ep.* 73).

Being a *philos* of Tzetzes, Basilakes would know how to interpret his apparently unceremonious reply.

A multi-layered self-portrait?

Nevertheless, as Tzetzes knew very well, assuming such a discourteous attitude, however ironically, was a tricky enterprise, which could end up causing serious misunderstandings, especially if the addressee did not appreciate the hidden humorous meaning of such seemingly ungrateful behaviour. Indeed, on another occasion, Tzetzes was forced to apologise to an illustrious correspondent of his who had not understood the joke and had been offended by the scholar's apparent disrespect.[23] Why, then, resort to a rhetorical expedient that might prove quite risky? As mentioned above, the nature of Tzetzes' relationship with Basilakes may have given him confidence that his gift-refusal game would not be misunderstood this time.

However, the audacious tone of Tzetzes' missive might also be motivated by a deeper self-fashioning agenda. An attentive reader of the *Chiliades*, in which mentions of Cato always accompany especially meaningful moments in the scholar's self-presentation, would note the reference in *Letter* 73 to the censor. And indeed, if we reconsider the two *historiai* on Cato and Epameinondas, we will notice that, in both cases, their utter lack of interest in earthly possessions is connected to another dominant theme of Tzetzes' works, namely the motif of freedom, ἐλευθερία. Both in the letter to Basilakes and in the extracts from the *Chiliades* quoted above, the acceptance of material gifts is associated either with slavery or salaried labour. The oscillation between the terms δωρεά ("gift") and μισθός ("salary, payment") is particularly noteworthy in this respect. Significantly, it is precisely when he purportedly quotes the incorruptible Cato in the final section of *Letter* 73 that Tzetzes hints at the interchangeability of these two words, which actually do not appear in the

23 See *Ep.* 16, where Tzetzes apologizes to an unidentified bishop, who had interpreted the scholar's playful refusal of a gift as a sign of disrespect. On this text, see Bernard 2015: 188.

source text.[24] What is more, the original context of the anecdote might have added a further layer of meaning to Tzetzes' refusal to accept gifts as a sign of friendship. Specifically, the scholar may have had in mind a diplomatic practice that is discussed in many Byzantine sources, namely the use of gifts to ensure the loyalty – and therefore the obedience – of more or less willing allies.[25] The potentially binding power of gifts becomes a major undercurrent in the Tzetzean portrayal of Cato's proud words to the Britons.

If the acceptance of gifts can be equated to salaried labour or even to slavery, those who are ἀδωρότατοι ("completely immune to gifts" and hence "incorruptible") are also, consequently, ἐλευθεριώτατοι ("utterly free"). It is certainly not a coincidence that, throughout the *Chiliades*, the only character deserving of the epithet ἐλευθερόψυχος ("endowed with a free soul") is the impartial Epameinondas. Of course, such a connection between indifference towards earthly goods and liberty of the soul might simply be read as the expression of an ascetic ideal. However, the kind of liberty that Tzetzes claims for himself seems to apply only to a specific set of circumstances and cannot be interpreted as a generic spiritual freedom from earthly temptations. Indeed, from his very first writings, the scholar gives a rather precise definition of the kind of liberty he has in mind.

In an extract from the *Exegesis of the Iliad*, Tzetzes associates lack of interest in material riches with the possession of an ἐλευθέρα γνώμη, which we might define as "liberty of opinion" or "freedom of judgement."[26] More interestingly still, in another passage of the same work, Tzetzes seems to consider such an ἐλευθέρα γνώμη as a sort of innate, psychological trait which corresponds to a physiological feature:[27] he is convinced that freedom of thought is typical of those who have a warm and irascible temperament. Needless to say, these traits clearly echo

24 Plutarch (*Cat. Mai.* 2.2.) only mentions the "gold" that Manius Curius was offered by the Samnites.

25 See the texts quoted by Grünbart 2011: xvii-xviii. Among these, a passage by Anna Komnene (*Alexias* 7.8.7) displays striking similarities to Tzetzes' account of Cato's reply to the Britons.

26 Tzetz. *Exeg. Il.* 210.14-211.8, commenting on *Il.* 1.122 (especially 211.2-4).

27 Tzetz. *Exeg. Il.* 317.14-318.3 (especially 317.14-16).

Tzetzes' self-portrait, a version of which features at the very beginning of the present paper. Such a connection between ἐλευθέρα γνώμη and irascibility puts us in mind of the many occasions on which Tzetzes ended up alienating former friends and patrons because of his temper and unbridled outspokenness.[28] Freedom of judgement and speech could often come with a price, especially if they jeopardized the cultivation of influential connections.

True friendship has no price?

In light of these considerations, we can now interpret Tzetzes' *Letter* 73 from a more informed perspective. Here, Tzetzes is not only expanding upon a well-known *topos* in order to confirm his intimacy with Basilakes and represent them both as kindred souls sharing a common devotion to *hoi logoi*. Nor is he simply stating a general commitment to an ascetic way of life. Rather, the connection between gifts and slavery on the one hand, and the oscillation between the terms δωρεά ("gift") and μισθός ("salary") on the other, clearly hint at the potentially insidious implications of gift exchange.

Byzantine writers were well aware of the dangers constantly looming behind apparent friendship and the social conventions connected to it, such as the practice of gift exchange.[29] Like friendship itself, a gift could hide a deeper, far from selfless, agenda. Indeed, an obligation of reciprocity was often implied, binding the receiver to the giver. Tzetzes' *Letter* 73 and the related passages of the *Chiliades* represent a rather unusual exploration of the often-unspoken consequences entailed by "friendly" gift-giving, laying bare the inherent ambiguity of this practice. More specifically, his emphatic self-identification with Cato the ἀδωρότατος and

28 See e.g. Tzetzes' disagreement with his first employer, the *doux* of Berroia, which might have been caused by the scholar's frankness, as suggested by Agapitos (forthcoming). For a different interpretation, see Braccini 2009-2010: 154-55; 169 and 2010: 89; 99-101. On Tzetzes' lack of diplomacy, see also his quarrel with Andronikos Kamateros, as summarised by Agapitos 2017: 22-27 and Pizzone (forthcoming b).

29 On the pragmatic nature of Byzantine friendship, see the seminal study by Mullett 1988 and, most recently, Bourbouhakis 2020 (especially 291-93), who focuses on epistolary exchanges.

ἐλευθεριώτατος is meant to convey two complementary messages. First, Tzetzes is clearly enhancing the value of his friendship, which cannot be bought and is therefore literally priceless. Consequently, those who want to benefit from it need to earn it through their own merits. In exchange, however, they will have a friend who, being completely unbiased, will always do and say what he deems right and true. Tzetzes might be outspoken and excessively frank, but he is no hypocrite. Secondly, and consequently, by underlining his revulsion towards all forms of gifts and by speaking through Cato, Tzetzes is also defending and negotiating his own freedom of thought and expression. No gift or donation will manage to enslave him: following the example of his Roman alter ego, Tzetzes prefers to lead a simple life rather than sell his liberty for a couple of crates full of gold.

Certainly, the letter to Basilakes is not the only text where Tzetzes connects the theme of gift refusal to his aspirations for liberty and independence. On many other occasions, the scholar presents himself as an ἀδωρότατος intellectual who does not care for material goods, but only for the pure affection of his friends.[30] In some instances, the gift-refusal motif is connected to Tzetzes' exclusive interest in the spiritual sphere of *hoi logoi*, a feature prominent also in eleventh-century authorial self-portraits, such as that of John Mauropous. However, as it has been demonstrated, Mauropous' self-fashioning as an ascetic intellectual is nothing but a "smokescreen," aimed at reconciling his worldly success with widespread misgivings towards the practice of writing, especially writing for wealth and renown.[31] Can we imagine something similar for Tzetzes' self-presentation as the alter ego of the ἀδωρότατος Cato? To put it differently, can we take Tzetzes' claims at face value? And, more importantly, did Tzetzes intend his audience to do so?

For all his proud declarations to the contrary, not only did the scholar accept the gifts that were sent to him, but he also asked for more, especially when he did not receive what he had been promised. His audacious claims to intellectual and moral independence are inevitably attenuated

30 From Tzetzes' *Letters* alone, we may quote as illustrative examples *Epistles* 19, 82 (especially 122.18-21) and 39. On the latter, see Shepard 1979 and Cernoglazov 2011: 60-61.

31 Bernard 2014b: 57.

by the need to adapt to the constraints imposed by long-established social conventions as well as material needs – or even desires.[32] In this context, the intentionally hyperbolic tone of the admonition to Basilakes brings into question the explicit meaning of the message, thus suggesting that more than one reading is possible. Certainly, Tzetzes emphatically urging Basilakes to stop sending gifts once and for all might even be interpreted as a joking exhortation for Basilakes to do just the opposite.

The possibility of multiple interpretations mirrors the tension in Tzetzes' multifaceted self-presentation, which unites ostensibly incompatible images within the very same work and, consequently, within the same authorial persona. As will be shown in the next section, the equilibristic nature of Tzetzes' position emerges even more clearly when we turn to patronage. Since the rhetorical and social conventions regulating friendship and patronage often coincide, we are bound to encounter similar motifs to those discussed above. Indeed, Cato is once more evoked as the symbol of Tzetzes' struggle both to protect and promote his independence. Nevertheless, new themes also arise, closely connected to Tzetzes' position as a "professional writer."[33]

2. A FREE INTELLECTUAL?

Before analysing some other passages of the *Chiliades* where Cato plays a central role, it is worth reading some extracts from *Letter* 75 to John Triphyles, which seems to have inspired these further references to the Roman censor. In the very first lines of the letter, Tzetzes appears to openly recognise and accept his condition as a professional writer. Using a fitting Aristophanic expression, the scholar goes as far as to define himself as an ἄνθρωπος ἐγγλωττογάστωρ ("a man who lives by his tongue"):

32 Cp. e.g. the *historia* on Simonides' silver Muse that will be discussed infra.

33 On Tzetzes as a professional writer, see Rhoby 2010.

> I am a man who lives by his tongue or, rather, it would be more appropriate to say that I live by my wit.[34] Words and treatises are my craft and my trade: it is through them that I harvest the wherewithal to live; it is through them only that I sustain myself, turning my Muse into silver – as Pindar says of Simonides – and following the example of the famous Plato, who sold his dialogues in Sicily.[35]

At first glance, Tzetzes seems to both legitimise and dignify his personal situation by comparing it to that of two illustrious predecessors. Like Simonides and Plato, Tzetzes, too, had to sell his works in order to survive. However, Tzetzes' reception of both Plato and Simonides is not as clear-cut as it might appear. If we read the final section of this same letter, we will note that Tzetzes seems to have some misgivings about the choices made by his ancient colleagues. More precisely, he appears to harbour a particularly strong dislike for Plato.[36] After having sardonically begged Plato's very soul for forgiveness,[37] the scholar goes on to express his uninhibited opinion of both the philosopher and his commercial exploitation of his own writings:

> Thus, the famous Plato, in order to transform his dialogues into silver, as Simonides did with his Muse, skilfully practiced the art of cooking, as well as the art of flattery addressed to tyrants. And through all these activities he earned barely enough to live by. As for me, the only anchor I have in the sea of life is the one I mentioned before, since I am familiar neither with the art of cooking, nor with that of flattery and I do not rely on anything else of the sort, nor do I receive any such free gifts from anyone. I believe that doing so would amount to an injustice against those who were aborted by Nature and were thus deprived of a harmonious shape.[38]

34 For the Tzetzean neologism νοογάστωρ and its relationship with the Aristophanic ἐγγλωττογάστωρ, see Lovato 2021.

35 Tzetz. *Ep.* 75.109.17-110.3.

36 For some preliminary remarks on Tzetzes' reception of Plato, see Lovato 2016: 341-42.

37 Tzetz. *Ep.* 75.110.3-4.

38 Tzetz. *Ep.* 75.111.1-11.

In this passage, Tzetzes refers back to Plato's habit of selling his philosophical works, a behaviour that he connects once again with Simonides' silver Muse. However, in these summarising remarks, Plato's commercial exploitation of his literary products is also equated to other, much less honorable services that he performed for his patrons: adulation and cookery. This irreverent depiction is a clear response to the controversial positions expressed in Plato's *Gorgias*, where rhetoric is not only compared to cookery and flattery, but is also considered to be far inferior to philosophy.[39] Tzetzes, who cannot accept such a disparaging view of what he considers to be the most important *technē* of all, takes Plato's arguments to the extreme and uses them against their author, who ends up embodying all the negative features that are associated with rhetoric in the *Gorgias*.[40]

Having thus cut Plato down to size, Tzetzes goes on to describe his own situation, carefully distancing himself from the philosopher. Contrary to Plato, Tzetzes is neither a flatterer nor a cook. It is only his literary production that allows him to survive in the "sea of life," since he never devoted himself to dubious activities such as those practised by his predecessor, nor did he accept any kind of free gift from anyone (οὐδὲ προῖκα παρ' οὐδενὸς οὐδέν τι λαμβάνοντες). In this passage, the scholar is keen on highlighting the gratuitous nature of the presents he rejected. In his eyes, accepting them would amount to accepting charity, thus committing an injustice towards those who are truly deprived. Despite the different context, we are confronted once again with the gift-refusal motif. In this specific instance, Tzetzes is clearly comparing himself to Epameinondas, who, as recounted in the *Chiliades*, not only refused the gifts he was offered, but also suggested that they be given to people in need.[41]

Considering Tzetzes' emulation of the incorruptible Cato in his letter to Basilakes and the ἐλευθερόψυχος Epameinondas in the epistle to Triphyles, it is unsurprising to find both of these figures appear again in

39 On Tzetzes' reversal of the Platonic description of rhetoric, see also Kolovou 2007.

40 In Tzetzes' writings, the comparison between rhetoric and cookery could also convey appreciation for one's rhetorical prowess (Cesaretti 1991: 200-1).

41 Cp. *Chil.* 10 hist. 346.614-18, as well as the discussion supra.

the section of the *Chiliades* commenting upon this very passage of the letter to Triphyles. Significantly, in this short *historia* aimed at emphasising Tzetzes' integrity, we encounter the same oscillation between the notions of gift-giving and payment that characterised the epistle to Basilakes. However, since *Letter* 75 to Triphyles is mostly concerned with Tzetzes' professional status, the fluctuation and potential overlap between these two concepts is the starting point for a reflection on the scholar's relationship with his clients and patrons.

Tzetzes was incorruptible, emulating the ancients
like Epameinondas, Cato and all other such heroes.
He did not accept anything that was offered as a free gift by the members of the ruling class,
no matter their standing, even though many were those who offered,
so much so that even when, during a terrible famine, one of the most illustrious rulers
offered to provide him and his slaves with a pension, he replied, as if addressing him directly:
"Go and find yourself some caretakers for your old age.
As for Tzetzes, he is not suited to live like a caretaker."
He thought that he would wrong those aborted by Nature,
who made them crippled, blind, crooked and maimed:
he believed these to be the rightful receivers of free donations of money.
Tzetzes himself did not accept any gold in exchange for his exegeses,
and he would hardly receive food, drinks, fruit and the like.
But some people want to copy his treatises,
and thus, he let his works be copied in exchange for an adequate quantity of gold
– doing so only rarely and entrusting them to a selected few –
as Plato did in the past with his own dialogues.
But, in addition to selling his dialogues,
Plato was a flatterer and a cook and he forced everyone
to give him money and to buy the books of others
for one hundred mines or even more, as when Dio
bought the works of Philolaus and Sophron.

As for Tzetzes, when even the *Augousta* sent him gifts,
he accepted them, albeit unwillingly. He thought it would be rude to refuse.
He rejoiced in the toil of writing provided that he was paid for his works.[42]
Only in the case of the Empress, of all people, did he happily receive donations,
even though they did not amount to a payment.[43]

Tzetzes begins this *historia* by fashioning himself as ἀδωρότατος and by highlighting once more his affinity with Cato and Epameinondas. Following the example of his Greek and Roman models, Tzetzes rejected all the donations he was presented with by many powerful benefactors. As in *Letter* 75, the scholar remarks that this kind of pecuniary donation (χρημάτων δόσεις) should be destined for people in need. This time, however, Tzetzes is much more explicit when it comes to the reasons behind his refusal of this kind of gift, which he once again equates to charity. Being well aware that accepting these donations would have made him forever indebted to and even "owned" by his benefactors, Tzetzes bluntly declares that he has no intention of becoming a caretaker.

Immediately after this bold declaration of independence, Tzetzes goes on to list the kind of rewards he would accept, but only as payment for his intellectual and literary activity. The scholar seems to be drawing a clear distinction between the apparently free but potentially binding δόσεις, which he always refused, and the well-deserved compensation that he received for his services, just as other literati did before him. However, if we analyse the following lines of the *historia*, we will remark that, once again, the scholar's position is not as clear-cut as it might appear. The proud self-depiction of the opening passage is soon replaced by a careful – and at times almost apologetic – explanation of Tzetzes' dealings with his clients and sponsors.

42 There seems to be a textual problem at line 37 (πονῶν καὶ γράφων δ' ἔχαιρεν, ἄνπερ μισθοὺς λαμβάνοι). Since, with ἄνπερ, Tzetzes generally uses the subjunctive and not the optative, the simplest solution is to replace the optative λαμβάνοι with the omophonic subjunctive λαμβάνῃ. My translation is based on this emendation.

43 Tzetz. *Chil.* 11 hist. 364.13-39.

Tzetzes opens the second part of the *historia* by denying that he has ever received any gold in exchange for his exegetical works (ἑρμηνεύματα). This transition seems to have been inspired by the earlier reference to the insidious, financial δόσεις offered by the scholar's anonymous benefactors. To strengthen his point, Tzetzes specifies that, as a reward for his "exegeses," he never accepted anything but food, drinks and the like. It is not easy to understand what Tzetzes means exactly by the term ἑρμηνεύματα, which he seems to distinguish from the "treatises" (συγγράμματα) mentioned two lines later. Based on other passages of his writings, we can infer that, when he talks about his "exegetical works," Tzetzes mainly refers to his teaching and/or to materials written with students in mind.[44] This seems to be corroborated by an extract from his commentary on the *Clouds*, where he criticises Aristophanes for having represented Socrates as a greedy teacher. As everyone knows, Tzetzes observes, Socrates used to repeat that "he did not have time to care for silver" (ἀργύριον τηρεῖν οὐκ ἄγω σχολήν). Consequently, he never asked for anything in exchange for his "lessons": the only rewards he accepted were food and drinks.[45] If we compare this scholium with the *historia* quoted above, we are tempted to conclude that, when he mentions the recompense for his ἑρμηνεύματα, Tzetzes is deliberately posing himself as a new Socrates, the very epitome of the selfless teacher who generously shared his knowledge with anyone who was willing to learn.[46]

44 See e.g. *Ep.* 22, where, to describe the activities he assigned to his pupils, Tzetzes repeatedly uses the verb ἑρμηνεύω and its derivatives. Cp. also *Ep.* 79, where Tzetzes complains about a student who was not interested in his ἐξηγήσεις. On Tzetzes as a didactic poet, see van den Berg 2020.

45 Tzetz. schol. in *Nubes* 98a.405.3-14. In this passage, Socrates is contrasted not only with Simonides, but also with Theodorus of Cyrene, who is criticised for his habit of asking money in exchange for his "lessons." Interestingly, this detail about Theodorus does not seem to appear anywhere else. The same applies to the anecdote of Socrates' two *pithoi*, which might be read as a sort of response to the story of Simonides' two chests (on which see further infra).

46 As is the case with Tzetzes' representation of his relationship with Eirene-Bertha, this self-description is far from a faithful representation of the scholar's dealings with his students. On many occasions, Tzetzes mentions the financial rewards that he received in exchange for his teaching: cf. e.g. *Ep.* 22 and *Ep.* 50, on which see Grünbart 2005: 415-16; 423.

This self-representation as a disinterested dispenser of wisdom, however, is partly muddled by the following lines. Tzetzes immediately complicates the picture by specifying that, in some cases at least, he *did* ask for a pecuniary payment in exchange for his works. The reader now learns that the scholar's treatises (συγγράμματα) were so successful that some people asked to copy them. To be granted the permission to do so, these potential clients were required to provide the author with an "adequate quantity of gold" (χρυσίου ἱκανοῦ), thus following the example set by Plato and his sponsors. Once again, however, Tzetzes swiftly proceeds to attenuate his former statements. To begin with, he is careful to point out that, contrary to Plato, he did not "sell" his works to just anyone. What is more, unlike the restrained Tzetzes, not only was Plato unreserved when it came to asking for financial compensation, but he also went as far as to ask his patrons to buy the books composed by others, such as Philolaus and Sophron.

Significantly, after focusing on Plato's reprehensible relationship with his Sicilian patrons, Tzetzes turns to discussing his own behaviour towards one of his most illustrious sponsors, the *Augousta* Eirene-Bertha. Even if Tzetzes does not state it explicitly in this passage, he is likely referring here to the *Allegories of the Iliad*, which, as far as we know, was the only work that Eirene-Bertha ever commissioned from Tzetzes. The scholar talks about his dealings with his imperial patroness in other, more well-known passages of his works, where he complains about the unfair treatment he received from the empress's treasurer.[47] In these texts, the agreement between Tzetzes and the unreliable treasurer is presented as a sort of contract which stipulated how much money Tzetzes was supposed to receive upon completion of the work. As is clear from Tzetzes' outbursts, the agreed sum was never paid and the scholar ended up finding another sponsor for his *Allegories*. In light of these considerations, the way in which Tzetzes presents his relationship with the *Augousta* in the *historia* here quoted is quite surprising.

Indeed, in this *historia*, Tzetzes only refers to some unspecified "gifts" (δῶρα) that he received from the empress. In line with his initial self-

47 See Tzetz. *Ep.* 57 and *Chil.* 9 hist. 264.271-90. On the letter, addressed to the empress's treasurer, see Grünbart 1996: 207-8. For the patronage relationship between Tzetzes and Eirene-Bertha, see Rhoby 2010: 159-63 and Grünbart 2005a: 418; 422-23.

fashioning as the alter ego of Cato and Epameinondas, Tzetzes is careful to highlight that he would have preferred to refuse them. Apparently, though, the high status of the giver prevented him from doing so. The empress' gifts (δόσεις) feature once again in the concluding lines of the *historia*, where they are explicitly contrasted to the μισθοί (payments) that Tzetzes received from his other clients. The scholar goes to great lengths to specify that the only person from whom he "gladly" accepted any kind of donation (δόσις) was the *Augousta* herself. It is worth noting that this is the very same term that, some lines earlier, Tzetzes had used to qualify the gratuitous – and therefore potentially insidious – "gifts" offered by his anonymous benefactors. In this case, however, Tzetzes seems to be particularly keen to emphasise that the donations coming from the empress were *not* to be considered as payments received in exchange for a service. This is, in my opinion, the meaning of the adverb ἀμισθίως (literally "without reward") featuring at the end of the passage (τῆς σεβαστοκρατούσης δε μόνης καὶ ἀμισθίως | δόσεις λαμβάνων ἔχαιρεν ἐκ πάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων). Given Tzetzes' aversion towards any form of 'gratuitous' gift, the reasons for his puzzling insistence on the lack of (financial) payment are especially worth exploring.

To better appreciate Tzetzes' representation of his relationship with his patrons and clients, it is necessary to consider more closely the role played by the different figures that he employs to define his authorial and professional status. The following paragraphs will therefore focus on his reception of Plato and Simonides. As we will see, if the example of Plato spells out the risks connected to the commodification and uncontrolled circulation of one's works, then Simonides is the perfect case study to explore the consequences of the creative constraints imposed by patronage. Moreover, both the poet and the philosopher turn out to be particularly "good to think with" when it comes to the discourse of gift-giving and, more broadly, to the correct etiquette to be observed with one's patrons, especially when they belong to the imperial court. While investigating these themes, we will encounter again some of the apparent contradictions that permeated most of the passages analysed so far. As I argue, the figures of Plato and Simonides allow Tzetzes to ar-

ticulate the ethical tensions inherent to his professional and social condition. At the same time, however, the very use of these fictional markers alerts the reader to the staged and performative nature of such self-presentation, which, by constantly oscillating between past and present, fact and fiction, offers an ever-shifting portrait of the author.

Plato's insatiable greed: matters of plagiarism and social etiquette

Despite initially posing himself as the living portrait of the uncompromising Cato and Epameinondas, in the *historia* describing his dealings with his students and sponsors Tzetzes ends up creating a considerably more nuanced self-representation. The reader is gradually introduced to the rather flexible solutions that the scholar has to accept in order to earn a living out of his intellectual activities. While Tzetzes refuses the insidious charity of his many admirers and imitates the example set by the frugal Socrates insofar as his teaching is concerned, when it comes to his much-admired "treatises" the situation changes. If Socrates did not care for silver at all, Tzetzes does care for gold when potential clients ask for the permission to copy some of his most appreciated works. In this respect, Tzetzes seems to follow quite closely the precedent set by Socrates' most famous pupil, the pragmatic Plato.

However, despite admitting to selling his own works, Tzetzes immediately distances himself from Plato, who asks for money in exchange for *each and every one* of his dialogues, thus systematically commodifying the products of his intellect and education. As Tzetzes endlessly emphasises, not even Plato's Sicilian patrons were safe from his insatiable requests. Such rapacity is undoubtedly one of the main reasons for Tzetzes' negative reception of the philosopher. Tzetzes associates Plato's reckless commercial enterprises with his proclivity for flattery. More specifically, he seems to imply that, in addition to regularly putting a price on what is priceless, Plato ended up "selling" himself to the powerful men he worked for.[48] According to Tzetzes, this kind of moral slavery eventually

48 See e.g. *Chil.* 10 hist. 357.818, where Plato is defined as εἷς ἐκ τῶν μισθίων (one of the "salaried labourers") of the two Sicilian tyrants he "worked" for.

led to a literal form of enslavement: tired of the philosopher's machinations, his former Sicilian patrons decided to get rid of Plato by selling him to a slave trader.[49] Furthermore, while Tzetzes never tells us what happens to Plato's own writings once they were sold, in yet another passage of the *Chiliades* he expands upon the fate of the volumes that the philosopher's patrons bought for their protégé, such as the writings of the Pythagorean Philolaus and the mimes composed by Sophron. Tzetzes informs us that, as soon as he laid hands on these books, Plato considered them to be his property, which he could reuse as he pleased to compose his own dialogues.[50]

This anecdote further clarifies the reasons behind Tzetzes' misgivings towards the creation of a potentially indiscriminate book trade. Those who participate in such an enterprise with their own works run the risk of sacrificing their autonomy, not only because they might be forced to execute the instructions of their clients, but also because they might end up losing control over their own literary creations. When he discusses the commercialisation of his works, Tzetzes seems to be especially concerned with this second aspect. Indeed, from what we can infer from the scholar's own words, the clients who paid for permission to copy his books were interested in works whose content was well-known and appreciated. To put it differently, these "buyers" do not seem particularly interested in influencing the *creative* choices of the author. In this case, the greatest danger is represented by the constantly looming threat of plagiarism or by the uncontrolled diffusion and potential alteration of works that were associated with Tzetzes' name.[51]

The desire to control the circulation of one's writings was already apparent in literature from the eleventh century. We know, for example,

49 See. e.g. *Chil.* 10 hist. 359 passim and hist. 362.988-92. This line of interpretation is further developed by Pizzone (forthcoming a), who focuses especially on twelfth-century book markets.

50 Tzetz. *Chil.* 10, hist. 355.798-803 and hist. 362. See especially ll. 998-99, where Plato is accused of having stolen most of his philosophical theories from Philolaus. On these and other similar passages, see Lovato 2017b: 215-17. The depiction of Plato as a plagiarist is not an original invention by Tzetzes: for a discussion of his sources, see Pizzone (forthcoming a).

51 On Tzetzes' practices of authorisation, see Pizzone 2020. On his misgivings towards the commodification of books, see Pizzone (forthcoming a).

that John Mauropous allegedly preferred his works to be read "inside," by the light of a small candle, rather than in a public place, in the presence of large audiences.[52] Such a motif was certainly connected with the elitist atmosphere of the eleventh-century literary circles, but it could occasionally be linked both with the alleged rejection of the commodification of literature and with the threat of plagiarism.[53] Fear of losing control over one's writings, often presented as one's very offspring,[54] was even more pressing in twelfth-century Byzantium, where literati tried to secure the few positions available at the imperial court or in the Patriarchate by presenting compelling compositions that could attract particularly coveted sponsors. As we know from many passages of his works, Tzetzes himself had often been the victim of plagiarism: even the successful Eustathios is known to have "stolen" from Tzetzes' writings without ever crediting him.[55] Therefore, when distancing himself from Plato's indiscriminate commercial enterprises, Tzetzes might be expressing his unease towards the book trade he himself was involved in, trying to ward off the fate suffered by Philolaus and Sophron, whose works became the "property" of those who acquired them.

Keeping control of his writings, however, is not the only reason why Tzetzes tries to separate himself from Plato. As mentioned, from as early as the eleventh century, the idea of letting one's writings circulate widely was seen as a potential manifestation of both arrogance and greed. In a time when gaining cultural capital could lead to a considerable accumulation of both social and economic capital, literati struggled to reconcile their worldly success – and ensuing wealth – with the image of the disinterested intellectual that they tried to sustain throughout their works. According to Christian notions of humility, writing was in itself a suspicious enterprise, since the very gesture of taking up the pen and expressing one's opinions bordered on arrogance. Doing so in exchange for money or social advancement was all the more unacceptable, since it degraded the (supposedly) detached nature of any engagement

52 Bernard 2014b: 59.

53 On Mauropous defending himself against an anonymous plagiarist, see Bernard 2014a: 273-74.

54 See Cullhed 2014b: 63 for an example taken from Tzetzes' *Chiliads.*

55 See e.g. Cullhed 2014a: 23* and 2014b: 63.

with *hoi logoi*. As noted, this tension between ambition and ascetic conceptions of the literatus permeates the self-presentation of John Mauropous, who, despite his successful career at the imperial court, was keen to pose as a poor and dispassionate intellectual. The same fluctuation characterises the works of Michael Psellos, emerging first and foremost in descriptions of his relationship with patrons and students: throughout his vast oeuvre, Psellos can either appear as a disinterested dispenser of wisdom (an image strikingly reminiscent of Tzetzes' self-fashioning as a new Socrates)[56] or as a rather blunt petitioner, who does not hesitate to ask for generous rewards in exchange for his works.[57]

The conflict between an ascetic conception of literature and the desire for social and financial success was felt all the more strongly by a twelfth-century intellectual who had no choice but to live by his pen – or, rather, by his tongue, to rephrase the Aristophanic image we encountered in *Letter 75* above. Indeed, I argue that Tzetzes' censure of Plato's attitude towards his patrons is informed by these irreconcilable – but equally powerful – ethical models. Thus, in addition to alluding to the potential connection between the "book market" and plagiarism, the story of the greedy Plato epitomises the tension between Tzetzes' attempt to pose as a disinterested devotee of *hoi logoi* and his desire to see his work appreciated – and adequately rewarded – by prestigious sponsors. By condemning Plato's shameless requests for payment, Tzetzes seems to be proposing his more accommodating behaviour as a paradigm of restraint, while at the same time repelling potential accusations of greed. However, as we learn from many other passages of his works, Tzetzes could be quite explicit – and considerably less accommodating – when voicing his disappointment regarding thrifty patrons who dared ask him to write for free.[58] Indeed, his requests for material support are so frequent and candid that they earned him the title of the

56 See Bernard 2014a: 193 for the relevant passages. Bernard further remarks that Mauropous equally liked to pose as a selfless teacher who distributed his knowledge for free (προῖκα).

57 On Psellos as an "extremely multi-sided writer and social actor," see Bernard 2014b: passim and especially 56.

58 See e.g. *Chil.* 5 hist. 31.942-49. Similar themes occur in *Chil.* 1 hist. 25.679-82.

"begging poet,"[59] which he shares with Theodore Prodromos, the Komnenian *Betteldichter* par excellence.[60] By comparison to Prodromos, however, Tzetzes seems to be particularly sensitive to the tension between the desirable (but unattainable) ideal of the ascetic poet and the unavoidable reliance on patronage. More interestingly still, not only is Tzetzes aware of this contradiction, but he even seems to playfully allude to it when, for example, he admits to his affinity with the dubious tribe of the Aristophanic ἐγγλωττογάστορες ("those who fill their stomach with their tongue").

With these considerations in mind, we can now return to the puzzling *historia* where Tzetzes describes his relationship with Eirene-Bertha. As noted, the scholar is careful to point out that, despite his aversion towards gratuitous gifts, he could not decline the presents sent by his patroness, which he is at pains to distinguish from the more commercial concept of μισθός ("payment"). The insistence on the language of gift-exchange and the explicit refusal of the notion of payment might be read as a further attempt to push back against potential accusations of cupidity. Even if he is forced to compromise his self-depiction as the living portrait of the ἀδωρότατος Cato, Tzetzes thus manages to elevate his relationship with the empress from the contractual dimension of the μισθός to the more gracious rhetoric of gift-giving. Furthermore, by replacing μισθοί with "gifts" (δῶρα, δόσεις), Tzetzes seems to find an acceptable synthesis between his condition as a professional literatus and the paradigm of the ascetic poet: instead of a commercial agreement, his patronage relationship with the *Augousta* becomes an intimate exchange between kindred souls, where artistic and literary excellence is automatically rewarded by the admiring empress.

However, there might be another reason why Tzetzes decides to partly contradict his former self-depiction as the alter ego of Cato. I would argue that, through this rather surprising representation of his relationship with the *Augousta*, Tzetzes is at the same time trying to voice

59 On Tzetzes' "rhetoric of poverty," see Cullhed 2014b: 58-61.

60 On Tzetzes and Prodromos as the epitome of the twelfth-century "begging poet," see Beaton 1987 and Bazzani 2007. On the self-ironic tinge of Prodromos' self-presentation as a poor poet, see again Bazzani 2007.

and drive away a feeling of unease that surfaces time and again when it comes to the works that he wrote as imperial commissions.

Simonides' silver Muse and the loss of authorial autonomy

To clarify this point, I will now turn to the other "mercenary writer" figure that Tzetzes employs as a foil against which to define his own authorial ethos, namely Simonides. Apart from featuring in the now familiar *Letter* 75 to Triphyles, he is also the protagonist of a short but meaningful *historia* that Tzetzes explicitly connects to this epistle.[61] Once again, the polymath recounts how Simonides was the first poet to ask to be paid in exchange for his compositions.[62] What comes next, however, does not feature in any of the texts analysed so far and deserves to be read in full:

> At first, lyric poets wrote for free.
> The first to write for a reward was Simonides.
> He had two chests made for him
> and he called one of them the chest of gifts and the other the chest of thanks.
> Whatever he received in exchange for his compositions,
> he put in what he called the chest of gifts. Thus, he eventually filled it.
> Instead, the chest of thanks was empty.
> If someone ever expected him to write for free,
> he would say: "There are two chests in my house:
> one is called chest of gifts and the other chest of thanks.
> When I open the chest of gifts, inside I find
> what I require to buy whatever I need.

61 See Tzetz. *Chil.* 10 hist. 354.779-82.

62 On Simonides as the first commissioned poet, see e.g. Schol. in Pind. *Isthm.* 2.9a-b. For a more in-depth discussion of the sources employed by Tzetzes, see Savio 2020: 36-37 with n. 21. Interestingly, in the writings of Eustathios of Thessaloniki it is Pindar who becomes the epitome of the commissioned (and mercenary) writer: for a detailed analysis, see van den Berg (forthcoming).

> If I open the chest of thanks, however, I find it empty
> and from what is inside there I am unable to buy what I need."
> With these words, he would ask to be paid for every composition,
> as Anacreon and the famous Callimachus say,
> along with many other eloquent men.
> This same Simonides did not write hymns to the gods,
> since he avoided working for free. He wrote eulogies for boys instead,
> in exchange for which he received much, and indeed sufficient, gold.
> When someone asked him: "Why is it that you do not write anything for the gods,
> but you only write eulogies for young boys?," Simonides replied:
> "Young boys are my gods, since it is from them that I receive what I ask."[63]

Tzetzes opens this *historia* by contrasting Simonides to other unnamed lyric poets, who, unlike him, did not require to be paid in exchange for their compositions. To strengthen his point, the scholar describes the two chests that Simonides showed to those who asked him to write for free. Tzetzes might have used many different sources to compose his version of the story and the vast majority are listed in Leone's critical apparatus. Most of these texts either define the recompense asked for by Simonides as a μισθός – thus emphasising the contractual nature of the relationship between poet and clients – or employ the term ἄργυρος ("silver"), which highlights the pecuniary nature of the required payment. In his own rewriting of the anecdote, Tzetzes employs both terms, thus combining the notion of contract with that of financial calculation. Interestingly, however, when he reports Simonides' own words, Tzetzes only employs the term δωρεά (translatable as "gift" or "donation"), which recurs in only one of his sources.[64]

Indeed, in the first section of the *historia*, the same episode seems to be presented from two different angles: the perspective of the narrating

63 Tzetz. *Chil.* 8 hist. 228.807-29.

64 See schol. in Theoc. 16 arg. Notably, however, in this scholium δωρεά does not qualify the "gifts" requested by Simonides, but refers to a hypothetical composition by the poet, which would have been considered as a "gift" by its recipient, had Simonides accepted to write it for free. On this text, see Rawles 2018: 228.

voice and the point of view of Simonides himself, whose words are conveyed through direct speech. The selective use of the term δωρεά is particularly meaningful in this respect: by insisting on the more abstract notion of gift-giving, the character of Simonides artfully downplays the commercial nature of his demands – thus appropriating a rhetorical strategy that was quite typical of Tzetzes himself. As we might recall, in the *historia* where he describes his dealings with his many sponsors, Tzetzes is equally eager to avoid the notion of monetary payment. Not only is he quite reluctant to mention the gold he received in exchange for his "treatises," but, when it comes to his "exegetical works," he is very keen on pointing out that he only accepted what was necessary to satisfy his basic needs. Significantly, the theme of necessity is another common element linking Tzetzes' representation of Simonides with his own self-depiction as a mercenary writer. In the letter to Triphyles, Tzetzes justifies his requests for payments by stating that his literary activity was his only source of income: he did not ask to be rewarded out of greed, but out of necessity. In the *historia* we have just read, Simonides thus seems to be repeating the very same arguments adopted by Tzetzes in many of his works. More significantly still, Simonides' insistence on the motif of "need" (τὸ χρειῶδες) is the result of a deliberate choice by Tzetzes. This theme appears in only one of the sources referring to Simonides and even there it does not feature as prominently as it does in Tzetzes' rewriting of the story.[65]

If we put all these elements together, we are tempted to conclude that the Simonides who shows his two chests to his clients in order to be paid for his work is not that dissimilar from Tzetzes the professional writer, who asks for an appropriate reward in exchange for his services. And indeed, if we look at the way in which Simonides is represented in other passages of the *Chiliades*, we will remark that Tzetzes seems actually to admire his ancient colleague. Not only is Simonides remembered for his many victories in all kinds of poetic contests,[66] but he is also listed, along with the much-admired Palamedes, amongst the inventors of the Greek alphabet.[67] Not once do we find the scathing tones reserved for Plato. As

65 Stob. 3.10.38.

66 Tzetz. *Chil.* 1 hist. 24.623-42 (see also schol. in *Chil.* 1.624.1-12).

67 Tzetz. *Chil.* 5 hist. 28.808-10 (but see *Chil.* 12 hist. 398. 42-47 for a partial rectification).

the *historia* here analysed makes clear, Simonides could have been a more fitting model for Tzetzes the commissioned writer, who almost seems to be lending his own voice to the ancient poet.

However, as the narrating voice of this same *historia* immediately points out, Simonides' behaviour towards his patrons was far from exemplary. After recounting the story of the two chests, Tzetzes observes that the poet abused the clever stratagem, since he never once accepted to write without receiving a monetary compensation. As the reader might recall, this is exactly the same mistake made by Plato. But is Tzetzes' disapproval directed only at what he seems to perceive as a particularly censurable breach of etiquette? Or is this implicit association between Plato and Simonides aimed at conveying a further message?

As noted above, when criticising Plato's commercial enterprises, Tzetzes creates a clear connection between the philosopher's reprehensible behaviour and his moral (and literal) enslavement at the hands of his patrons. Liberty also seems to be the issue at stake in the final section of the *historia* on Simonides. This time, however, Tzetzes is not reflecting upon the potential loss of autonomy and ownership stemming from the commodification of one's own books. Rather, he is spelling out the threats to one's authorial liberty that might arise from the creation of a systematic, contractual relationship with one's patrons, especially when the latter can – and aspire to – actively influence the contents of the works they commission. According to Tzetzes, this is exactly what happens to Simonides: his decision always to write for a price inevitably limits his creative independence, forcing him to follow his patrons' desires, which are both very specific and very limited. In Tzetzes' *historia*, the debasing consequences of similar constraints are expounded by the poet's anonymous interlocutor, who clearly expects a skilled author like Simonides to compose solemn hymns to the gods instead of writing (much less dignified and dignifying) eulogies for young boys. Considering the generally positive image of Simonides that emerges from the *Chiliades*, we are tempted to conclude that, this time, Tzetzes' point of view overlaps with that of the unnamed acquaintance of the poet: why should a remarkable writer such as Simonides squander his talent by choosing topics and – possibly – poetic forms that do not allow him properly to express his exceptional abilities?

From what we know about Tzetzes' relationship with his imperial patrons, we might even go a step further. I suggest not only that Tzetzes' perspective is represented by the words of the unnamed interlocutor of Simonides, but also that the scholar may have directed this same question to himself. Just like Simonides, Tzetzes was confronted with sponsors demanding that he compose works that he clearly considered beneath him. This is especially evident when it comes to the writings commissioned by female patrons, such as the *sebastokratorissa* Eirene and the empress Eirene-Bertha. Indeed, as has been convincingly demonstrated,[68] Tzetzes both complains about the vagueness of the instructions he received[69] and also implies that, had he been given the chance, he could have shown the true extent of his knowledge. The basic demands of his commissioners, however, prevented him from appropriately showcasing his talent.[70]

The significance of Simonides for the conceptualisation of Tzetzes' professional status is further illuminated by a detailed analysis of the scholar's use of his sources. Interestingly, Leone's critical apparatus does not mention any potential model for the seemingly unique concluding episode of the *historia*. However, if we take a closer look at the *scholia vetera* on Pindar, we will remark that a similar anecdote was recounted about another ancient author, Anacreon. In contrast to that of Simonides, Anacreon's literary production is indeed characterised by a considerable number of erotic poems celebrating beautiful young boys, whom

68 Jeffreys 1974: 151-57.

69 See e.g. Tzetz. *All. Il.* prol. 1207-14.

70 Both in the *Iliad Allegories* and in the *Theogony,* Tzetzes states that he had to limit himself to writing what was necessary to – or required by – his imperial reader(s) (Jeffreys 1979: 151-54; but see Pizzone (forthcoming a) for a different interpretation of the *Theogony*). In these texts, Tzetzes implies that, had the circumstances been different, he could have said much more – as he does in some of his other works (compare for example the complex introduction to the *Exegesis of the Iliad* with the rather simple prologue of the *Iliad Allegories*). Interestingly, when Constantine Kotertzes became the new sponsor of the *Allegories*, the length and complexity of Tzetzes' allegorical interpretations seemed to increase, as noted by Rhoby 2010: 164-65; 170. Gender might have somehow influenced Tzetzes' authorial choices, as suggested by the fact that the scholar qualifies the *Theogony* – and, indirectly, the *Iliad Allegories* – as γυναικεῖαι βίβλοι (Jeffreys 1974: 154).

the poet was said to consider as no less than his "gods."[71] Once again, as he did with Cato and Epameinondas, Tzetzes alters his source by giving a prominent role to characters who did not feature in his models, but whom he considered to be especially meaningful for his strategy of self-presentation. Moreover, just as in the episode of Cato and the Britons, the modifications introduced by Tzetzes focus on very specific – and particularly suggestive – details. For example, while also dealing with the issue of commissioned poetry, the Pindaric scholium reworked by Tzetzes does not mention Anacreon as an example of mercenary author. Quite the contrary, Anacreon features in a sort of catalogue of ancient writers who devoted themselves to the celebration of beauty *without* asking for payment in return. In this context, Anacreon's response to the anonymous interlocutor inquiring about the poet's tendency to write only hymns to young boys acquires a different meaning than it does in Tzetzes' story. Therefore, along with the alteration of the identity of the characters involved, the connection between Simonides' choice of inferior topics[72] and the necessity to satisfy his patrons' desires can be quite safely considered as an original amendment on Tzetzes' part. As with Cato and Epameinondas, the scholar is so intent on projecting his own experience onto the figure of Simonides that he ends up attributing to the poet words and deeds that the tradition ascribed to others.

These alterations of the original source, along with the fact that Tzetzes decided to place this episode in a pivotal position of his *historia* on Simonides, show the importance of this anecdote for the scholar's reception of the poet and, consequently, for his strategy of authorial self-fashioning. This becomes all the more evident if we consider that Tzetzes clearly wanted this text to be read along with the letter to Triphyles and the other *historiai* connected to it, including the one devoted to his relationship with Eirene-Bertha.

71 Schol. vet. in Pind. *Isthm.* 2.1b (especially ll. 8-10: Ἀνακρέοντα γοῦν ἐρωτηθέντα, φασί, διατί οὐκ εἰς θεοὺς ἀλλ' εἰς παῖδας γράφεις τοὺς ὕμνους; εἰπεῖν, ὅτι οὗτοι ἡμῶν θεοί εἰσιν). I am grateful to Andrea Capra for his help in locating Tzetzes' source.

72 See e.g. the hierarchy of literary genres that Tzetzes sketches in *schol. in Ranas* 585.858.3-6. In this passage, the scholar seems to imply that lyric poets who write hymns to the gods and celebrate athletic victories deserve not only to be paid, but also to be honoured and supported by society as a whole.

If we return one last time to the *historia* detailing Tzetzes' interaction with the empress, we might be able to add a further layer of meaning to the lines where the polymath hesitantly admits to having accepted the gifts (δόσεις) sent by her, emphatically distinguishing these from the μισθοί that he received from his other clients. Certainly, these remarks might have aimed both to reject potential accusations of greed and to sublimate the scholar's agreement with the empress into a more personal exchange. However, Tzetzes' evident desire to downplay the commercial and contractual nature of his dealings with the *Augousta* might also be read as an attempt to – at least theoretically – distance himself from Simonides' silver Muse and the limits to one's authorial autonomy that such a mercenary goddess might entail. Indeed, the threat faced by Simonides might even be more insidious than the loss of copyright stemming from selling the rights to one's own books. If the author might lose control of works that have already been written in the latter case, in the former he might not even be able to write what he really wants, thus inevitably subordinating his will (and his fame) to the desires of his patrons, who become his only "gods." I would argue that Tzetzes' representation of his relationship with Eirene-Bertha both reveals and tries to dispel the scholar's apprehension at the potential overlap between Simonides' situation and his own. This is probably why the scholar is ready to momentarily put down the mask of the ἀδωρότατος Cato and to admit to having accepted the ostensibly gratuitous δόσεις of his patroness: apparently, the consequences of a contractual agreement with a powerful sponsor could prove even more constraining than the gratitude owed to the occasional donor of a gift.

As it turns out, Tzetzes was not the only one to feel restricted by his condition as a commissioned writer. The implicit accusations that we have detected in his subtle representation of Simonides are reminiscent of the equally subtle complaints expressed by some of his contemporaries, who have also been labelled as "professional writers." A relevant case in point is, for example, Constantine Manasses' *Description of the Little Man*. As recently observed, this apparently innocuous description of a courtly event may hide an implicit jab at the ignorant members of the aristocracy, who are amused by the "exotic" little man just as much as

they are entertained by their poets, proving their inability to appreciate the value of refined education.[73]

This said, just like Manasses' self-image as an undervalued court poet, Tzetzes' complex treatment of Simonides, along with its echoes in his own patronage relationship with Eirene-Bertha, cannot be considered as an accurate representation of the situation and attitudes of the "real author." Indeed, as some oblique remarks by Eustathios seem to suggest, Tzetzes must have been rather proud of his imperial commissions, so much so that his adversaries accused him of being an arrogant braggart.[74] Furthermore, if we are to believe the details provided by his own letters, Tzetzes did not limit himself to accepting the gratuitous gifts supposedly offered by the *Augousta*, but went as far as to berate her treasurer for not living up to his end of the bargain. With this last example, however, we are already crossing the tenuous line separating the "real author" from the "model author." And if the first is often out of reach for the modern reader, the second can prove just as elusive, especially when it comes to Tzetzes and the fluctuating nature of his self-presentation. For instance, what should we make of the alter ego of the inflexible Cato who, despite some ostensible hesitations, is willing to follow the precedent set by the much less uncompromising Plato and Simonides? And how are we to interpret Simonides' – and Tzetzes' – apologetic references to their apparent privation? After all, as we learn from the *Chiliades*, Simonides' mercenary Muse yielded "much, and indeed, sufficient gold," just as Tzetzes' commodification of his "treatises" allowed him to earn "an adequate amount of gold." Are we really dealing with a poor poet who is forced to renounce his much-cherished independence only to avoid dying of starvation? Or does Tzetzes' comparison with Plato and Simonides hide more than the apologetic self-representation of a needy – but incorruptible – intellectual?

73 For this interpretation, see Nilsson 2020: 23 and 182-85. As I argue elsewhere (see Lovato 2021), another relevant parallel is the *Timarion*, on which see also Labuk 2019: 71-76.

74 See e.g. Eust. *Il.* 1.3.1-4, to be read with Cullhed 2014a: 9*-10*.

From inconsistency to polyphony

These questions highlight a fluctuation that goes to the very essence of Tzetzes' self-presentation, which is marked by the coexistence of different, and apparently contrasting, authorial voices. As I have shown, this authorial polyphony is not to be interpreted as a lack of consistency on the part of the author, nor should this multiplicity be ignored or downplayed so as to fit one's interpretation of the writer's agenda. Rather, the mutability of the authorial voice is a recurrent – and often deliberate – feature of many Byzantine sources, which elude our search for a consistent message or a specific intention. In this context, a reassessment of Tzetzes' strategies of self-presentation makes a particularly meaningful contribution to recent scholarly developments focusing on the flexibility of the Byzantine authorial self. Indeed, the present study has shown that authorial polyphony is an effect that Tzetzes both searched for and skilfully manipulated to different ends throughout his works.

The difficult coexistence of idealised figures such as Cato and Epameinondas with dubious characters like Plato or Simonides perfectly epitomises the equilibristic nature of Tzetzes' professional and social condition, which forced him to find an impossible balance between contrasting ethical models. Just like his predecessors in the eleventh century, Tzetzes needed to reconcile his ideal self-image as an ascetic and autonomous intellectual, embodied by Cato and Epameinondas, with the constraints stemming from his condition as a commissioned writer dependent on both the support and the requests of powerful patrons and friends. By constantly oscillating between the utter liberty of the Roman censor and the moral (and literal) slavery of the greedy Plato, Tzetzes represents the unsolvable contrast between desirable – but unattainable – ideals and the much less noble – but unavoidable – practices of the professional writer.

However, while clearly echoing contemporary socio-cultural practices, Tzetzes' polyphonic voice is also the result of a narrative carefully crafted by its author *and* protagonist. The central role played by figures belonging to the Greek and Roman past points to an ulterior kind of tension traversing Tzetzes' authorial self, which does not only oscillate between conflicting ethical paradigms, but also between story and history,

fact and fiction, playfulness and gravity. As noted in the introduction, the constant intermingling between these different dimensions does not allow the reader to extract a single, univocal message. More interestingly still, in some instances, it is Tzetzes himself who seems to allude to – and play with – the possibility of multiple meanings, challenging the audience to identify the rhetorical and discursive strategies sustaining them. Take, for example, the letter to Basilakes that we analysed at the beginning of this study: how is the reader supposed to interpret the over-emphatic tone characterising Tzetzes' identification with the gift-hater Cato? Is one supposed to take it seriously or does the playful tone of the letter – along with the artful manipulation of its sources – suggest quite the opposite of what is explicitly said? The same interplay between fictional markers and playfulness characterises the letter to Tryphiles, which is the very source of Tzetzes' many *historiai* on his own professional ethos. Once again, the references to ancient Greek figures, dressed in an unmistakably Aristophanic language, alert the audience to the potentially ironic tone of what is being said. Are we really to believe Tzetzes' attempts to set himself apart from mercenary intellectuals such as Plato and Simonides and to pose himself as the incorruptible Cato? Or are his protestations of selflessness yet another strategy to attract the sympathy – and material support – of gold-bestowing patrons?

Such ambiguity is one of the most prominent hallmarks of Tzetzes' authorial voice and is an essential component of the endless game between this author and his readers, both past and present. After all, as Tzetzes himself states in a very self-conscious passage of his *Chiliades*, not only there are many stories about Cato, but the very same story can be told in different ways.[75] If this is true for the inflexible censor, how can it not apply to the Protean Tzetzes, who is both the director and the main character of his own authorial narrative?

75 Tzetz. *Chil.* 10 hist. 347.665-74. On this passage, see also Pizzone 2018, 302-3. For Tzetzes' use of "*amphoteroglōssia*" as a rhetorical tool to "negotiate power" and unmask "the compromises faced by an intellectual struggling for patronage," see Pizzone (forthcoming a).

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LUCAN'S LOST GAULS: THE INTERPOLATION AT *DE BELLO CIVILI* 1.436-40

By Alexander Andrée

Summary: This article discusses five spurious lines at Lucan 1.436-40. Reviewing the early printed tradition of *De bello civili* as well as examining the medieval manuscripts in which the lines are found, the study explores the extant evidence for the lines. In its search for the origin of the lines, the investigation comprises a discussion of the palaeography of the manuscripts, the poetic and contextual interpretation of the lines, and will venture a suggestion as to their date and presumptive author and the location where they were likely composed.

I

Lucan 1.392-465 catalogues the Gallic tribes left behind unguarded when Caesar summons his legions to civil war.[1] Among the twenty tribes mentioned by name and the fifteen or so alluded to by way of geographic periphrases – rivers, mountain ranges, gods, cities, and lakes[2] – are counted the Bituriges, the Suessones, the Averni, the Remi and others inhabiting central and northern France or Belgium. After 1.435, *Gens habitat cana pendentes rupe Cebennas*, follow five spurious lines that are normally excised by modern editors of Lucan:

1 Williams 1978: 222, calls this "a catalogue in reverse" by comparison with previous epic examples, the model being, of course, the catalogue of ships in *Iliad* 2. Whereas the purpose of previous catalogues, including the two in Virgil's *Aeneid*, was to present the forces that were to take part in the action, Lucan's catalogue instead lists the tribes that will be left behind when Caesar leaves Gaul to invade Italy.

2 See Roche 2009: 278.

Alexander Andrée 'Lucan's Lost Gauls: The Interpolation at *De bello civili* 1.436-40' *C&M* 70 (2022) 99-124.

436 Pictones immunes subigunt sua rura; nec ultra
437 instabiles Turones circumsita castra coercent.
438 In nebulis, Meduana, tuis marcere perosus
439 Andus iam placida Ligeris recreatur ab unda.
440 Inclita Caesareis Genabos dissoluitur alis.[3]

Housman,[4] Getty, Wuilleumier and Le Bonniec, Shackleton-Bailey, Luck, Gagliardi, and, most recently, Roche[5] all either remove 1.436-40 from their texts or print them in brackets.[6] Although they seem to continue the theme of Lucan's Gallic tribes, these lines have very little support in the manuscripts: of the around 400 surviving copies of *De bello civili*, only three preserve the first four of these lines; for 440 there seems to be no manuscript support whatsoever. If the consensus that the lines are spurious is so strong among editors, how did they find their way into the convential numbering system, and what is their origin? Let us try to find out.

The lines first appear in print in 1524, when Mariangelo Accorso or Accursius (1489-1546) cited them in a note on Ausonius' *Mosella*, claiming to have found the lines in a *codex peruetustus* that inserted them after 1.435.[7] The lines as quoted by Accursius, however, differ from how they

3 "The free (or idle or tax-exempt) men of Poitou cultivate their fields, and no longer do the neighbouring camps surround the fickle men of Touraine.
Loathing to be languid in your mists, Mayenne,
The man of Anjou is now refreshed by the calm waters of the Loire.
Glorious Orléanais is released from Caesar's troops." All translations in this article are my own.

4 Although claiming to reprint Housman's edition (p. vii), which does not include lines 436-40, Duff 1928: 34-35 adds them in brackets in his Loeb edition, but without translating them.

5 Roche 2009: 293, on lines 436-40: "These lines are not found in Ω and are rejected by all modern editors as an interpolation; 436-9 were apparently inserted at some point before 1115; 440 appears for the first time in 1521."

6 They are defended, unsuccessfully, by Mendell 1942: 3-22 (at 14-15). I am grateful to Christopher M. Berard, Providence College, Rhode Island, who in a time of library closures helped me obtain a copy of this article.

7 Accursius 1524: in Ausonii *Mos.* 468 (n.p.). A bibliographic mishap has meant that scholars have quoted Accursius' work as if it were printed in 1521 (Lejay 1894: CI, repeated most recently by Roche 2009: 293; see note 5 above). The origin of the error

are conventionally printed: instead of *Pictones immunes subigunt* Accursius has *Pictonis immunis subigit*; he inverses lines 437 and 438; he prints *Tricoros* instead of *Turonos*, *Medualle* in place of *Meduana*, *Adus* instead of *Andus*, and *Menabos* for *Genabos*. Although he was aware of the grammatical and hermeneutical inconsistencies of the lines as he read them in his manuscript, Accursius left it to his readers to perform the necessary emendations.[8]

It appears that it was Turnebus (1512-1565) who first rearranged the lines in the way we saw them printed above (although he replaced 438 *nebulis* with *ripis*). According to a note in his *Aduersaria*, the French philologist saw them "in Belgica editione," but since he was only able to find the lines in a single manuscript (and one which had just the first four lines), he drew the conclusion that they were spurious.[9] The Belgian edition is mentioned in the context of another occurrence of the lines, hitherto unnoticed. At the foot of fol. 4v of the manuscript Berne, Burgerbibliothek, 45, a ninth-century copy of Lucan from Fleury, the five lines have been added in an early-modern hand, perhaps that of Pierre Daniel (1530–1603) or Jacques Bongars (1554-1612), the earlier owners of the manuscript, and connected with a line to their position after 435. The annotator claims to have found the lines "in Belgica editione" but regards them to be "valde suspecti"; however, the lines do not occur here as they are printed in the Belgian edition, as we shall see below, but according to the emended version as proposed by Turnebus, to whose *Aduersaria* the annotator refers with book and chapter.

is to be found in the fact that Accursius dates his apology for the work, entitled "Testudo," where he defends himself against charges of plagiarism, printed at the end of the volume, to November 1521, whereas the date of printing, found only a few lines below the date of the preface, is April 1524 (n.p.).

8 Accursius 1524: In Ausonii *Mos.* 468 (n.p.): "Hos autem, non aliter omnino referentes quam in codice ipso haberentur, et quod hic corrigendi locus non erat, legentium coniecturis discutiendos linquimus."

9 Turnebus 1599: col. 729: "Libr. i. Lucani quinque versus additi sunt in Belgica editione: quorum quatuor in vno duntaxat exemplari reperi, vt eo nomine mihi pene pro spuriis suspecti sint. confido autem me eos & melius ordinaturum, & fidelius exhibiturum ..."

The Belgian edition to which both Turnebus and the anonymous annotator in Berne, Burgerbibliothek, 45 refer ought to be Theodor Poelmann's 1576 Antwerp printing.[10] This contains the lines, numbered 436-40, printed almost exactly as Accursius did.[11] And indeed, a note to line 436 reveals that Poelmann read the lines in Accursius's *Diatribae*. In the same note, Poelmann also cites the lines from Willem Canter's *Nouae lectiones*, book III, printed at Antwerp in 1571. In this work,[12] the first four lines (436-39) occur in a discussion of other spurious or added lines in Lucan. In the note Canter quotes the lines with 436 *Pictonus* etc. in the singular, 437 and 438 in the order proposed by Turnebus, as well as displaying the forms *Turonos*, *Meditana*, and *Andus*. Canter does not mention a fifth line; his source must therefore have been different from that of Accursius. Gregor Bersmann, furthermore, in his Leipzig edition of 1589, prints the lines in the text (unnumbered) exactly as Poelmann; in a marginal comment, he also notes the readings of Canter.[13]

The lines are also mentioned by Étienne Clavier in his 1602 edition of Claudian's *opera*.[14] Commenting on 32 *Pictorum* in the latter's panegyric of Emperor Honorius' fourth consulate, Clavier claims for reasons unknown that the first four verses (he was apparently unaware of 440) were inserted into Lucan's text by Jacques Cujas (1522-90). Since Cujas did not edit Lucan or comment on him directly, this assertion is difficult to substantiate, short of combing through his massive oeuvre of legal commentary. Hugo Grotius, however, in his three editions of Lucan,[15] prints all five lines, without numbering, with 437 and 438 in the order as corrected by Turnebus, alongside the forms *Turonas*, *Meduana*, *Andus*, and *Genabos*. In the notes following after the text, Grotius describes the lines as additions, since not all manuscripts carry them.[16]

10 Poelmann 1576: 28. The lines are not found in the first Belgian edition of Lucan, the 1475-76 Louvain printing by Johann Veldener.

11 The difference is that Poelmann prints 436 *Pictones immunes subigunt*, and 437 *coercet* (for *coercent*).

12 Canter 1571: 155.

13 Bersmann 1589: 35.

14 Clavier 1602: 147.

15 Grotius 1614; 1626; 1651.

16 I have read the notes in the 1651 edition, where they are found at 339-40.

Oudendorp seems to be the first editor to set off the lines typographically: in his 1728 edition he both brackets and italicizes them, and adds the comment that he found them neither Latin nor poetic ("neque latini, nec poëtici sunt"). He also expressed the sentiment, before launching into his own rather detailed commentary, that they were worthy neither of being emended nor explained ("addo, nec dignos, ut emendentur, aut explicentur"). Furthermore, the manuscript in which Oudendorp saw them, which had belonged to the mayor Hulst de la Haye, displayed the verses after 443 and, apparently, copied as part of the continuous text.[17] Oudendorp set the tone for future editors: henceforth, the lines are excluded from editions of Lucan's epic.

So far the printed tradition. Accursius claims to have seen the lines in a *codex peruetustus*, and Grotius, Oudendorp, and other critics mention that they have seen the lines in manuscripts. What, then, is the extant manuscript evidence for the spurious lines?

II

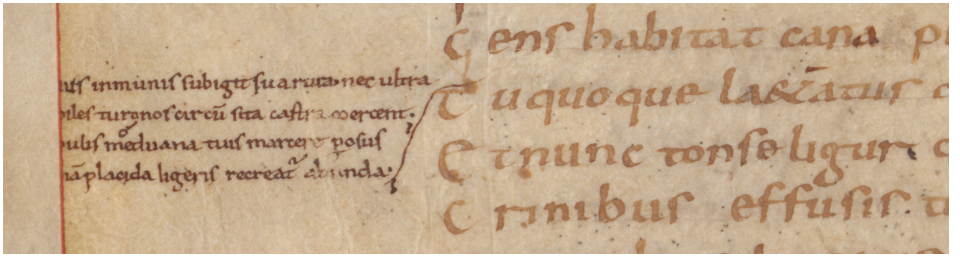
Whereas 440 is nowhere to be found outside the printed tradition, lines 436-39 are preserved by three manuscripts of Lucan's *De bello civili*:[18]

The first is *M* (Montpellier, Bibliothèque Universitaire Historique de Médecine, H113), a manuscript from the second quarter of the ninth century, whose script "erinnert an Orléans-typ"; this belonged at one time

17 This manuscript is no longer extant. Oudendorp 1728: 61 followed Grotius in reading *Turonas*: "from the MS which Canterus used, in which *Turonos* (although I know that *Turonios* is read in Tacitus. But Caesar always uses *Turones*, whom I believe Lucan followed)." And he also reports the variants of other editions: "Grotius, Canterus, Ciacconus, Hulst have *Turonos*; Pulm. & Bersm. have *Tricoros*."

18 I use the sigla of Lejay 1894: LXXXIV, mindful that Gotoff 1971 uses *R* not of Paris, BnF, lat. 8040, but of Montpellier, Bibliothèque Universitaire Historique de Médecine, H362. No other of the seventy-something manuscripts from French, Italian, English, Swiss, and German libraries that I have collated for this study contains the four (or five) spurious lines.

to the abbey of Saint-Martin, Autun.[19] Used by all modern editors of Lucan, *M* is Hosius' "codex optimus," but Housman's "king of shreds and patches [...], the manuscript which we could best dispense with."[20] Our spurious lines were added by a French seemingly twelfth-century hand mid-page in the left margin of fol. 7v,[21] where cropping of the page has resulted in the loss of the first five or six letters of each line. Their position after 435 *Cebennas* (spelled *gebennas* in the manuscript) and before 441 *Tu quoque* is indicated by an oblique line:[22]



Bibliothèque universitaire historique de médecine, Université de Montpellier, Montpellier. H113, fol. 7v (detail). Photo credits: BIU de Montpellier. Service photographique Montpellier.

The next is *R* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 8040), an eleventh-century manuscript (either early or late, the dating varies),[23] which belonged to the abbey of St Benedict at Fleury-sur-Loire,[24] a gift of a certain Girard, according to an 'ex-libris', written in a hand contemporary with the main text, running across the opening of fol. 7v-8r and down part of the right-hand column of fol. 8r: "Hunc librum contulit Girardus monachus Patri Benedicto. Quem si quis tulerit anathema sit."

19 The placing and dating are Bischoff's in Bischoff & Ebersperger 1998-2014: vol. 2, 200, no. 2828. See also Munk Olsen 1982-85: 48; and Gotoff 1971: 14.

20 See Hosius 1913: xlvii; Housman 1927: xiii.

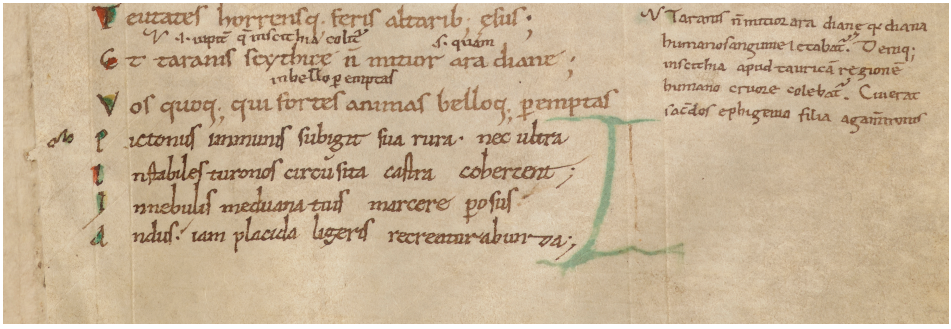
21 Unless otherwise stated, the dating of scribal hands in this article is my own.

22 The tie-mark visible in the image over *meduana* is not picked up anywhere on the page.

23 Châtelain 1894-1900: vol. 2, 19, specifying the date to *s.* XI^{in}; Munk Olsen 1982-85: 55-56, gives instead *s.* XI^{2}.

24 The volume is found in the 1552 booklist of Fleury. It is BF1143 in Mostert 1989: 223. On the manuscripts of the Classics from Fleury, see Pellegrin 1986. Manuscript *R* is mentioned on p. 164.

The same inscription is repeated in the same way at fol. 113v-14r. Our lines were added by a French late eleventh- or early twelfth-century hand at fol. 8r, immediately below the text, with a tie-mark indicating their position after 435 *Cebennas* (spelled *gebennas* in the manuscript). Châtelain seems to suggest that if Girardus, the donor of the manuscript, is identified with a certain Giraldus,[25] "auteur de divers poèmes," he may be the author of our spurious lines; outside of the *Histoire littéraire*, however, this Giraldus is unknown.[26] *R* is normally not used by editors of Lucan.



Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 8040, fol. 8r (detail).

The third and last manuscript is *T* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 8039) written, according to Bischoff, either late in the ninth or early in the tenth century, perhaps at Fleury.[27] The hands that copied the manuscript, which also includes Boethius' *Consolatio*,[28] are indeed

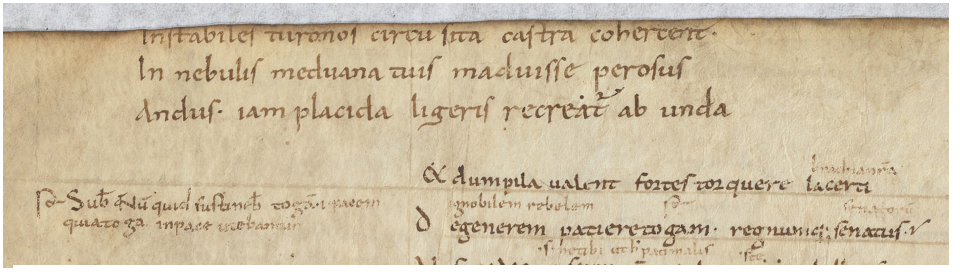
25 He is mentioned as the late tenth-century author of a poem on the exploits of Vautier or Walther, King of Aquitaine, by the *Histoire littéraire de la France* 1733: 438.

26 Châtelain 1894-1900: vol. 2, 19.

27 Bischoff & Ebersperger 1998-2014: vol. 3, 137, no. 4519. In his handwritten notes on this manuscripts, now published digitally by the Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Bischoff conjectured its origin as "vielleicht Fleury": http://www.mgh-bibliothek.de/cgi-bin/digilib.pl?ident=h001460_37&dir=h&tit=&img=28 (accessed 5 August 2020); see also Munk Olsen 1982-85: 55.

28 According to a note in a later medieval hand on fol. 77v, the volume once contained also Juvenal and Prudentius; its early modern owners include J.-A. de Thou and Colbert; Lejay 1894: LXXXIV.

French, but resist further and stricter classification.[29] Fabio Troncarelli suggests to me that the manuscript may have been housed at Saint-Evroult,[30] an abbey situated on the border of Normandy which had another copy of Boethius at the end of the ninth century, whose initials are similar to the ones in *T*.[31] What appears to be an ownership mark in the margin of fol. 61v, now almost entirely covered in ink, presumably by the manuscript's new owners, may provide further confirmation of this provenance. The text is written in two columns and surrounded and interweaved, for the first four and a half folios, by a plethora of glosses, which then begin to dwindle; they return at fol. 41r and continue to the end of the work at 49v. The last gathering is damaged (by fire?). Our additional lines were added in the upper margin of fol. 3v in a large, clear French tenth- or early-eleventh-century hand, not much different in age from that of the text hand, but in a higher grade script than the text itself. The cropping of the page has resulted in the loss of line 436. No visible indication in *T* signals the placing of the lines relative to the text (thus, unless it was explicitly stated in connection with the cropped-off line 436, the position of the lines could not have been gleaned by anyone who copied them from *T*).



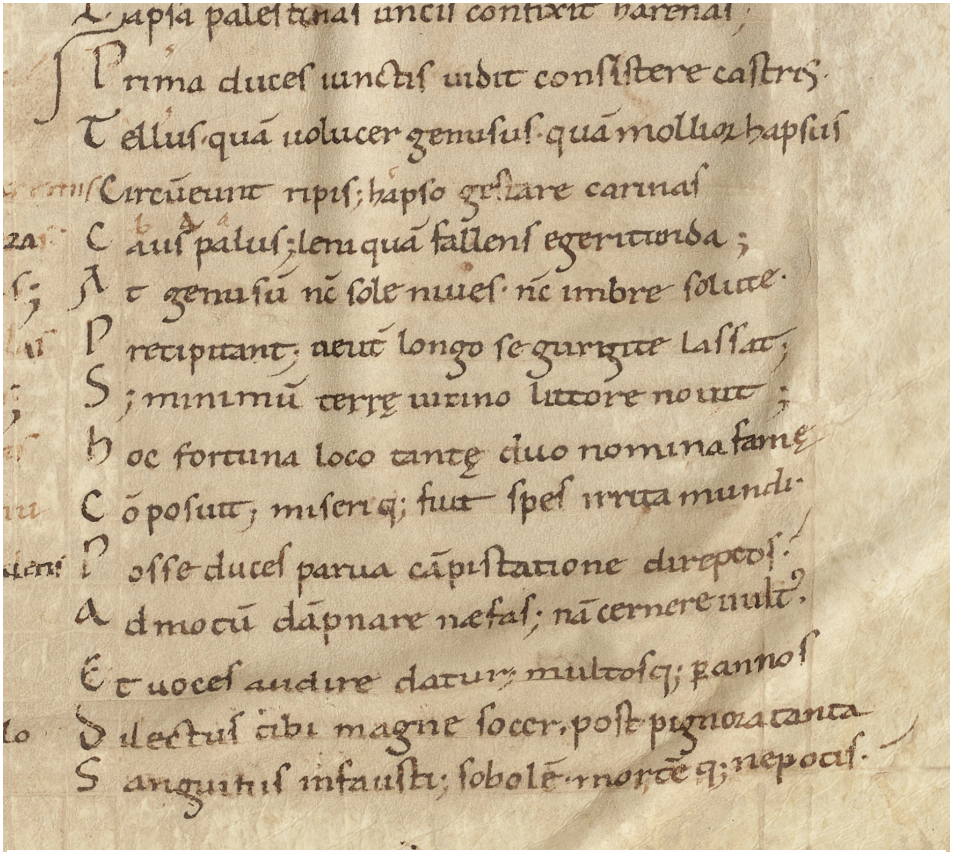
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 8039, fol. 3v (detail).

29 I am grateful to Prof. David Ganz, who helped me reach this conclusion, and who pointed me to Bischoff's digitized notes.

30 Private communication, 4 August 2020. See also Troncarelli 1987: 176, no. 32.

31 Alençon, Bibliothèque municipale, 12. I am grateful to Prof. Troncarelli for sharing this information with me.

In fact, the large, round, elegant tenth- or early-eleventh-century hand of French pedigree that wrote the added lines on fol. 3v, with tapering descenders and feet devoid of serifs, is similar but not identical to a hand that relieves the main hand and writes part of the text on fol. 22r.



Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 8039, fol. 22r (detail).

III

Based on the evidence of *M* and *R*, therefore, the position of the lines after 435 seems clear. However, aside from the obvious omission of 440, which is found in no medieval manuscript, the text as transmitted by

these three manuscripts display significant differences from how they are conventionally printed.

First, the first three words of 436 are not in fact written *Pictones immunes subigunt*, but are found instead in the singular: *pictonus immunis subigit* (*M* and *R*; the line, as we saw, is missing in *T*).[32] Oudendorp gives as a reason for the change: "Numquam enim haec gens *Pictoni*, sed *Pictones* vocantur."[33] To be sure, Caesar uses the form *Pictones* (Gall. 7.4.6), as does Pliny the Elder (nat. 4.108 and 17.47) to describe the men of Poitou, otherwise referred to as *Pictaui*. Although it is used by Caesar and Pliny, however, the 'emended' reading *Pictones* is never used, to my knowledge, in Latin epic poetry, probably for the reason that the *o* is short (while the ending *-es* is long, thus yielding a cretic, impossible in hexameter). *Pictonus*, by contrast, may be scanned as a dactyl. Given that the words qualifying *Pictonus* (*immunis* and *subigit*) are both in the singular, the emendation to the plural is, to my mind, smacking of *prurigo coniciendi*: is it not more likely that *Pictonus* is a hapax than that all three words are wrong? I think the poet must be allowed some licence and wordplay in line with the other singular subject in these lines (439 *Andus*).

Usually, editors print the form *Turones* at 437; this is not, however, the reading of the three manuscripts, which all have *Turonos*. Grotius, Oudendorp (and others) were aware of the manuscript reading but emended it to *Turonas*, claiming to follow Caesar, whom they mistakenly thought used *Turones* ("sed *Turones* semper Caesar").[34] Caesar in fact writes *Turonos* in the accusative plural (Gall. 7.4.6). *Turoni* is used by Tacitus in the nominative plural (ann. 3.41);[35] but Pliny the Elder writes *Turones* (nat.

32 As we saw above, Accursius, and therefore probably also the manuscript he was using, presented a variant of the singular reading (oddly substituting *Pictonis* for *Pictonus*).

33 Oudendorp 1728: 61.

34 Oudendorp 1728: 62; Grotius 1651: 339.

35 The form *Turoni* is also used by the anonymous author of the *Vita metrica sancti Martini*, v. 145-49 (Huygens 2000: 766-90), employing also some of the other forms in the lines here under scrutiny: "Sed dum omnes obdormiunt / **Turoni** corpus rapiunt, / per fenestram eiciunt / et aforis suscipiunt. Baiulant suum gaudium, / voces sonant letancium, / evectione navium / intrant **Ligeris** fluvium. Expergefacti grandibus / **Pictavenses** sonoribus / delusos se fallacibus / dolent esse soporibus. / Hinc redeunt

4.107). From the context, it is apparent that our text requires *Turonos* as the accusative object of *coercent*, of which Caesar's camps is the subject. Thus, the common reading of the manuscripts ought to be correct.

Line 438 *Meduana* has been a source of some contention among critics. Thus, some editors print *Meditana* (Canter for example), others *Medualle* (Poelmann and Bersmann, presumably following Accursius); *Meduana*, however, is the Latin name for the river Mayenne, a branch of the Loire, as is attested by among others Gregory of Tours,[36] Theodulf of Orléans,[37] and other authors. It is thus from an early date a well-attested name for the Mayenne.

Anjou is the place (city or region) meant by *Andus* in 439. Since Caesar uses the form *Andes* to refer to the people of Angers or Anjou ('les Andécaves'), Grotius wanted instead to read *Andis*, but *Andus* is, again, a well-attested form, used by twelfth-century poets and prose-writers,

ad propria / confusi cum mesticia, / **Turoni** cum leticia / sua revisunt menia. In occursum pontificis / vaditur a **Turonicis** / tam clericis quam laicis / cum vocibus hymnidicis." This 'Vita' is from Saint Martin of Pontoise (France, Val-d'Oise). The name of the author used to be in the last quatrain, but it was erased. According to Huygens, it may be supposed that his name was Guido.

36 Krusch & Levison 1951: 493, lines 13-15: "Exercitus vero ipsius, qui prius transierat, metuens per viam illam qua venerat regredi, ne forte mala quae fecerat pateretur, ad Andigavam urbem dirigit, **Meduanae** torrentis expetens pontem."

37 In at least two poems, one of which has the title *De fluuio qui siccatus est*, referring not directly to the Mayenne, but to the Sarthe, which joins the Mayenne just north of Angers; the first is found in PL 105: 309B-D: "Quos habet Andegavis venerabilis ambitus urbis, / Qui pia devota carmina mente canunt. / Quam **Meduana** morans fovet, et Liger aureus ornat, / Qua rate cum laevi Sarta decora juvat. [...] / Plebsque salutiferae procurrit ab aede Mariae, / Huc quam transmittit pons **Meduana** tuus." The second is at PL 105: 340D-41A: "Est fluvius, Sartam Galli dixere priores, / Perticus hunc gignit, et **Meduana** bibit / Fluctibus ille suis penetrans Cenomanica rura, / Moenia qui propter illius urbis abit."

such as Baudri of Bourgeuil (d. 1130),[38] and Hugh of Fleury (dead not before 1118),[39] who was quoted by Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1141),[40] and also by earlier writers, notably by Aimoin, a monk of Fleury (c. 960-c. 1010), in a chapter of his *Historiae Francorum libri IV* entitled "De Gallia secundum Caesarem."[41]

Finally, of the three manuscripts preserving the four lines, *T* alone offers a variant to 438 *marcere*: it reads *maduisse*. This fits the metre, turning the spondee of the fourth foot and the dactyl of the fifth into two dactyls.[42] And indeed, *maduisse* is a word with epic precedent: Ovid and Statius use it (*met.* 10.45 and *Theb.* 9.631 respectively), and also Avitus (*Poe-*

38 In a poem on a certain Frodo Andegavensis, who died in England, which ends with the couplet (PL 166: 1190B-C): "Indigetis corpus jubet Anglis flebilis **Andus** / Lectores jubeant coelicolis animam," and in another poem, on the passing of a Gerard Laudunis, which begins (PL 166: 1198D-99A): "Tantum Gerardus laudes dum laudibus auxit, / Quod dignum magnis laudibus **Andus** habet."

39 Waitz 1851: 357, lines 9-13: "Urbes in ea multae et opulentae: Lugdunum, Cabillonis, Edua quae et Augustudunus, Senonis, Autissiodorus, Nivedunus quae et Nevernis, Meldis, Trecas, Parisius, Carnotum, Gennabus quae et Aurelianis, Rothomagus, Ebroas; Oximus id est Sagensis, Cinomannis, Luxovium, Nannetis, **Andus** quae et Andegavis, Abrincatina, Redonis, Venetus. Quarum Augustudunus et Senonis majoris auctoritatis antiquitus fuere."

40 Dalche 1988: 158, line 695: "Vrbes in ea multe et opulente Lugdunus, Cabilonis, Edua que et Augustudunus, Senonis, Authisiodorus, Niuedunus que et Niuernis, Meldis, Trecas, Parisius, Karnotum, Gennabus que et Aurelianis, Rothomagus, Ebroas, Oximus id est Sagiensis, Cenomannis, Luxouium, Namnetis, **Andus** que et Andegauis, Abricatina, Redonis, Venetus, quarum Augustudunus et Senonis maioris antiquitus auctoritatis fuere."

41 Speaking of the rich cities of Gaul, Aimoin says (PL 139: 633A-B): "Sed ex his praecipuae sunt nostroque aevo plus cognitae: Lugdunum, Cabillonis, Hedua quae et Augustodunus, Senonis, Autissiodorus, Meldis, Trecas, Parisius, Carnotum, Gennabus, ubi nunc Aurelianis, Rothomagus, Ebroas, Oximus, Cenomannis, Lexovium, Namnetis, Rhedonis, Venetus, Abrincatina, **Andus** quae et Andegavis, Turonis, Bituriges, Niviodunus, quam quidam Nivernis esse putant." Throughout the work, Aimoin also makes frequent references to the *Liger*.

42 The metrical scheme for the first four feet of the four (five) lines is: DSDD, DDSD, DDDS (or DDDD if *maduisse* is read in place of *marcere*), SDDD, and DDDS – Oudendorp's disparaging assessment of the lines reported above is thus, at least with reference to their metrical value, exaggerated.

matum de Mosaicae historiae gestis 5.244); and it is a favourite word of Prudentius who, *inter alia*, uses it in the exact same position as our poet as a bridge between the fourth and fifth foot: *Sic Lacedaemonias oleo maduisse palaestras* (mam. 365); *Sanguine iustorum innocuo maduisse recordans* (c.Symm. 1.516). Because of these precedents, I wonder if *maduisse* should not be preferred to *marcere*, both because it is the *lectio* (*paene*) *difficilior*, and that it has epic precedent, but, most importantly, because it changes the rather awkward sense of *marcere perosus*, "loathing to be weak, languid or lazy," into "loathing to be wet" or even "loathing to be intoxicated." This seems to be a more fitting description of the effect of living near a river and its foggy banks. Our man of Anjou or Angers, tired of being wet or drunk (or weak) in the mists of the Mayenne, now that Caesar has withdrawn his legions, is refreshed by the calm waters of the Loire. Apparently Caesar's troops forced him to stay north of the Loire, whose waters are fresh and clear, along the muddy banks of misty Mayenne. There is some precedent to this interpretation. Pliny the Elder (nat. 4.107) refers to the Loire as *flumen clarum*. Because of its allegedly rapid flow, Gregory of Tours calls the Mayenne *torrens* (Franc. 10.9). Theodulf of Orléans, by contrast, in a Palm Sunday poem, calls it *morans*; the Loire, on the other hand, is "golden": *Quam Meduana morans fovet, et Liger aureus ornat*, / *Qua rate cum laevi Sarta decora juvat* (PL 105: 309B). Finally, Marbod of Rennes, *Vita beati Maurilii*, 2.259-60, perhaps harkening back to an old tradition, describes the flow of the Mayenne as "threatening" and prone to billows, thunder, and uproar: *Bella ciet paci motu Meduana minaci*. / *Consurgunt fluctus, oritur fragor, atque tumultus* (PL 171: 1647B).

Although the evidence displayed by these sources is at times conflicting, the consensus opinion seems to be that the Mayenne carries with it negative connotations, whereas those of the Loire are positive.[43] Thus, on the whole, they chime well with the sentiment expressed in our lines. A critically updated version of the lines (not counting 440), taking full account of the manuscript evidence presented above, will read:

43 The much-later poems of Joachim du Bellay (1522-60) seem to echo a similar sentiment (where I suppose *Meuana* is synonymous with *Meduana*), e.g. the poem "Votum rusticum" 1, 1: "Quà Ligeris laeta arua secat, iunctús que Meuanae / Pampineos inter colles, syluás que uirentes, / Leniter effusus, placidis pulcherrimus undis, / In mare caeruleum flauentes uoluit arenas." du Bellay 1919: 450.

> Pictonus immunis subigit sua rura, nec ultra
> instabiles Turonos circumsita castra coercent.
> In nebulis, Meduana, tuis maduisse perosus
> Andus iam placida Ligeris recreatur ab unda.

Even if this version is truer to the manuscript evidence, and even if it offers a reasonable interpretation of the lines, the question remains: who wrote these lines, thinking that they would be a suitable addition to Lucan's catalogue of Gallic tribes?

IV

Questioning the authenticity of the lines, early modern editors have also wondered about their origin. Guyet reported the rumour that the lines, at least the first four, were written by Marbod of Rennes (d. 1123),[44] the well-known bishop and Loire poet. Although this tradition has never been substantiated, critics have posited that the origin of the lines lies in the twelfth century, and that their author was a local patriot of the Loire region.[45] Thus Getty quoted R.W. Hunt as believing that "the interpolator is probably to be looked for in a school rather in a monastery, that he flourished [...] in the valley of the Loire, and that his name might be revealed some day by a study of commentators on Lucan like Anselm (of

44 Oudendorp prints Guyet's (François Guyet [Gujetus], French philologist and Latin poet, 1575-1655) notes, which he found written in the margin of Guyet's copy of Grotius' edition of Lucan, in appendix after his edition (Oudendorp 1728: 886-910). Guyet's note on 436 *Pictones* reads (887): "In quibusdam libris legitur: *Pictonus inmunis subigit*. Nota varietatem lectionis. Hi quinque versus absunt a Vett. Codd. teste H. Grot. & aliis. Horum authorem esse Marbodum Rhedonensem Episcopum ex monacho *san*. Sergiensi tradunt ante annos quingentos." See Lejay 1894: 60. The rumour was repeated by, inter alios, Barth, as reported by Weber 1828: 120: "Marbodum Andinum, Rhedonensem Episcopum, fama est, ut patriae gratificaretur, hos de Meduana et Ligeri versus Lucano inseruisse."

45 So for example Lejay 1894: c; Wuilleumier and Le Bonniec 1962: 81.

Laon?) or Arnulf of Orléans who lived during the twelfth century."[46] Indeed, Arnulf, otherwise known for his exegesis of Ovid, wrote a comprehensive commentary on Lucan, the *Glosulae super Lucanum*,[47] and although no such commentary has been preserved in Anselm's name, the notes on Lucan (alongside those on Vergil and Statius) in the manuscript Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, lat. fol. 34, have been associated with his school.[48] Neither of these scholars, however, seem to have been acquainted with the additional lines: Arnulf does not comment on them in his *Glosulae*,[49] and the commentary associated with Anselm also lacks mention of the lines.[50]

Furthermore, these proposed attributions do not take into account the tenth- or early eleventh century date of the added lines in *T*, which provides a *terminus ante quem* for their composition. This *terminus* would also rule out Marbod's authorship of the verses; he was indeed a Loire poet, but his active years fell in the late eleventh- and early twelfth-century (he died in 1123). The tradition of attributing the verses to Marbod must have arisen from convenience. There is nothing that connects him to these lines other than his use of the words *Liger* and *Meduana*, in common with dozens of other poets. Guyet, or whoever it was who first made the claim, most likely suggested Marbod as the author of the lines without having seen *T* or without being able correctly to date the hand.

Châtelain's suggestion that it was Giraldus, the otherwise unknown donor of *R* to the library of Fleury, is impossible to substantiate: there are no surviving works by this man with which to compare the lines. It should also be pointed out that the ex-libris inscription bearing Giraldus's name is written in an entirely different hand than the one that added the spurious lines in *R*. In fact, the hand of 'Giraldus monachus' looks rather more like the scribe who wrote the main text in a French

46 Getty 1940: 135.

47 Marti 1958: 58.

48 See de Angelis 1997: 75-136.

49 Marti 1958: 58.

50 Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, lat. fol. 34, fol. 3v, where the commentary jumps from commenting on 435 *Gebennas* (written *Gehennae* in the manuscript) to 441 *tu … treuir*.

eleventh-century hand.[51] In contrast, the addition of lines 436-39 is executed in a hand of the early to mid-twelfth century, spiky and with a crammed ductus. If Giraldus were the author of the lines, would it not be reasonable to assume that he wrote them in the same hand as he added the ex-libris? The least one would expect is that the two scripts dated to the same century.

Consequently, it would be prudent to look beyond the suggestions of earlier scholarship to find the author of our added lines. Beginning by reviewing the evidence for where the lines could have originated, let us try to establish the *ubi* of our investigation.

First, collation of Lucan's text surrounding the additional lines in our three manuscripts (1.392-465) indicates that they are textually closely associated. It should be said at this juncture that Lucan presents one of the most complex textual traditions of the Latin classics, and no critic has been able to successfully bring order into the chaos offered by the manuscripts from the earliest stage in the tradition.[52] Whereas *M* is a staple ingredient in any critical edition of Lucan, the last editor to call on the authority of *R* and *T* was Lejay,[53] who assigns them to a different branch of the tradition than *M*.[54] A recollation of the larger passage in the midst of which the verses are found confirms the strong association between *R* and *T*,[55] but also puts Lejay's strict division into some doubt; indeed, it seems that *M*, at least for this passage, shares some readings with both *R* and *T*,[56] and was, at an early stage, corrected against a manuscript with readings similar to those furnished by *R* and *T*.[57] The three manuscripts are thus textually closely related.

51 Based on palaeographical features, Omont believed that the volume was written in Southern France, "le Midi". See Lejay 1894: LXXXIV.

52 Gotoff 1971 is a start.

53 Neither of these manuscripts was used by Housman or Shackleton Bailey.

54 Lejay 1894: LXXXIX.

55 398 Lingonas] lingones *RT*; 416 ducat] tollat *RT*; 423 Suessones] sessones *RT*; 329 foedere] sanguine *RT*; 433 raptum] raptim *RT*; 453 datum] datum est *RT*

56 397 Vosegi] uogesi *RTM*; 463 Belgis] bellis *RTM*

57 419 late] lates $RTM^{p.c.}$; tum] tunc $RTM^{p.c.}$; 420 Atyri] satyri $RTM^{p.c.}$; 435 cana pendentes] canas pendenti $RTM^{a.c.}$

Second, the three manuscripts belong to the same geographic region. As was seen above, *M* was written in a script typical of ninth-century Orléans. Even if it is not known that *R* was written at Fleury, from an early date it belonged to that abbey. *T* is also French and may actually have been written at Fleury. If this is correct, all three manuscripts converge on a very specific area of north-western France, the region around Orléans on the Loire, Fleury being less than 35km upstream from Orléans. The additional lines are all about tribes, rivers, and towns in that region, the Loire valley. The source of the additional lines is likely to be found in the same area.

As to the date at which the lines were composed, the *quando*, it was seen above that *T* offers a *terminus ante quem*: the date of the lines cannot be more recent than the date of the hand that wrote them in *T*, that is the tenth- or possibly the early eleventh century. They could, of course, have been composed earlier – as early as Lucan's own time – and not entered into an extant manuscript until the tenth century. But this we can never know. Let us therefore continue to examine the *quid* – the contents of the lines and their possible source.

Lucan's main source for his catalogue of Gallic tribes was Caesar's *De bello Gallico*: seventeen of the twenty tribes mentioned by name are found in this work.[58] Although names of Gallic tribes are scattered among all seven of Caesar's books of *De bello Gallico*, at one point in book VII Caesar furnishes a list of eight tribes that he joins to himself in the fight against Vercingetorix (*Gall.* 7.4.6): "celeriter sibi Senones, Parisios, Pictones, Cadurcos, Turonos, Aulercos, Lemovices, Andes reliquosque omnes, qui Oceanum attingunt, adiungit."[59] Interestingly, the three tribes specifically mentioned in our four spurious lines – the *Pictones*, the *Turoni*, and the *Andes* – occur in the exact same order in Caesar's narrative (with other tribes interspersed, of course). Since, furthermore, as was pointed out above, *Turonos* is the form preferred by Caesar (and not *Turones*), and since *Turonos* is the form found in the manuscripts, it is likely that the composer of the verses had access to this form through Caesar. These

58 Roche 2009: 279.

59 *Andes* and *Turonos* are also found together also in *Gall.* 2.35: "Carnutes, Andes, Turonos, quaeque civitates propinquae his locis erant, ubi bellum gesserat, legionibus in hiberna deductis in Italiam profectus est."

two features could hardly be coincidental: our mysterious author was surely acquainted with Caesar's text.

Is there a poet with a connection to the abbey of Fleury in the tenth century, who knew Caesar?

V

There was no shortage, as a matter of fact, of Latin poets at Fleury: Abbo (d. 1004) and Haimo (d. 1118) are the two most famous. Whereas Haimo's dates are too late for our poet, Abbo's would fit; but, judging by his writings, Abbo does not seem to have had a particular predilection for Caesar.[60] A much likelier candidate is Aimoin of Fleury, whom we have already encountered. Aimoin, who died in around 1010, not only wrote a history of the Frankish people,[61] but included in it a chapter entitled "De Gallia secundum Caesarem," in which the form *Andus*, central to the spurious lines, is used.[62] Dedicating his work to his abbot Abbo, he prefaces it with the following words:

> Admonitionis itaque tuae non immemor, qua saepissime hortatus es ut situm Germaniae vel Galliae, in quibus haec quae referentur acta sunt, non praetermitterem, ea quae in auctoribus **Julio, Plinio ac Orosio** invenire potui colligens, huic opusculo inserendo voluntati sublimitatis tuae satisfacere commodum duxi. His igitur adjunxi quae **Julius** de Germanorum Gallorumque moribus ac institutis in libro suae interserit Historiae (PL 139: 627B).

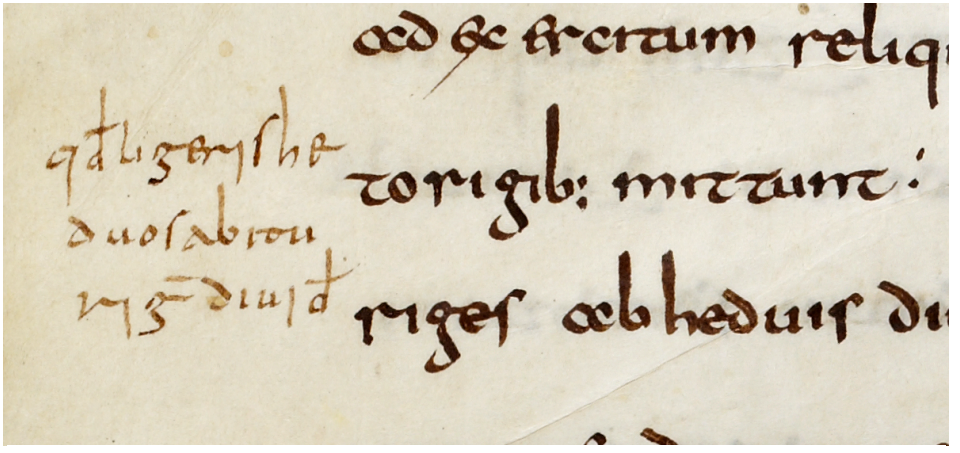
Aimoin thus not only had access to Caesar and was able to read him; he actively used and emulated him. Indeed, the well-stocked library of the abbey of Fleury, one of the most celebrated Benedictine monasteries in

60 See Manitius 1911-31: vol. 2, 664-72. On Abbo's poetry, see Gwara 1992: 203-35.

61 On Aimoin and his work, see Manitius 1911-31: vol. 2, 239-46; Werner 1960: 69-103.

62 See note 40 above.

France, possessed a copy of *De bello Gallico* which, as a matter of fact, contains ample notes in Aimoin's own hand.[63] Unfortunately, comparing Aimoin's notes with the hand in *T* (or *M* and *R* for that matter) does not even yield a potential match: the hands are utterly different.



Aimoin's hand in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 5763, fol. 71v (detail).

Nevertheless, in annotating *De bello Gallico* in Paris, BnF, lat. 5763 Aimoin takes particular interest in the names of the Gallic tribes mentioned by Caesar, especially on fol. 71r and 71v, where the *Turoni* and the *Andus*, amongst others, are mentioned, and he even repeats some of them in the margins. Although this is far from certain proof of the authorship of our spurious lines, it nevertheless provides testimony to Aimoin's interest in Gallic tribes, an interest that perhaps could have led to the composition of four occasional lines added to a copy of Lucan. Clearly, the fact that the lines are not written in Aimoin's hand in any of the surviving manuscripts does not exclude their composition by him. A more substantial objection would be that Aimoin has no reputation as a poet. Nonetheless, he did write poetry, although most of his works are written

63 Paris, BnF, lat. 5763, *s.* IX, from Fleury. It is BF1062 in Mostert 1989: 208; the volume also carries notes in the hand of Heiric of Auxerre; see Werner 1960: 83; Manitius 1911-31: vol. 2, 240. See also Brown 1979: 122-23.

in prose. Aimoin concluded his history of the Franks with a poem, *translatio patris Benedicti*, which, written in dactylic hexameters, confirms his skills in prosody.[64]

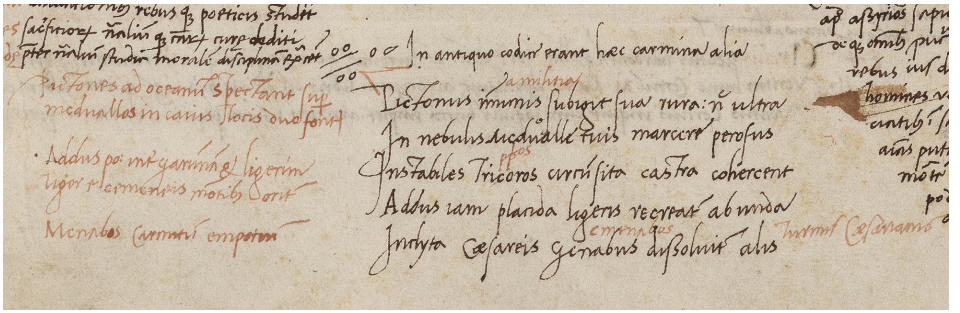
Thus, while, technically speaking, any monk attached to the abbey school could have composed the lines, as an exercise in poetic composition if nothing else, the connection to Caesar tips the scale: Aimoin knew Caesar like no one else at Fleury in the tenth century. This leaves us with, if not a definite answer to the question *quis*, at least a plausible author of the four first spurious lines, who fits all the necessary criteria. It now remains to return to the question of where Accursius found the lines, and where 440 came from.

VI

Given the existence of 440 and the other differences between the text as transmitted by the manuscripts and as it was printed by Accursius, his *codex peruetustus* is not identifiable with any of the three surviving witnesses to 436-39. Indeed, aside from *M*, *R*, and *T*, none of the seventy-something manuscripts collated for this study transmit the additional lines. They do appear, however, in a copy of the *editio princeps* of Lucan kept at the Vatican Library,[65] not as part of the printed text, but added by an annotator. Until the end of Book 5 (fol. 54v), the volume is heavily glossed in a variety of cursive humanist hands, using both black and red ink. On fol. 9v, there is an insertion mark after 1.435 *Gebennas*, which is picked up by a note written in the lower margin in what appears to be a fifteenth-century humanist cursive hand (a different hand from the one that wrote most of the other glosses):

64 The *Translatio* is printed in PL 139:797-802 at the very end of Aimoin's *Historia Francorum*.

65 The edition was prepared by Giovanni Andrea Bussi and printed by Conrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz at Rome in 1469 (ISTC il00292000; GW M18850). The copy is Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Inc. II. 15. On the text of the *editio princeps*, see Díaz Burillo 2019: 257-72.



Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Inc. II. 15, fol. 9v (detail). © 2021 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Transcribing the note yields a familiar text:

> In antiquo codice erant hæc carmina alia
> Pictonus immunis subigit sua rura: nec ultra
> In nebulis Medualle tuis marcere perosus
> Instabiles Tricoros circumsita castra cohercent
> Addus iam placida ligeris recreatur ab unda
> Inclyta Cæsareis Genabus dissoluitur alis.

Indeed, the note proffers the lines in almost exactly the same way as Accursius prints them. All five lines are included, arranged in the same order as Accursius published them (with the inversion of 437 and 438): it has *Medualle* for *Meduana*, *Tricoros* for *Turones*, *Addus* for *Andus*. The only difference is that the note has *Genabus* for Accursius' *Menabus*. This latter form, however, appears as an interlinear gloss written in red ink just above *Genabus*; this could have been Accursius' source, and he could have picked the reading *Menabus* from the gloss.

The hand adding the lines has been identified as Pomponian, that is belonging either to Pomponius Laetus, a student of Lorenzo Valla, who founded an antiquarian and philological academy, the Accademia Romana, at his house on the Quirinal, or to one of his many emulators, the so-called 'Pomponiani'. As far as we know, however, Accursius was

never a member of Pomponius Laetus' first Accademia Romana,[66] but he may very well have been a second-generation follower of Pomponius or otherwise inspired by their movement.

At this juncture, a few options seem possible. Either Accursius wrote the note himself,[67] copying the lines as he had discovered them in a *codex peruetustus* or *antiquus*, the whereabouts of which are still not traceable. Or he could have first found the lines already written in the incunable, and merely repeated the opinion of the scribe that they were found *in codice antiquo*, not having seen them himself but trusting the veracity of the reporter. A third option is that Accursius had nothing at all to do with this gloss, which could have been written by someone who had access to the same or a similar codex in which Accursius saw the lines, and wrote them down in the margin of the incunable.

Whatever the precise origins of this reference, the text in the three manuscripts that preserve the additional lines indicate that the manuscript, if there ever was one, in which Accursius saw the lines, contained a version that had already expanded on the tradition. The absence of 440 from the manuscript tradition, as well as the inversion of lines 437 and 438 make this clear. But without the later emergence of other evidence, this is where the trail runs cold. Whether or not Accursius penned the notes in the Vatican incunable, there is still no trace of his *codex peruetustus*, and the origin of line 440 will remain a mystery. The only thing that can be said for certain is that 440 was never part of the medieval tradition of the spurious lines as they are found transmitted by the Loire manuscripts. Anyone who saw the first four lines in one of the extant French manuscripts (or in a manuscript that has subsequently been lost) could have made up the fifth line and added it in his own copy. He or

66 See the online *Repertorium Pomponianum*: https://www.repertoriumpomponianum.it/pomponiani/pomponiani.htm (accessed 26 October 2020). See Piacentini 1984. I am grateful to Marco Petoletti and Maurizio Campanelli for advising me in this direction.

67 At this time, I have not been able to track down a sample of Accursius' handwriting, with which I could compare the hand(s) in the Vatican incunable. The handwritten copy of Accursius' "Testudo," his defence against allegations of plagiarism, found in the manuscript München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 377, and dated to 1520 is copied in a too calligraphic hand to allow for comparison with the cursive hand(s) displayed by the incunable.

someone else could have taken this copy with him to Italy, where it was later discovered by Accursius and/or the unidentified scribe in the Vatican incunable.[68] Whether he saw them in the Vatican incunable or elsewhere, Accursius printed the five lines in his notes on Ausonius, whence Poelmann picked them up and printed them at the place where they, eventually, acquired their conventional numeration. With the exception of the Hulst manuscript (whatever this was) and the *codex peruetustus* of Accursius (whatever this was), it seems clear that the four or five spurious lines were never regarded as authentic in the medieval period; in the manuscripts in which they are extant they are always copied outside of the main text, never as part of it. It was early modern scholars who were responsible for adding them to Lucan's text.

Summing up the evidence brought forth in the preceding pages, let me conclude: lines 1.436-39 are first recorded, and were probably crafted, sometime in the tenth or eleventh century, in the area around Orléans, probably at Fleury, by someone who found Lucan's list of Gallic tribes lacking. Perhaps he was a local patriot who wanted to add the tribes in his own immediate vicinity – the men of Poitou, Touraine, and Anjou – to Lucan's original Bituriges, Nervii, Arverni, Sequani, Suessones and others. Alternatively, and more probably, he wanted to complete Lucan's catalogue – which relied on Caesar's account – by supplying the 'missing' peoples from Caesar, with whose text he was intimately familiar. Perhaps it was a combination of both. And perhaps the poet was Aimoin. To the four 'original' lines were added, at some other unknown point in time, line 440, perhaps by a native of the Orléanais – *Cenabum* is the Latin name for Orléans;[69] this 'extended' version, however, was never part of the French tradition, but was either brought to or composed in Italy, where the lines were discovered some three or four hundred years later and became part of the tradition of Lucan's *De bello civili*.

68 The only thing we know about the incunable's earlier provenance is that at one point it was owned by Fulvio Orsini (1529-1600), but none of the hands writing the notes surrounding the text appears to be his.

69 Caesar, *Gall.* 7.11.5.

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A DEBATE ABOUT WOMEN IN *ILIAD* 20.251-55? THE EVIDENCE OF FOUR SCHOLIA

By Robert Mayhew

Summary: In *Iliad* 20, Aeneas and Achilles trade insults, and at one point (251-55) Aeneas says that they are acting like women (ὥς τε γυναῖκας). Four *Iliad*-scholia provide evidence that the authenticity of this passage was disputed, and one of these scholia refers to a comment about women in Aristotle's *Historia animalium*, in order to explain or defend these verses. This note highlights these scholia and this dispute, which have not received sufficient scholarly attention, while illustrating one of the uses ancient Homeric scholars made of the *Historia animalium*.

Judging by the Homeric scholia, Alexandrian scholars not infrequently used Aristotle's *Historia animalium* like an animal encyclopedia, to explain or defend Homer's references to animals. For instance, a metaphor in *Iliad* 18, describing how Achilles misses Patroclus like a lion misses its cubs, refers to "a full-maned lion, whose cubs a hunting man has stolen"[1] (... ὥς τε λὶς ἠϋγένειος, | ᾧ ῥά θ' ὑπὸ σκύμνους ἐλαφηβόλος ἁρπάσῃ ἀνήρ) (318-19). A T-scholion comments: "A lion bears [or 'sires'] two [cubs] alone, as Aristotle [says] in *On Animals*" (δύο μόνα τίκτει λέων· ὡς Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν τῷ Περὶ ζῴων : ~).[2] This is almost certainly a reference to *Historia animalium* 6.31.579a33–b2: "in most cases [the lion] bears two [cubs], at the very most six, but sometimes it bears even one" (τίκτει [sc.

* I am grateful for the feedback I received from the journal's referee.

1 Translations from the Greek are my own.

2 Schol. T *Il.* 18.318-19 ex. (Erbse); *Burney* MS 86 (fol. 206v). For the main scholia discussed in this article, I have examined electronic copies of the relevant manuscripts, and (as here) I provide both the reference in Erbse 1977 and the manuscript folio number.

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λέων] δ' ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ δύο, τὰ μέντοι πλεῖστα ἕξ· τίκτει δ' ἐνίοτε καὶ ἕν). Perhaps some critics of Homer had questioned whether lionesses bear more than one cub.[3]

Sometimes, however, the *Historia animalium* was brought in to settle more substantive scholarly disputes.[4] I briefly examine such a possible case here.

In *Iliad* 20, Achilles has a new set of armor and returns to the fighting. His first opponent is Aeneas. Before their short-lived duel (in which Aeneas escapes owing to divine intervention) they speak to each other and trade insults. Aeneas puts an end to this as follows (251-55):

> But why must the two of us, with quarrels and insults,
> insult each other, face to face, *like women,*
> who, enraged about some spirit-devouring quarrel,
> go into the middle of the street and insult each other,
> much of it true, and much not – which rage commands them to say?[5]
>
> ἀλλὰ τίη ἔριδας καὶ νείκεα νῶϊν ἀνάγκη
> νεικεῖν ἀλλήλοισιν ἐναντίον, *ὥς τε γυναῖκας*,
> αἵ τε χολωσάμεναι ἔριδος πέρι θυμοβόροιο
> νεικεῦσ' ἀλλήλῃσι μέσην ἐς ἄγυιαν ἰοῦσαι
> πόλλ' ἐτεά τε καὶ οὐκί, χόλος δέ τε καὶ τὰ κελεύει;

According to an A-scholion,[6] Aristonicus reports that Aristarchus athetized these five verses as ill-timed[7] and annoying (or inappropriate) (ἀθετούνται στίχοι πέντε ὡς ἄκαιροι καὶ ὀχληροί), giving multiple reasons, one of which concerns me here:

3 For another example of this sort of use of the *Historia animalium*, see schol. D *Od.* 22.299-300 (Ernst), on the nature of the insect (οἶστρος) that appears in a cattle-stampede metaphor, describing the panic-stricken suitors. It contains a paraphrase of *HA* 5.19.551b21-23 and 557a24.

4 I discuss a clear case of this in Mayhew 2021a.

5 That is, rage makes them say what is not true. See Edwards 1991: 321.

6 Schol. A *Il.* 20.251-55a Ariston. (Erbse); *Venetus* A (fol. 264v).

7 Ill-timed, he believes, because already at 244 Aeneas says "But come, let us no longer discuss these things" (ἀλλ' ἄγε, μηκέτι ταῦτα λεγώμεθα), which supposedly makes 251 ('But why must the two of us,' etc.) another beginning (ἄλλην ἀρχήν).

καὶ τὰ λεγόμενα ἀνάξια τῶν προσώπων· καὶ παρὰ βαρβάροις δέ ἐστι τὸ τὰς γυναῖκας προερχομένας λοιδορεῖσθαι ὡ<ς> παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις.

Moreover, what is said is unworthy of the characters; and, for women to go outside to scold one another is something that happens among barbarians, as for instance among Egyptians.

This is inappropriate, I take Aristarchus to be saying, because Aeneas is not simply comparing themselves to women, but to *barbarian* women – which is not relevant here (as Aeneas and Achilles are not barbarian) and further is unworthy of (and inaccurate as a description of) the actions of Aeneas and Achilles.[8]

Two bT-scholia[9] on *Iliad* 20.253 comment on the reference to women.[10] Here is the B-scholion, *Venetus* B (fol. 274r):

ι΄ς περὶ ἔριδος εἰς χόλον ἀχθεῖσαι· τοῦτο δὲ περὶ ἀσέμνων γυναικῶν :—

Having been led over a quarrel to rage; but this is about undignified women.

8 Schironi 2018: 729 comments: "We cannot but wonder whether this short, nasty comment about the Egyptians was inspired by Aristarchus' own experiences in the streets of Alexandria. Whether or not this was the case, he seems to have considered the Homeric heroes (both Greeks and Trojans...) much better than his contemporaries – just as Homer was the best poet ever."

9 The bT scholia are preserved in the b family of manuscripts (i.e. *Venetus* B [B], *Laur. plut.* 32,3 [C], *Escorial* Y 1.1 [E3], and *Escorial* Ω 1.12 [E4]) and in manuscript T (*Burney* MS 86). The source of both is thought to be a lost archetype ('c'), the sources of which in turn are in large part ancient exegetical commentaries. See Erbse 1969: xvii-xxi and xxvi-xxviii (with a stemma on lviii). (Of the b mss., I have examined the relevant scholia only in *Venetus* B.)

10 Erbse presents these two combined as b(BCE^{3}E^{4})T *Il.* 20.253 ex.: αἵ τε χολωσάμεναι ἔριδος πέρι: περὶ ἔριδος εἰς χόλον ἀχθεῖσαι. τοῦτο ἐπὶ βαρβάρων γυναικῶν. He indicates the differences among them in his apparatus. But as I have argued elsewhere in this journal (Mayhew 2021b), where there are significant differences (as in this case), it is better to present and treat them as separate scholia.

In addition to including a lemma (instead of merely beginning with a mark indicating the relevant verse [ι΄ς]), the T-scholion, *Burney* MS 86 (fol. 224v), is significantly different:

> αἵ τε χολωσάμεναι ἔριδος πέρι: περὶ ἔριδος εἰς χόλον ἀχθεῖσαι· τοῦτο ἐπὶ βαρβάρων γυναικῶν :—
>
> "who enraged about some spirit-devouring quarrel": Having been led over a quarrel to rage; this is in reference to barbarian women.

Given the brevity of these scholia, I cannot rule out the possibility that they are in effect making the same point as Aristarchus (or even have Aristarchus as their source). But I think it more likely that these are attempted explanations of the verses. Perhaps they are in response to Aristarchus; or perhaps they were prompted by some pettifogging critic like Zoilus, who may have complained about the inaccuracy of the verses on the grounds that this is not true of all women. In any case, whoever is behind these scholia likely considered these verses authentic, and accurate on Homer's part because they are true *in a certain context*.

According to the B-scholion, Aeneas is not referring to all women but to undignified ones.[11] That seems quite straightforward. According to the T-scholion, Aeneas is not referring to all women but to barbarian ones. This makes sense only if the scholiast or his source takes Aeneas to be referring to *Trojan* women (the ones he, as a Trojan, knows). For why should the audience assume that Homer, in having Aeneas say ὥς τε γυναῖκας, is referring specifically to barbarian women apart from Greek or Trojan women? If I am right, then on this view (in contrast to Aristarchus'), Homer considered the Trojans barbarians.[12]

11 There is no implication that men cannot be undignified in a way characteristic of men, merely that the sort of undignified behavior Aeneas describes is more characteristic of undignified women than of undignified men.

12 This likely represents a later (and inaccurate) view of Homer, in that the epics do not seem to contrast Greeks and barbarians; and if they do speak of barbarians at all (I note only *Il.* 2.867 βαρβαροφώνων, describing the Karians), they do not include the Trojans among them, though that would eventually become a more common assessment in the Classical period. See for instance Hall 1989: 5-13 and 21-40.

Finally, a bT-scholion on *Iliad* 20.252 (identical in *Venetus* B (fol. 274r) and *Burney* MS 86 (fol. 224v))[13] – a comment on ὥς τε γυναῖκας – states:

> φησὶ γὰρ ἀριστοφάνης· γυνὴ ἀνδρὸς ἐπιφθονώτερον, μεμψιμοιρότερον, φιλολοίδορον φιλοπληκτικώτερον, μᾶλλον ἀρίδακρυ.
>
> For Aristophanes claims: a woman is more jealous than a man, more complaining, fond of scolding, more fond of fighting, more given to tears.

I agree with Erbse that ἀριστοφάνης is a mistake for ἀριστοτέλης.[14] Consider Aristotle's *Historia animalium* 8(9).1.608b8-11:

> διόπερ γυνὴ ἀνδρὸς ἐλεημονέστερον καὶ ἀρίδακρυ μᾶλλον, ἔτι δὲ φθονερώτερον καὶ μεμψιμοιρότερον, καὶ φιλολοίδορον μᾶλλον καὶ πληκτικώτερον.
>
> Hence a woman is more compassionate than a man and more given to tears, but also more jealous and more complaining, and more fond of scolding and more apt to fight.

Aristotle is clearly the source,[15] and has been brought in to explain Homer's ὥς τε γυναῖκας etc.

As there is no other evidence to go on, besides these four scholia, I can merely speculate, which I do as follows: There was a debate in antiquity about *Iliad* 20.251-55, especially about whether these texts were genuine

13 b(BCE^{3}E^{4})T *Il.* 20.252 ex. (Erbse). The only difference is that, as with the previous bT scholia, the one in *Venetus* B lacks a lemma.

14 Erbse 1977, 44 sets ἀριστοφάνης between daggers, and refers to the passage from Aristotle. On the off chance that the reference to Aristophanes is accurate, then this is a passage that dropped out of the extant work known as the *Epitome of the Historia animalium* by Aristophanes of Byzantium (see Lambros 1885), in which case Aristotle would still be the source of the scholion, only indirectly.

15 The main differences: ἐλεημονέστερον has dropped out of the scholion; ἀρίδακρυ μᾶλλον is switched (μᾶλλον ἀρίδακρυ) and placed at the end of the scholion; ἐπιφθονώτερον has replaced φθονερώτερον; μᾶλλον was dropped from φιλολοίδορον μᾶλλον; φιλοπληκτικώτερον has replaced πληκτικώτερον.

and accurate. Part of the debate involved ὥς τε γυναῖκας (252), and there were, it seems, four positions:[16] (1) Aristarchus', which takes the reference to women to count against the passage, as the words attributed to Aeneas describe women among the barbarians and (modern day?) Egyptians, but do not describe the Greek and Trojan women of the *Iliad*. The remaining three are likely explanations of Homer's text as it stands: (2) Homer is not referring to all women, but to undignified ones. (I find this the least interesting explanation, though it may well be correct.) (3) Homer has Aeneas refer not to all women, but to barbarian ones – that is to say, to Trojan women. Presumably it *would* have counted against Homer, on this view, if it were implied that this referred to Greek women as well. (4) Aristotle is brought in, as an authority on animals (including humans), to point out that Homer is right, because women – which is to say, women generally – do on his view have a greater tendency than men to quarrel and insult each other.[17]

As is so often the case, what bothered ancient Homeric scholars is of little concern to modern ones. Although "This section of the speech [sc. *Iliad* 20.244-58] has been heavily criticized for its repeated and time-consuming exhortations not to waste time talking" (Edwards 1991: 320),[18] I am not aware of any modern scholar who suspects the authenticity of these verses on the grounds of the inappropriateness of the reference to women insulting each other in public.[19]

16 At any rate, it is clear that (1) and (4) represent distinct interpretations.

17 Whether Aristotle would have agreed with this application of *HA* 8(9).1.608b8-11 is not at all clear. On this Aristotle passage, see for instance Mayhew 2004: 92-104 and Connell 2021: 15-16 and 48-53.

18 See note 7 above.

19 Edwards 1991: 321 goes on to comment: "It can also be argued that the expansion is not excessive, but matches that of the preceding genealogy" – i.e. Aeneas' genealogy of the Trojan royal house. Lohmann 1970: 66-67 and 153 follows Aristarchus in rejecting the authenticity of *Il.* 20.251-55, but not because of the comment about women.

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HEUS TU! PROMITTIS AD CENAM, NEC VENIS? DICITUR IUS! THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLINY *EP.* 1.15 AND SEVERAL *CARMINA CATULLI*

By Boris Hogenmüller

Summary: Various studies have already shown that Catullus is one of many authors whose work Pliny the Younger preferred to read and to whom he often referred in his letters. An interesting example of this intertextual reference is found in *Ep.* 1.15. It is obvious that Pliny refers to the specific contents and motifs from three different poems of Catullus, which the addressee of the letter should easily have been reminded of when reading the letter. That Catullus' poems are the underlying (or superordinate) hypertexts to which Pliny refers is what this paper aims to prove.

Introduction

Pliny's letters are surely among the most revealing and interesting literary publications about Roman life of the first century A.D. The epistles themselves excel both through the multitude of their subjects and the diversity of their addressees. The most famous among them are undoubtedly the extensive correspondence with Emperor Trajan (*Ep.* 10.1-121) and the well-known historian Tacitus (*Ep.* 1.6; 1.20; 4.13; 6.9; 6.16; 6.20; 7.20; 7.33; 8.7; 9.10; 9.14), especially the report on the eruption of Vesuvius in the year 79 A.D. (*Ep.* 6.16 and *Ep.* 6.20). In addition, numerous letters are found in the extensive corpus that give the impression that they have initially been intended for private use, before being revised for publication.[1]

1 Cf. Ludolph 1997: 23-28; Kuhlmann 2014: 14-15; Wehmann 2014: 64-65.

Boris Hogenmüller '*Heus tu! Promittis ad cenam, nec venis? Dicitur ius!* The relationship between Pliny *Ep.* 1.15 and several *carmina Catulli*' *C&M* 70 (2022) 133-148.

But even these letters eventually emerge as a kind of art products,[2] which can give testimony of the erudition (*doctrina*) of their author – the specific *doctrina*, which was the defining element of the work of the Neoterics Calvus and Catullus.[3] In addition, just like the Neoteric poets, Pliny is able to adopt the Greek and Latin works of his predecessors, adapt their contents to the intention of the respective letter, and skilfully play with the motifs of the hypotexts.[4] However, the hidden intertextual allusions – a sign of the author's *doctrina* – are constantly posing new challenges to modern research, since they make it difficult for the modern reader to get access to the texts and understand them in the end.

At times, the identification of Pliny's models may not be as easy as it is in *Ep.* 1.7.4, wherein the author himself announces Homer as the source of his quotation, or in *Ep.* 8.2.3, in which an obvious allusion to Virgil (*Aen.* 5.305) can be recognised. Often, the intertextual allusions to underlying hypotexts that the author used in the design of his letters are indirect allusions on content and form.[5] Moreover, these allusions are found on the meta-level of the texts and are less frequently presented through direct borrowings of words and phrases on the lexical-syntactic level than by indirect hints on theme and structure.[6]

In my opinion, this peculiar kind of intertextual dependency can be seen best in *Ep.* 1.15, wherein Pliny has obviously adopted three poems of the Veronese Catullus while composing the letter to Septicius. Explicitly, the mentioned poems are *C.* 13, the literary game of an invitation to dinner sent to Fabullus, *C.* 30, the indignant reprimand of the friend Alfenus for his proven infidelity, and *C.* 50, the literary reflection of one

2 Cf. Kasten 2003: 667; concerning the difference between 'real' and literary letters cf. Ludolph 1997: 23-28.

3 Cf. Haig Gaisser 2012: 165.

4 Cf. Schwerdtner 2015: 48: "In about one tenth of his 247 private letters, Pliny uses over 60 literary citations, with about a quarter from the Latin and three quarters from Greek literature."

5 Cf. Kuhlen 1991; Genette 1993.

6 According to Gérard Genette's theory ([1993]: 10-16) this kind of intertextuality is regarded as the effective presence of one text in another which manifests itself in quotations and plagiarism – that means explicitly declared or even not explicitly declared takeovers of the pretext – as well as allusions and statements for whose complete understanding knowledge of the pretext is necessary.

hilarious evening spent with his friend Calvus. In what follows, I would like to prove that these poems are the subordinated or superordinated hypotexts that Pliny had in mind when composing his artificial letter.

praeterea facit versus, quales Catullus meus et Calvus Pliny's relationship to Catullus

"In the Pliny Circle the poetry of Catullus and Calvus was *en vogue* [...]" is the convincing verdict of Nina Mindt.[7] Thus, it is not surprising that Calvus and Catullus were among those authors whose works Pliny had demonstrably read as well as incorporated into his letters. The artful intertextual allusions to the poems of the Neoterics would certainly have been recognised and understood by the highly sophisticated addressees as well as the readers of the letters.[8] Ilaria Marchesi[9] refers to Pliny's art of allusion as "critical re-reading of Catullus' poetry" which defines his own poetics.

Although only one literal quotation can be found in the epistles – a direct reference to *C.* 16.5-8 can be seen in *Ep.* 4.14, while in *Ep.* 1.18.4, there is probably just an indirect allusion to *C.* 82.2[10] – Pliny had an extraordinary appreciation of Catullus, as Matthew Roller[11] claims: "Pliny's particularly close engagement with Catullus is easy to demonstrate. Besides praising Catullus by name and quoting him [...], Pliny also shares with Catullus no less than six of the terms by which he labels his own poetry – far more than he shares with any other earlier poet whose works survive." According to Roller's opinion, these six common terms found in Catullus' poems are the nouns *nugae* (c. 1.4), *ineptiae* (c. 14b.1), *versiculi*

7 Cf. Mindt 2013: 138.

8 Cf. Pliny's own testimonies (e. g. *Ep.* 1.16: *praeterea facit versus, quales Catullus meus et Calvus*; *Ep.* 4.27) and several modern studies e. g. Schenk 1999: 114-34; Schwerdtner 2015.

9 Cf. Marchesi 2008: 55.

10 Cf. Schenk 1999: 116; differently Schwerdtner 2015: n. 202.

11 Cf. Roller 1998: 271.

(c. 16.3 and 6), *poema* (c. 22.15-16), and *hendecasyllabi*, which Pliny mentions in *Ep.* 4.14[12] as well as the verb *ludere* (c. 50.2 and 5), which both – Catullus and Pliny – use as a term to characterise the playful creation of verses.

From the obvious linguistic similarities, it is easy to deduce Pliny's remarkable connection to the language of the Neoteric poetry which Catullus represents. The world of thought of the Neoteric poets, their personal dismay, and the resulting emotionality, which is often expressed in harsh and hurtful words[13], plays a remarkable role in Pliny's work as well. The author skilfully plays with the motifs and themes that can be found in Catullus' poems, neither by blindly copying them nor by losing sight of the peculiar character of the respective letter by a mere imitation. As a product of this artful game, Pliny's letters emerge as an independent work which – concerning their underlying originality – do not fall short of Catullus' poems any more than Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* does with regard to the epic of the same name by Apollonius of Rhodes. I would like to now investigate the way in which Pliny uses Catullus' poems as templates and alludes to passages and motifs following the rules of intertextuality, by choosing *Ep.* 1.15 as an example.

Pliny *Ep.* 1.15 – Catullus *C.* 13; *C.* 30; *C.* 50

C. Plinius Septicio Claro suo salutem

Heus tu! Promittis ad cenam, nec venis? Dicitur ius: ad assem impendium reddes, nec id modicum. Paratae erant lactucae singulae, cochleae ternae, ova bina, halica cum mulso et nive — nam hanc quoque computabis, immo hanc in primis quae perit in ferculo –, olivae betacei cucurbitae bulbi, alia mille non minus lauta. Audisses comoedos vel lectorem vel lyristen vel — quae mea liberalitas — omnes. At tu apud nescio quem ostrea vulvas echinos Gaditanas maluisti. Dabis poenas, non dico quas. Dure fecisti: invidisti, nescio an tibi, certe mihi, sed tamen et tibi. Quantum nos lusissemus risissemus studuissemus!

12 Concerning Pliny's *hendecasyllabi* cf. Auhagen 2003: 200.

13 Cf. Syndikus 1984: I 66-68.

> Potes apparatius cenare apud multos, nusquam hilarius simplicius incautius. In summa experire, et nisi postea te aliis potius excusaveris, mihi semper excusa. Vale.
>
> Shame on you! You promised to come to dinner, and you never came! I'll take you to court, and you will pay to the last penny for my losses, and quite a sum! Ready for each of us were a lettuce, three snails, and two eggs, barley water with honey wine cooled with snow (you must add the cost of snow as well, in fact the snow in particular, as it melts in the dish). There were olives, beetroot, gourds, onions, and countless other delicacies no less elegant. You would have heard performers of comedy, or a reader, or a lyre-player, or even all three, such is my generosity!
> But you preferred to dine at some nobody's house, enjoying oysters, sow's tripe, sea urchins, and performing-girls from Cadiz. You'll be punished for this, I won't say how. What boorishness was this! You begrudged perhaps yourself, and certainly me – but yes, yourself as well. What joking and laughter and learning we would have enjoyed! You can dine in many houses on more elaborate fare, but nowhere more genially, innocently, and unguardedly. In short, you must try it out, and in future, unless you make your excuses to others instead, you must always make them to me. Farewell!
>
> (trans. Walsh)

In *Ep*. 1.15, Pliny writes about the invitation to a joint dinner (*ad cenam*), which he extended to his friend and patron, the Roman *eques* and later *praefectus praetorio* of the Emperor Hadrian, Septicius Clarus.[14] However, as already reported in the second half of the letter, Septicius failed to appear, even though he had previously promised to (*promittis*). Feigning outrage[15] Pliny now wants to pass judgement (*ius*) on the 'accused' for

14 Pliny dedicated the first book of letters to Septicius and Suetonius also dedicated his *Biographies of the Emperors* to Septicius, cf. Schulten 1923: coll. 1557-58; Eck 2001: col. 429.

15 In my opinion, it is obvious that Pliny's rebuke of Septicius in this letter is more jocular and even light-hearted than serious. The main reason is that Pliny's threat to take Septicius to court and have him fined is clearly exaggerated: of course, there is

this 'offence': Septicius should pay for all that was provided, without exception (*ad assem impendium reddes, nec id modicum*). All sorts of culinary delicacies – Pliny lists lettuce, snails, eggs, spelt mixed with honey and snow (*lactucae singulae, cochleae ternae, ova bina, halica cum mulso et nive*), a very rare and therefore more delicate and luxury item[16], additionally olives from Baetica, beetroot, onions, and a thousand other equally expensive dainties, no less tasty things (*olivae betacei cucurbitae bulbi, alia mille non minus lauta*) – as well as exquisite entertainment – a comedian or a reader or a lyre-player (*comoedos vel lectorem vel lyristen*) – would have been provided as a sign of Pliny's generosity (*quae mea liberalitas omnes*). Seemingly offended and full of feigned indignation and sarcasm, Pliny reproaches Septicius for having preferred to dine at another host (*at tu apud nescio quem ostrea vulvas echinos Gaditanas maluisti*). For this, Septicius would have to pay penalty, although it is unclear how and in what way (*dabis poenas, non dico quas*). Pliny is convinced that the damage done by Septicius would not only be great for Pliny but for Septicius as well (*invidisti, nescio an tibi, certe mihi, sed tamen et tibi*), especially as Septicius could dine at many houses in better style than at Pliny's, but nowhere would he have a better time or such a simple and free and easy entertainment (*potes apparatius cenare apud multos, nusquam hilarius simplicius incautius*). In short, Septicus should try (*in summa experire*), and if afterwards he did not prefer to excuse himself to others rather than to Pliny (*nisi postea te aliis potius excusaveris, mihi semper excusa*), then Pliny would give him leave to decline his invitations forever (*mihi semper excusa*).

At first glance, the situation Pliny describes seems in some ways to be taken from everyday life and appears therefore trivial. However, when examining it more closely, it becomes more obvious that a certain literary calculation is hidden behind, which challenges both the addressee and the learned audience to identify three different poems from the work of the poet Catullus that served as models for Pliny.

no civil law procedure to be used against someone who reneges on a dinner invitation, nor any monetary penalty to be paid. Furthermore, the phrase *dabis poenas, non dico quas* seems also joking as the penalty is exactly all the fun Septicius missed. Moreover, it is important to claim that Pliny and Septicius stayed close friends as can be finally proved by the dedication of Pliny's first book of letters to Septicius.

16 Cf. Weeber 2015: 200.

Pliny *Ep.* 1.15 – Catullus *C.* 13

Clearly, the entrance scene of the letter is reminiscent of Catullus' invitation poem *C.* 13, which is addressed to his friend Fabullus. Regarding the context of the poem, Fabullus is expected to appear for dinner within the next few days after recently having returned from a long distance – confer *C.* 12[17] (vv. 1-2: *cenabis bene* [...] *paucis diebus*). But, in contrast to Pliny's writing, Catullus' friend will not be offered luxury items unless the guest provides them himself (vv. 3-4: *si tecum attuleris bonam atque magnam cenam*), because Catullus was as poor as a church mouse (vv. 7-8: *tui Catulli plenus sacculus aranearum*).[18]

It is obvious that the poet responds to a literary *topos*, which was peculiar to Hellenistic invitation letters[19]: A humble host invites a richer guest and offers him, instead of fancy food, something special, namely Catullus' 'pure and untarnished friendship' (v. 9: *meros amores*), combined with all sorts of wit and good humour (v. 5: *sale et cachinnis*). For sure, it is undeniable that this was deliberately shown self-restraint, which hardly corresponds with reality.

One can speculate that a similar restraint and modesty might have been expressed in Pliny's original invitation to Septicius, which can also be seen in Catullus' invitation poem to Fabullus. Maybe Pliny had also invited his friend for dinner following the rules of *modestia* without offering all forms of culinary delicacies but promising friendly entertainment and cheerfulness. If this assumption is true, Pliny's 'angry' response to Septicius would be justified in a way that was adequate to Catullus when Fabullus did not appear for dinner. Pliny's writing – his probably not quite serious 'reckoning' with his friend Septicius – could thus be regarded as a continuation of Catullus' poem by prolonging the original invitation idea, the origin of which can be found in the underlying poem of Catullus. Or, in other words: In Catullus' poem, Pliny has found the motif which he was able to refer to and carry on in his epistle using the peculiar idea of Catullus' text in an artful literary game.[20] Thus, in my

17 Cf. Syndikus 1984: I 127-29.
18 Cf. ibid. 130-33.
19 Cf. Bacch. fr. 21 Sn.; Ath. 500b; *AP* 11.44.
20 Cf. Mindt 2013: 138.

opinion, Catullus' *C.* 13 can clearly be identified as one of the hypotexts that Pliny had in mind when composing his own letter.

Pliny *Ep.* 1.15 – Catullus *C.* 30

Equally noteworthy are the allusions to another poem, which Pliny probably referred to in the next part of the letter. Here, the displaced host first accuses the guest of having accepted another invitation (*maluisti*), preferring the more unusual dishes that were offered at another dinner – oysters, sow's matrices, sea-urchins, and Spanish dancing girls (*ostrea vulvas echinos Gaditanas*). With the emphatic expression: "You'll be punished for this, but I won't say how!" (*Dabis poenas, non dico quas*), Pliny ends the short burst of emotion that the friend's disloyalty has forced upon him.

Pliny, however, does not tell what such a penance might look like. Not a single word of revenge or maledictions is found in his letter. Yet it seems probable that Septicius – or the scholarly recipient of the letter – had a rather concrete impression of a peculiar retribution. This is because Catullus offers in *C.* 30 an idea of what such a literary retaliation might look like – possibly referring to a very similar occasion such as Pliny's letter.[21] There, Catullus denounces the unfaithfulness of his friend Alfenus very clearly. Alfenus is declared to be 'fidelity forgotten and false' (v. 1: *immemor atque false*), 'hard-hearted' (v. 2: *dure*), 'unfaithful' (v. 3: *perfide*), and 'unjust' (v. 7: *inique*) and called a man who does not hesitate to betray, to deceive (v. 3: *iam me prodere, iam non dubitas fallere*), and to abandon his friend Catullus (v. 5: *me miserum deseris*).

Keeping in mind the occasion of Pliny's letter to Septicius while reading these verses, the sophisticated reader subconsciously assumes that Catullus' words would also fit well in the situation of Pliny's letter to characterise the addressee Septicius. Very likely, Septicius would have also noticed the subliminal allusion to Catullus' accusing words to Alfenus if he received the letter, which thus *vice versa* became his own 'accusation' by intertextual allusion.

21 It is not clear what kind of crime Alfenus committed to Catullus, cf. Syndikus 1984: I 181-85.

Alfenus' behaviour – Catullus specifically speaks of a retreat (v. 9: *retrahis*), which is to be equated with Pliny's lament over the absence of the *cena* – would have undone all former words and deeds of the friend (vv. 9-10: *te ac tua dicta omnia factaque / ventos irrita ferre ac nebulas aereas sinis*). Even if Alfenus had forgotten about his failure (v. 11: *si tu oblitus es*), all gods would remember and make him pay (v. 11: *di meminerunt*), in particular the personalised goddess Fides (v. 11: *meminit Fides*), who would make him regret his crime later (v. 12: *ut paenitet postmodo facti faciet tui*).

It seems justifiable to assume that this kind of 'divine retaliation' that Alfenus had to expect might implicitly threaten Septicius as well. In my opinion, it is obvious that the addressee of Pliny's words would have recognised the scholarly allusion to the underlying motif, which he found in Catullus' poem. Thus, I regard Catullus' *C.* 30 as another hypotext or praetext, which Pliny used as a basis by means of intertextual allusion while writing this letter to Septicius.

Pliny *Ep.* 1.15 – Catullus *C.* 50

Reading the final part of the letter, the impression that a third poem of Catullus has at least indirectly been a model for Pliny becomes apparent. By demanding punishment, Pliny implicitly states that Septicius' absence was the sign of a hard-hearted man (*dure*) – Catullus' impression of the faithless Alfenus, who has been explicitly mentioned as *durus*, is clearly in mind – and the damage to their friendship would be felt by both partners (*invidisti, nescio an tibi, certe mihi, sed tamen et tibi*). Envisioning the dinner party, Pliny explicitly reminds the friend what he had missed out on that evening (*Ep.* 1.15.3-4):

> Quantum nos lusissemus risissemus studuissemus! Potes apparatius cenare apud multos, nusquam hilarius simplicius incautius. In summa experire, et nisi postea te aliis potius excusaveris, mihi semper excusa. Vale.
>
> What joking and laughter and learning we would have enjoyed! You can dine in many houses on more elaborate fare, but nowhere more

> genially, innocently, and unguardedly. In short, you must try it out, and in future, unless you make your excuses to others instead, you must always make them to me. Farewell!
>
> (trans. Walsh)

If Septicius had accepted the invitation, both friends might have joked (*lusissemus*), laughed (*risissemus*), and learnt (*studuissemus*) a lot, so Pliny assumes. Although Septicius could have certainly eaten better somewhere else (*potes apparatius cenare apud multos*), he would do so nowhere more genially (*hilarius*), innocently (*simplicius*) and unguardedly (*incautius*) than with Pliny. Concluding, Pliny utters the final admonishing words: If Septicius prefers to excuse himself rather to Pliny than to others (*te aliis potius excusaveris*), then he can certainly do it forever (*mihi semper*).

Once again, it seems obvious that Pliny alludes to a specific situation that Catullus has described in one of his poems before, which the reader of the letter would have felt directly reminded of. Catullus' *C.* 50 needs to be considered here, which represents a fictitious letter to his friend Licinius Calvus:

> Hesterno, Licini, die otiosi
> multum lusimus in meis tabellis,
> ut convenerat esse delicatos:
> scribens versiculos uterque nostrum
> ludebat numero modo hoc modo illoc,
> reddens mutua per iocum atque vinum.
> atque illinc abii tuo lepore
> incensus, Licini, facetiisque,
> ut nec me miserum cibus iuvaret
> nec somnus tegeret quiete ocellos,
> sed toto indomitus furore lecto
> versarer, cupiens videre lucem,
> ut tecum loquerer, simulque ut essem.
> at defessa labore membra postquam
> semimortua lectulo iacebant,
> hoc, iucunde, tibi poema feci,

ex quo perspiceres meum dolorem.
nunc audax cave sis, precesque nostras,
oramus, cave despuas, ocelle,
ne poenas Nemesis reposcat a te.
est vehemens dea: laedere hanc caveto.

At leisure, Licinius, yesterday
We'd much fun with my writing-tables
As we'd agreed to be frivolous.
Each of us writing light verses
Played now with this metre, now that,
Capping each other's jokes and toasts.
Yes, and I left there fired by
Your charm, Licinius, and wit,
So food gave poor me no pleasure
Nor could I rest my eyes in sleep
But widly excited turned and tossed
Over the bed, longing for daylight
That I might be with you and talk.
But after my tired aching limbs
Were lying on the couch half dead,
I made this poem for you, the charmer,
So you could spot my trouble from it.
Now don't be rash, please – don't reject
Our prayers, we implore you, precious,
Lest Nemesis make you pay for it.
She's a drastic Goddess. Don't provoke her.

(trans. Lee)

In this poem, Catullus reflects on the cheerful and pleasurable meeting with the friend Licinius Calvus, which had supposedly taken place on the day or evening before (v. 1: *hesterno, Licini, die otiosi*), possibly during a *cena*. While drinking wine and hilariously revelling (v. 6: *per iocum atque vinum*), Catullus states that both friends joked a lot on the writing boards (v. 2: *multum lusimus in meiis tabellis*) by playfully writing down small verses (vv. 4-5: *scribens versiculos uterque nostrum / ludebat*). Enchanted by

Calvus' erudition and wit, Catullus went home (*abii tuo lepore incensus, Licini, facetiisque*), and since he could not sleep (*toto indomitus furore lecto versarer*), he wrote the present poem to his friend out of longing to see him again (*hoc, iucunde, tibi poema feci*), as an example of Catullus' grief (*ex quo perspiceres meum dolorem*). If, however, Calvus should think little of Catullus' feeling, Calvus should beware of Nemesis, the personified retribution, to injure whom would carry negative consequences (*poenas Nemesis reposcat a te / est vehemens dea: laedere hanc caveto*).[22]

That Septicius might have expected a dinner that followed a similar pattern, just as with the friends Catullus and Calvus, is hinted at in Pliny's tricolon of *lusissemus risissemus studuissemus*. The direct intertextual connection to Catullus, however, seems not only to be given by the evoked mood of the two texts, but it is further amplified by the choice of the verb *ludere*, which, as mentioned by Matthew Roller, Pliny and Catullus share as a specific term in a similar semantic framework. Obviously, both Catullus and Pliny use *ludere* here as a term to describe hilarious moments which are spent together with a friend during a dinner.[23] A coincidental use of this specific word in these unique circumstances seems – from my point of view – rather unlikely.

It also seems noteworthy that there is an indirect allusion to Catullus' poem in the threat of punishment, in so far as Pliny points out to Septicius that he will have to pay a 'punishment' for his non-appearance (*dabis poenas, non dico quas*). Although Pliny himself remains vague about the form that the punishment will take, one may be reminded of Catullus' statement that the personified Nemesis will punish Calvus if he ignores his friend's desire. As in Pliny's letter, it is also uncertain in the context of Catullus' poem what the punishment for unrequited friendship will be – Catullus merely notes that Nemesis is a powerful goddess (*est vehemens dea*) whom one should be careful not to offend (*laedere hanc caveto*). The reader of Pliny's letter should certainly bear in mind that the same Nemesis who is threatened to Calvus in Catullus' poem could also call Septicius to account: Regarding the friendship between Catullus and Calvus,

22 Cf. Syndikus 1984: I 250-54.

23 It seems plausible also that Pliny's *risissemus* alludes to the Catullan *per iocum atque vinum* and *studuissemus* ("engaged in literary activity") to the phrase *in meis tabellis … scribens versiculos*.

Nemesis, the eternal goddess of retribution, also watches over the friendship between Pliny and Septicius – and thereby connects the authors' thoughts and feelings about friendship and its betrayal across centuries. For these reasons, I consider this artful allusion on the meta-level of intertextuality to be another witty connection that Pliny obviously perceived and consequently used to create this kind of highly sophisticated intertextual game with Septicius and the readers of the letter as well.

Based on these considerations and obvious parallels demonstrated above, it is thus convincing that Catullus' *C.* 50 should also be regarded a hypotext used by Pliny who transforms[24] the motifs known from the template into the newly created hypertext.

Summary

Concerning Pliny's *Ep.* 1.15, the study could prove that Pliny has used and transformed several poems of Catullus into the conception of his letter to Septicius. In this respect, according to the theory of hypertextuality described by Gérard Genette, Pliny has hinted at Catullus' poems *C.* 13, *C.* 30, and *C.* 50 by associative allusions and conscious reminiscences as well as by transforming the poems' peculiar motifs into his letter, and by literarily continuing the original thoughts. In this process, Pliny was so skilful that the letter is not an ordinary transformation of the contents of the model. Rather, the letter itself has become a literary creation that even today continues to challenge its reader.

In conclusion, it is noteworthy that *Ep.* 1.15 must be regarded as the product of a literary game. This can best be seen in the fact that Septicius – who became the dedicatee of the first book of letters, an honour which

24 Whether this transformation is intentional because Pliny is presenting a letter infused with Catullan motifs and vocabulary as a studied appropriation whose literary origin he expects his readers to recognize, or because the Catullan imagery and language comes into Pliny's mind as part of his general literary background cannot be answered unambiguously. However, I am convinced that Pliny has a strong attachment to Neoteric poetry and especially to its main representatives Catullus and Calvus as can be seen in different letters (e. g. *Epp.* 2.2; 4.14; 4.27; 9.16; 9.25: cf. also Marchesi 2008: 62-96), which allows him to allude to their motifs almost naturally.

was associated with several duties and privileges[25] – continued to be Pliny's friend and *patronus*, even though he had been accused with seemingly 'harsh' words.

Though Pliny seems to be enraged and offended by Septicius' 'infidelity', he remains more rational, more composed, and far more reflective in his statements and actions towards Septicius than Catullus could be towards Calvus or other friends – this is caused by Catullus' theory of poetry and his neoteric self-concept as well. Anger as an emotion does not make Pliny act in an uncontrolled or irrational way; moreover, he is led by the underlying motif of *modestia*,[26] which is inherent in his letters. This virtue makes Pliny appear moderate, deliberate, and determined by noticeable calculation regarding his own situation and the benefit for it even in situations imagined in *Ep.* 1.15. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that Septicius achieves the nimbus of a *persona Catulliana*, who, like the protagonists of Catullus' poems, is blamed for his misconduct by the author without losing the friendly relationship at all.[27]

25 Cf. van Dam 2008: 1-12.

26 Cf. Scheidle 1993; Ludolph 1997: 60-88 and 194-205; Tzounakas 2007: 52-54; Marchesi 2008; Tzounakas 2012: 302.

27 This can also be seen in *ep*. 2.2, where anger for the misconduct of a friend plays a central role as well. Cf. Hogenmüller 2020: 135-49.

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THE RETURN OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT IN THE THIRD CENTURY A.D.: A QUESTION OF *DAIMONES* AND PHYSICAL IMMORTALITY

By Dag Øistein Endsjø

Summary: Why was an unknown man insisting he was Alexander the Great received with distinct deference by Roman officials and Bacchic celebration by hundreds of attendants around A.D. 221? Examining Dio Cassius's presentation in light of contemporary beliefs, one finds that the enthusiastic reception most probably was due to the conviction that Alexander had actually returned physically immortal and deified, either resurrected or never having died at all. The respectful awe of the officials was also most likely caused by either this belief or by their holding that this was the dead and disembodied *hērōs* of the famed conqueror.

In A.D. 221 or right before, a man claiming to be Alexander the Great was received with deference and enthusiasm in three eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, more than half a millennium after the renowned conqueror originally lived. The contemporary Greco-Roman historian Dio Cassius is our only source on this event, but his succinct account is generally accepted as truthful and well-informed, as this traditionally renowned scholar born and raised in Bithynia was well connected in the area and writing about a contemporary event. And this is his report:

> For briefly before this [an event in 221], a *daimōn* proclaiming to be Alexander of Macedon, and resembling him in all manners in looks and appearance, set out from around the Ister [Danube], after having appeared in some unknown manner, and travelled through Moesia and Thrace, together with four hundred men performing Bacchic rites, equipped with thyrsi and fawnskins and doing no harm. All those who were in Thrace at the time agreed that lodgings and all provisions for him were offered at public expense; and no one dared to

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> oppose him either by word or deed, neither magistrate, soldier, procurator, nor provincial governor, but he proceeded through daytime as in a procession, as far as Byzantium, as he had proclaimed. Then he went by ship and disembarked in the territory of Chalcedon [in Bithynia], and there, after performing certain sacred rites by night and burying a wooden horse, he vanished. This I was told while still in Asia (Trans. E. Cary, modified).[1]

If one leaves out any supernatural explanation, this obviously involved an absolutely exceptional man, who after having gotten the idea to pose as the legendary conqueror, managed to gather an extensive following and considerable respect even among the upmost echelons of society. Beyond depicting his extraordinary ability to make the most profound impression on those he met,[2] and his appearance being similar to what his contemporaries held Alexander to look like, the sources do not give much in way of information about the man himself. However, as no one is recorded to have pointed out that this Pseudo-Alexander in reality was just so or so, he probably did not originate from the region through which he traversed.

The major question is, nevertheless, whom contemporaries thought this figure really was. Was he considered just a brazen impostor? Did others agree with Dio's assumption that this was a *daimōn*, who may or may not have been the fabulous conqueror and what did this really imply? Or did this pretender actually succeed in convincing people that he, indeed, was who he said he was, the real-life Alexander the Great, returned centuries after he had lived originally?

The status of Alexander after his death

The posthumous Alexander was in no way a peripheral figure in the Mediterranean world. In their extensive examinations of Alexandrian veneration, Boris Dreyer and Shane Wallace point to evidence of enduring cult

1 Cass. Dio 80.18.1-3.

2 Cf. Edmund Groag describing the man as "an ecstatic enthusiast," who, "through his belief in himself, also carries the masses with him" (Groag 1909: 254).

in various places, like Arca Caesarea, Ephesus, and Thessaloniki.[3] As Angela Kühnen argues, the momentous reception of the pretender may also, in itself, be considered "a clearer indication of the Alexander veneration of the time."[4] In Alexandria, Rhodes, and Ionian Teos, sacred games were celebrated in honour of Alexander.[5] In what form the potentate was revered is rarely specified in the sources, but when games were performed in honour of various men, the men were generally venerated as *hērōes*, like Pelops at the Olympic games,[6] Melicertes-Palaemon at the Isthmian games,[7] and Opheltes-Archemorus at the Nemean games.[8] As Diodorus of Sicily related how Ptolemy had the entombed Alexander in Alexandria honoured with sacrifices and magnificent games, he also specified that this was done in the way befitting *hērōes* (θυσίαις ἡρωικαῖς καὶ ἀγῶσι μεγαλοπρεπέσι τιμήσας).[9]

But Alexander was at times also honoured as a god, and not as a *hērōs*. In third century A.D. Erythrae, for example, there existed a "priest of Alexander the *god*" (ἱερέα θεοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου),[10] while in Carian Bargylia a renovated statue central for the city's third century A.D. cult simply bore the inscription "the god Alexander" (θεὸν Ἀλέξανδρον).[11] A third century A.D. dedication in Latin discovered in 1872 close to today's deserted Macedonian village of Vlahčeni, might also present Alexander as a god. The inscription is addressed "to Jove and Juno and Dracco and Draccena and Alexander."[12] As argued by Edmund Groag, Jean Gagé and Marjeta Šašel Kos, the epigraph may thus present Alexander as a god among

3 Dreyer 2009: 218-29; Wallace 2018: 183-87; Arcus Caesarea according to SHA *Alex. Sev.* 13.1; Ephesus according to *SEG* IV 521; Thessaloniki according to *IG* X 278.

4 Kühnen 2008: 40.

5 Alexandria according to Diod. Sic. 18.28.4; Rhodes according to *IGR* 4.1116; Teos according to Strabo 14.1.31.

6 Paus. 5.13.1-3.

7 Paus. 1.44.8, 2.1.3.

8 Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.4.

9 Diod. Sic. 18.28.4.

10 *IErythrai* 64; cf. *SIG* III 1014.viii; my emphasis.

11 *OGIS* 3.

12 "IOVI ET IVNONI [E]T DRACCONI ET DRACCENAE ET ALEXANDRO EP[IT]YNCHANVS S(ERVVS) [R]VRI OCAVI C(LARISSIMI) V(IRI) POSV[IT]."

other gods, venerated along with Jupiter and Juno, and what were probably two regional serpent deities.[13]

According to Jaakkojuhani Peltonen, Greeks in the Roman Empire also tended to, more generally, portray "the Macedonian king as 'our' Alexander … a Greek cultural hero" that gave them "something to identify with,"[14] something that also could have contributed to the warm welcome the pretender received in his ancient Macedonian heartlands. But the exemplary status of Alexander was in no way limited to the east, as, for instance, pointed out by C.T. Mallan; he represented "a standard point of comparison" for any ambitious ruler in the Empire.[15] It was at times a question of *imitatio Alexandri*. When Pompey celebrated his triumph for his victory over Mithridates of Pontus, a mighty ruler known for presenting himself in the image of Alexander, the Roman general himself chose to wore Alexander's alleged mantel, which had been found among the possessions of the Pontic king.[16] Dio Cassius also connected Alexander with a number of Roman potentates. Early in his career, Julius Caesar famously lamented his own shortcomings compared to that of Alexander, when encountering a statue of his role model in Cádiz.[17] Octavian visited his tomb in Alexandria, emphasizing the alleged connection between himself and the formidable conqueror.[18] After having crossed the Bay of Naples in a chariot, Caligula adorned himself with what he said was Alexander's breastplate.[19] Trajan claimed to have surpassed Alexander, after he had conquered the Parthian capital,[20] whereas Pescennius Niger was hailed by his men as the new Alexander, when initiating his unsuccessful claim to the imperial throne in 193.[21]

Caracalla was probably the emperor exhibiting the most intense enthusiasm about Alexander, imitating his idol in various ways, letting

13 Groag 1909: 253-55; Gagé 1975: 11-12; Kos 1991: 188-89.
14 Peltonen 2019: 57.
15 Mallan 2017: 137; cf. Carlsen 2016: 318-28; Wallace 2018: 171-72.
16 App. *Mithr*. 17.117.
17 Cass. Dio 37.52.2; cf. Suet. *Iul.* 7.1.
18 Cass. Dio 51.16.5; cf. Suet. *Aug.* 18.
19 Cass. Dio 59.17.3.
20 Cass. Dio 68.29.1.
21 Cass. Dio 75.6.2.

himself be depicted as him, and using weapons and cups held to be his.[22] In 215, he, too, visited the mausoleum, offering the corpse of Alexander his purple cloak, as well as his belt, gemset rings, "and anything else of value on his person."[23] He also created a military unit of 16,000 Macedonians, which he named "Alexander's phalanx," complete with arms and uniforms supposedly in style of that idealized period.[24] In a letter to the senate, Caracalla took his affinity with his magnificent idol to a new level, asserting that he was Alexander reincarnated. As he maintained, "Alexander had come to life again in the person of the Augustus, so that he might live on once more in him, having had such a short life before."[25]

Contemporary reactions

Examining the beliefs concerning the man asserting he was Alexander of Macedon, one finds that there does seem not to have been one single explanation as to what his appearance really meant to his contemporaries. Although Dio Cassius's account is the only source preserved, he refers to various people holding divergent views on this dramatic incident.

First of all, there is Dio himself who has an opinion of his own. There are also the Bacchic entourage of several hundred men enthusiastically following the pretender; there are the "magistrate, soldier, procurator, and provincial governor" who did not "dare to oppose him," and, finally, there are "all those" others "who were in Thrace at the time," among whom the first or second-hand sources for Dio seem to be found.

One should also take into account how Dio connects the entire incident of Pseudo-Alexander with how emperor Elagabalus soon afterwards adopted his slightly younger cousin as his son and successor, while renaming him Alexander. According to Dio, the very reason why the emperor did this was "what happened in Moesia Superior" with the appearance of the Alexandrian pretender, along with an enigmatic prediction about how "some Alexander (τις Ἀλέξανδρος) should come from Emesa

22 Cass. Dio 78.7.1.
23 Hdn. 4.8.6-9.
24 Hdn. 4.8.7, 4.9.3; Cass. Dio 78.7.1-2
25 Cass. Dio 78.7.2.

[modern Homs in Syria] to succeed [Elagabalus]."[26] The main point here is, of course, how the emperor allegedly took Pseudo-Alexander's spectacular appearance most seriously – even altering his policies in its wake. As Jesper Carlsen maintains, the reception of this impostor could have seemed so troubling to Elagabalus that he changed the name of his adopted son (conveniently from Arca Caesarea close to Emesa) to Severus *Alexander* in order to remove the possibility that he would be succeeded by any other Alexander, either someone claiming to be the original potentate returned like Pseudo-Alexander or, more simply, someone else by that illustrious name.[27] Although it is not possible to determine whether Elagabalus held that the pretender really was Alexander returned or some other supernatural figure, or whether his actions were based solely on the extraordinary reactions of others, the acts of the emperor testify to how momentous this entire incident was generally held to be. The extraordinary reception of the man claiming "to be Alexander of Macedon" was no trifling matter.

The nature of Dio's *daimōn*

Describing the pretender as a "*daimōn*," Dio himself holds that this was no ordinary man but a supernatural figure. Indeed, he connects the entire incident to "some divine arrangement (ἐκ θείας τινὸς παρασκευῆς)."[28] As such, he considered Pseudo-Alexander as something else entirely than the Nero pretender appearing about twelve years after the death of this emperor in A.D. 68. Whereas Dio simply dismissed this "Pseudo-Nero" as an Asiatic impostor "named Terentius Maximus,"[29] the Alexander pretender is depicted as an otherworldly *daimōn* inspiring awe. Here one should also note that there are no sources connecting anything miraculous with the claims of any of the three men who asserted

26 Cass. Dio 80.17.2.
27 Carlsen 2016: 330; cf. Shayegan 2004: 298.
28 Cass. Dio 80.17.3.
29 Cass. Dio 66.19.3.

they were Nero the first two decades after his demise. They all apparently based their claims on the rather mundane assumption that Nero had not been killed at all, but simply escaped.[30]

When examining what Dio meant by Pseudo-Alexander being a "*daimōn*," one should remember how complex this term really was. Originally, as in Homer, this was a synonym for an Olympian god, whereas Hesiod used *daimōn* for the classical hero or *hērōs*, the disembodied soul of certain mightier dead. As first found in Pindar in the mid fifth century B.C., there is also a belief in *daimones* watching over each mortal from birth, something that became particularly important in Platonic thinking and remained so even in imperial times, as seen with Plutarch.[31] Another type of *daimones*, as presented in Plato's *Symposium* by the priestess Diotima, are lesser divinities "halfway between gods and men," whose main role is that of being "envoys and interpreters that ply between heaven and earth."[32] *Epinomis*, probably also by Plato, refers to "*daimones* and creatures of the air" being ranked immediately under the traditional gods and the heavenly bodies.[33] These *daimones* seem also closely related to the ones Apuleius referred to in the second century A.D., describing their bodies as "so loose-knit, lustrous, and fine-spun that all the rays of our gaze are let through by their loose texture." Most strikingly, they are "not easily visible to anyone, unless they reveal their form at divine command."[34]

Fergus Millar argues that for Dio, *daimōn* seems like "the neutral term by which he designates any divine force or intervention."[35] According to Dio a *daimōn* could certainly manifest itself in rather different ways, not

30 Tacitus *Hist.* 2.8, 1.2; Cass. Dio 66.19.3; Suet. *Ner.* 57. The Christian belief that Nero at the end of time would be resurrected from the dead mightier than ever, or return from some unknown place to where he had been miraculously translated, is only first documented in the beginning of the fourth century by Lactantius (*De mort. pers.* 2; cf. August. *De civ. D.* 20.19).

31 Pind. *Ol.* 13.105; Pl. *Ap.* 40a; *Phd.* 107d; *Resp.* 617d-e, 620 d-e; Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.2; Plut. *De gen.* 10; *Caes.* 69.2. Cf. Burkert 1985: 179-81, 321-22.

32 Pl. *Symp.* 202d-203a.

33 Pl. *Epin.* 984d-e.

34 Apul. *De deo Soc.* 11.

35 Millar 1964: 179.

least in dreams, as what they did to him on several occasions.[36] But although he seems to have understood his own life as directly affected by the kind of guardian *daimōn* who follows each and every one from birth, this does not appear to be how he understood the Alexander pretender either.

Turning to the *daimōn* as a lesser divinity placed somewhere halfway between gods and humans, one finds, however, that this is an understanding that apparently fits Dio's *daimōn* claiming to be Alexander the Great. The way he appeared mysteriously, and, in the end, simply vanished not only functions as proof of his profoundly different nature in Dio's account, but mirrors Apuleius's description of such *daimones* being able to appear and disappear at will.

An important clue to how Dio understood the *daimōn* claiming to be Alexander is found in the most direct parallel in his texts, namely his depiction of the *daimōn*, who miraculously appeared and disappeared in Italy in 217, or soon before. The rendition of this episode is as follows:

> In Rome, moreover, a *daimōn* having the appearance of a man led a donkey up to the Capitol and afterwards to the palace, seeking its master, as he claimed, and saying that the emperor [Caracalla] was dead and Jupiter was ruling now. As he was arrested for this and sent by [the praefectus urbi Flavius] Maternianus to Antoninus [Caracalla], he said: "I will do as you bid, but I will not converse with this emperor, but with another." And when he reached Capua a little later, he vanished (Trans. E. Cary, modified).[37]

Dio's depiction of this other *daimōn* appears as equally enigmatic as that of the Alexander pretender. Most importantly, one finds the same kind of unexplained first appearance and by how they both inexplicable disappeared in the end (ἀφανὴς ἐγένετο).

When comparing Dio's presentation of Pseudo-Alexander and the *daimōn* in Rome, it is, however, important to note that the quintessential indication of there being something supernatural about these two figures – that is the way they both inexplicably vanished in the end – is

36 See e.g. Cass. Dio 73.23.2-4, 79.10, 80.5.

37 Cass. Dio 79.7.4

something that could not have influenced how they were perceived when *initially* encountered. Prior to their miraculous disappearance, both of Dio's *daimones* looked and acted essentially like ordinary mortals, speaking and interacting with people along their way. None of the more extraordinary things they did, neither claiming to be Alexander the Great nor presenting some unsubstantiated assertion about the current emperor, classify as anything miraculous as such. Dio's unambiguous understanding of the two as *daimones* consequently appears not to be based on their initial appearance. He apparently accepts them as *daimones* in hindsight, in connection with how they both mysteriously vanished.

This must be taken into account also when examining how Pseudo-Alexander could have been understood by those who first encountered him and who received him in such a remarkable manner. Although both this episode and the one from Rome seem certainly less fantastic prior to their vanishing, there is still reason to consider their reception in the light of how one possibly could expect people who believed that supernatural figures could manifest themselves would react if they encountered one. But here there is also a distinctive difference between the two incidents.

Looking at the man in Rome, one finds that there is no indication that any of those who encountered him prior to his disappearance thought of him as anything but an annoying rabble-rouser, who had to be arrested and duly punished for his lèse-majesté. The cautious and deferent way with which the Roman officials met the Alexander pretender seems, however, more in agreement with how one should act when encountering a *daimōn*. On the other hand, anonymous *daimones* tended not to present themselves as such renown figures as Alexander of Macedon. As such, this is an unlikely explanation for what the officials thought the pretender to be. Looking at the parade of jubilant bacchants, one finds that this is not at all consistent with their believing this was a *daimōn*, as such explicitly divine rites were not performed in relation with such lesser superhuman beings.

A god manifested?

As the most traditional understanding of a *daimōn* was that of an Olympian god, it may be relevant to examine whether some could have perceived Pseudo-Alexander as one of these traditional deities having chosen to appear in the likeness of that most fabulous conqueror.

As witnessed already in Homer, gods could manifest themselves as ordinary humans, often duping people knowing the person they impersonated, like when Athena in the *Odyssey* took the shape of King Mentes of the Taphians[38] and the daughter of the Phaeacian sea captain Dymas,[39] when Apollo appeared as king Mentes of the Cicones in the *Iliad*,[40] or when Poseidon in the *Iliad* took the guise of the Aetolian warrior Thoas.[41]

These visitations of gods in human disguise were still considered to take place in historical times, though certainly not frequently. Demeter in the likeness of an ordinary woman killed king Pyrrhus of Epirus with a blow of a tile in 272 B.C.,[42] whereas Luke-Acts depict the Lycaonians as convinced that Paul and Barnabas really were Zeus and Hermes visiting them.[43] Chariton of Aphrodisias does not seem to have raised many eyebrows either, when he in his first century A.D. novel *Callirhoe* presented the possible idea that a young girl had been a goddess all along appearing incognita, after she, too, had suddenly vanished mysteriously.[44]

That both men behind the dramas in Thrace and Rome really were figures of flesh and bones is another thing that fitted with how the Greeks traditionally viewed their gods as creatures with an absolutely physical nature; physical immortality was, indeed, the very thing that made "the immortals (οἱ ἀθάνατοι)," differ from us "mortals (οἱ βροτοί)." That something was immortal meant originally that it was physically incorruptible (ἄφθιτος), a term repeatedly used to describe the nature of the gods as well as incorruptible objects, like items belonging to the gods

38 *Od.* 1.178-79.
39 *Od.* 6.20-23.
40 *Il.* 17.70-73.
41 *Il.* 13.215-18.
42 Paus. 1.13.8.
43 *Acts* 14.11-12.
44 Chariton *Call.* 3.3.

or made of gold.[45] Although the later and primarily philosophical understanding of the gods as more spiritual beings certainly had an effect, the basic notion of the physical nature of the gods remained. Christian apologists like Athenagoras could still in the second century A.D. complain about how the Greek "masses (οἱ πολλοί)" were not able to "distinguish between matter and God," as they held the gods to be "of flesh (σαρκοειδής)."[46]

The inexplicable disappearance of both the Alexander pretender and the Italian *daimōn*, as well as the way they appeared in some unknown manner, were typical of deities visiting the mortal realm. As both of them appeared for just a limited period of time, their bodies would not give away their corruptible nature by ageing, that most revealing aspect of human nature. How Pseudo-Alexander insisted that he was none of the great gods by claiming that he instead was so and so, in this case Alexander of Macedon, was also in accordance with how gods traditionally would act when appearing as mortals.

There is, however, an important factor that makes it mostly improbable that Pseudo-Alexander was considered a deity in disguise. When gods appeared as humans and not as *themselves*, they usually made a point of appearing incognito or with discretion, not making a spectacle. This was at times connected with the emphasis on showing kindness to strangers, as one simply could not be sure who was at one's door. The prophesying but otherwise not very remarkable man in Rome could thus fit the picture, but that one of the gods should appear as the miraculously returned Alexander the Great along with such an ostentatious retinue was consequently particularly unlikely according to traditional beliefs. It is not probable that Dio either, considered his pretender *daimōn* as one of the major gods appearing in the form of Alexander, as this is nowhere indicated.

45 Rohde 1925: 74; Nilsson 1971: 623; Endsjø 2009: 38-45.

46 Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 15; cf. Endsjø 2009: 42.

Alexander truly returned?

That Dio does not mention anyone protesting against the man "proclaiming to be the famous Alexander of Macedon" indicates to what degree the pretender's assertion seems to have been accepted when he traversed Thrace and the neighbouring provinces. Any possible dissent appears to have drowned in the ecstatic enthusiasm and sombre respect shown him. As Dio himself points out, "no one *dared* to oppose him either by word or deed, neither magistrate, soldier, procurator, nor provincial governor." How others "who were in Thrace at the time" apparently uncritically relayed these events to Dio indicates that they, too, were not overtly renouncing the pretender's assertions.[47] One should also note that when Dio himself refers to this *daimōn* "*proclaiming* to be (εἶναι λέγων) Alexander of Macedon,"[48] he does not rule out that this *daimōn* truly was the ancient potentate in some way, although he apparently leaves open the possibility for this being some unknown *daimōn* only appearing in the likeness of Alexander.

The reception of the Alexander pretender stands in stark contrast to that of Dio's prophesying *daimōn* in Rome, who apparently incited scant interest among the masses and who was quite simply arrested by the authorities. With regards to how the man in Rome was apprehended merely because of his unwanted divination about the emperor, it is, indeed, striking that the imperial authorities were not only lenient with but even welcoming the man falsely asserting to be the most powerful Hellenic ruler returned, thereby essentially challenging the very authority of the Roman emperor.

It is therefore ample reason to examine closer to what degree it could have been possible that some accepted that the remarkable pretender actually *was* Alexander the Great, once again returned.

But similar to how there is no simple explanation to what the Alexander pretender being considered a *daimōn* meant, there is no single answer either as to what it entailed that anyone was convinced that this really was that famed ruler of yore. There is a number of ways that people in

47 Cass. Dio 80.18.1, my emphasis.
48 Ibid., my emphasis.

antiquity thought it was possible for an individual to transcend his or her original mortality and subsequently return.

Alexander reincarnated?

Edmund Groag describes Pseudo-Alexander as "an ecstatic enthusiast considering himself to be the incarnation of an earlier, mythical personality."[49] But if Pseudo-Alexander himself maintained that he was only a reincarnation or if he generally was held to be just that, Dio probably would have made that clear, as he did with Caracalla's claim, instead of writing that this man was "proclaiming to *be* (εἶναι) the famous Alexander of Macedon."[50]

There is, indeed, nothing in Dio's account indicating that Pseudo-Alexander was seen as Alexander reincarnated by anyone. If that had been the general understanding, he would probably not have been welcomed with such enthusiasm and utmost respect as he was. Although metempsychosis was held to be a principle of nature in certain more philosophical and eclectic circles, not least in Platonic and Pythagorean thinking, it was never a mainstream belief, as it ran so fundamentally against the traditional conviction that physical continuity was an absolute prerequisite for a complete individual survival. That one's very identity was inseparable from the unity of one's original body and soul remained, at this point, still the dominant notion.[51] Reincarnated with a *new* body, without his original flesh and bones, Alexander would simply no longer be himself.

Although one cannot rule out that some more philosophically inclined people could have held the pretender to be the reincarnation of Alexander, the prevailing understanding of metempsychosis as something incompatible with individual survival makes any belief in this pretender being the reincarnated conqueror, all in all, inconsistent with the deference and excitement with which he was met. This also explains the

49 Groag 1909: 254; cf. Kos 1991: 189.

50 Cass. Dio 80.18, my emphasis.

51 Cf. Rohde 1925: 5, 9; Clarke 1999: 115, 157; Endsjø 2009: 1-2, 24-30.

general indifference Caracalla received when he himself proclaimed to be the reincarnation of Alexander.

A dead and disembodied *hērōs*?

If Pseudo-Alexander was seen as a disembodied *hērōs*, it would have been in accordance with his claim that he really was Alexander. Even though severed from their bodies, the dead souls of *hērōes* were still the same persons as when they were alive, and Alexander had already been venerated as a *hērōs* for centuries in various places in the Eastern Mediterranean. A heroic return of Alexander would not be in contradiction, either, with the fact that his dead body remained in the mausoleum in Alexandria,[52] as a return as a *hērōs* would mean that it was only his soul that had manifested itself.

But forever disconnected from the remains of their physical bodies, being a *hērōs* did not equal that of attaining immortality, which according to traditional beliefs always required the continuous union of the soul with the physical body. *Hērōes* were the fortunate *dead* disembodied souls that were the subject of chthonic cult and at liberty, to a certain degree, to intervene into the realm of the living.

If Dio held that his *daimōn* really was who he said he was, or, at least, did not rule out the possibility that this was the case, this would also be in accordance with the traditional understanding of a disembodied *hērōs* – not least considering that *daimones* was one of the traditional terms used for such powerful dead souls. This is, moreover, in agreement with how most modern scholars maintain that Dio held Pseudo-Alexander to be a spiritual figure.[53]

52 Whereas Septimius Severus had closed the tomb in 199, Caracalla apparently had it reopened when visiting it in 215. In 390 Libanius referred to the body still being on display in Alexandria. Cf. Cass. Dio 76.13.2; Hdn. 4.8.9; Lib. Or. 49.12.

53 Both Herbert B. Foster and Earnest Cary translated Dio's "*daimōn*" with "spirit" (Foster 1906: 100; Cary 1925: 473). Groag referred to Pseudo-Alexander as a "*Spuk*" in German, a "ghost" or "spectre," although simultaneously arguing that he may have been considered a deity (Groag 1909: 255, 253-55). More recently, M. Rahim Shayegan has translated Dio's *daimōn* with "soul" (Shayegan 2004: 298), Jesper Carlsen with "spirit"

The way Pseudo-Alexander just appeared and subsequently vanished was how such *hērōes*, *daimones*, *phasmata* or *eidōla* traditionally could manifest themselves for the living – although very rarely. In 490 B.C. many witnessed "a *phasma* of Theseus in arms" charging against the Persians at Marathon before he, too, vanished,[54] whereas the Messenians claimed that their seventh century B.C. leader Aristomenes was present as a *hērōs* at the battle of Leuctra in 371 B.C.[55] Later a whole number of *hērōes* appeared for a short time as *phasmata* in the battle against the Celts at Delphi in 279 B.C.[56]

That Pseudo-Alexander in reality was no ethereal spirit but a man of flesh and bone does not rule out that even some of those who met him could still *believe* that he was an incorporeal *hērōs*. Traditionally these apparitions could appear just as tangible as the Alexander pretender. The *hērōs* Echetlaeus, who also manifested himself at the battle of Marathon, slaughtered several Persians with a plough;[57] the unfortunate hunter Actaeon, who had been devoured by his own hounds, returned as an apparition (*eidōlon*) at some uncertain date only to ravage the lands of the Orchomenians;[58] the disembodied *daimōn* of one of Odyssey's crewmen kept on killing young girls in Temesa in Magna Graecia, until he was waylaid and defeated by an Olympic pugilist in 472 B.C., after which he disappeared in the sea.[59] Polycritus, an originally well respected citizen of fourth century B.C. Aetolia, appeared as a disembodied *phasma* or *daimōn* soon after his death, only to tear his own new-born child limb from limb and devour it in front of a horrified assembly, before vanishing as into thin air.[60]

(Carlsen 2016: 329), while C.T. Mallan called this figure the "phantasmagorical Alexander" (Mallan 2017: 143), and John Granger Cook "a spirit" and "a ghost" (Cook 2018: 253).

54 Plut. *Thes.* 35.5.

55 Paus. 4.32.4.

56 Paus. 10.23.2.

57 Paus. 1.32.5.

58 Paus. 9.38.5.

59 Paus. 6.6.10.

60 Phlegon *Mir.* 2.9-10.

The apprehensive but respectful manner, with which the Roman officials greeted this brazen impostor, seems consistent with how an incorporeal *hērōs* should be treated. As such it is probable that some of these officials, as well as some of those "who were in Thrace at the time" who reported this, may have held that this man apparently looking so much like the ancient conqueror could have been Alexander's *hērōs*.

Turning to the enthusiastic followers who celebrated Pseudo-Alexander with Bacchic rites, one finds, however, that their reception is quite contrary to the possibility of their seeing him as a disembodied *hērōs*. If this had been the case, he would instead have been honoured with a more sombre and chthonic cult. This euphoric welcome was also incompatible with how the exceptional returned *hērōes* usually were treated with considerable caution, due to their ambiguous nature and how they often resorted to violence.

A returned Alexander of flesh and bones?

If people held that this remarkable pretender was Alexander the Great himself in flesh and bone, the most obvious challenge to this belief was that he at this point was so absolutely dead and had been so for more than half a millennium, with his corpse on display in a mausoleum in Alexandria.

If this was the *deceased* Alexander returned, he must consequently have been resurrected from the dead, as almost casually suggested by M. Rahim Shayegan in a claim he, alas, does not elaborate any further.[61] But although always truly miraculous, being resurrected from the dead was not entirely impossible according to traditional Greek religion. Indeed, as I have previously tried to show systematically, this was one of the ways the gods made certain men and women physically immortal.[62] According to Greek beliefs, there was a whole number of men and women whom the gods had resurrected to eternal life, like Asclepius,[63] Heracles's mother

61 Shayegan 2004: 299.

62 Cf. Endsjø 2008: 423-24; 2009: 54-64.

63 Celsus according to Origen *C. Cels.* 3.22, 3.24; Justin *1 Apol.* 21.2; Theoph. *Ad. Autol.* 1.13.

Alcmene,[64] Achilles,[65] the Ethiopian king Memnon,[66] the infant Boeotian prince Melicertes,[67] at least one of the Dioscuri,[68] as well as the seventh century B.C. sage Aristeas of Proconnesus.[69]

There is also another possible explanation about what beliefs lay behind the momentous reception of Pseudo-Alexander. Some could have held that Alexander had come back without ever having died at all. Although this meant that they ignored, were unaware of, or were not convinced by the historic accounts of Alexander's death and the existence of his body in the mausoleum in Alexandria, this is a possibility that also may be examined more closely.

That someone somehow could have escaped death entirely for centuries was not at all impossible according to traditional Greek beliefs, as I have also detailed more extensively before.[70] Indeed, the vast majority whom the gods offered eternal life were not resurrected but, instead, just never died. The number of people with whom this allegedly happened to is extensive, just to mention Dionysus,[71] the quintessential superhero Heracles,[72] queen Ino of Thebes,[73] princess Orithyia of Athens,[74] the

64 Plut. *Rom.* 28.6, cf. 28.7-8.

65 *Aethiopis* according to Proclus *Chrest.* 4.2.198-200; Ibycus and Simonides according to the *Schol. Ap. Rhod.* 4.811-14; Pind. *Nem.* 4.49-50; *Ol.* 2.68-80; Eur. *Andr.* 1259-62; Eur. *IT* 435-38; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.811-14.

66 Pind. *Ol.* 2.79-80.

67 Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.3; Paus. 1.44.7.

68 *Cypria* according to Proclus *Chrest.* 4.1.106-9; Pind. *Nem.* 10.55-59, 75-90; *Pyth.* 11.61-64; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.11.2.

69 Hdt. 4.14; Celsus according to Origen *C. Cels.* 3.27.

70 Cf. Endsjø 2008: 424-26; 2009: 82-89.

71 Plut. *Pel.* 16.5; Origen *C. Cels.* 3.22; Paus. 3.18.11.

72 Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.7.7; Callim. *Hymn Dian.* 159-61; Diod. Sic. 4.38.4-5; Eur. *Heracl.* 9-12, 871-72, 910-14; Isoc. *Or.* 5.32; Origen *C. Cels.* 3.22; Paus. 3.18.11; Plut. *Pel.* 16.5; Soph. *Phil.* 727-29; *Thrac.* 1255-78; Theoc. *Id.* 24.83-84; Theoph. *Ad. Autol.* 1.13.

73 Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.3; Paus. 1.44.7.

74 Hdt. 7.189; Paus. 1.19.5, 5.19.1.

handsome youths Ganymede,[75] Tithonus,[76] and Hylas,[77] king Amphiaraus of Argos,[78] Helen of Troy,[79] Romulus, the first king of Rome,[80] and, according to the most ancient Greek sources, the entire generation of warriors who survived the wars of Thebes and Troy.[81]

As achieving physical immortality always equalled becoming divine, all of these men and women were turned into minor or, at times, greater gods, as they left humanity behind. As they were transformed into immortal deities, these figures no longer belonged in the human realm and were simultaneously translated to heaven or to lakes, the ocean, the underground, or some remote part of the earth. This was a belief that was still very much alive in the Roman Empire, as for example witnessed by the philosophically inclined Plutarch, who in the first century A.D. complained about "the masses (οἱ πολλοί)" continuing to hold that the gods could "send the *bodies* of good people with their souls to heaven."[82]

If the magnificent pretender was held to really be the deified and physically immortalized Alexander, it would also be in complete agreement with how he, in some places, already was venerated as a *god*, as in Erythrae, Bargylia, and perhaps even the province of Moesia Superior where Pseudo-Alexander first made his appearance. According to traditional beliefs, he must have been made physical immortal at some point if he were to be considered having become a true god.

75 *Il.* 20.232-35; *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 5.202-6; [Lucian] *Charid.* 7; Pind. *Ol.* 1.43-45; Sophocles according to Ath. 3.602e.

76 *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 5.218-38; Mimnermus *Fragment* 4. Sappho in a recently rediscovered poem first published by Michael Gronewald and Robert W. Daniel in *ZPE* 147 (2004) 1-8.

77 Theoc. *Id.* 13.43-73; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.1224-39.

78 Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.8, Pind. *Nem.* 9.23-27, 10.8-9; Diod. Sic. 4.65.8-9; Eur. *Supp.* 500-1, 925-26; Paus. 1.34.2, 2.23.2; Philostr. *Imag.* 1.27.1; Xen. *Cyn.* 1.8.

79 Eur. *Hel.* 1666-69; Isoc. *Hel.* 61; [Lucian] *Charid.* 6; Paus. 3.19.13; Apollod. *Epit.* 6.29.

80 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.56.2-3; Livy *Per.* 1.16.1-8; Plut. *Rom.* 27.5-28.8; Tert. *C. Marc.* 4.7.3; Tert. *Apol.* 21.23.

81 Hes. *Op.* 161-73, cf. *Od.* 4.561-65.

82 Plut. *Rom.* 27.8, 28.8, my emphasis.

These deified men and women, no longer at home in the mortal world, could never make more than limited returns to their original realm before they had to go back to where they now belonged.[83] The manner of Pseudo-Alexander's brief and momentous appearance was, as such, also reflecting this traditional pattern of return. That the pretender was held to have simply vanished in the end could easily be seen as the ultimate proof of his really being the mighty Macedonian ruler deified, as such an inexplicable disappearance was completely in agreement with how people who had been immortalized would leave after having briefly revisited the mortal realm. This was also the case when gods in general made their appearances.

Although there was no proof of anything supernatural prior to Pseudo-Alexander's inexplicable disappearance, there are, indeed, several factors in Dio's account that fit well with what would have been the case if he really was the physically immortal Alexander in accordance with traditional beliefs. First of all, how he appeared "in some unknown manner" meant that one could not rule out that he had just showed up miraculously, just the way he would have done if he now really had become divine. That the pretender was "resembling him [Alexander] in all manners in looks and appearance,"[84] as the almost thirty-three-year-old man he allegedly had been five centuries previously, was equally in agreement with his having become immortal, as this meant that he had received the agelessness intrinsic of divine nature. If this was Alexander immortalized, his looks really *should* be unaltered.

How Pseudo-Alexander was welcomed both by his most enthusiastic followers, who turned themselves into his personal Bacchic retinue and celebrated him with divine rites, and by the Roman officials, who were careful to show him no disrespect and to provide him with all his needs, was also in accordance with how a deified figure should be treated. This extraordinary reception was, moreover, something that could have convinced even more people that this actually was the famous conqueror returned immortalized. Such an understanding is thus also consistent

83 Cf. e.g. the return of Asclepius in Celsus according to Origen *C. Cels.* 3.24; of the Dioscuri in Eur. *Med.* 1642-79, and Paus. 4.16.9, 4.27.2-3, 3.16.2-3; of Aristeas of Proconnesus according to Hdt. 4.15, and Celsus according to Origen *C. Cels.* 3.27.

84 Cass. Dio 80.18.1.

with how those others "who were in Thrace at the time" apparently were not refuting Pseudo-Alexander's claims either.

Among those who were in the area at the time, may also have been a certain Epitynchanus who had procured the Vlahčeni inscription apparently presenting "Alexander" as a god. According to Edmund Groag and Marjeta Šašel Kos, Epitynchanus may have made this dedication in honour of Pseudo-Alexander,[85] something that may seem somewhat pointless if he did not accept that the pretender was who he said he was, the actually returned Alexander. How this "Alexander" is placed among other gods indicates that Epitynchanus understood him as a physically immortal god in accordance with traditional beliefs. Although one, of course, cannot be certain about the identification of this "Alexander" with the pretender, the inscription is a match in both space and time. The site of the dedication is south in what was Moesia Superior, the province where Pseudo-Alexander first appeared, whereas Epitynchanus was a contemporary of the pretender, as he presents himself as a slave or servant of the Roman senator Furius Octavianus, who served under Caracalla, Elagabalus, and Severus Alexander.[86]

For anyone holding the pretender to be Alexander returned and deified, to receive him with Bacchic rites normally reserved for Dionysus was especially appropriate. The historical Alexander exhibited a particular affinity with this god, often seeing himself emulating the feats of the deity. If the famed conqueror himself had managed to become divine like what previously had happened to Dionysus, it could, thus, seem logical to honour him with the rites proper for his deified idol. The examples of Alexander's devotion are many. He believed, for example, that he was following in the footsteps of Dionysus in his attempt to conquer India, celebrating the discovery of ivy in this far-away land as proof of how his divine idol previously had vanquished this realm.[87] When returning from his Indian campaign in 325 B.C., Alexander even had "his army wearing wreaths of ivy … in imitation of Father Liber [Dionysus]," as reported by

85 Groag 1909: 253-55; Kos 1991: 188-89.

86 Groag 1909: 255.

87 Arr. *Anab.* 5.1.6-5.2.3; cf. Curt. 9.10.24.

Pliny.[88] Curtius notes that a bit later in the Persian province of Carmania, Alexander let his troops in a similar way "imitate" what he considered the original procession of a Dionysus, in a Bacchic revel that lasted seven days.[89] The close bond between Alexander and Dionysus was also recognized by Dio Cassius, as seen in his remark on Caracalla's use of elephants in another attempt to emulate Alexander: "He might seem to be imitating Alexander, or rather, perhaps, Dionysus."[90]

The "certain sacred rites" (ἱερά τινα) – including the burial of a wooden horse – Pseudo-Alexander performed at night just before he disappeared[91] could also have been seen as another indication of his divinity. This mirrored how both deified humans and other gods sometimes ended their temporary return to the mortal realm by initiating various rites. About 250 years after his resurrection and immortalization, Aristeas of Proconnesus reappeared briefly to the Italic Metapontians, bidding them to set up an altar to Apollo and a statue of himself.[92] In Euripides' *Helen*, the deified Dioscuri intervened and told that due to the will of Zeus their sister Helen would also be made immortal and the object of libations and offering, just like themselves.[93] Euripides similarly made the once mortal Dionysus in *Bacchae* wanting to end his visit in Thebes by establish his mysteries there, as he had already done in numerous cities inhabited by both Greeks and barbarians.[94]

A question of bodily continuity

The focus in traditional Greek religion was generally not on whether someone had been resurrected or not, but on the fact that these people were held to have achieved physical immortality, and how this always

88 Plin. *HN* 16.62; cf. the Bacchic celebrations of Alexander's soldiers when discovering ivy in India according to Arr. *Anab.* 5.2.

89 Curt. 9.10.24-27; Kos 1991: 187.

90 Cass. Dio 78.7.4; cf. Carlsen 2016: 325.

91 Cass. Dio 80.18.3.

92 Hdt. 4.15.1.

93 Eur. *Hel.* 1666-69.

94 Eur. *Bacch.* 13-22.

involved absolute bodily continuity. But here, of course, lay the big challenge in regard to a returned Alexander of flesh and blood, regardless of whether he was held to have been resurrected or not having died at all.

The general acceptance of Alexander's death and the very presence of his dead body in Alexandria ran, of course, against any belief that this legendary figure never had died. That he should have been resurrected at some point before his appearance in the eastern provinces was, similarly, hard to reconcile with the widely accepted fate of his corpse. Whereas Asclepius, Achilles, Aristeas, and the other men and women generally considered to have been raised from the dead to physical immortality were all resurrected just briefly after their death, the presence of his body in Alexandria meant that Alexander would have been resurrected centuries after his demise. This makes the idea of a resurrected Alexander most problematic in light of the traditional notion that individual identity always comprised of both soul and the original body.

Once the body was destroyed, for example by decay, fire, or consumption, physical resurrection was consequently no longer possible.[95] Although the gods could heal certain wounds or reassemble a body that had been neatly cut up, they were not able to recreate flesh or bones that had been annihilated. These essential limits of divine powers were most obviously exhibited in the fate of ancient Pelops who had to be resurrected with a prosthesis of ivory, after Demeter had devoured his shoulder when he was dead and dismembered.[96] It is apparently the same logic behind how some Greeks denied the future resurrection of the dead at the end of time, while simultaneously accepting the resurrection of Jesus, as witnessed for example in First Corinthians and in Acts' depiction of Paul at Areopagus. Whereas the general resurrection involved countless people whose bodies had been annihilated, Jesus had been raised before his body in any way had deteriorated, although he forever had to keep his stigmata.[97]

95 Cf. Endsjø 2009: 153-55.

96 *Schol. to Lycophron Alex.* 152; Pind. *Ol.* 1.52; cf. Endsjø 2009: 154-55.

97 *1 Cor.* 15.12. In *Acts* 17.31-32 Paul was met with interest from his Athenian audience when talking about Jesus' resurrection "*from* the dead (ἐκ νεκρῶν)" but was ridiculed as he referred to the general resurrection "*of* the dead (νεκρῶν)" (my emphasis). Cf. Endsjø 2008: 431-34; 2009: 147-52.

Although Alexander's body was yet not gone in the early third century A.D., the corpse still remaining in the famous mausoleum in Alexandria was not at all unchanged. The corpse had, as Curtius relates, been embalmed by Egyptians and Chaldeans "according to their customs,"[98] something that most probably meant that it had been eviscerated and had had its brain removed, as this was the usual practice in Egyptian mummification. How Octavian, as related by Dio Cassius, later on caused "a piece of the nose" to be broken off when visiting the mausoleum,[99] did not just further exacerbate the state of the body but demonstrated how brittle the corpse had become after centuries on display.

That anyone should be able to be resurrected with one's brains and entrails gone ran against the most basic traditional Greek understanding of physical continuity necessary for any proper further existence. The missing nose tip and the absolute frangibility of Alexander's physical state did not help in any way either. If resurrected at this point, this meant that one was dealing with a miserable reanimated and partly noseless corpse without brains and other internal organs, and which easily fell apart – in no way a figure that possibly could have received such enthusiasm and respect as in the account of Dio Cassius.

Convoluted narratives

The more generally accepted facts about the fate of Alexander after his death do not, however, stand all by themselves. There are also intricate accounts of Alexander's dead body that could have made people uncertain whether the eviscerated body in the mausoleum in Alexandria really was him. Peculiar stories tell of the body being abducted or swapped. Strabo and Pausanias, for instance, related how Ptolemy kidnapped the body.[100] Around the same time as Pseudo-Alexander made his appearance, Aelian told of how Ptolemy, right after Alexander's death, secured

98 Curt. 10.10.9-13.

99 Cass. Dio 51.16.5.

100 Strabo 17.1.8; Paus. 1.6.3; cf. Erskine 2002. See also Curt. 10.10.20, where Ptolemy more simply "transported the king's body to Memphis, and from there a few years

the body by secretly conveying it in the most pedestrian manner, while leaving behind a magnificent bier of silver, gold and ivory with a dummy of the king to fool his rival Perdiccas.[101]

Another way Alexander's body appeared not so straightforward is seen in how it allegedly was impervious to corruption the first days after his death in Babylon. Quintus Curtius Rufus maintained that after seven days in the "burning heat" of Mesopotamia, the body was "not spoiled by any decay, not even by the least discoloration. Nor had his face yet lost that vigour which is associated with the soul."[102] Plutarch maintained essentially the same thing, noting that the body "remained pure and not decomposed" for "many days ... although it lay uncared for in hot and stifling places."[103] The apparently miraculous state of Alexander's corpse was also stressed by how the morticians, according to Curtius, "at first did not dare to touch him" until "after they had prayed that it might be right and proper for mortals to handle a god."[104] Although this involved non-Hellenic caretakers, the presentation reflects the classical Greek notion that incorruptibility was the very sign of a divine body, although, here, first witnessed when Alexander was dead. If the corpse had remained in this way completely unaltered, Alexander could still have been resurrected according to the logic of traditional Greek beliefs, even centuries after his death.

A few decades before Pseudo-Alexander made his appearance, the Greek historian Arrian conveyed a particular narrative that indicates that even Alexander's death was not always considered entirely unambiguous. According to this, the mortally ill Alexander wanted to stage his own disappearance by throwing himself into the waters of the Euphrates, in order to have people believe "he had gone away," obviously with both body and soul, "to join the gods." His plans were, however, impeded by his wife Roxana, after which he gave himself up to lamentations over

later to Alexandria," and Diod. Sic. 18.26.3, where Ptolemy just "went to Syria" where he received the body.

101 Ael. *VH* 12.64.

102 Curt. 10.10.12.

103 Plut. *Alex.* 77.3.

104 Curt. 10.10.13.

his lost chance to be considered to have achieved immortality.[105] This incident was also retold in Pseudo-Callisthenes's Alexander Romance, probably in the third century A.D. Here the debilitated Alexander had "started to crawl on all four towards the river" when stopped by his wife, after which he chastised her for "taking away my glory."[106]

The way Alexander allegedly planned to vanish without a trace, in order to make people believe that he had been taken with body and soul to the realm of the immortals, perfectly mirrored the traditional belief about various men and women being turned into gods both in mythical and historical times. In this narrative, Alexander played directly into the ancient conviction that when someone had mysteriously disappeared, this was by itself an indication that he or she had been swept away by the gods and made physically immortal,[107] as seen, for example, with Heracles,[108] Oedipus,[109] princess Orithyia,[110] Romulus,[111] the Olympic boxer Cleomedes who vanished from a closed chest in 484 B.C.,[112] Apollonius of Tyana who disappeared from within a temple around A.D. 100,[113] and, perhaps, also with Antinous, Hadrian's handsome lover, who became the subject of extensive cult after he drowned in the waters of the Nile in A.D. 130 and possibly was never found again.[114]

Although both Arrian and Pseudo-Callisthenes relate how Alexander did not succeed in his desire to disappear in the Euphrates, it is not inconceivable that this story could have contributed to some actually believing that such a greatly lauded figure really had vanished and become physically immortal. Popular beliefs do not automatically follow historical facts.

105 Arr. *Anab.* 7.27.
106 [Callisthenes] *Alexander Romance* 3.32.
107 Cf. Edwards 1985: 223; Endsjø 2008: 425-27; 2009: 91-99.
108 Diod. Sic. 4.38.4-5.
109 Soph. *OC* 1656-64.
110 Paus. 1.19.5.
111 Plut. *Rom.* 27.5, 28.8; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.56.2-3; Tert. *Apol.* 21.23.
112 Plut. *Rom.* 28.4-5, cf. 27.8, 28.8; Paus. 6.9.7-8; Celsus according to Origen *C. Cels.* 3.33.
113 Philostr. *VA* 8.30-31.
114 Origen *C. Cels.* 3.36, 5.62, 8.9; Celsus according to Origen *C. Cels.* 3.36. Cf. Rohde 1925: 78, 538; Endsjø 2009: 96, 102.

A pattern of contradictions

How there seems to have been disagreement on whether Alexander was to be honoured as a god or as a *hērōs*, with what that entailed of his having been made physically immortal or just having survived as a disembodied soul, was not unique.[115] The accounts of even some of the most well-known men and women generally held to have been deified were not at all unequivocal. While Heracles was usually seen as a god due to his body having disappeared without a trace,[116] there were those, like the Peloponnesian Sicyonians, who instead venerated him as a disembodied *hērōs*.[117] According to the *Odyssey*, Heracles's shadow (*eidōlon*) is, even more confusingly, found in Hades, while he *himself* "is feasting forever with the immortal gods."[118] In the second century A.D., Celsus felt the need to insist that the resurrected Asclepius, when seen by people who entreated him for healing, was not an "apparition (*phasma*)" or, in other words, a *hērōs*, but Asclepius "himself," consequently deified and physically immortalized.[119]

Other times the very basis of the immortalization narrative was challenged. Whereas most sources hold that Achilles after his death was translated to some place at the end of the earth by his divine mother, Thetis, and there resurrected to eternal life,[120] the ever-influential Homer squarely placed him as a miserable dead soul in Hades.[121] Various authorities disagree on whether Iphigenia was sacrificed by her father or made physically immortal as she was swept away the very moment she was about to be killed.[122] The account of Romulus having become a god after disappearing in a horrible storm was circulated along with reports

115 Cass. Dio 56.34.2, 67.2.6, 69.2.5, 79.9.

116 Soph. *Phil.* 727-29; Eur. *Heracl.* 12, 9-10, 871-72, 910-11; Diod. Sic. 4.38.4-5; Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.7.7; Origen *C. Cels.* 3.22.

117 Paus. 2.10.1.

118 *Od.* 11.601-2, my emphasis.

119 Celsus according to Origen *C. Cels.* 3.24.

120 See supra note 65.

121 *Od.* 11.488-91; cf. Edwards 1985: 221.

122 Iphigenia was sacrificed according to Aesch. *Ag.* 1523-29, 1555-59, Soph. *El.* 530-51, and Eur. *El.* 1020-26, whereas she was turned into a goddess according to Hesiod in Paus. 1.43.1, *Cypria* in Proclus *Chrest.* 4.1.141-43 and Eur. *IA* 1608, 1622.

of how he had been murdered, cut up limb for limb, and his body parts secreted away by the most noble citizens.[123] Claims that Jesus's body had actually been stolen by his disciples similarly, of course, never stopped the immense success of the accounts of how he had been resurrected to physical immortality.[124] Moreover, although the empty tomb in Mark was in line with traditional Greek beliefs around vanished people who had been deified, and Luke, as well as most later authorities, insisted that the resurrected Jesus was of "flesh and bones,"[125] Paul in his epistles seems to have understood the nature of the immortalized Jesus more akin to that of a classical *hērōs*, as he repeatedly insisted that flesh was generally not included in the resurrection of the dead.[126]

None of these more contradictory aspects kept many in the ancient world from believing that these originally mortal men and women all had become physically immortal. This variety of claims was, indeed, not exceptional but typical of how traditions connected to various central figures and events frequently varied according to different literary sources and local cults. It is generally often difficult to establish absolute truths within traditional Greek beliefs. As pointedly made clear by Paul Veyne, the Greek worldview meant that people were often at liberty to draw their own conclusions as the sources so often did not align the most basic facts.[127]

It is difficult not to recognize the parallels between the conflicting accounts pertaining to Alexander and to some of these other figures who were commonly held to have achieved physical immortality. As was the case with so many other deified mortals, all the most plausible explanations about Alexander's fate could be seen as countered by odd stories making everything seem opaquer. Most importantly, the already existing cult of Alexander as someone who had been turned into a god could simply make anything pointing to this not really being possible seem irrelevant.

123 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.56.2-3; Livy *Per.* 1.16.1-8; Plut. *Rom.* 27.3-28.3; Dio Cassius in John of Antioch fr. 11 Mariev.

124 Cf. e.g. Matthew 28.13-15; Justin *D. Tryph.* 68.

125 *Mark* 16.5-8; *Luke* 24.39; cf. Endsjø 2009: 160-83.

126 Cf. e.g. *1 Cor.* 1.29, 15.50; *Col.* 2.11.

127 Veyne 1988: 8.

This is the background against which one must have in mind when re-examining Dio Cassius's description of the third century A.D. people, who reacted with such reverence and enthusiasm upon coming face to face with this charismatic character. If one tries to see it from the point of view of those who actually were there, one is suddenly encountered by this dazzling figure who proclaimed that he was Alexander of Macedon, once again returned, a man who already was recognized as a god in various cults. Hundreds upon hundreds of ecstatic followers donned their Bacchic attire and simply followed him. All dignitaries treated both him and his retinue with the upmost respect. No one dared to contradict that this really was the mighty Alexander, and he truly looked the part. Apparently, nobody argued that a physically immortal Alexander was less likely than a deified Asclepius, Heracles, Romulus, or some of those other figures, whose tales of immortalization were also countered by conflicting reports. Who, then, were there to point out that the apparent return of this deified conqueror was not actually possible according to what most authorities would tell about his fate?

The most probable conviction

Many of the soldiers, magistrates, procurators and other officials who received the Alexandrian pretender with such utmost respect, could very well have suspected or have been convinced that this was the disembodied *hērōs* of that celebrated potentate, in accordance with what Dio Cassius may have considered a possibility. Some of the others "who were in Thrace at the time" may also have held this to be the case. The momentous returns of such mighty dead souls, although always miraculous, were believed to have taken place at least since the end of Archaic times, and Alexander fit the picture perfectly, having already been venerated as a *hērōs* for centuries. But Alexander returned as a dead and chthonic *hērōs* was, however, not at all compatible with how Pseudo-Alexander was welcomed with exaltation and divine rites by his impromptu Bacchic retinue of four hundred men.

In this way, one finds that the only explanation that fits with how Pseudo-Alexander was received not only with respect, but *also* with enthusiasm and divine rites, is that those who encountered him either accepted the pretender's own claim, or were so much in doubt that they would not deny the possibility that he really *was* that legendary conqueror, once again returned in flesh and bones. Such a conviction was in accordance with the most ancient and enduring beliefs. As far back as it is possible to go in Greek history, the gods had chosen to deify certain men and women by making them physically immortal, either through resurrection or through altering their mortal nature before they died.

Everything about the pretender was in agreement with these traditional beliefs: he was already honoured as a god in certain places; his brief return mirrored how other deified men and women at times came back to the realm of mortals; how he "appeared in some unknown manner" was just the way divine figures generally manifested themselves most abruptly; both the reserved and the jubilant reception were appropriate if he had truly been deified; how he resembled Alexander "in all manners in looks and appearance" was as it should be, if he had truly become ageless and immortal; his clearly physical body reflected how the bodies of the gods traditionally consisted of flesh and bones; and the mysterious rites he performed in the end were in the manner of the way deified mortals and other gods at times introduced new cults upon their returns.

Although records of his death centuries before and the presence of his poorly preserved body in Alexandria ran counter to how immortality required absolute physical continuity, there were also the parallel stories indicating other possibilities – similar to how opposing narratives were often connected to various other individuals held to have been become physically immortal.

How he simply vanished in the end – in complete agreement with how the appearance of any immortal figure should end – could as such have seemed like the ultimate proof for those who believed that this really was the original Alexander the Great who had come back, deified and physically immortal.

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HERODIAN'S SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS: LITERARY PORTRAIT AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

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Summary: In this article I offer a comprehensive examination of Herodian's narrative of the emperor Septimius Severus, with a focus on his literary programme and historical methodology. First, I corroborate the view of recent scholarship as regards Herodian's complex characterization of Septimius Severus by offering new insights into Herodian's technique of progressively shaping the emperor's portrait with great richness and complexity. Second, I show that Herodian goes to some trouble to rework his source-material, mainly Cassius Dio's *History*, in order to favour a more positive reading of Severus, which best suits his themes and interests. Third, I argue that Herodian constantly employs *intratextuality* in order to develop substantial structural, thematic, and verbal associations and comparisons between Severus and other historical agents and thus draw the reader to perceive his history in a dovetailed and comparative manner. Thus, I propose that Herodian's portrait of Severus is his own innovation, and that it should be tailored to his overall narrative method of providing a cohesive, unified, and intelligible re-configuration of the fragmented and chaotic post-Marcus world. I show that Severus' portrait has been shaped by Herodian's universalising view of imperial history, and that it is used to provide a sense of continuation and repetition among separate reigns by establishing thematic oppositions (mainly between activity and cowardice, and between tyrannical and enlightened behaviour), which recur as a unifying factor for his work as a whole.

Introduction

The Roman emperor Septimius Severus is a figure of considerable prominence in Herodian's *History of the Roman Empire*, and occupies a unique place in the total plan of his work. Recent scholarship has been especially perceptive in noting that Severus is "the most important, and certainly

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the most complex character in the whole of Herodian's history."[1] In comparison to the other main literary accounts of Severus, specifically those of Cassius Dio and the *Historia Augusta*, Herodian's is perhaps the most elaborate and innovative in terms of both its narrative technique and content.[2] It is therefore unsurprising that Herodian's portrayal of the emperor has exercised considerable influence on Severus' reception in later times.[3]

This article aims to advance our understanding of Herodian's portrait of Septimius Severus, with a focus especially on Herodian's literary programme and historical methodology. A systematic comparison with the corresponding account in Cassius Dio's *Roman History*, allows for detailed analysis of Herodian's compositional devices of manipulating his source-material in order to suit his own individual themes and emphases.[4] Indeed, as shall be shown below, there are many occasions on which Herodian reshapes Dio's account in order to favour a more positive reading of Severus and his reign. This view, I suggest, should not be seen in terms of Herodian's use of (now lost) 'biased' sources, as Rubin has emphatically put forward.[5] Zimmermann has offered a good criticism of Rubin's theory and drawn attention to Herodian's literary-rhetorical method of adapting Cassius Dio's work in order to present compelling,

1 Pitcher 2018a: 243.

2 On the sources about Severus' history, see, more generally, Kreutzer 1882.

3 See Hidber 2006: 240 with n. 225, who refers to Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

4 It is now generally accepted that Herodian knew Dio's work well and that he used and remolded his text. See, recently, Hidber 2006: 63, 68-70; Galimberti 2014: 15, 18; Scott 2018a: 438 with n. 14 for further bibliography. On Herodian's reworking of Dio's text through omissions, expansions, alterations, or even distortions, see e.g. Alföldy 1971: 431-32; Kolb 1972: 29-30, 43-44, 47, 160-61; Scheithauer 1990; Zimmermann 1999: 43-251; Scott 2018a: 438 with n. 14, 442-45, 449-50, 451-52; Chrysanthou 2020. Kreutzer 1882: 222-24 draws attention to Herodian's use of Cassius Dio in his account of Severus' accession.

5 See Rubin 1980: 92-129, arguing against Bersanetti 1938 who underlines Herodian's propensity to rhetoric and romance, and thus his subsequent interest in creating a contrast between Severus' industry and Niger's sloth. Rubin, on the contrary, suggests that Herodian, despite his anti-Severan feelings, has used a pro-Severan source in his narrative of Severus' war against Niger and a pro-Albinian source in his treatment of the relations between Severus and Albinus.

often one-sided contoured pictures of Septimius Severus and his opponents that allow general laws of history to emerge.[6]

In this article, I build upon Zimmermann's approach to offer a comprehensive examination of Severus' specific function in Herodian's work, both within the immediate context of the narrative of his reign and as part of Herodian's history and literary method as a whole. In order to do this, I divide my discussion into the following parts, which sequentially reflect the different phases of Severus' career: (1) Severus' route to sole power; (2) Severus' trap of the Praetorians and his *adventus* in Rome (193 C.E.); (3) Severus against Niger; (4) Severus against Albinus; (5) Severus' stay in Rome; (6) Severus' Eastern Expedition; (7) Severus, his sons, and his last years.

I argue that Herodian's portrait of Severus is informed by his overall understanding of the post-Marcus world. It illustrates how Herodian uses his emperors as a means to unite, through vigorous comparisons and contrasts, the different parts of his work in an elaborate intratextual web. The final effect is an orderly, coherent, and sequential narrative analysis of a most disordered and chaotic period of Roman history.

1. Severus' route to sole rule

In his introductory sketch of Severus' character, Herodian offers significant information about the emperor's qualities, especially his efficiency and vigour in administrative tasks, his energetic/passionate spirit, his endurance of tough lifestyle, and his sharp mind and strength of action (2.9.2).[7] All of these details give the reader a (quite reliable) taste of Severus' character and reign. At the same time, they are intended to depict

[6] Zimmermann 1999: 177-203. Other scholars have focused on Herodian's rhetorical design rather than 'biased tendencies' as well. See e.g. Fuchs 1895: 227: "Did. Iulianus, Pesc. Niger und Clod. Albinus werden zugunsten des Severus mit Absicht und stilistischer Berechnung auf Kosten der historischen Wahrheit in den Schatten gestellt." See also Sidebottom 1998: 2788: "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."

[7] Citations of Herodian's *History* are made according to the text of Lucarini 2005, while those of Dio's work are according to the text of Boissevain 1895-1931, with the 'reformed'

Severus as a foil for Didius Julianus, who was already made emperor in Rome, and Pescennius Niger, who was proclaimed emperor in Syria.[8]

A brief comparison with Cassius Dio drives this point home. Dio moves his narrative focus from Rome to the frontier, and refers to Severus, Niger and Albinus and their position as governors of Pannonia, Syria, and Britain respectively (74[73].14.3). He then mentions the incident of the three stars in Rome which portended Julianus' dreadful fate (74[73].14.4-5). Dio appraises Severus positively as the "shrewdest (cf. δεινότατος) of the three leaders":[9] he understood in advance that, after Julianus' removal from power, the three would fight against each other for the empire. He thus decided to win over Albinus by appointing him Caesar (74[73].15.1-2). As far as Niger is concerned, Dio says that he "was proud of having been summoned by the populace" and that "Severus had no hopes of him" (74[73].15.2). By contrast, Herodian cuts away any reference to Albinus and the divine sign in Rome. He prefers to expatiate upon Severus' qualities, and particularly his opposition to Niger.

That Herodian frequently transfers or omits details found in Dio's account in order to tidy his narrative and aid its focus on the main historical players, suggesting at the same time a comparative reading of them through creating intratextual analogies and contrasts, is especially apparent in his following account of Severus' career. For example, while in Cass. Dio 75[74].3.1-3 a more detailed report of *omina* pointing to Severus' preeminence is placed after Severus' defeat of Julianus and assumption of power,[10] Herodian relates Severus' omens of empire after

numeration of Boissevain, which Cary's Loeb edition 1914-1927 also uses, followed by the 'traditional' numeration in brackets. For the translations of ancient texts I use those of the Loeb editions – for Herodian's text, in particular, that of Whittaker 1969-1970 – slightly adapted at some points. It is important to notice that Dio's original text about Severus' reign is not extant, and that for this paper we rely on the epitomized or excerpted versions of it. See further Scott 2018b: 2-3 on the reconstruction of Dio's text.

8 On the contrasting portrayals of Severus and Niger, see Bersanetti 1938; Sidebottom 1998: 2808; De Blois 1998: 3417; Marasco 1998: 2850-52; Hidber 2006: 207-10; Hekster 2017: 121-22; Pitcher 2018a: 243: "Niger vacillates; Septimius Severus acts," 246.

9 Bering-Staschewski 1981: 61-62 thinks that δεινότατος here bears negative connotations, meaning "most dangerous."

10 Herodian is generally more averse than Dio to giving detailed accounts of omens. See Hidber 2006, 88-89. Closely relevant to this is the fact that Herodian, unlike Dio (cf.

his introduction of Severus into the narrative, more precisely during his explication of Severus' aspirations to power. This section comes after the accession of his opponents Julianus and Niger (2.9.3-6). Herodian's choice, I suggest, has the effect not only of abridging the narrative,[11] but also of aiding reflection progressively on the similarities and differences between the circumstances of accession of Severus, Niger, and Julianus.[12]

Turning to Severus' assumption of imperial power itself, one can notice that Herodian constructs his narrative in the most calculated manner in order to make his story of Severus' accession a thought-provoking *comparandum* with that of Niger, which was reported earlier in the *History*.[13] The detail about Severus' attempt "to sound out the feelings of the army" (2.9.7) recalls Niger's similar practice before his soldiers in Syria: "This is why I have come before you to ask what your feelings are" (2.8.3). It even harks back to Herodian's account of Pertinax's accession, especially the fact that Pertinax and Commodus' murderers "decided to go to the praetorians' camp and test the feelings of the soldiers" (2.2.1). Pertinax himself, before his first meeting with the senate, rejected all of the imperial honours "until he discovered the senate's mind" (2.3.2).

Severus and Niger are linked by further verbal and structural echoes. "The first thing Severus did," as Herodian says, "was to make overtures to small groups of legionary commanders and tribunes and senior centurions, talking about the Roman Empire" (2.9.7). Precise verbal echoes

76[75].13.1-2; 77[76].3.4; 77[76].11.1-2) does not pay attention to Severus' interest in decoding signs. Cf. SHA Sev. 2.8-9; 3.9; 4.3. On Severus' attitude towards astrology, see Rubin 1980: 33-38.

[11] Notice that Herodian omits most of the signs and dreams reported by Dio (75[74].3.1-3) and focuses on "the most recent and most important of these dreams, which was also a revelation of Severus' highest expectations" (2.9.4). Indeed, the story of the horse and Pertinax reflects an important aspect of Severan propaganda, namely Severus' (self-)association with Pertinax, which Herodian is keen to revisit (cf. 2.9.8; 2.9.11; 2.10.1; 2.10.4; 2.10.9; 2.13).

[12] Pitcher 2018a: 244 notices that Herodian mentions the dreams "after his initial assessment of the future emperor's character *and* the description of how he swung into action...Thus, Herodian's narrator, by delaying the revelation that Septimius has been having these dreams in favour of an account which initially presents the execution of his plan as a reaction to breaking news, reinforces by apparent *praxis* his description of Septimius as the sort of man who makes decisions and acts upon them in a flash."

[13] The link between the two stories has been stressed by Fuchs 1884: 10.

connect this section with the account of the same actions performed by Niger (2.7.7).[14] But there is a more subtle effect as well, for the similarities also point up a valuable contrast between the two men, especially Niger's lack of action and Severus' energy. We are told that Niger discussed with his colleagues in order that the news he was receiving from Rome would be spread (2.7.7). For he "hoped that no one would have any difficulty in supporting him, if they heard that he for his part was not making some insidious bid for power, but going to assist the Romans in response to their call" (2.7.8). Severus, on the other hand, tries to stir them up to action by undermining his opponents and pretending that his primary aim was to punish Pertinax's murderers, rather than winning power for himself (2.9.7-10).[15]

Herodian explains the Pannonians' easy submission to Severus' duplicity by means of an ethnographic comment: "they were intellectually dull and slow-witted when it comes to crafty words or subtle actions" (2.9.11). It is noteworthy that in the abridged version of Dio's text there is no depiction of the Pannonians as dull-witted.[16] In Herodian's narrative, the digression on the Pannonians evokes Niger's accession-story again, for it is highly reminiscent of the similar excursus on the Syrians there.[17] In both instances, an elaborate characterization of a nation serves to highlight those traits that explain their willingness to support the emperor – "the Syrians were erratic people, always ready to upset established rule, and they loved Niger" (2.7.9) – while illuminating at the same time some of the characteristics of the emperors (cf. 2.7.9-10), which typify their behaviour and their reigns, and help to explicate their success and fall. Thus, duplicity will prove so successful a key to Severus' survival, while Niger's fondness for shows and festivals turns out to be central to his demise (cf. 2.8.9).

The drive to compare and contrast Severus with Niger does not end

[14] Fuchs 1896: 230-31 n. 36; Zimmermann 1999: 172.

[15] On Severus as the avenger of Pertinax, see also SHA *Sev*. 5.4-5; Aur. Vict. *Caes*. 20.10; Eutr. 18.

[16] Pitcher 2018b: 225, though see Dio's comments in 49.36. Cf. a similar description of Pannonians as simple-minded in another context in Tac. *Ann*. 1.16.

[17] See Zimmermann 1999: 172; Hekster 2017: 121. In general, see Zimmermann 1999: 171-73 for a schematic presentation of the most important correspondences between the two accession-stories.

here. Herodian reports that Severus, "after he knew the temper of the Pannonians, began to send out messages to the adjoining provinces and to all the governors of the people in the North subject to Rome, all of whom he persuaded through generous promises and hopes, and won them over without any trouble" (2.9.12). Niger, on the other hand, "was absolutely delighted at this [i.e. his proclamation] and believed that the will of the Roman people and the enthusiasm of his own men in the East firmly established his claim to control the empire" (2.8.7). Closely connected to this is the fact that, whereas Severus himself sends messages and tries to win supporters, Niger gains allies only "when the rumour flew in every country of Asia Minor" (2.8.7). Just as before, so here Severus appears to be a man of action, while Niger appears to be much more passive, expecting things to happen. Crucially, Herodian reports that, when enthusiastic offers for help were sent to Niger, he rejected them because he believed that he secured imperial rule (2.8.8). Severus, on the other hand, does not take anything for granted and succeeds through policy and action, trickery and deception, in gaining allies for himself (cf. 2.10.1).[18]

The following account of Severus' appearance before the Illyrian troops reinforces the sharp dividing line between Severus and Niger through close intratextual correspondences. First, Severus' adoption of the name of Pertinax as a means of winning soldierly and popular support (2.10.1) recalls Niger's earlier connection with Pertinax.[19] However, there it has been stressed that "Niger had a reputation for modelling his life on the example of Pertinax" (2.7.5), while here it is Severus who personally encourages this reputation. Once again Severus' action shines and sparkles against Niger's passivity.[20]

Likewise, Severus' speech which follows resonates with Niger's speech in Antioch before his proclamation as emperor in many respects.[21] Severus stresses the fact that he does not want to disregard "the Roman empire as it falls in ruins (cf. τήν τε Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν μὴ περιιδεῖν

[18] See also Zimmermann 1999: 172, 175.

[19] Hekster 2017: 121.

[20] Zimmermann 1999: 175. See also Sidebottom 1998: 2808: "But the claims of both are shown to be false."

[21] Also formulaic is the language which introduces the two speeches: 2.10.1 ~ 2.8.1.

ἐρριμμένην)" (2.10.2). He also mentions that he never before had such hopes (cf. πρότερον μὲν οὐδέποτε ἀντιποιησαμένῳ τοιαύτης ἐλπίδος), and invites his audience through a direct second-person plural to evoke their knowledge of his loyalty to the emperors (2.10.2). Severus' language and rhetoric here are highly reminiscent of Niger's opening words to his soldiers. Niger begins his speech with an emphasis on his personal qualities of gentleness and caution, which he (like Severus) assumes that his audience members are possibly aware of (2.8.2).[22] Niger, moreover, like Severus, declares that he is not simply moved to action by his personal choice and some irrational hope (cf. καὶ ἀλόγου ἐλπίδος) or by a stronger desire, but by the urge of the Romans to help them and "not neglect such a glorious, great empire which has been shamelessly fallen in ruins (cf. τὴν οὕτως ἔνδοξον καὶ ἐνάρετον ... ἀρχὴν μὴ περιιδεῖν αἰσχρῶς ἐρριμμένην)" (2.8.2). Both Severus and Niger express their intention to save the ruined Roman Empire.[23] Their motivation, however, is considerably different: Niger is motivated by the call to help by the Roman people and not simply by his own hope, desire, or choice. Severus, on the other hand, appears to be inspired by his own desire only (cf. 2.10.2: κἀμοὶ δὲ δι' εὐχῆς ἐστι). For, while Niger in the rest of his speech repeatedly stresses the need to respond to the call of others in Rome, Severus tries hard to persuade his listeners that they themselves should take the initiative to act.

Moreover, both Severus and Niger refer to Julianus' lack of support in Rome (2.10.4 ~ 2.8.5), and accordingly they try to assure their men of the safety of the enterprise. However, while Severus bases his claim for safety upon the superior numbers, bravery, and military experience of his soldiers (2.10.5), Niger expresses the opinion that "the very safety of our enterprise lies in the express will of those who summon me and in the fact that there is no opposition to stand in our way" (2.8.4). In other words, Severus, unlike Niger, neither encourages his men to rely on others nor eliminates the possibility of opposition. Rather, he uses the latter to demonstrate the superior military qualities of his own forces and thus inspire his men to take action. It is worth noting that even the reference to ἀνδρεία by the two men is expressed in completely different terms.

[22] See Fuchs 1895: 231 n. 37; Fuchs 1896: 199 n. 84.

[23] Fuchs 1895: 232 n. 42.

Severus is more direct and personal: "All in all you are so magnificently equipped to demonstrate your courage (cf. εἰς ἀνδρείαν) that no one...could withstand you" (2.10.5). Niger is more restrained: "a slow response to a call of distress would make us guilty of cowardice (ἀνανδρίας) and betrayal" (2.8.3).

Severus himself also draws attention to the contrast between his energy and the laziness of his enemies in both Rome and Syria. In the rest of his speech, he stresses the life of luxury of the Praetorians and the people in Syria (2.10.6) who (as he asserts) are weak and cowardly: "It is elegant, witty remarks that the Syrians are good at, particularly the people of Antioch" (2.10.7). Herodian's similar words about the Syrians and the citizens of Antioch earlier may be evoked in parallel here to reinforce Severus' undermining commentary and enhance his reliability as speaker (2.7.9-10). Severus effectively juxtaposes Niger's inability to rule with courage and moderation with his and his army's energy, effectiveness, and strength (2.10.7-8). The closing words of each emperor are characteristic of their different styles of leadership. Niger appears to be more cautious and reluctant before his soldiers: "Give me an indication therefore of what your feelings are" (2.8.5). Severus is more passionate and energetic: "Let us be the first to take Rome...Starting from there we shall easily control the rest of the world" (2.10.9). Unsurprisingly, Niger turns to a life of idleness and luxury and neglects his administrative tasks as well as his departure for Rome, being elevated by vain optimism (2.8.7-9). Severus, in contrast, does not allow any delay, but announces the departure for Rome (2.10.9-2.11.1).[24]

The rest of the narrative of Severus' route from Pannonia to Rome is designed to illuminate his energetic attitude. Attention is especially given to Severus' vigorous participation in soldierly tasks, which make him an example for his men to imitate (2.11.1-2) – a practical demonstration of Marcus' deathbed instruction on how to gain the goodwill (εὔνοιαν) of one's subjects (1.4.4-5). In general, it is a sign of Herodian's good emperor to be able to inspire his subordinates with goodwill.[25] Herodian does not forego the opportunity to stress Severus' quick

[24] See Zimmermann 1999: 173; Hekster 2017: 121-22.

[25] See esp. Pertinax (2.3.5; 2.4.2), Geta (4.3.3), Caracalla (4.14.5), Severus Alexander (6.4.2), Maximinus (6.8.2), and Maximus (8.6.6; 8.7.8).

movement (2.11.3). He also ignores specific details or events in order to place Severus in an attractive light. He omits, for example, some of the actions taken by Julianus against Severus' approach (cf. 2.11.7-9), which are mentioned in Cass. Dio 74[73].16.1-17.1.[26] This narrative choice brings into sharp relief Julianus' cowardice and inactivity,[27] which is used as a foil to Severus' courageous demeanour. Moreover, Julianus' desperate reaction and his lack of support in Rome confirm Severus' words in Pannonia (2.11.7-2.12.5).

Also provocative is Herodian's sustained interest in delineating the reactions of contemporary social groups in order to comment on the character and leadership of the emperors. We are told that the Roman people, as soon as they received the news about Severus' arrival in Rome, "were all in a complete panic, and, for fear of Severus' force, they pretended to support him by condemning Julianus' cowardice and Niger's negligent delay" (2.12.2). The senate, in turn, "as they viewed Julianus' cowardly state of despair, all proceeded to go over to Severus' side" (2.12.3). They were "in contempt of Julianus" (2.12.4), and, "when they learned of his total demoralization and that his bodyguard had deserted him," they decided to acknowledge Severus as sole emperor (2.12.6). In Cass. Dio 74[73].17.3 more stress is laid on the soldiers, and particularly on the fact that they were persuaded by Severus to kill Pertinax's murderers and keep peace themselves in order to suffer no harm. Herodian omits these details and mentions only the soldiers' desertion of Julianus (2.12.6). This narrative choice has the effect of keeping the focus of the narrative around Julianus and his complete state of demoralization, which is emphatically revealed through the presentation of the people and the senators' views.[28]

[26] Cf. SHA *Sev*. 5.5-8. See also SHA *Did. Jul*. 5.1; 5.3-9; *Pesc. Nig*. 2.6.

[27] See 2.11.7: "When Julianus received news of this, he was reduced to a state of utter desperation"; 2.11.9: "Julianus, however, did not dare to advance from the city." See also 2.12.2-3; 2.12.5. Cf. Whittaker 1969: 219 n. 1: "J[ulianus] was too late to defend the Alpine passes, but he was not as completely inactive as H[erodian] suggests."

[28] Zimmermann 1999: 167-68 notes Herodian's strong emphasis on the figure of the emperor here and explains that the role of the soldiers in Julianus' overthrow is downplayed because, according to Herodian, they are considered as representatives of his tyrannical rule.

Even Herodian's narrative of Julianus' death is constructed towards this end. In Cass. Dio 74[73].17.5, there is a reference to Julianus' murder in the palace. There is also a glimpse of Julianus' lack of understanding and ignorance, shown through a vivid citation of the emperor's last words (cf. "But what evil have I done? Whom have I killed?"). This characteristic of the emperor is consistent with the emphasis, often given with a tinge of irony or sarcasm, on Julianus' lack of shrewdness in the abridged version of Dio's history (74[73].12.5; 74[73].14.2[a]; 74[73].16.3-4). Herodian prefers to stress (as we saw) Julianus' bumbling cowardice and inactivity.[29] This is also apparent in his narrative of Julianus' death and his concluding judgement on the emperor: "One of the military tribunes was dispatched against Julianus to kill the cowardly, wretched, old man who had purchased this sorry end with his own money. Julianus was found alone and deserted by everyone and was murdered amid a shameful scene of tears" (2.12.7-2.13.1). Herodian's decision to give prominence to Julianus' cowardice and wretchedness throughout his narrative should be explained by the fact that this pattern of behaviour is applicable to other emperors in the subsequent narrative, such as Niger, Albinus, Macrinus, Severus Alexander, and Gordian I. At the same time it helps to illuminate Severus' prowess and valiance, and thus explain his victory.

To sum up, Herodian's account of Severus' route to sole power is constructed in such a calculated manner as to call attention to Severus' energy by setting him, through the development of intratextual analogies and contrasts, against his opponents, Julianus and Niger. To this end, Herodian is ready to omit, simplify, or even alter details found in Dio's work in order to give more space and prominence to Severus and the other contenders for imperial power and place Severus in an attractive light.

[29] See also Timonen 2000: 204, 210. On Julianus' madness, cf. SHA *Did. Iul.* 7.9; *Pesc. Nig.* 2.4-6. On Julianus' death-scene in different literary sources, see Timonen 2000: 200-6.

2. Severus' trap of the praetorians and his *adventus* in Rome (193 C.E.)

After he becomes emperor, Severus turns to punish Pertinax's murderers. Herodian privileges narrative compression that serves to place his focus on the principal characters. While Cass. Dio 75[74].1.1 distinguishes between the soldiers who took part in Pertinax's murder, on whom Severus inflicts the death penalty, and the rest, whom he summons and traps, Herodian simply refers to Severus' deception of Pertinax's murderers (2.13.1). Indeed, his narrative of Severus' trap of the soldiers invites the reader to attend to various themes which have been stressed in the preceding narrative.

First of all, this incident most clearly shows Severus' treacherous nature, which Herodian has already drawn notice to (cf. 2.9.2; 2.9.10-1). This is a characteristic that suggests a clear parallel between Severus and his son Caracalla who later tricks and massacres the Alexandrians (4.9).[30] The word σόφισμα, literally meaning 'clever device'/'trick', is repeatedly used to denote Severus' action (2.13.1; 2.13.11; 2.13.12). Moreover, Herodian's narrative underlines Severus' 'passionate spirit' (cf. 2.13.5: θυμοειδεῖ τῷ πνεύματι), a crucial characteristic of the emperor which Herodian already mentioned in his introductory sketch of Severus (2.9.2). In addition, the whole scene is a clear manifestation of the congruence between Severus' avowed rhetoric in Pannonia and his current action. The Praetorians, following Severus' instructions, willingly come to his camp, wearing ceremonial clothes (2.13.2-3; cf. 2.13.10). We may recall that Severus has emphasized the Praetorians' aptitude for ceremonies earlier in his speech in Pannonia (2.10.2; cf. 2.10.6). Moreover, here as there, Severus lavishes attention on the superiority of his forces, especially in terms of their 'intelligence', strength, and their number of allies.[31] Severus also refers to Pertinax in terms which are now familiar to the reader: "You murdered a respected and honourable, old emperor"

[30] See Sidebottom 1998: 2816.

[31] See esp. 2.10.6 (in Pannonia): "But the guards in Rome have become increasingly intoxicated with this life and now they could not even resist your battle-cry let alone your attack" ~ 2.13.5 (in Rome): "You have been easily trapped and are our prisoners without even a struggle."

(cf. σεμνὸν πρεσβύτην καὶ βασιλέα χρηστόν) (2.13.6). Compare Severus' similar words about Pertinax in his speech in Pannonia: "But when the empire devolved on a respected, elderly man (cf. εἰς σεμνὸν πρεσβύτην), the memory of whose courage and integrity (cf. οὗ τῆς ἀνδρείας τε καὶ χρηστότητος) is even now instilled into our hearts" (2.10.4).[32]

A further link between the two speeches concerns the way in which Severus expresses his intentions to deprive the Praetorians of their role as imperial guards: "You have broken your oath and defiled your hands with the blood of fellow-citizens and an emperor" (cf. ἐς τὸν ὅρκον ἀσεβήσαντας καὶ ἐμφυλίῳ καὶ βασιλικῷ αἵματι τὰς δεξιὰς μιάναντας) (2.13.8). Here, we may recall Severus' earlier derogatory words in Pannonia about the Praetorians: "He criticized the Roman garrison for disloyalty and staining their oath of allegiance by shedding the blood of emperors and fellow citizens" (cf. διέβαλλε δὲ τοὺς ἐν Ῥώμῃ στρατιώτας ὡς ἀπίστους καὶ βασιλείῳ καὶ ἐμφυλίῳ αἵματι μιάναντας τὸν ὅρκον) (2.9.8). The echo demonstrates that Severus' action against the Praetorians lives up to his earlier pre-battle rhetoric. Moreover, another reminder may be evoked in parallel, namely Pertinax's own words to the soldiers before his death: "For you of all people to become murderers and to stain your hand with the blood of a citizen, let alone an emperor (cf. καὶ μὴ μόνον ἐμφυλίῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ βασιλείῳ μιᾶναι τὰς δεξιὰς αἵματι), may, I warn you, be an act of sacrilege today and later a source of danger to you" (cf. ὁρᾶτε μὴ πρὸς τὸ νῦν ἀνόσιον, ὕστερον καὶ ἐπικίνδυνον ὑμῖν ᾖ) (2.5.6). Severus' words to the Praetorians hence bring to fruition the expectations that Pertinax's speech has generated, and suggest an essential link between Severus and Pertinax, his avowed paradigm.

Particularly striking is the way in which Herodian focalizes Severus' entry into Rome through the reactions and gaze of the groups at the time. Comparison with the abridged version of the history of Cassius Dio reveals insights into Herodian's peculiar narrative technique. Herodian

[32] Pitcher 2018a: 245 notices, in addition that "the adjectives which he [i.e. Severus] uses to describe the deceased Pertinax during that oration ('respected (*semnon*) ... honourable (*khrēston*)') recall the ones used of his unfortunate predecessor before and immediately after his assassination." See esp. Pitcher 2018a: 245 n. 15, who notes that 2.13.6 recalls 2.5.8 (with reference to *semnon* focalized through Pertinax's future assassins) and 2.6.2 (with reference to *khrēston* given through the perspective of the senators).

stresses that "Severus approached Rome with all the rest of his army, fully armed" (2.14.1). It is little surprise, then, that "the Romans were absolutely terrified at his appearance" (2.14.1). In Cass. Dio 75[74].1.3, "Severus advanced as far as the gates on horseback and in cavalry costume, but there he changed to civilian attire and proceeded on foot; and the entire army, both infantry and cavalry, accompanied him in full armour."[33] Also notable is the fact that, in Cass. Dio 75[74].1.3-5, it is the unanimous enthusiasm and pleasure with Severus' arrival that are spaced out, not the 'terror' and 'fear' of the Romans as in Herodian's version of events (2.14.1).[34] Moreover, in Cass. Dio 75[74].1.3-5 the interest lies neither in the internal reflections of the participants – it is rather the appearance and actions of the different groups in the city that are described – nor in calling attention to any specific characteristics of Severus. It seems that Dio was witness of this spectacle.[35]

Herodian, on the other hand, pays more attention to the internal thoughts of the onlookers, rather than their appearance and specific actions.[36] This is a technique that Herodian regularly employs to mark the emperor's *adventus* and call attention to some of the most noteworthy qualities of him that have been central to his rise to power. We might compare Commodus' accession, where the focal point of interest lies in Commodus' noble origins and heredity (1.7.1-4), or Elagabalus', where the emperor's appearance is the focus of attention (5.5.7). Here, the qualities considered encourage a backward glance at the earlier narrative of

[33] Notice Herodian's omission of the details about Severus' change of clothes and assumption of the appearance of an ordinary citizen (see Meulder 2002: 91); an act which might show his alleged 'modesty and humility' and thus his deceptive character, especially at the beginning of his rule, when he needed the support of the senate (Madsen 2016: 154-55). Lange 2015 stresses the importance of entering Rome not in arms but on foot. Whittaker 1969: 234-35 n. 2 notes the parallel with Vitellius' entry into Rome 'in civilian dress' (Tac. *Hist.* 2.89).

[34] Müller 1996: 317 ad loc.

[35] Cass. Dio 75[74].1.4: "The spectacle proved the most brilliant of any that I have witnessed."

[36] 2.14.1-2: "The people and the senate went out with garlands of laurels to greet him as the first man and emperor to have achieved such enormous successes so effortlessly and without bloodshed. Apart from his general qualities, they were particularly impressed by his shrewd judgement, his noble endurance of hardship and the confidence and courage of his daring enterprises."

Severus' reign, especially his introduction into the narrative (cf. 2.9.2), and offer an explanatory framework whereby the reader can ponder anew the reasons for Severus' preeminence. To the same effect contribute some remarkable echoes of Severus' earlier career. In particular, the initial 'terror' and 'fear' felt by the Romans towards Severus' *adventus*, as well as the senate's and the people's act of welcoming Severus with garlands of laurels (δαφνηφοροῦντες) (2.14.1),[37] recall the similar reaction of the Italians to Severus' arrival at the Italian frontier (2.11.6).[38] Moreover, the term ἀναιμωτί, which is used to underline that Severus succeeded without bloodshed, perhaps ironically recalls Niger's vain optimism in Antioch and his claim that "he would rule without bloodshed" (cf. ἀναιμωτί τε ἄρξειν) (2.8.8). The term ἀκονιτί ('effortlessly') also echoes Severus' success over the Praetorians (2.13.5: "You have been easily trapped and you are our prisoners without even a struggle [ἀκονιτί])."

Severus' appearance in the senate offers another instance where Herodian seems to diverge from Dio's account. In particular, Severus' promise of a rule of aristocracy and his rejection of tyrannical acts, such as murders, unjust confiscations of properties, and strengthening of sycophants (2.14.3), repeat a theme already familiar from Pertinax – whom Severus affects to emulate strongly (2.14.3) – and elsewhere (cf. 5.1.4 on Macrinus; 6.1.2 on Severus Alexander).[39] In his speech to the senate after his elevation to the throne, Pertinax claims that his rule will be an aristocracy rather than a tyranny (2.3.10).[40] The theme might go even further back to Marcus Aurelius – whom Severus here affects to emulate as well (2.14.3) – and his exhortation to his councillors to stand by his son Commodus and guide him through his government of the empire (1.4.4; 1.4.6), representing a sort of 'joint administration' as well.

[37] Cf. Cass. Dio 75[74].1.4: ἥ τε γὰρ πόλις πᾶσα ἄνθεσί τε καὶ δάφναις ἐστεφάνωτο καὶ ἱματίοις ποικίλοις ἐκεκόσμητο ("for the whole city had been decked with garlands of flowers and laurel and adorned with richly coloured stuffs").

[38] 2.11.6: "Not daring to offer any opposition in his way, they went to meet him with garlands of laurels (δαφνηφοροῦντες) and opened wide their gates to admit him." Cf. the similar reactions at 1.7.3; 2.2.10; 4.1.3. See also Fuchs 1886: 200 n. 88.

[39] See Whittaker 1969: 237 n. 1. On the meaning of ἀριστοκρατία, τυραννίς, and βασιλεία in Herodian, see Marasco 1998: 2857-63; Kuhn-Chen 2002: 302-6; Hidber 2006: 221-22 n.163; Bekker-Nielsen 2014: 238-45.

[40] See Hidber 2006: 209-10.

Severus later displays the same tyrannical behaviour that here he strongly rejects (cf. 3.8.2; 3.8.6; 3.8.8). The disjunction between Severus' speech and actions is made explicit in Cass. Dio 75[74].2.2. In Herodian's narrative, we are told that, despite Severus' promises, some elder men were able to grasp Severus' trickery (2.14.4). Herodian is on-hand to confirm this opinion – "this was later proved to be true" (2.14.4) – thus preparing the reader for a significant discrepancy between Severus' rhetoric and action. It is remarkable, however, that Herodian omits the murder of Julius Solon as well as other discreditable deeds of Severus, which are detailed in Cass. Dio 75[74].2.3-6. Specifically, Severus is blamed for having so many troops present in the city, spending money excessively, and relying on the power of his army rather than his associates' goodwill (Cass. Dio 75[74].2.3). He is also censured for his practice of "recruiting bodyguards exclusively from Italy, Spain, Macedonia and Noricum ... and ordering that any vacancies should be filled from all the legions alike" (Cass. Dio 75[74].2.4-6). Herodian ignores these unfavourable details about Severus (at least for now) and simply refers to his actions of favouring the people and the soldiers (esp. through distribution of money and organization of shows) and selecting the best of the soldiers as his guards (2.14.5-6).[41]

It is, therefore, remarkable how Herodian's narrative of Severus' trap of the Praetorians in Rome is jointed thematically and verbally with Severus' pre-battle speech in Pannonia in order to emphasize a number of characteristics of Severus, such as his action and rhetoric, courage and shrewdness, which have been central to his rise to power. Particularly striking is also the way in which Herodian constructs the scenes of Severus' arrival in Rome and his appearance in the senate. Although both scenes hint at some questionable aspects of Severus' leadership, such as his cruelty and trickery, they primarily serve to highlight some of the most noteworthy qualities of Severus. His speech to the senate, in addition, suggests an association of Severus with Pertinax and Marcus

[41] My reading here stands in contrast to Rubin 1980: 57-58 who thinks that Dio's version of Severus' entry into Rome is positive and highly influenced by Severan propaganda, which Herodian and esp. the *Historia Augusta* avoid.

Aurelius, which, even if it turns out to be only a matter of rhetoric, enhances our understanding of a crucial component of Severus' propaganda which significantly contributes to his predominance.

In the next sections on Severus' civil and external wars, we shall see that this urge to compare and contrast Severus with other emperors constitutes a most useful tool at the hands of Herodian for evaluating and historically interpreting Severus' military career.

3. Severus against Niger

In his account of the preliminaries of Severus' war against Niger, Herodian again underlines the contrast between Niger's inaction and Severus' energy. He begins his narrative by stressing that "Severus hurried off (ἠπείγετο) to the East, where Niger was still putting off his departure and remaining inactive amidst the pleasures of Antioch (cf. ἔτι γὰρ μέλλοντος καὶ ὑπτιάζοντος τοῦ Νίγρου, τῇ τε Ἀντιοχείᾳ ἐντρυφῶντος)" (2.14.5-6). Niger's idleness invites the readers to recall Julianus' similar lack of carefulness (cf. ἔνδον ἦσαν τοῦ Ἰουλιανοῦ ἔτι ὑπτιάζοντος καὶ τὰ πραττόμενα ἀγνοοῦντος) (2.12.2). Severus, as Herodian declares, "intended to launch an unexpected attack to catch Niger unprepared" (2.14.6). It is notable that, at the corresponding point in the abridged version of Dio's *History*, there is a reference to Niger's lack of intelligence and the fact that he was vainglorious (Cass. Dio 75[74].6.2[a]).

Next Herodian reports Severus' dealing with Albinus (2.15.1-5). As noted above, in Cass. Dio 74[73].15.1 the same incident is related before Severus' accession to the throne. Herodian retains the information about Severus' deception of Albinus, but he delays to mention the story after his narrative of the overthrow of Julianus and during his account of Severus' preparation for the war against Niger (2.15.1). This displacement, I suggest, serves not only to "minimize the switching around and maintain a linear focus" in his narrative,[42] but also to invite the readers to compare Severus' way of handling his three opponents, thus primarily advancing our understanding of Severus' shrewdness and guile (cf.

[42] See Kemezis 2014: 237 n. 26, who specifically refers to Herodian's delayed introduction of Albinus into the narrative.

2.15.2: σοφίσματι) used in overpowering Albinus (cf. esp. 2.15.1; 2.15.3; 2.15.5). In general, Severus' concern to gain an advantage over his enemy has been a consistent characteristic of him in his dealings with both Julianus (2.10-1) and Niger (2.14.6).

The narrative of the conflict between Severus and Niger, just as his earlier account of Severus' fighting against Julianus, is designed to illuminate Severus' superior principles of military leadership. To this end, Herodian at several points of his narrative is at pains to place an entirely different colouring on the events from the one that Cassius Dio had, while at the same time he develops substantial structural, thematic, or even verbal intratextual associations between Severus' earlier and current campaigns.

For example, Niger's state of complete panic, when he received the unexpected news about Severus (3.1.1), recalls Julianus' similar response (2.11.7), though Niger proves to be much more decisive and energetic than Julianus (3.1.1-7).[43] Herodian mentions Niger's attempt to gain allies (3.1.2), his barricade of the Taurus Mountains (3.1.4), and his seizure of Byzantium (3.1.5). He also omits his unsuccessful attack against Perinthus (75[74].6.3),[44] while he is much more brief than Cass. Dio 75[74].10-12 in his topographical excursus on Byzantium, offering only those details that are essential for understanding Niger's decision to move against the city.[45] In addition, he does not forego the opportunity of hinting at Severus' later success in capturing Byzantium, by referring at this point to "the power of those who later destroyed it" (3.1.7). This 'advance notice' of Severus' accomplishment serves to undermine Niger's preparatory movements, and "helps to establish the military efficiency of Severus, who will go on to do just that."[46] Herodian's subsequent, perhaps ironical, comment on Niger contributes to the same effect: "In this way Niger made provision for his side with great foresight and regard for

[43] *Pace* Bersanetti 1938, who stresses Herodian's one-sided emphasis on Niger's sloth.
[44] Bersanetti 1938: 359; Whittaker 1969: 256 n. 1; Rubin 1980: 99.
[45] See Pitcher 2012: 270-71.
[46] Pitcher 2012: 271.

safety – *as he thought* (cf. ὡς ᾤετο)" (3.1.7).[47]

Herodian gives a brief notice of the battle of Cyzicus. A variation between Herodian's account and that of Cassius Dio concerns the depiction of Aemilianus, Niger's commander. In Cass. Dio 75[74].6.2 there is a rather positive picture of the general: "Niger had as one of his lieutenants Aemilianus, since this man, by remaining neutral and watching events in order to take advantage of them, seemed to surpass all the senators of that day in understanding and in experience of affairs". On the contrary, in Herodian's narrative, which here follows multiple sources (cf. 3.2.3: φασὶ δέ τινες ... οἳ δέ φασιν), Aemilianus is clearly presented as a traitor to Niger, being outmanoeuvred by Severus' trickery and ingenuity (3.2.3-5).[48] Severus' victory once again illuminates his shrewd mind and forethought (3.2.3), while at the same time it shows the accuracy of Severus' defamatory statements at 2.10.6-8 about the superiority of the Danube army to the Syrian troops.[49]

The same positive appraisal of Severus occurs in Herodian's report of the Battle of Nicaea (3.2.10). Here Herodian omits several less positive details about Severus' forces, which are mentioned in Cass. Dio 75[74].6.4-6. In the latter we are told that the fortunes of the two forces varied during the battle: first, Severus' followers under the command of Candidus are victorious, although Severus is absent from the battle;[50] then, upon Niger's appearance, Niger's men temporarily prevail.[51] Herodian continues to tilt the scales towards Severus in his account of his

[47] Pitcher 2018a: 246 aptly notices the narrator's skepticism here (through the parenthetical "so he thought") and the contrast between Herodian's characterization of Niger and that of Severus as ἀνὴρ προμηθής ("a man endowed with foresight") earlier (2.15.1).

[48] See Zimmermann 1999: 185. Interestingly, in Cass. Dio 75[74].6.2-2[a], Aemilianus is implicitly contrasted with Niger who (as we are told) "was not a man of keen intelligence."

[49] Kemezis 2014: 255 n. 77.

[50] Ward 2011: 161-65 reflects helpfully on the fact that Severus is mostly present in name only; he does not appear to take any action himself. As Ward 2011: 165 puts it: "Severus seems to be a constant presence but is in reality just as absent in Herodian as in Dio." Cf. Rubin 1980: 100 with n. 74 who comments on Herodian's use of expressions that give "the impression that Severus commanded his campaigns in person."

[51] Cf. Whittaker 1969: 266-67 n. 1. Bersanetti 1938: 359-62 notes that Herodian, unlike Dio, omits Niger's active presence in the battle and stresses that such omissions should be

siege of the defences in the Taurus Mountains. Despite the strong resistance of the besieged, Severus wins because of the extreme weather conditions (3.3.6-8). As a result, Herodian says, Severus' soldiers were encouraged by the belief that "they were being guided by divine providence" (3.3.8).

The clash between Niger and Severus culminates in the battle of Issus. Comparison with the corresponding (abridged) account of Dio's *History* reveals that Herodian's primary aim is to illuminate Severus' military excellence. First, in Cass. Dio 75[74].7.1, the battle is said to have taken place near the 'Cilician-Syrian Gates', rather than at the bay of Issus. Herodian distinguishes between two different battles, one at the pass of the Cilician Gates (3.3.7-8) and another at the bay of Issus (3.4.1-5). Second, in Cass. Dio 75[74].7.1 there is mention of Severus' commanders, Valerianus and Anullinus, and to the fact that Niger was present in the battle. In Herodian, it is clear that Niger was present, but there is no mention of the specific commanders of Severus, leaving it unclear whether Severus himself was present or not (3.4.4). Moreover, Herodian omits all specific details about the array and first movements of the two armies, which are found in Cass. Dio 75[74].7.2-5. In Cass. Dio 75[74].7.6, there is a reference to the superiority of Niger's forces during the battle and to the sudden storm that deprived them of their complete success (75[74].7.6). In Herodian, by contrast, it is simply mentioned that the two forces fell upon each other and that they fought for a long time with heavy casualties. Considerable emphasis is given to the rout of Niger's army (3.4.4-5). It is noticeable how Herodian transfers the detail about the supernatural intervention and the subsequent encouragement of Severus' troops, which is mentioned in Cass. Dio 75[74].7.6-7, earlier to the context of Severus' besiegement of the pass of the Cilician Gates (3.3.7-8).[52] There it is linked with another successful enterprise of Severus' army. Herodian's narrative is designed to present Severus' military activity in a glamorous light.

One might also consider Herodian's account of the aftermath of the battle. In Cass. Dio 75[74].8.3, it is mentioned that Niger is caught while

attributed to Herodian's rhetoric which aims to contrast Niger's idleness to Severus' energy. Rubin 1980: 101 attributes this omission to Herodian's reliance on a pro-Severan source.

[52] See Kolb 1972: 73-74.

he tries to flee from Antioch. He is beheaded, and Severus has his head sent to Byzantium and affixed to a pole, so that the Byzantines, at the sight of it, should go over to him. Herodian cuts away such unfavourable information about Severus. He only says that Niger "was found in one of the outlying areas of the city...and was caught and beheaded" (3.4.6). He also ascribes blame to Niger's 'sloth' and 'sluggishness' for his demise (3.4.7). Herodian, as we saw, has throughout contrasted these characteristics of Niger with Severus' energy and prowess. It is true that Herodian does not eschew a reference to Severus' ruthless punishment of Niger's partisans (3.4.7) – a point which presents a striking contrast to Severus' avowed promise to the senate earlier (2.14.3).[53] But, he omits all of the specific details about Severus' confiscations of properties and mercilessness in raising funds (Cass. Dio 75[74].8.3-5), as well as his trials of senators (Cass. Dio 75[74].9.1-4).

4. Severus against Albinus

Herodian omits Severus' Parthian War of 195 C.E., which is narrated in Cass. Dio 75[75].1-3. This omission might be explained in terms of his earlier programmatic statements on his method of selectivity at 2.15.6-7. Herodian might have considered that this campaign does not meet his standards of narrative treatment, and thus he preferred to streamline his account in order to focus more closely on events that he might have felt were necessary to his narrative.[54]

Herodian concentrates on Severus' civil war with Albinus. Both he and Cassius Dio make clear that Severus, after Niger's death, intended to secure the full control of imperial power, and that Albinus aspired to become emperor (Cass. Dio 76[75].4.1 ~ Hdn. 3.5.2). However, while Cass. Dio 76[75].4.1 openly declares that "Severus no longer gave Albinus even

[53] On this disjunction, see Hekster 2017: 118-19.

[54] See Sievers 1867: 263; Kemezis 2014: 236 n. 24: "Herodian may be deliberately signaling, to those who know the facts, that he is streamlining the story and giving his characters neater motivations, thus presumably increasing the reader's pleasure." See also Whittaker 1969: 283 n. 1: "H[erodian]'s omission might be explained if the victories were primarily for propaganda."

the rank of Caesar," Herodian prefers to stress the senators' support of Albinus because of his nobility of birth (3.5.2) – a point which confirms Severus' initial anxiety about Albinus (2.15.2),[55] providing a contrast, at the same time, with Severus' humble origins (3.10.6).[56] Herodian also mentions Severus' resort to trickery (again) because Albinus "offered no valid pretext for his hostile action" (3.5.3). His account thus tallies nicely with his portrait of the emperor so far.

Herodian does not include in his narrative the elaborate (eyewitness-)scene found in Cass. Dio 76[75].4.2-7, describing the reactions of the senators and the populace to the current critical situation and the accompanying divine signs. Instead, he focuses on Severus' attempt to overpower Albinus through deception; but to no avail this time, for Albinus was alert to Severus' 'underlying character', which was manifested (as Herodian states) through his earlier misdeeds and failure to follow his promises (cf. 3.5.3-8). Even Severus' speech is designed to illuminate his deceptive and treacherous nature, especially in the way in which he affects to present himself as loyal to Albinus (3.6.1-2) and tries to belittle him and his forces (3.6.1-7).[57]

The following narrative focuses on Severus' siege of Byzantium (3.6.9), which reflects another major divergence of Herodian from the epitomated account of Dio's history, with a view to depicting Severus on the field in a more favourable light. We may remember that Herodian has proleptically suggested, during his narrative of Niger's capture of Byzantium, Severus' success (3.1.7). A detailed account of Severus' two-year siege of Byzantium is given in Cass. Dio 75[74].10-14, in an earlier chronological context than in Herodian. Crucially, Herodian omits the details about Severus' pleasant reaction to the news about the victory of his troops, mentioned in Cass. Dio 75[74].14.2, and limits himself to some details about the destruction and lowering of the status of the city (3.6.9).

[55] Timonen 2000: 82.

[56] See Hekster 2017: 121 on Severus as an 'outsider' to Roman cultural background.

[57] See esp. 3.6.3-4 where Severus accuses Albinus of injustice and aggression, although Herodian made clear that Albinus offered no valid pretext for an open aggression (3.5.3). See Hekster 2017: 123. Moreover, Severus' focus on the deficiencies of the British army (3.6.6) presents a striking contrast with Herodian's earlier statement about Severus' suspicions of Albinus' army in Britain (2.15.1). On this last point, see also Whittaker 1969: 291 n. 2. On Severus' deceptive rhetoric here, see Ward 2011: 165-66.

In Cass. Dio 75[74].14.3-5, the same point receives more attention, and the reader is drawn to cast a critical eye at Severus' destruction of the walls of Byzantium. Kemezis rightly explains Herodian's brevity in his account of the siege by the historian's compositional technique of "omitting anything that would detract from momentum": "by the time it [i.e. the siege] is over, the narrative is done with the eastern war and rushing on toward Severus' reckoning with Albinus."[58]

It is noticeable that Herodian's brief account of the siege of Byzantium offers a less critical assessment of Severus' behaviour than that of Dio. This presentation is strengthened by Herodian's subsequent focus on Severus' military excellence through his participation in all hardships (3.6.10). This, as Herodian suggests, allows Severus "to set his men a concrete example of determination and bravery" and to inspire them to persist not only by fear and regulations, "but by encouraging them to imitate their emperor" (3.6.10). Severus' action lives up to his pre-battle words about the superior strength of himself and his soldiers (2.10.5-6; 2.10.8; 3.6.3; 3.6.6-7). It is remarkable that Herodian's narrative movement here has several structural and thematic similarities to his earlier description of Severus' expedition against Julianus and Niger, which invites the readers to read Severus' civil wars in parallel with one another.

There, as we noted above, Herodian relates first Severus' pre-battle speech in Pannonia (2.10.2-9), and then his initial military actions (2.11.1),[59] focusing especially on Severus' excellent military conduct, particularly his sharing in the soldiers' hardships, which inspired his men with goodwill and emulation (2.11.2). The verbal and thematic parallelism between the two scenes pertains to a number of key characteristics of Severus' aptitude, which evoke Marcus' ideal model of leadership (cf. 1.4.5), and which guaranteed Severus' victory over Julianus and Niger. Accordingly, they serve as an encouraging sign of Severus' successful fighting against Albinus.

To this effect also contributes Herodian's depiction of Albinus' reaction to Severus' approach: "When the news reached Albinus...it terrified him, because he was living idly whiling away his time in easy living" (3.7.1). Herodian's description not only confirms Severus' words to his

[58] Kemezis 2014: 236.

[59] See also Fuchs 1884: 62 n. 4 for the connection between 3.6.10 and 2.11.1.

soldiers about Albinus' predilection for luxury (cf. 3.6.7), but also encourages the reader to reflect back to Niger and Julianus, both of whom appear to have similar reactions.[60] There is a thematic continuity between the three men, which is also stressed by identical words and phrases.[61] The reader is thus sensitized to a pattern of imperial behaviour and course of events, which sharpens the contrast with Severus' energy and military prowess, and thus leaves an ominous impression.

Herodian conveniently omits the exploits of Numerianus, detailed in Cass. Dio 76[75].5.1, and concentrates on the decisive Battle of Lugdunum. Herodian's account, although it remains basically positive, shows some chiaroscuro. The focus of the narrative alternates between the competing parties, while the actual clash is described in terms that are familiar from Severus' earlier battles against Niger (3.7.2).[62] In Cass. Dio 76[75].6.3-6, a much more detailed account (as usual) of the phases and shifts of fortune of both contending sides is found. In Cass. Dio 76[75].6.1, moreover, it is explicitly mentioned that, during the battle of Lugdunum between Severus and Albinus, "*both leaders* were present in the conflict." By contrast, Herodian favours a more positive reading of Severus, noting that Albinus took refuge in the city and sent his army out to fight (3.7.2). Note also that, at Cass. Dio 76[75].6.1, it is stressed that this was the first

[60] The connection with Niger is also noted by Fuchs 1884: 62 n. 4; Whittaker 1969: 297 n. 1. See also Hidber 2006: 208 with n. 92. Fuchs 1895: 238 n. 83 mentions Commodus (1.8.1), Julianus (2.7.1) and Macrinus (5.2.4) in parallel.

[61] Julianus: 2.11.7 (ὡς δὲ ταῦτα τῷ Ἰουλιανῷ ἀπηγγέλλετο, ἐν ἐσχάτῃ ἀπογνώσει ἦν); 2.12.2-3 (καὶ ἤδη οἱ πολέμιοι ἔνδον ἦσαν τοῦ Ἰουλιανοῦ ἔτι ὑπτιάζοντος καὶ τὰ πραττόμενα ἀγνοοῦντος...ὁ δὲ Ἰουλιανὸς πολλῇ καταλαμβανόμενος ἀφασίᾳ τε καὶ ἀπορίᾳ, ὅπως χρήσεται τοῖς πράγμασιν οὐκ εἰδώς); Niger: 2.14.6 (ἔτι γὰρ μέλλοντος καὶ ὑπτιάζοντος τοῦ Νίγρου, τῇ τε Ἀντιοχείᾳ ἐντρυφῶντος); 3.1.1 (ὁ δὲ Νίγρος, ἐπεὶ ἠγγέλη αὐτῷ μηδέν τι τοιοῦτον προσδεχομένῳ κατειληφὼς μὲν τὴν Ῥώμην ὁ Σεβῆρος, ... ἐν μεγίστῃ ταραχῇ ἦν); Albinus: 3.7.1 (ὡς δὲ ἀπηγγέλη τῷ Ἀλβίνῳ μὴ μέλλων ὁ Σεβῆρος ἀλλ' ἤδη παρεσόμενος, ὑπτιάζοντι καὶ τρυφῶντι μεγάλην ταραχὴν ἐνέβαλε). See also Whittaker 1969: 297 n. 1; Müller 1996: 320 ad loc.

[62] 3.7.2: γενομένης δὲ συμβολῆς καρτερᾶς. Cf. Battle of Cyzicus: 3.2.2: μάχαι καρτεραὶ γίνονται κατ' ἐκεῖνα τὰ χωρία. Battle of Nicaea: 3.2.10: καὶ μάχης καρτερᾶς γενομένης. Cf. Severus' British expedition (3.14.10); Maximinus' German expedition (7.2.6; 7.2.8); the civil war between the soldiers and the people in Rome during the reign of Maximus and Balbinus (7.12.4). See also Fuchs 1895: 251 with n. 166.

battle where Severus was himself present. In Herodian's narrative, Severus' presence in this battle is clear (cf. 3.7.3: "in the sector where Severus and his personal troops were stationed"). Additionally in Cass. Dio 76[75].6.2, there is mention of Albinus' defeat of Lupus, one of the generals of Severus (cf. SHA *Sev*. 10.7). Herodian does not make mention of this earlier victory of Albinus.

In the rest of his narrative of the Battle of Lugdunum, nevertheless, the image of Severus as a good general is offset by less respectable sides of his behaviour which are brought to the fore. Especially striking is Herodian's focus on "the bravery and bloodthirsty courage of the British," which (according to the historian) were not inferior to that of the Illyrians (3.7.2). Herodian's favourable statement concurs with his earlier reference to the power of this army (cf. 2.15.1), but contrasts with Severus' pre-battle rhetoric (3.6.6).[63] Herodian then shows his aversion to favouritism in historiography by reporting (as he himself declares) the version of those historians who "give an unbiased account aimed at the truth" (3.7.3). He thus refers to the superior strength of Albinus' battle-array at the place where Severus and his soldiers were stationed, as well as the subsequent flight and misfortune of Severus (3.7.3). In Cass. Dio 76[75].6.6-7 Severus' misfortune is treated in a more detailed manner, but the description shows his heroic stature and concern for others rather than his inferior act of flight stressed by Herodian. Despite this, it is true that the fact that Severus "comes close to destroying the Praetorians along with himself" leaves a shadow over his military action in Cassius Dio as well.[64]

Furthermore, Herodian's attitude towards favouritism in historiography is highly problematized in his narrative of the aftermath of the battle. As far as Albinus' death is concerned, the epitomated account of Cassius Dio's *History* mentions that Albinus committed suicide, and continues: "Severus, after viewing the body of Albinus and feasting his eyes upon it to the full, while giving free rein to his tongue as well, ordered all but the head to be cast away, but sent the head to Rome to be exposed

[63] See Whittaker 1969: 242 n. 1, 292 n. 2; Kemezis 2014: 255 n. 77; Hekster 2017: 122.

[64] Ward 2011: 168. See also Rubin 1980: 22, 125 who acknowledges too that Dio's account "is slightly less hostile in tone" than that of Herodian (22). Cf. Roques 1990: 245 n. 58; Zimmermann 1999: 186.

on a pole" (Cass. Dio 76[75].7.3). It is explicitly noted that this account reflects *not* what Severus himself wrote about this incident, but what actually happened (Cass. Dio 76[75].7.3). Herodian, on the other hand, seems to follow Severus' own propaganda. He does not suppress the fact that "Albinus was taken prisoner and executed" (3.7.7), that his head was carried to Severus (3.7.7) and that it was then "sent to Rome with orders that it should publicly be displayed on a pole" (3.8.1). However, Herodian leaves out all specific details about Severus' humiliating treatment of Albinus' corpse.[65] He simply mentions that Severus' intention of sending Albinus' head to be displayed publicly was to show to the Roman people the measure of his temper as well as his anger with the friends of Albinus (3.8.1). This statement clearly reflects Severus' cruel and fierce character; but while the narrator in Cass. Dio 76[75].7.4 openly points a censorial finger at Severus – "As this action showed...he [i.e. Severus] possessed none of the qualities of a good ruler" – Herodian omits an explicit condemnation of his subject. At the same time, he is prepared to praise Severus for his incomparable military achievements (3.7.7-8).

Herodian's positive comment on Severus' victories, I suggest, is aimed at illuminating Severus' superior principles of military leadership. Herodian suggests a backward glance in time at Roman history, and particularly at other well-known civil wars, especially (as he says) that of Caesar against Pompey, that of Octavian against Antony and Pompey's sons, and that of Sulla against Marius (3.7.8). This overview of past civil wars serves to offer historical contextualization and add an extra laudatory dimension to what we have hitherto read about Severus' achievement. Interestingly, in Cass. Dio 76[75].8.1 a speech of Severus to the senate is related, in which Severus praised the cruelty of Sulla, Marius, and Octavian, while he blamed the mildness of Caesar and Pompey.[66] It is plausible that Herodian enters into an elaborate intertextual dialogue with Dio here, turning a negative detail about Severus into a highly encomiastic one.

Herodian, nevertheless, is not shy to mention Severus' executions and

[65] Timonen 2000: 82-3. Contrast the gruesome description in SHA *Sev*. 11.5-9; *Albinus* 9.6-7, with Timonen 2000: 84-85.

[66] See Whittaker 1969: 303 n. 3. On the connection between Severus and Sulla and Marius with reference to their cruelty, see also SHA *Pesc. Nig*. 6.4.

confiscations of Albinus' supporters (3.8.2-3 ~ Cass. Dio 76[75].7.4; 8.4), which find a parallel in his similarly harsh treatment of Niger's friends (3.4.7). Severus' tyrannical conduct, both here and there, is opposed to his avowed promise to the senate about a rule of aristocracy (2.14.3), thus bearing out his earlier dissimulation. However, Herodian is also ready to omit Severus' self-stylization as the son of Marcus and brother of Commodus – an act which (as Dio says) inspired the senate with special dismay (Cass. Dio 76[75].7.4).[67] Dio's Severus also appears to deify Commodus and strongly support him before the senators (Cass. Dio 76[75].8.1-4). Likewise, Herodian's concluding verdict on the way in which Severus destroyed Julianus, Niger, and Albinus is quite oversimplified in comparison with the preceding narrative,[68] being intended to eventually present Severus in a rather glamorous light.

So, it is arguable that Severus' combats against Julianus, Niger, and Albinus are narrated in such a careful way as to draw the reader through verbal, thematic, and structural repetitions to consider them together. These repetitions readily show some common faulty features of Niger, Albinus, and Julianus, which reveal an ominous pattern that will come back in a similar way during the reigns of future emperors (particularly, Macrinus, Severus Alexander, and Gordian I) in Herodian's work. At the same time, they help to illuminate Severus' military qualities in contrast, which are closely in line with Marcus' ideal model of leadership at the outset of the *History*. It is true that at times Herodian refers to tyrannical facets of Severus' character, and he also mentions Severus' great misfortune in the battle of Lugdunum. But, as we saw, these less creditable moments in Severus' military career are offset or qualified by other more positive threads that follow in Herodian's narrative.

[67] On Herodian's omission, see Hekster 2017: 124-25. Herodian only refers to Severus' apology for Commodus in his speech to the soldiers in Pannonia (2.10.3-4). On this point, see Zimmermann 1999: 146-50.

[68] See Ward 2011: 179-80: "So, then, neither Severus nor his army fought any battles against Julianus. Pescennius was defeated by force but, as was shown above, Severus himself was present in name only. Lastly, that Albinus was overcome by Severus' abundant courage could hardly be more at odds with the way Herodian narrates the Battle of Lugdunum."

Shall we consider, therefore, that Herodian's portrait of Severus turns out to be encomiastic at the end? Herodian's subsequent narrative calls into doubt any such simplistic conclusions.

5. Severus' stay in Rome

Severus' *adventus* in Rome, which is described in formulaic terms,[69] dwells on the emotive and cognitive reactions of the onlookers. In particular, Herodian elaborates on the Romans' great fear of Severus' cruel and hostile disposition (3.8.3). One is thus reminded of Severus' earlier arrival in Rome (193 C.E.) and Herodian's similar reportage of the opinion of the people and the senate there. It is true that earlier it is said that Severus causes fear and consternation to the Romans (2.14.1), but Herodian puts the spotlight on those qualities of Severus (such as his shrewd mind, courage, and nobility in enduring hardships) that impress the Roman people and the senate and lead him to assume the sole power (2.14.2). The contrast between the onlookers' responses in the earlier and current arrival of Severus in Rome strikingly calls attention to Severus' shifting behaviour and his gradual fall into tyranny.

This shifting behaviour is further documented in Herodian's report of Severus' military reforms. Herodian expands upon the gifts and privileges that Severus offers to the soldiers and the negative consequences for their military discipline and aptitude (3.8.5). This signals a contrast with Severus' own military prowess and excellent military behaviour (cf. 2.11.2; 3.6.10), while at the same time it recalls Herodian's earlier defamation of Julianus' corruption of the soldiers (2.6.14).[70] It thus suggests an uncomplimentary association between Severus and Julianus.

In the following lines, Herodian casts around for material that shows Severus in an even worse light. Severus, according to Herodian, appears before the senate, where he ruthlessly attacks Albinus' friends and destroys prominent, noble, and rich men (3.8.6-7). He also gives bad press to Severus for his φιλοχρηματία (3.8.7: "There never was an emperor so obsessed with money"). Although Herodian tries to soften this negative

[69] See 3.8.3 ~ 1.7.6 (Commodus) ~ 2.14.1 (Severus' earlier *adventus* in 193 C.E.).

[70] See also Fuchs 1895: 248 with n. 151.

point by referring to Severus' unprecedented military excellence (3.8.8), he is keen to stress Severus' large-scale murders and confiscations that made "his rule one of intimidation, not affection" (cf. φόβῳ γοῦν ἦρξε μᾶλλον τῶν ἀρχομένων ἢ εὐνοίᾳ) (3.8.8). This information contrasts sharply with Severus' exemplary conduct on the field before (2.11.2; 3.6.10) and Marcus' relevant advice (1.4.5), though it is in keeping with Herodian's earlier emphasis on Severus' expertise in "pretending to and giving assurance of goodwill" (cf. μάλιστα προσποιήσασθαί τε καὶ πιστώσασθαι εὔνοιαν) in his pre-battle speech in Pannonia (2.9.13). We may compare Severus' son Caracalla who pretends to show goodwill towards the Alexandrians (4.8.7-8) and the Parthian king (4.11.1), much to the latter's detriment. Severus is aligned here with other bad emperors in Herodian's *History*, who either inspire their people with fear,[71] and whose decline is marked by a shift in the goodwill of their subordinates.[72]

Severus' savage behaviour here diverges significantly from his earlier appearance in the senate after his acclamation (cf. 2.14.3: "On the following day he went down to the senate house, where he made a very moderate and promising speech"). In his earlier speech to the senate, he claimed that he would follow a rule of aristocracy, putting no one to death and having no one's properties confiscated. He would offer, as he said, his subjects a period of true prosperity, emulating Marcus' rule and adopting the name as well as the disposition of Pertinax (2.14.3). The antitheses between Severus' earlier and current appearances before the senate, I suggest, flag up Severus' deceptive character (cf. 2.14.4) and tyrannical conduct, which distinguishes him sharply from the paradigms of Marcus and Pertinax,[73] and align him with examples of cruel emperors

[71] Commodus: 1.14.9; 2.1.7; 2.2.4; 3.2.4; Caracalla: 4.3.4; 4.11.9; Maximinus: 7.1.1; 7.5.1; 7.7.2; 7.7.4; 7.8.2. On fear in Herodian's work, see Opelt 1998; Kuhn-Chen 2002: 293-96.

[72] Commodus: 1.14.7; 1.17.5; Julianus: 2.10.4-5. Interestingly, Herodian stresses the lack of soldierly goodwill towards Macrinus upon his accession, which underlines the aura of doom surrounding the emperor. Macrinus is reported to have "obtained the principate not so much through the love and loyalty of the soldiers as through necessity and the demands of the immediate situation" (4.14.3) Herodian has previously mentioned Macrinus' deficient military experience and his extravagant lifestyle for which Caracalla treated him with contempt (4.12.1-2).

[73] On Severus' deviation from Marcus' paradigm in Herodian's narrative, see also Hekster 2017: 124-25.

in Herodian's *History*, such as Commodus (1.13.7; 1.14.7; 1.17.2; 2.7.2), Caracalla (3.15.4; 4.13.1; cf. 4.3.4; 4.6.1-3; 4.6.5), Elagabalus (5.7.6), and Maximinus (7.1.4; 7.1.8; 7.3.1-4; 7.4.2).

The connection between Severus and Herodian's model of *princeps malus* is further endorsed by Herodian's report of the emperor's demagogic deeds, which provide another parallel to his earlier brief stay in Rome (cf. 2.14.5). Most of the acts described here (3.8.9-10, shows, celebrations, and games, distributions of money, slaughters of animals, and so on) are found in connection with other bad emperors in Herodian's *History*.[74] The whole description of Severus' shows and games, in particular, echoes verbally and thematically Commodus' performances in 192 C.E. In both incidents, Herodian claims that he was present (1.15.4; 3.8.10).[75] However, it should be stressed that one significant difference between Severus and the other (bad) emperors in Herodian's *History* is that, despite these activities, Severus neither neglects the duties pertaining to his office because of indolence (cf. 3.9.1), nor does he insult the Roman elite or his own imperial dignity by involving others in abominable professions or taking up himself shameful roles (cf. Commodus or Elagabalus). Herodian thus does more justice to Severus by presenting his activities as a political means of favouring the Roman people.

[74] See Niger (2.7.10; 2.8.9); Geta and Caracalla (3.10.3-4; 3.13.1; 4.4.1; 4.11.9); Macrinus (5.2.4); Elagabalus (5.5.8-10; 5.6.6-10). On distributions of money to the people, in particular, see 3.8.4; 3.10.2 (Severus); 5.5.8 (Caracalla); 7.6.4 (Maximinus).

[75] See Whittaker 1969: 314 n. 1.

6. Severus' eastern expedition

Crucial at this point is Herodian's presentation of Severus' motives: the emperor wanted to gain a reputation for himself not simply because he won a civil war over Roman forces, but also by erecting victory monuments (τρόπαια) against the barbarians (3.9.1). The word τρόπαια, especially those that commemorate victories over the barbarians, evoke both Marcus and Pertinax (1.15.7; 2.1.4; 2.9.9),[76] Severus' avowed paradigms. Here, the motivation which lies behind Severus' expedition against the East, however, is not to imitate Pertinax's or Marcus' examples, but to win reputation for himself, although he uses as a pretext the friendship of the king of Hatra with Niger (3.9.1). We may compare his alleged motivation earlier of fighting against Julianus and Niger, in order to avenge the murder of Pertinax rather than winning personal power (2.9.8; 2.9.10; 2.14.3).

Herodian takes special interest in Severus' siege of Hatra. In the epitomated account of Cassius Dio's *History*, two attacks on Hatra are mentioned, which are placed chronologically later to the capture of Ctesiphon (Cass. Dio 76[75].10-11).[77] In both of these attacks, Severus' defeat is emphasized. In the account of the first attack, there is also a reference to Severus' killing of Julius Crispus and Laetus (Cass. Dio 76[75].10.2-3; cf. SHA *Sev*. 15.7), an incident which finds no mention in Herodian's *History*. Herodian also omits the mutiny of the European legions – a clear indication of the soldiers' disobedience to Severus – which finds a place in the narrative of the second attack in Cass. Dio 76[75].12.3.[78] Crucially, in Herodian there is no reference to the presence of a divine force that *is not* in favour of Severus, and which saves the city (cf. Cass. Dio 76[75].12.4). Severus appears to withdraw his forces out of fear of destruction (3.9.7). According to Herodian, fortune *favours* Severus and offers him comfort after his defeat in Hatra (3.9.8). Herodian, as often, works hard to present a favourable picture of Severus' military conduct.

[76] See Ward 2011: 154.

[77] See Whittaker 1969: 317 n. 4, 320-1 n. 2. Hidber 2004: 208 considers that here we have an "instance of economic narration." See also Herodian's omission of the incident of Severus and the boar (Cass. Dio 76[75].9.2).

[78] See Whittaker 1969: 320 n. 1.

Indeed, Severus' capture of Ctesiphon, which in Herodian's work is placed after the defeat in Hatra, serves the purpose of characterizing this success as a powerful counterweight to Severus' defeat in the siege of Hatra, drawing attention to the good fortune which is said to have accompanied Severus throughout his career and which gave him compensation at that moment too (3.9.8).[79] Herodian cares to repeat the *unintended* movement of the Romans, the unexpectedness of their attack, and the unprepared state of the Parthians (3.9.9; 3.9.10; 3.9.11). This theme fits well with and reinforces Severus' quality of military swiftness and ability to catch his enemies unprepared;[80] a theme that Herodian has already stressed in his account of Severus' earlier military exploits (cf. 2.14.6; 3.1.1).

Herodian's narrative of the aftermath of Severus' Eastern expedition endorses his favourable portrait of the emperor. Severus orders that his battles and victories should be publicly staged, while the senate bestows honourable tributes upon him (3.9.12). His own visual narrative of victory at the end comes full circle and confirms his initial motivation for waging the campaign against the East (cf. 3.9.1),[81] echoing at the same time the erection of two huge victory monuments after his success over Albinus in the Battle of Lugdunum.[82] In Herodian's narrative, as we saw throughout this section, Severus' civil and external wars are knitted together through several parallels to suggest a continuous, positive appraisal of Severus' military career.

[79] The historicity of Herodian's account in this respect has been rightly doubted. See Roques 1990: 247 n. 82; Müller 1996: 321 ad loc. 'Supernatural sanction' is an important aspect of Severus' propaganda itself: Rubin 1980: 38, 43; Kemezis 2014: 60-61.

[80] See Ward 2011: 175.

[81] See also Ward 2011: 155, 175-76. In general, Ward 2011: 153 stresses that "Severus ... is by no means the only emperor in Herodian's narrative who is concerned with how he presents himself visually" and cites as parallels Commodus (1.14.9), Caracalla (4.8.1-2), Elagabalus (5.5.6-7), and Maximinus (7.2.8).

[82] Ward 2011: 178-79.

7. Severus, his sons, and his last years

Herodian does not mention Severus' visits to Palestine and Egypt (cf. Cass. Dio 76[75].13, including an excursus on the river Nile).[83] He simply refers to Severus' visit to the armies in Moesia and Pannonia and then his enthusiastic reception in Rome (3.10.1). The latter is described in terms reminiscent of Herodian's earlier account of Severus' return after his defeat of Albinus (3.8.3). Several of Severus' actions described here, including his offer to the people of sacrifices, holidays and public festivals, spectacles and victory games as well as money (3.10.2), find parallels in his earlier stay in Rome after his triumphant completion of the civil wars (cf. esp. 3.8.3-4; 3.8.9-10).

However, the similarities between the two scenes also bring out important differences. Earlier, Severus comes to Rome full of wrath against Albinus' friends, amidst an atmosphere of anxiety and fear. He mercilessly kills many senators and other distinguished men in order to satisfy his avarice, and he strives to appeal to the Roman people through demagogic means (3.8.3-10). In the present case, however, the emphasis shifts from Severus' tyrannical attributes to his attention to the administration of the empire and his attempt to educate (cf. παιδεύων) and teach his sons self-control (cf. σωφρονίζων) (3.10.2; 3.10.4). Both Severus' assiduous dealings with his civil duties as emperor and his education of his sons evoke earlier ideal emperors in Herodian's narrative, particularly Marcus Aurelius (1.2-4) and Pertinax (2.1.4; 2.2.7; 2.4.6-9). Indeed, Severus himself, as Herodian relates, encourages a connection with the Antonines by naming his older son 'Antoninus' (3.10.5). Additionally, Severus' act of providing the daughter of Plautianus, an infamous man (according to Herodian) as wife to his son Caracalla (3.10.5) recalls and contrasts with Marcus' careful choice of his sons-in-law on the basis of their virtuous conduct (1.2.2).

Herodian omits all of the specific details about Plautianus' actions and his relationship with Severus, which are spaced out in the abridged account of Dio's work.[84] He simply makes a handful of generalizing

[83] See Whittaker 1969: 325 n. 4; Müller 1996: 321 ad loc.

[84] See Cass. Dio 76[75].14.1-7; 76[75].15.1-7; 76[75].16.3-4; 77[76].2.2-3.

comments, perhaps drawn from or inspired by Dio, on Plautianus' severity and violence (3.10.7) and Severus' empowerment of him (3.10.6). Herodian is particularly careful to keep before our eyes a *disturbing theme* that matters to the principate as a whole, namely the irregular promotion of infamous people to positions of high influence.[85] Similar tendencies are noticed in the reigns of Commodus (1.12.3) and Elagabalus (5.7.6-7).

The following narrative clearly illustrates how Plautianus overreaches his position as praetorian prefect and tries to make an insidious bid for imperial power. It has been compellingly argued that, while the version of Plautianus' conspiracy in Dio's abridged text (77[76].2.5-4.5) is much more negative towards Caracalla, keeping the spotlight on Caracalla's active role in contriving the plot (Cass. Dio 77[76].3.1-3), Herodian chooses to give this role to Plautianus (3.11-12).[86] This difference might be explained by the fact that Dio's senatorial history is much more critical of Caracalla in general, as well as by the fact that Herodian's *History* shows an intense interest in the figure of the praetorian prefect, above all the challenges and dangers he put to imperial rule.[87] Comparable examples are Herodian's stories of the plots of Perennis, Cleander, or Laetus against Commodus, which have been shown to present several similarities among themselves and with that of Plautianus.[88]

This connection between Severus and Commodus is set in uniquely sharp focus in Herodian's narrative of the aftermath of Plautianus' plot:[89] "In future Severus appointed two military prefects, and he himself spent most of his life on the imperial property in the suburbs of Rome and the

[85] On the same theme in Cassius Dio, see Kemezis 2014: 144-45.

[86] See Zimmermann 1999: 196; Scott 2018a: 452-53. On a comparative reading of Plautianus' plot in Cassius Dio and Herodian, see also Hohl 1956: 33-46.

[87] On this theme, see Scott 2018a: *passim* and esp. 450-54 on Plautianus' plot.

[88] See Scott 2018a: esp. 445-54.

[89] Herodian cares to abridge his narrative again and keep his focus on the main players by omitting the meeting of the senate, which Severus called after Plautianus' death, where the news about Plautianus' plot is announced to the senate (Cass. Dio 77[76].5.1-2). Herodian also omits the details that are given about the fate of several intimates of Plautianus (Cass. Dio 77[76].5.1-6), as well as the honours bestowed upon Saturninus and Euodus by the senators (Cass. Dio 77[76].6.1). See also Herodian's omission of the affair of Bulla the robber (Cass. Dio 77[76].10).

coast of Campania, there doing his judicial and administrative work" (3.13.1). Commodus too, after his destruction of Perennis and his son, "appointed two praetorian prefects, because he thought it safer not to entrust so much power to one man. He believed that a divided office would diminish anyone's ambitions for supreme power" (1.9.10).[90] Moreover, after he escapes Maternus' plot, Commodus spends most of his time in the suburbs and the imperial estates far away from the city of Rome (1.11.5). Here too differences are as important as similarities. Herodian is explicit about the fact that Commodus avoids legal and imperial administration (1.11.5). Severus, on the other hand, does not neglect the duties pertaining to imperial rule, and he is also concerned to move his two sons away from the life in Rome and offer them a sense of good living (3.13.1; cf. 3.8.9-10 analysed above).[91]

Herodian lavishes especial attention on Caracalla's intolerable state and his desire, after Plautianus' disposal, to cause the death of his wife (3.13.2), whom "Severus exiled together with her brother to Sicily, giving them enough means to live on comfortably" (3.13.3). It is remarkable here that Herodian departs from the more hostile treatment of Severus in Cass. Dio 77[76].6.3, according to which the children of Plautianus were banished to Lipara and, while they lived, they spent their lives in fear and hardship and with lack of the necessities of life.[92] Herodian, unlike Dio, cares to underline Severus's philanthropy.[93] Given this positive appraisal of Severus, it is no wonder that Herodian eschews references to Severus' numerous executions of senators, mentioned in Cass. Dio 77[76].5.3-6; 77[76].7.3-9.4.

Another notable instance of Herodian's deviation from Dio's story, which has the effect of presenting a more favourable picture of the emperor and promoting recurring themes which are central to Herodian's understanding of history, concerns Severus' instructions to his sons about the importance of fraternal love and mutual support. Herodian places this incident after Plautianus' death and before Severus' departure in the

[90] The link is also noted by Müller 1996: 322 ad loc.

[91] See Zimmermann 1999: 197, who underlines the similarities and differences between Commodus and Severus at 3.13.1.

[92] Whittaker 1969: 351 n. 2.

[93] On this point, see also Zimmermann 1999: 196.

British expedition (3.13.3-5). In Cass. Dio 77[76].15.2 a similar piece of advice given by Severus is mentioned, albeit in less elaborated terms, before his death: "Be harmonious, enrich the soldiers, and scorn all other men."[94] Herodian's version of Severus' teaching evokes Marcus' dying words in the first book of the *History* (1.3-4), which highlights a crucial aspect of the way in which Severus appears to abide here by the ideal model set by Marcus at the beginning of the work.[95] Moreover, both Marcus' and Severus' speeches recall intertextually Cyrus' dying speech in the *Cyropaedia* (8.7) and that of Micipsa in Sallust's *Bellum Jugurthinum* (10).[96] Herodian thus draws on an extensive intertextual tradition in order to enrich Severus' scene and elevate his ideas and instructions. By the same token, this intertextual dialogue serves as a forewarning of his death, which follows during the British campaign, and the continuation of the conflict between his two sons.

Most significantly, Herodian's decision to place Severus' words before this campaign, rather than in his narrative of Severus' death might be explained by the fact that Herodian, unlike Cassius Dio (and the *Historia Augusta*), goes to some lengths to stress Severus' role as an 'educator' of his two sons (3.10.2-5; 3.13.1-6; 3.14.2).[97] Indeed, the complexities of teaching and learning in the post-Marcus world is a recurrent theme in

[94] Potter 2008: 206 notes that these words may sum up Severus' most significant problem during his reign, which "is that he seems never to have felt at home with the governing class of the empire, and that his discomfort translated into behavior that undermined the subtle balance of power between different interest groups that had been the basis of Antonine government."

[95] Zimmermann 1999: 199-200 stresses the inferiority of Severus to Marcus in terms of 'teaching principles'.

[96] See Whittaker 1969: 16 n. 2; Sidebottom 1998: 2806; Hidber 2006: 195-201; Galimberti 2014: 55. Cf. SHA *Sev*. 21.10: "Severus, when laid low by sickness, sent to his elder son that divine speech in Sallust in which Micipsa urges his sons to the ways of peace."

[97] On this point, see Zimmermann 1999: 195, 197, 199. In Cass. Dio 77[76].7.1, Plautianus is a kind of a 'pedagogue' (cf. οἷον παιδαγωγοῦ τινός) of Geta and Caracalla. After his death, the two brothers went to great lengths in their outrageous aptitude (cf. Cass. Dio 77[76].7.2-3). See also Zimmermann 1999: 199 n. 243 who mentions, in addition, Herodian's omission of Euodus, the τροφεύς of Caracalla (77[76].3.2), which in turn lays special emphasis on Severus' role as 'instructor'.

Herodian's *History*.[98] Herodian's reference to Severus' instruction before the British campaign adds to his role as 'pedagogue' of his two sons. It also features in his attempt to reconcile them and put an end to their squabbling. Crucially, Herodian relates that an important reason for Severus' British expedition itself was, besides his love for glory (cf. 3.9.1 on his Eastern expedition),[99] his anxiety "to get his sons out of Rome in order that they could return to their senses, leading a sober military life away from the luxurious delicacies of Rome" (3.14.2).[100]

After Severus' departure for the expedition, Herodian (as often) calls attention to his excellent military aptitude (3.14.3). We may remember the corresponding reflection at 2.11.2, after his departure from Pannonia to move against Julianus and Niger, or at 3.6.10, during his war against Albinus. This is another way in which civil and external wars are linked together in Herodian's narrative to suggest repeated patterns of imperial behaviour. Here the reference to Severus' old age and bad health (3.14.2) are especially designed to elevate his military qualities (3.14.2-3). Despite his weakness, Severus continues to show the same power and firmness on the field that he did during the civil wars. Moreover, Herodian omits specific details about Severus' march against Britain (cf. Cass. Dio 77[76].13.1-2: invasion of Caledonia, the hardships which Severus faces, and the positioning of the enemy). He simply repeats the usual success of Severus on the field, namely to catch his enemies unprepared and attack them unexpectedly (3.14.4; cf. 2.14.6; 3.1.1; 3.9.11). This is another theme that connects Severus' current campaign with the earlier ones, continuing the praise of the emperor's leadership qualities, particularly his energy and swiftness.

[98] On the importance of *paideia* for Herodian, see e.g. Sidebottom 1998: 2776, 2779, 2805-12; Zimmermann 1999: 29-31, 36, 37, 45, 62, 233-37.

[99] Later we read that Severus rejects the offer for peace because (as Herodian says) he wanted to delay his return to Rome and also wanted to "win a British victory and title" (3.14.5). Different is Cass. Dio 77[76].13.4: Severus "forced the Britons to come to terms, on the condition that they should abandon a large part of their territory."

[100] Cf. Cass. Dio 77[76].11.1: "Severus, seeing that his sons were changing their mode of life and that the legions were becoming enervated by idleness, made a campaign against Britain." See also Cass. Dio 77[76].13.1: "Severus, accordingly, desiring to subjugate the whole of it [i.e. Britain], invaded Caledonia."

Of special interest is Severus' act of giving his son Geta "a council of senior friends" to accompany him in his exercise of legal and political business (3.14.9). This is a clear remembrance of Marcus Aurelius, who entrusts his relatives and *amici* with the task of advising his son Commodus (1.4.1-6). It is also a theme that remains central to Herodian's narrative,[101] where it is shown that an ideal imperial court is one where "the emperor worked in concert with his *amici*."[102]

The association between Severus and Marcus Aurelius is also visible in Severus' death-scene. Herodian's description of Severus' situation is strongly reminiscent, both thematically and verbally, of Marcus Aurelius' circumstances towards the end of his life.[103] Like Marcus, Severus is an old man who is attacked by an illness and dies while executing his imperial tasks (3.15.1). Caracalla's portrait, in turn, is evocative of that of Commodus in the first book of the *History*, thus suggesting a parallel pair of fathers and sons.[104] Caracalla does not show interest in continuing the war against the barbarians.[105] Likewise, Commodus abandons the war of Marcus against the barbarians and wishes to return home (1.6.3).[106] Moreover, Caracalla's attempt to win over the benevolence of the soldiers (cf. 3.15.5; 4.5.1) recalls Commodus' similar act upon his accession to the throne (1.5.1; 1.5.8).

Nor does Herodian mention Severus' preparation to fight against the revolt of the Caledonians and the Maeatae, related in Cass. Dio 77[76].15.1-2. Rather, he notes that Severus died 'in grief' (λύπῃ) (3.15.2),

[101] See e.g. 3.15.6 on Geta and Caracalla; or 6.1.2 on Severus Alexander. On this theme, see Crook 1955: 76-91.

[102] Scott 2018a: 456.

[103] 3.15.1 (Severus): τὸν δὲ Σεβῆρον γηραιὸν ὄντα ἤδη νόσος ἐπιμηκεστέρα καταλαμβάνει ~ 1.3.1 (Marcus): γηραιὸν ὄντα Μάρκον, καὶ μὴ μόνον ὑφ' ἡλικίας, ἀλλὰ καμάτοις τε καὶ φροντίσι τετρυχωμένον διατρίβοντά τε ἐν Παίοσι, νόσος χαλεπὴ καταλαμβάνει.

[104] See also Hekster 2017: 114. In the SHA *Sev*. 21.5 there is an explicit association between Severus and Marcus in that regard: "What could have been more fortunate for Marcus than not to have left Commodus as his heir? What more fortunate for Septimius Severus than not to have even begotten Bassianus?" See SHA *Sev*. 20-21 more generally.

[105] Müller 1996: 322 ad loc.

[106] See Whittaker 1969: 363 n. 2.

presumably because of Caracalla's impropriety and the antagonism between his two sons.[107] This is another element that provides comparison with Marcus Aurelius, who at the end of his life is disturbed (according to Herodian) and feels fear and sorrow (cf. δεδιώς ... ἐτάραττε ... ἐλύπει ... ἐδεδίει) about the future of his son (1.3.1-5).[108]

Most importantly, Caracalla's attempt to kill his father evokes a tradition about Commodus' patricide that is mentioned in the epitomized version of Dio's history (Cass. Dio 72[71].33.4[2]; 77[76].14.7), but not in Herodian.[109] In particular, there is a strong analogy between Caracalla's attempt to persuade his doctors and attendants to kill his father (3.15.2) and the detail we find about Commodus in Cass. Dio 72[71].33.4[2], namely that "Marcus passed away...not as a result of the disease from which he still suffered, but by the act of his physicians...who wished to do Commodus a favour." In Cass. Dio 77[76].14, there is mention of two attempts by Caracalla to kill his father, but neither is made through doctors and attendants.[110] It is not implausible that Herodian transfers the detail about Commodus' patricide in Cassius Dio to his account of Caracalla in his history. The connection between the two incidents, after all, is present in Cass. Dio 77[76].14.7. Scholars have noted acutely that Herodian's decision to include Caracalla's patricide in his account of Severus' death, while omitting Commodus' similar attempt, allows Severus to appear

[107] Hidber 2006: 164.

[108] Müller 1996: 323 ad loc; Hidber 2006: 262 n. 312. Another link between Severus and Marcus might be found in the aftermath of their death. Herodian offers some details about Severus' sons carrying to Rome in an alabaster urn the ashes of Severus' body, which are taken to the sacred imperial mausoleum (3.15.7; 4.1.3-4) and Severus' funeral and *apotheōsis* (4.2). Cf. SHA *Sev.* 19.4; 24.2. A reference to Marcus' *apotheōsis* occurs in Commodus' speech to the soldiers as well (1.5.6). Moreover, Herodian does not mention the funeral-ceremonies and the honours bestowed upon Pertinax by Severus (Cass. Dio 75[74].4-5), but see 4.2 on the long excursus on the *apotheōsis* of Severus. Whittaker 1969, 375 n. 3 asks whether Herodian was "deliberately writing a parallel" to that of Dio about Pertinax. Might this be another indication of Herodian's implicit parallelism between Severus and Pertinax?

[109] On this point, see Zimmermann 1999: 201; Hidber 2006: 270-71; Hekster 2017: 114.

[110] Whittaker 1969: 363 n. 3. For a comparison between the death scenes of Marcus and Severus in Herodian, see Hekster 2017: 112-15. Cf. Müller 1996: 322-23 ad loc.

more ambiguous in the end than Marcus in his virtue and leadership, particularly in his role as parent-educator.[111]

Nevertheless, the soldierly εὔνοια towards Geta and Caracalla, which Herodian mentions next, adds to Severus' posthumous reputation. The soldiers, we are told, did not yield to Caracalla's request to acknowledge him as sole emperor, because "they remembered Severus and the fact that they had reared (cf. παραθρέψειαν) the children as equals from childhood" (3.15.5; cf. Cass. Dio 78[77].1.3). A similar line of argument used by Commodus in his speech to the soldiers on the northern front might be evoked in comparison. There Commodus asks for the goodwill (εὔνοιαν) of the soldiers and stresses the fact that Marcus, when Commodus was a small boy, used to bring him to the soldiers and entrust him to their care. Thus, Commodus claims, the elder soldiers owe him their allegiance as τροφεία, namely as a kind of return gift for rearing and bringing him up (1.5.4). Commodus, unlike Caracalla, manages to win over the support of the soldiers. Marcus' memory (μνήμη), which Commodus directly evokes (1.5.7), plays a central role to his success, just as Severus' memory contributes, even temporarily, to the state of peace and concord between Geta and Caracalla (3.15.6); precisely to what Severus constantly strived for while he was alive.

Conclusion

This article has corroborated the view of recent scholarship as regards Herodian's complex characterization of Septimius Severus.[112] It has shown throughout that Herodian's Severus is composed of light and shade, and that his portrait is progressively shaped with great richness and complexity. Severus is depicted as a successful (military) leader *par*

[111] See Zimmermann 1999: 37, 201, who also accepts the possibility of Herodian's transferring Dio's details about Commodus' patricide to that of Caracalla. See also Hekster 2017: 114, who considers in general that Severus turns out to be a negative mirror-image of Marcus.

[112] Pitcher 2018a: 243; Ward 2011: 69, 147-48, 156; Hekster 2017: 111-27.

excellence, who demonstrates strength, swiftness, and dynamism, and inspires his men with prowess through his words and actions.[113] He stands out as a capable commander who gets his way by cleverness and foresight. None of this is to say, however, that Herodian's narrative of Severus is pure encomium.[114] Several flaws of Severus' character and reign are exposed and criticized, such as his cruelty and violence, his obsession with money and ambition.[115] Cassius Dio's *History*, which stimulates a sceptical approach towards similar misdemeanours of the emperor, may have reasonably been Herodian's source here.[116] However, it is my contention in this study that, despite these reservations, Herodian's narrative is designed to show Severus in a better light than that of Cassius Dio.[117]

[113] See also Pitcher 2018a: 246: "Septimius' career is a triumph of rhetoric, as well as of determined action. Herodian's depiction of him leaves little doubt of this."

[114] Cf. Herodian's avowed statements about his adherence to objective and unbiased historiography (1.1.1-2; 2.15.7; 3.7.3; 3.7.6). Hidber 2004: 202 mentions that Herodian might be especially thinking of Cassius Dio, who, apart from the *Roman History*, wrote panegyrical works about Septimius Severus. See also Sidebottom 1998: 2781. On Herodian's criticism of other historians, see also Hidber 2006, 82-92. Photius, the ninth-century patriarch of Constantinople, appreciated Herodian's historiographical approach for its clarity, moderation, and impartiality (*Bibl.* 99).

[115] See Meulder 2002: 86-87 on the connection of Herodian's Severus with the Platonic tyrant.

[116] See e.g. on Severus' cruelty and violence, Cass. Dio 75[74].2.2; 75[74].8.3; 75[74].9.4; 75[74].9.5-6; 76[75].7.3-8.4; 76[75].10.2-3; 77[76].7.3-9.4; his obsession with money, see Cass. Dio 75[74].2.3; 75[74].8.4-5; his concern for personal glory, see Cass. Dio 75[74].1.1. On this point, see Bering-Staschewski 1981: 71-72. On the close connections between Herodian's and Dio's portraits of Severus, cf. Zimmermann 1999: 186-88; Meulder 2002: 92. Later sources include criticism of the same points. See e.g. on Severus' cruelty: SHA *Sev*. 6.6-7; 8.1-5; 9.4-9; 10.8; 11.5-9; 12-14; 15.4-7; 17.7; 18.7 ("He wrote a trustworthy account of his own life, both before and after he became emperor, in which the only charge that he tried to explain away was that of cruelty"); 18.8; 21.10; SHA *Albinus* 12.1-14. Cf. Aur. Vic. *Caes.* 20.10; Eutr. 18. On his love for glory and money, see SHA *Sev*. 15.1-2; Eutr. 18.

[117] On Dio's portrait of Septimius Severus, Scott 2018b: 6 aptly notes: "In response to this decline in status, Dio's view of the principate from Commodus through Severus Alexander is generally negative, apart from the example set by Pertinax. Each emperor of this period, even those who at times receive Dio's praise, was inherently flawed. These flaws range from the ignorance and cowardice of Commodus, to the violence and cruelty of Septimius Severus and Caracalla, to the outrageousness of Elagabalus." See also Scott

Indeed, a close comparison of Herodian's treatment of Severus with that offered by the (epitomated) account of Cassius Dio has shown that Herodian goes to some trouble to rework his source-material, in order to favour a more positive reading of Severus. In particular, we noted many instances of omissions, displacements, and modifications of specific contexts, which cumulatively offer insights into Herodian's method of streamlining his account and selecting that which best suits his themes and interests.[118]

In this article I repeatedly stressed Herodian's tendency to develop substantial structural, thematic, and verbal *intratextual* associations and comparisons between specific historical agents and events, which are designed to draw the reader to perceive his history of Septimius Severus in a dovetailed and comparative manner.[119] More precisely, I suggested that

2018b: 6 n. 34: "Dio's presentation of Septimius Severus and Macrinus is decidedly mixed, but neither approaches the praise lavished upon Marcus Aurelius, or to a lesser extent on Pertinax." Cf. Kemezis 2014: 146: "Even if Dio's harshest castigation is confined to the officially disgraced Elagabalus and the embarrassing Caracalla, still Septimius Severus is made insufficiently heroic and Macrinus insufficiently villainous." On Dio's complex portraiture of Severus, see also Ward 2011: 24-25, 69. Cf. Rantala 2016: 160-63, who approaches "Dio's text as a statement from the senatorial point of view, or even as a form of senatorial resistance against Severus and his policy" (161). Rantala 2016: 175 concludes in a critical manner: "Dio's comments about Severus' policy were not pure coincidental, but should be seen as a conscious attempt to demonstrate the unpleasant nature of the Severan reign...Severus possessed, in Dio's eyes, all the features of a tyrant." Further bibliography on Dio's 'mixed' characterization of Severus is cited in Scott 2018b: 13 n. 71. On Dio's criticism of the Severans, see also Madsen 2016: 154-58. On Severus in the SHA, see Ward 2011: 191-92: "While the theme of good and bad emperors is one that looms large in the *HA*, Severus, who possesses both virtues and vices, hangs somewhere in between the *boni* and the *mali*."

[118] On Herodian's narrative method, see further bibliography cited above, n. 4.

[119] More generally, on Herodian's penchant for formulaic scenes, patterning, and repetition, see also Fuchs 1895: 222-52; Fuchs 1896: 180-234; Sidebottom 1998: 2815-17; Zimmermann 1999: 7, 64, 144, 151, 171, 255, 259-61; Scott 2018a: 434-59; Alföldy 1973: 352: "Jedes in sich geschlossene historische Einzelbild in Herodians Werk birgt in sich Motive, durch die das nächste Bild verständlich wird: Dadurch ist die Kontinuität des aus einzelnen Erzählungen bestehenden historischen Romans gesichert." Cf. De Blois 1998: 3416: "He made use of contrasting schemes." See also Pitcher 2018a: 242 on Herodian's Maximinus ("Herodian's narrator establishes a web of correspondences which

Severus' gradual descent into tyranny is marked by Herodian's construction of similar scenes that develop in opposing ways and thus force the reader to contemplate all the more profoundly the emperor's deceptive behaviour. Remember, for example, how Herodian's account of Severus' entry into Rome and his subsequent appearance in the senate after his victory over Albinus (3.8.3-10) encourages the reader to reflect back to the preceding narrative of his earlier *adventus* in 193 C.E. (2.14.1-7). Along the same lines, I showed that in his account of Severus' accession Herodian constantly invites his readers to compare and contrast Severus with his contenders, Julianus, Niger, and later Albinus, thus offering them an enhanced understanding of Severus' superiority and predominance. Within this interpretative analysis, Herodian cares to associate, through several intratextual linkages, Severus' three main opponents in order to allow a less ideal pattern of imperial behaviour to emerge, which in turn brings into sharp relief Severus' excellent military principles in contrast.[120] Closely relevant to this is the elaborate way in which Herodian's narrative of Severus' trap of the Praetorians in Rome is linked thematically and verbally with Severus' pre-battle speech in Pannonia in order to emphasize a number of commendable characteristics of Severus. Also notable is the artful way in which Severus' civil and external wars are knitted together to suggest a continuous, positive appraisal of his military qualities (such as his energy, swiftness, and shrewdness) and achievements. This culminates in Herodian's concluding verdict on the emperor, whom he praises for his incomparable military distinction in both civil and foreign wars (3.15.3).

Crucially, this image of Severus appears *only* in Herodian's *History*. There is no such consistent focus on Severus' active demeanour and successful leadership on the field, particularly as opposed to his opponents,

anchors the interpretation of his reign firmly within that of the larger text that surrounds it"), 248 on Herodian's Severus ("And, as with Maximinus, one needs to pay attention to the web of allusions that link and contrast him with many other characters, both within and (in the case of Odysseus) without the text of the history to make full sense of what Herodian is doing with him as a character"), and 249 on Herodian's tendency "to compare, contrast, and categorize emperors or would-be emperors of Rome against each other."

120 On this contrast, see also Fuchs 1895: 227-28, 248; Sidebottom 1998: 2851; Kuhn-Chen 2002: 286-87; Hidber 2006: 208.

either in the abridged version of Dio's *History* or the *Vita Septimii Severi*, or even Aurelius Victor's biography of the emperor (*Caes.* 20).[121] Rather, in Dio's account of Severus' battle against Albinus near Lugdunum, it is plainly stressed that this was the first battle at which Severus was present (76[75].6.1).[122] This view causes special wonder, especially if we take into account that Cassius Dio wrote a laudatory work on Severus, which he incorporated into the *History*.[123] Moreover, it is only Herodian who emphasizes the similar disposition of cowardice and idleness of Julianus, Niger, and Albinus, and links the three men into a triangle for cross-comparison and reflection.[124] Likewise, it is only in Herodian's *History* that we read about Severus' role as educator of his two sons.[125] The same is true of Severus' guile to which no similar weight is accorded in the other main literary accounts of his reign. Herodian's narrative method and portrait

[121] In Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 20.14 there is only a praiseworthy comment on Severus' superiority to everyone in battle, but (as expected) there is no elaborate development of the theme. See also [Aur. Vict.] *De vir. ill.* 20.5; Eutr. 18-19. With reference to Cassius Dio's narrative, Ward 2011: 79 aptly notes: "In fact, as a military commander, Septimius Severus leaves much to be desired...: he suffers defeats, most often relies on the superior skills of his officers, and only rarely secures a victory himself." Cf. Bering-Staschewski 1981: 69-72. However, Ward 2011: 170 concludes that Herodian's Severus is more like that of Dio.

[122] Cf. Cass. Dio 75[74].6.4-5; 75[74].7.1; 77[76].10.6. Strikingly, in SHA *Sev.* 5.6 it is mentioned that Severus was *terrified*, when he heard that legates were sent by the senate to order his soldiers to desert him.

[123] Whittaker 1969: 246-47 n. 2; Rubin 1980: 52-53; Sidebottom 1998: 2781; Scott 2018b: 10 with n. 61.

[124] On the depiction of Niger and Albinus in their corresponding biographies in the *SHA*, see Ward 2011: 208-21. On Niger, Ward 2011: 211 aptly notes: "It is Pescennius' military endeavors and leadership that receive the most detailed attention in the narrative of his life. While it is often the case that the narrator simply mentions Pescennius' positive qualities as a general (*PN* 3.6; 6.10), there are also a few, longer anecdotes that put this on full display (*PN* 7.7-9; 10.1-9; 11.1-4). The quality that is perhaps most noticeable within this wider theme is his strictness as a leader." On Albinus, see Ward 2011: 220: "Still, in the few places where the narrator voices an opinion and/or relates an anecdote that illustrates Albinus' character, it can be said that Albinus is portrayed in a rather negative light, especially regarding his cruelty (*ClA* 11.6; 13.1)."

[125] A plausible exception is Cass. Dio 78[77].13.2: "Severus, to be sure, had trained him (i.e. Caracalla) in absolutely all the pursuits that tended to excellence, whether of body or of mind, so that even after he became emperor he went to teachers and studied philosophy most of the day."

of the emperor, therefore, are his own innovation, and they should be tailored, I suggest, to his unique literary programme and historical methodology.

First of all, Herodian's emphasis on Severus' credentials as a competent general might be justified by appealing to the specific theme of his work, which concerns the explication of what Herodian perceived as the unparalleled series of imperial successions and the drastic transfers of power in the post-Marcus world (1.1.4-6). Severus' military achievements are marshalled to make a crucial point about his successful possession of the empire and the dreadful failure of his opponents. In line with this, Herodian has another arrow in his quiver, namely that his narrative of Severus' military success allows, through presentational repetition and variation (*poikilia*),[126] a network of behavioural patterns to emerge, which are amenable to his more general analysis of imperial history.

Herodian, as has been shown, is concerned to suggest how many of the key characteristics and situations of Severus go back to Marcus Aurelius, Pertinax, or even Commodus, and look ahead to other emperors, such as his son Caracalla, Elagabalus, and Maximinus who continue to show, and often bring to a climax, tyrannical traits that have been associated with Severus. It has also been proposed that Julianus establishes a pattern of cowardly behaviour which concerns both Niger and Albinus, and which is applicable to future emperors as well, such as Macrinus, Severus Alexander, and Gordian I. Often, as has been noticed, the drive to compare emperors against each other is part of the emperor's propagandistic self-representation as well,[127] which makes the reader reflect upon the gaps between rhetoric and action, the ideal and the real.[128] In the

[126] This accords with Herodian's programmatic statement in the prologue to his work about the *poikilia* of the content of his history: "In a period of sixty years the Roman Empire was shared by more rulers than the years warranted, so producing many different phenomena which are worthy of wonder (cf. πολλὰ καὶ ποικίλα ἤνεγκε καὶ θαύματος ἄξια)" (1.1.5). On the use of the term *poikilia* in historical works and works of literary criticism to denote both thematic and stylistic variety which can be useful and pleasing to the audience, see Hidber 2006: 114-16; Nünlist 2009: 31, 139, 198-202.

[127] See Pitcher 2018a: 249 on *sunkrisis* being part of the emperors' self-depiction.

[128] The complex relationship between Severus' words and actions in Herodian's *History* is also stressed by Pitcher 2018a: 246.

course of our discussion, we have repeatedly stressed how Herodian's image of Severus reinterprets and often undermines Severus' own propaganda, especially as it concerns his projected connection with Marcus Aurelius' family and Pertinax.

On the whole, the associations drawn between different emperors in Herodian's *History* have the effect of infusing Herodian's characterization with some degree of 'typification'; in other words, his characters appear to have some typical and common, rather than idiosyncratic and distinctive, traits.[129] This aspect also serves to alert the readers to some predictable sets of behaviour and course of events, which are forthcoming in the narrative, thus enhancing the readers' engagement with history, by generating expectations in them about how characters will behave, act and impact the plot.[130] The recognition of the "horizons of expectation"[131] involved in Herodian's gradual installation of behavioural patterns throws considerable light on how he creates a reading dynamic that promotes suspense and makes history comprehensible and attractive through narrative cohesiveness and progression.[132] It also warns against the view that Herodian composed his work hastily, carelessly, or even incomprehensively.[133] Rather, it suggests that Herodian's *History* more generally, as well as his image of Severus more specifically, involved deliberate and careful planning.

Our discussion has clearly demonstrated that Herodian's portrait of Severus provides a sense of continuation and repetition among separate reigns, which draw the reader's attention to recurring themes and explanatory strands. More specifically, Herodian uses Severus to establish thematic oppositions between activity and cowardice, and between tyrannical and enlightened behaviour, which will recur and constitute a

[129] On Herodian's 'typical' characters, cf. De Blois 1998: 3419; Hidber 2006: 184.

[130] On this aspect of Herodian's technique, cf. Ward 2011: 114-44, 148, 182-84, 236-37 who focuses especially on scenes of 'internal viewing' in the *History*.

[131] For this term, see Jauss 1982.

[132] In the prologue to his work, Herodian has drawn attention to the pleasurable knowledge of his *History* (1.1.3). That a cohesive narrative design enhances intelligibility and pleasure in reading is a point well stressed by ancient critics as well. See e.g. Arist. *Poet*. 23, 1459a17-1459a29; Diod. Sic. 20.1.5; Polyb. 1.4.11; Dion. Hal. *Pomp*. 3.13-14; *Thuc*. 9; Lucian *Hist. conscr*. 55.

[133] See e.g. Whittaker 1969: x; Millar 1969: 14.

unifying factor for his work as a whole. Several of the leading themes of Herodian's narrative of Severus' reign (such as aristocracy, the *eunoia* of the subordinates, education, victories in external wars), as we saw, go back to Marcus Aurelius himself and have a wider application to the empire as a whole. On this understanding, I suggest that Herodian's portrait of Severus has been shaped by his universalizing view of imperial history. It is unique both in terms of the function it fulfils within this section of Herodian's *History* and as part of his overall narrative method of providing a cohesive, unified, and intelligible re-configuration of the fragmented and chaotic post-Marcus world.[134]

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