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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Narrative Setting and *actio* in Herodian's Speeches

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Abstract

This article studies how some of the narrative settings in Herodian's *History* supply the reader with fundamental rhetorical information about the *actio* of its speeches. I examine the *actio* in the settings of the speeches delivered by Marcus Aurelius (1.4.2–6), Crispinus (8.3.4–6), and Maximinus (7.8.4–8). These settings can determine the length of a speech, the typology of an address, or the characterisation of the speaker. Accordingly, readers can understand why the historian chooses a particular type of speech in each narrative context. All this evinces the great care which Herodian put into the writing of these sections of his *History*.

Keywords: rhetoric; ancient historiography; narrative settings; *actio*; Herodian; speeches; Marcus Aurelius; Crispinus; Maximinus Thrax

Rhetoric, narrative settings, and the writing of history

In the past forty years, the study of the influence of rhetoric on history writing has flourished.[1] Thanks to the advances in the field since Woodman's groundbreaking studies, historiography is now understood not only as a source of historical information, but also as a literary genre which puts a high premium on form and style.[2] Likewise, the rhetorical education of the historians is now also regarded as being essential to their craft. This approach has spurred robust research into the historian's methodology and educational background, with particular focus on two key areas.

Since historiography is the sum of *logoi* and *erga*, speeches have garnered the most critical scrutiny.[3] After all, speeches are the clearest product of the historiographer's rhetorical education, and thus they occupy a very prominent place in methodological discussions. Accordingly, the scholarship of the past forty years has devoted great

[1]This article is part of the Research Project PID2021–123069NB-100 (MICINN), 'The Narrative Setting in the Historiography from Antiquity to the Renaissance', funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and ERDF, 'A Way of Making Europe', and the UEX Research Group 'Arenga' (HUM-023).

[2]Cf. Woodman (1988); Nicolai (1992); Marincola (1997); Fox and Livingstone (2010); Carey (2017).

[3]Cf. Walbank (1965); Fornara (1983); Marincola (2007); Pausch (ed.) (2010); Achilli (2012).

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efforts to better understand how ancient historians composed their speeches. The Polybian taxonomy has also received a great deal of attention – that is, the three kinds of speeches which Polybius (12.25.a3) considered typical of historiography: deliberative speeches (τὰς δημηγορίας), embassy speeches (τοὺς πρεσβευτικοὺς λόγους), and military speeches (τὰς παρακλήσεις).[4] Finally, scholars have also focused on elucidating how certain rhetorical figures operate in tandem with these speeches, like *enargeia* – the rhetorical figure that vividly describes actions, such as a battle scene, to put them squarely before readers' eyes.[5]

At the same time, significant progress has been made in our understanding of the role played by historiography itself in rhetorical education.[6] For example, we now have a better understanding of the role played by historiographical models in *progymnasmata* handbooks.[7] This has foregrounded the ecosystem of mutual influence inhabited by rhetoric and historiography for centuries. In the earliest stage, Classical-era historians (Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon) experimented in their works with the rhetorical techniques then available.[8] Afterwards, these same authors became canonical models for the next generations of historians, and so their works became a major source for rhetorical handbooks and rhetorical instruction.[9] Inevitably, once this rhetorical material became codified and formalised for different purposes in rhetorical textbooks or anthologies, it influenced the writing of history in later periods, such as the Imperial era.[10]

Despite substantial scholarly progress thus far, there are still important gaps in our knowledge of the interplay between rhetoric and historiography in Antiquity. Some crucial aspects of the historiographers' craft fall outside the scope of the aforementioned critical approaches, such as the 'unwritten rules' of historiography.[11] By this I mean those methods and practices that are not codified either in the rhetorical manuals or in the scarce normative information on history writing that has survived to the present day – practices and methods which were nonetheless part of the historian's day-to-day life, and which played a pivotal role in historiographical *mimesis*.

One of these 'unwritten rules' concerns the 'narrative setting'. By 'narrative setting', an expression originally coined by Westlake, I mean those words and sentences

[4]On this passage by Polybius, cf. Thornton (2013). On deliberative speeches, cf. Levene (1999); Usher (2010); Côté and Fleury (eds.) (2013). On embassy speeches, *cf.* Piccirilli (2002); Tuci (2019); Gazzano (2019). On battle exhortations, *cf.* Albertus (1908); Hansen (1993); Pritchett (1994); Iglesias-Zoido (2007); Iglesias-Zoido (ed.) (2008); Abbamonte, Miletti, and Spina (eds.) (2009); Lendon (2017).

[5]Cf. Walker (1993); Zangara (2007). For *enargeia* as the main feature of *ekphrasis*, cf. Carmona Centano (2014) 186–89. For a discussion on the cognitive mechanisms underpinning *enargeia*, another common rhetorical figure of visualization, cf. Iglesias-Crespo (2021); Iglesias-Crespo (2022).

[6]Cf. Nicolai (1992).

[7]Cf. Gibson (2004); Iglesias-Zoido (2007); Iglesias-Zoido (2012); Iglesias-Zoido (2017); Nicolai (2017); Matijašić (2018); Chiron and Sans (eds.) (2020).

[8]Cf. Iglesias-Zoido (2011) 51–65 and Carey (2017) 69–70.

[9]Cf. Gibson (2004); Iglesias-Zoido (2012).

[10]Cf. Iglesias-Zoido and Pineda (eds.) (2017) on the anthologies of historiographical speeches from the Antiquity to the Renaissance.

[11]About this concept in ancient historiography, cf. Brock (1995); Nicolai (1999) 2815; Marincola (2010).

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which introduce and close the speeches embedded in the histories, which may in turn be expressed in direct or reported speech.[12] The setting provides key information about the speech's context, such as: Who is the character? Where is the character located? Is the character a good orator? In so doing, the settings condition the reader's view on the speech while providing fertile ground for intertextual play. Although the narrative setting first originated in epic, it was in historiography where it reached its greatest development. From Thucydides onwards, historiographical speeches ceased to be subordinated to the narrative. Instead, going beyond the narrative model developed by Herodotus (still heavily influenced by epic), in Thucydides' *History* the speech began to interact with the narrative on a previously unknown level.[13] Precisely through the narrative setting Thucydides achieved a fertile integration of the two essential parts of his history – the *logoi* and the *erga*. It is useful then to see the narrative setting as the mortar that unites narrative and speech into a coordinated whole. Furthermore, Thucydides' use of the narrative setting became a model for later historiography, so much so that it can be argued that one of the 'unwritten rules' of historiography concerns the elaboration of the narrative setting of the speeches. The rules of the setting are not set in writing, and yet they are most certainly applied with great precision by later historians in the process of *imitatio*.[14]

Through analysis and abstraction, it is possible to say that a narrative setting usually displays a threefold structure, where each level plays a different function.[15] The first level is constituted by the words in direct contact with the speech, the deictics and the *verba dicendi*. The second level is made up of the opening and closing sentences in full. The third level deals with the 'oratorical context', the larger narrative sections (sometimes stretching over a full chapter before the speech itself) which in fact only exist to introduce the speech. This third level often provides critical information about the preparation, the characteristics, and the consequences of the given speech. Furthermore, the language used in each level tends to become increasingly standardised the closer the level is to the actual speech. In the first level, the historian systematically deploys a highly codified set of verbs and nouns to embed the speech into the narrative. It goes without saying that the second and third level afford more freedom to the historian. In these two levels, the particularities of each episode determine which data are introduced about both the speech and the orator. Nonetheless, we can also observe general patterns in the data introduced in these levels, such as: the delimitation of the oratorical scope of the speech, its place within a debate, the identification and characterisation of the speaker, and even information about the speaker's goals.

[12]Cf. Westlake (1973) on the concept of 'narrative setting' and other expressions coined by critics in German ('Umrahmung'). On the narrative setting in Greek historiography, with especial attention to the work of Thucydides, Iglesias-Zoido (2006); Morrison (2006); Pavlou (2013). Cf. Laird (1999) 87–115).

[13]On the relationship between speech and narrative in Herodotus, with different perspectives especially with respect to the later books of the *History*, cf. Lang (1984); Lateiner (1989) 19–21; Pelling (2006); Zali (2014).

[14]Cf. Iglesias-Zoido (2016); Iglesias-Zoido (2023).

[15]Cf. the first theoretical exposition of this threefold structure in Iglesias-Zoido (2006), and the practical applications in Imperial Age historians in Iglesias-Zoido (2016) and Iglesias-Zoido (2023).

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In addition, the narrative settings often provide crucial, rhetorical information about the speech's delivery, or *actio*.[16] In fact, the narrative setting functions like a stage direction: it specifies the speech's intensity and mood while contextualising its delivery. In this sense, the setting allows the historian to express that which Aristotle referred to in *Rhetoric* 1403b as the ὡς δεῖ εἰπεῖν.[17] This involves playing with three qualities of the human voice: intensity (μέγεθος), timbre (ἁρμονία), and rhythm (ῥυθμός). For Aristotle, these vocal qualities did not only influence how emotions are expressed (cf. *Rh.*1403b26–36: πρὸς ἕκαστον πάθος) but were also linked to the wish to make speech 'visible' through rhetorical urbanities (cf. *Rh.* 1404a11).[18] Hence, by mixing aural and visual elements, the speech is more impactful than a dry account of events (cf. *Rh.* 1368a).[19]

The challenge for the historian is that the reader cannot read or listen to an orator on the page.[20] For this reason, the narrator must become an extradiegetic mediator who informs the reader about the speaker and his or her delivery. To do so, the historian turns to the narrative setting precisely because it allows him to provide this rich body of nuanced, rhetorical information which could have hardly existed elsewhere, and which even determines the type of speech that follows it. Introducing a speech with the verb 'to say' is not the same as to do so with 'to exhort' or 'to shout'.[21] Hence, the setting is the place where the historian provides the reader with important nuances relating to the *actio* of the speech reproduced in the work.

In the following pages, I shall examine how Herodian deploys the narrative setting in his *History*, paying especial attention to the *actio* of his allocutions.[22] The *History* is a work which is often neglected by scholarship. And yet, it offers an excellent example of how an Imperial-era historian deployed the narrative setting to introduce speeches.[23] Traditionally, critics have considered that Herodian wrote mediocre speeches which failed to properly imitate the canonical models of Greek historiography. Purportedly, such a failure would evince, at best, Herodian's lack of interest in his predecessors, or, at worst, his poor rhetorical education.[24] These views built on the fact that Herodian sometimes opted for shorter, concise speeches without a fully developed *dispositio*. On these grounds, critics such as Alföldy concluded that Herodian was more of a 'historical

[16]Cf. Aldrete (1999); Díez Coronado (2003); Cavarcere (2011) on *actio* in Antiquity. The most important study of *actio* in ancient historiography is Moreno and Nicolai (eds.) (2016).

[17]Cf. Díez Coronado (2003) 34–5.

[18]For the Aristotelian conception of rhetorical discourse as *phantasia*, cf. O'Gorman (2005).

[19]Cf., in this respect, Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.2: *adfectus omnes languescant necesse est, nisi voce, vultu, totius prope habitu corporis inardescunt* ('All emotional appeals necessarily lose their force if they are not kindled by the voice, facial expression, and demeanor of practically the entire body').

[20]Of course, in certain cases, the oral performance of historical texts would also be considered. Cf. in this respect Johnson (1994) and Thomas (2003). However, from Thucydides onwards, historiographical writing implies an attentive reading conditioned by the written page. Cf. Yunis (2003).

[21]Cf. Iglesias-Zoido (2016).

[22]On Herodian's work, cf. Widmer (1967); Whittaker (1969–70); Kolb (1972); Sidebottom (1998); Zimmermann (1999); Kuhn-Chen (2002); Hidber (2006); Kemezis (2014); Galimberti (ed.) (2017) and, especially, Galimberti (ed.) (2022) and Chrysanthou (2022). I am using Whittaker's edition and translation of Herodian. I also take into account, where appropriate, the Greek text edited by Lucarini (2005).

[23]On Herodian's speeches, cf. Castelli (2008); Pitcher (2022); Mallan (2022); Iglesias-Zoido (2023).

[24]Cf. Whittaker (1969–70) lx on different interpretations of these *oratio recta* speeches, usually criticised for their lack of appropriateness and their doubtful historicity.

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novelist' who assigned plots and speeches to his characters than a historian who wrote speeches adjusted to rhetorical norms and the concrete needs of the situation.[25]

This assessment of Herodian has been challenged in recent years by Sidebottom and Kemezis, who have championed the need to read Herodian's *History* in its literary and rhetorical context.[26] According to these authors, many of these 'faulty' speeches in fact conform to the size, arrangement, and subject matter traditionally accepted in the genre; furthermore, they explain their particularities by noting their 'ironic tone', or the fact that they are literally staging a rhetorical failure of persuasion, rather than being a failure themselves.[27] Building on these insights and on the recent developments in the study of historiographical rhetoric, Pitcher, Mallan, and Chrysanthou offer a more accurate picture of the speeches' virtues and shortcomings.[28] Thanks to these joint efforts, previous points of contention – such as the differences between speeches in *oratio recta* and *oratio obliqua*, their linkage to the narrative, or the absence or presence of speeches in specific parts of the *History* – are now taken as virtues of Herodian's narrative art. A pertinent development for the case at hand has been a greater understanding of how Herodian emplots speeches in the narrative, often defying the readers' expectations. It has even been argued that it is unfair to judge these speeches by the same standards as, say, Thucydides or Cassius Dio. Some scholars have even suggested that, at least from an aesthetic point of view, Herodian's coeval readers might have regarded his speeches as being more appropriate to the narrative thanks to the interweaving between *logoi* and *erga*, than the more extensive and complex ones produced by authors judged to be exemplary by modern standards.[29]

My proposal to examine Herodian's sophisticated use of the narrative settings thus builds on these scholarly efforts which have opened a new avenue of research into his rhetorical art. I shall focus on three specific speeches: first, Marcus Aurelius to his advisers on his death bed (1.4.2–6); second, Crispinus to the local militia of Aquileia (8.3.4–6); and third, Maximinus Thrax to his soldiers (7.8.4–8), which is, in my view, a particularly striking case. The first speech is a static speech: the emperor speaks from his death bed. Here the *actio* is conditioned by Herodian's dramatic use of intertextuality: seeking to trigger the readers' *pathos* of compassion (οἶκτος), Marcus Aurelius' speech evokes those by Cyrus in Xenophon or Micipsa in Sallust. These intertextual connections not only contribute to heighten his emotional appeal, but also justify particularly the brevity of his speech. The second speech is a military exhortation delivered on the move: the orator walks through the soldiers' ranks on the walls of Aquileia. Here the *actio* is crucial, as it renders the speech as a type of military exhortation: an *epipolesis*. The third, as I said, is a striking case, as it offers us a very unusual picture in ancient historiography. Maximinus (who was himself a veteran soldier) reads before his troops a written speech prepared by his *amici*, and its final part is

[25]Cf. Alföldy (1971) 431: 'sie ist mehr eine Art historischen Romans als ein Geschichtswerk'.

[26]Cf. Sidebottom (1998); Kemezis (2014).

[27]Cf. Sidebottom (1998) 2817; Kemezis (2014) 252–4.

[28]Cf. Pitcher (2022); Mallan (2022); Chrysanthou (2022).

[29]Cf. Mallan (2022) 66: 'aesthetically at least, one may suspect that Herodian's coevals found this short, well-integrated these speech units more congenial than the often lengthy and convoluted speeches of [Cassius] Dio or Thucydides'.

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punctuated by the abrupt gesturing of his hands and face. Here the *actio* is key again, as it characterises Maximinus as a semi-barbarian with no training.

Marcus Aurelius

The first speech analysed here is Marcus Aurelius' address to his advisers and his son before his death (1.4.2–6).[30] Previous critics tend to pay particular attention to Herodian's goal of offering an archetypal farewell address that must be put in relation with other similar allocutions, such as the final words of Cyrus to his friends and family before his death (X. *Cyr.* 8.7.6–28) or the speeches uttered by Micipsa (Sall. *BJ* 10) and Hadrian (DC 69.20).[31] From our point of view, this allocution offers an outstanding example of the attention paid by Herodian to the *actio* in his speeches. Before Marcus Aurelius begins to speak to his advisers and his son in his death bed, Herodian introduces the scene (1.4.1):

> κυμαίνουσαν οὖν ἔχων τοσαύταις φροντίσι τὴν ψυχήν, συγκαλέσας τε τοὺς φίλους ὅσοι τε παρῆσαν τῶν συγγενῶν, καὶ τὸν παῖδα παραστησάμενος, ἐπειδὴ πάντες συνῆλθον, ἡσυχῇ τοῦ σκίμποδος κουφίσας ἑαυτὸν τοιούτων λόγων ἤρξατο ...
>
> With a heavy heart because of these worries, Marcus summoned his advisers and the relatives who were with him and made his son stand beside him. When everyone was assembled, he quietly[32] raised himself up from his sick-bed and began a speech, saying ...

As we shall see, the sentence before the speech acts as a 'preamble' which supplies us with essential data for understanding the speech delivery. First-level terms refer to the uttered words (τοιούτων λόγων) and the verb which introduces the speech (ἤρξατο). By means of this peculiar formula, Herodian also seems to imply that the emperor 'began' a speech that will be inevitably interrupted at the end because of his poor health. Likewise, the setting is a clear example of intertextual play: the lexical choice alludes to the opening setting of Cyrus' final speech in Xenophon's *Cyropedia* (cf. X. *Cyr.* 8.7.5: παρόντων δὲ πάντων ἤρχετο τοιοῦδε λόγου, 'when they were all come, he began to speak as follow').[33]

The second level situates the speaker physically and provides information about his actions right before the speech: M. Aurelius summons his advisers and relatives whom he will address (συγκαλέσας, παραστησάμενος). Here we find again another allusion to the initial setting of Cyrus' speech, with the difference that Herodian pays close attention to the specific way in which M. Aurelius speaks (ἡσυχῇ τοῦ σκίμποδος κουφίσας

[30]On Marcus Aurelius in Herodian, cf. Alföldy (1973); De Blois (1998) 3415–23. Cf. Chrysanthou (2022) 252–4 who offers a good summary of previous studies. Iglesias-Zoido (2023) 277–85 provides a detailed study of the narrative setting of this speech.

[31]Cf. Kuhn-Chen (2002) 266–70; Zimmermann (1999) 30–1; Hidber (2006) 198–201; Chrysanthou (2022) 205–7; Iglesias-Zoido (2023).

[32]With respect to this translation of ἡσυχῇ, we are following Torres Esbarrach (1985) 93: 'Cuando todos estuvieron reunidos, se levantó tranquilamente de su lecho ...'. Cf. also Lucarini (2005)'s text *ad loc*.

[33]Cf. Iglesias-Zoido (2023) 277–81.

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ἑαυτόν: the emperor calmly sits up by himself, getting ready to deliver the speech from the bed). This detail is key, as the *pronuntiatio* heightens the drama of the moment. Herodian wants not only to show the ailing emperor in his last moments, but also to underscore his courage in this context: M. Aurelius did not need anyone's help to sit up and was able to deliver his speech upright. The information emphasises the emperor's great efforts at the same time as it highlights his dignity to the end.[34] This is dramatically re-emphasised in the speech's final section (Hdn. 1.4.7), which informs us that M. Aurelius was unable to finish his speech because he fell silent and collapsed. On this basis, it is clear that the speech was not as complete as the emperor may have wished because of his health. This, in turn, justifies its brevity when compared with its models, especially the speech uttered by Cyrus at the end of the *Cyropedia*. Herodian writes:

> τοσαῦτα εἰπόντα τὸν Μᾶρκον ἐπιπεσοῦσα λιποθυμία κατεσίγασεν· ὑπὸ δὲ ἀσθενείας τε καὶ ἀθυμίας αὖθις ὑπτίαζεν. **οἶκτος** δὲ πάντας ἐλάμβανε τοὺς παρόντας, ὡς μηδὲ κατασχόντας αὐτῶν τινὰς εἰς οἰμωγὴν ἀναβοῆσαι.
>
> After this Marcus fainted and said no more. As he fell back on his bed, weak with exhaustion, everyone present was so affected by the sad occasion that some of them could not help groaning aloud.

Therefore, the narrative setting not only provides essential data on the speech's *pronuntiatio*, nor only provides the key to assess the speech (its brevity compared to its models); most importantly, it also allows us to understand how the speech seeks to trigger a specific *pathos* (οἶκτος) while respecting at the same time the laws of πρέπον: its length is perfectly adjusted to the physical situation of the speaker as revealed in the narrative setting.[35]

Crispinus

Crispinus' speech (8.3.4–6) combines *oratio obliqua* with the *oratio recta*.[36] It is also richly allusive, as it is embedded in the narration of the siege of Aquileia.[37] The siege of a city was one of the occasions when the historian could imitate models firmly rooted in tradition.[38] In this case, the speech is framed by its resolution (the siege failed miserably, leading to the murder of Maximinus and his son by his own troops) within a typical scene of 'besieger besieged' (Hdn. 8.5.5): 'thus, the army supposedly mounting a siege had actually been besieged' (συνέβαινε δὲ τὸν στρατὸν δοκοῦντα πολιορκεῖν αὐτὸν πολιορκεῖσθαι).[39] With this stereotypical expression, the historian establishes a direct link with other key passages of the genre, such as the siege of Sphacteria (cf.

[34]Cf. in this sense the example of Vespasian and the idea that the emperor must die standing up, as told by Suet. *Vesp*. 24: *imperatorem ait stantem mori oportere*. Cf. Meijer (2004) 60–2.

[35]On τὸ πρέπον as rhetorical criterion in the historiographical genre in the Imperial age cf. Avenarius (1956) 150 and Pritchett (1975) xxvi–xxx.

[36]Cf. Pitcher (2022) 339 on this type of 'mixed speech'.

[37]Cf. Guida (2022) 76–83 for his commentary about this episode.

[38]Cf. Paul (1982); Armstrong and Trundle (eds.) (2019).

[39]On this 'thematic inversion' with multiple allusive elements, cf. Iglesias-Zoido (2021) 231–4.

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Thuc. 4.29.2) or Nicias' situation description of the Athenian expedition to Sicily in his famous letter to the assembly (Thuc. 7.11.4).[40]

Herodian's clear interest in this event and its unexpected outcome explains why he inserted here one of the few examples of counter-speech in his *History*. Faced with Maximinus' ambassadors, who ask for surrender on negotiated terms (Hdn. 8.3.1–3), Crispinus encourages his troops to fight on (Hdn. 8.3.4–6). Crispinus' intervention is decisive, yet simple. First, he exhorts the citizens of Aquileia to stand firm and resist whilst remaining loyal to the senate and the people of Rome (8.3.4). Second, he reminds them of the many times when a few, outnumbered men did defeat their enemies without fear (8.3.5). He further encourages them by reminding them that they are fighting for their own country against enemies who have no stakes in the battle, and thus do not fight with the same ardour (8.3.6). In short, the speech is a simple enumeration of some common military *topoi*.[41]

But, in the context of this pivotal episode in the *History*, this brief battle exhortation becomes crucial to convince the *okhlos* (ὄχλος)[42] to choose struggle over surrender thanks to the narrative setting, which precisely gives the speech its true meaning.[43] Indeed, the setting's introductory and closing words inform us that the orator delivers the speech while walking through the ranks. This narrative detail allows the reader to understand Crispinus' somewhat stereotypical speech in the light of the *epipolesis* tradition.[44] The setting informs the reader that Crispinus delivered a type of model speech whose sole *raison d'être* was the need to show an orator who manages to instil courage in his audience in particularly complex circumstances – that is, after an offer of negotiated surrender that had almost persuaded the Aquileians. Herodian also specifies in the setting the specific kind of *epipolesis* which Crispinus delivers: one in which the speaker addressed several groups, but the historian offers just one single allocution as a summary.[45] Furthermore, Herodian's setting also signals the typical *actio* of an *epipolesis*, whereby the speaker goes through the ranks addressing both individuals and the group:

> (Hdn 8.3.4) ὁ δὲ Κρισπῖνος φοβηθεὶς μή πως ἅτε ὄχλος ταῖς ὑποσχέσεσιν ἀναπεισθείς, εἰρήνην τε ἀντὶ πολέμου ἑλόμενος, ἀνοίξῃ τὰς πύλας, **περιθέων τὸ τεῖχος** ἐδεῖτο καὶ ἐλιπάρει μένειν τε θαρραλέως καὶ ἀντέχειν γενναίως …
>
> Crispinus was afraid that perhaps, being common people, they would be taken in by these promises and open up the gates because they preferred peace to war.

[40]This topic is widely developed throughout the Greek historiography: Plb. 1.18.10, 1.84.1; Plu. *Caes*. 39.9; Josephus (*BJ* 5.486) or Cassius Dio (40.34). Cf. also Livy 23.37.5 and Vell. Pat. 2.51.2. Cf., in this respect, Woodman (1983).

[41]Cf. Albertus (1908); Iglesias-Zoido (2007).

[42]Cf. Motta (2022) 193 on ὄχλος 'as the leading actor' in this episode.

[43]Particularly noteworthy is the scant importance that, in contrast to Herodian, the author of the *Historia Augusta* offers with respect to the role played by Crispinus. In fact, he gives more importance to Menophilus than to Crispinus himself, who is reduced to the role of a 'colleague' of the former (HA *Max*. 22.1: *quibus populus paene consenserat, nisi Menophilus cum collega restitisset …*).

[44]Cf. Carmona Centeno (2014).

[45]For a brief discussion of this phenomenon more generally in the narratology of speech, cf. de Bakker and de Jong (2022) 9.

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> So he dashed round the ramparts, begging them again and again to stay firm, keep up their fine resistance ...
>
> (Hdn. 8.3.7) τοιαῦτά τινα λέγων ὁ Κρισπῖνος καὶ **πρὸς ἑκάστους** καὶ **κοινῇ**, φύσει μὲν καὶ ἄλλως αἰδέσιμος ὤν, ἔν τε τῇ Ῥωμαίων φωνῇ εὐπρόσφορος ἐν λόγοις, ἐπιεικῶς τε αὐτῶν προεστώς, ἔπεισε μένειν ἐν τοῖς προκειμένοις ...
>
> Crispinus, who was a man who won respect naturally, was a fluent Latin orator and a fair commander to them, saying words like these to the individuals and to the general gathering persuaded the Aquileians to stick to their resolution ...

The result then is a speech that fits perfectly into the model of the *epipolesis* as developed by the epic and historiographical traditions since Homer. In fact, Crispinus' speech gestures to some of the genre's canonical precedents, such as Hector (*Il.* 17.215 ss.: ὄτρυνεν δὲ ἕκαστον ἐποιχόμενος) and, above all, Nicias haranguing the Athenian expedition to Sicily (Thuc. 6.67.3: κατὰ τε ἔθνη ἐπιπαριὼν ἕκαστα καὶ ξύμπασι τοιάδε παρεκελεύετο), the true starting point of this model within the historiographical genre.[46]

Therefore, through the setting Herodian consciously frames the battle exhortation in the tradition of the *epipolesis*, presenting Crispinus in the initial setting walking the walls of Aquileia (περιθέων τὸ τεῖχος) while he delivers the speech and, after the speech, informing the reader that his exhortations were targeted at both individual groups (πρὸς ἑκάστους) and to all the troops (καὶ κοινῇ).[47] Given the way in which the speech is presented thanks to its narrative setting, it is clear, from the historian's point of view, that the content of the allocution is not as important as its physical delivery to understand the outcome of the siege.

Maximinus Thrax

Maximinus, the so-called 'first soldier emperor', kickstarted the period of military anarchy.[48] Of very humble origins, Maximinus had been an instructor of recruits who, after a brilliant military career, became emperor in a total break with tradition.[49] It is therefore not surprising that he is the target of very harsh criticism from Herodian. At the beginning of Book VII (7.1.1–2), Herodian tells us that Maximinus exercised his power in a cruel and terrifying manner. Furthermore, he states 'that Maximinus went from a tolerant and humane government to the cruelty of tyranny. He was a barbarian both in character and birth. With a bloodthirsty temperament, he set out to retain power by cruelty' (7.1.2). It is therefore clear that Herodian presents us with

[46]On this basis, in Latin we have other examples of this type of *epipolesis* in historians such as Tacitus (Tac. *Ann.* 14.35.1: *ut quamque nationem accesserat*) and Livy (23.18: *singulos admonens universosque*).

[47]As Carmona Centeno (2014) 103–4 points out, this harangue belongs to the type of '*epipolesis* with decomposition only of the audience'. Regarding this terminology, cf. Longo (1983).

[48]Cf. Loriot (1975).

[49]On Maximinus in Herodian, cf. Burian (1988); Martin (2006); Moralee (2008); Boragno (2021); Chrysanthou (2022) 4–8, 51–9.

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an unexemplary character. His actions and his speeches are described accordingly, underlining Maximinus' cruel and ruthless nature.[50]

In the *History*, Maximinus delivers only one speech: a military exhortation uttered after learning of the widespread rebellion against his tyrannical power (7.8.4–8).[51] Herodian uses the opportunity to offer the reader a portrait of the emperor. In previous sections, Herodian had already emphasised Maximinus' isolation and his aversion to situations that would take him away from military environments, the only place where he felt safe. The narrative setting plays a crucial role in this context. Indeed, Herodian's portrayal showcases a feature which distinguished Maximinus from all his predecessors: the fact that he had so little rhetorical training that he needed the advice of those close to him in order to deliver a speech. For this reason, the initial setting represents a truly particular instance not only in terms of Herodian's *History*, but also with regard to ancient historiography as a whole (Hdn. 7.8.3):

> ὁ μέντοι Μαξιμῖνος συγκαλέσας πάντα τὸν στρατόν ἐς τὸ πρὸ τῆς πόλεως πεδίον, προελθών τε τῆς τρίτης ἡμέρας ἀνελθών τε ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα, ἐπιφερόμενος τὸ βιβλίον ὅπερ ἦσαν αὐτῷ συντάξαντές τινες τῶν φίλων, ἐξ ἀναγνώσεως ἔλεξε τοιάδε.
>
> On the third day Maximinus summoned the entire army to the parade ground in front of the city and went out to address them. After he went up on to the rostrum, carrying a document which some of his advisers had composed for him, he read out the following speech.

The first level of the setting is conventional on the surface: Herodian chooses the usual ἔλεξε τοιάδε. What is striking is the second level, the previous sentence. In the first part of the sentence, Herodian establishes a common situation, the summoning of the army. But in the second part, it becomes clear that the general is going to harangue his troops holding a written text (a tablet or a papyrus roll) in his hands which his advisers had prepared for him. In fact, we are told that Maximinus is going to read aloud the text of his speech (ἐξ ἀναγνώσεως).[52] This detail totally conditions the *actio* and is by no means innocent or casual, as it casts Maximinus in a negative light and explains why his harangue was not successful.[53] When reading this passage, it is important to bear in mind the widespread view that an emperor had to be eloquent. One only needs

[50]Cf. Boragno (2021).

[51]Cf. Mallan (2022) 67 for a detailed list of the different interventions of each character in Herodian's *History*. Few characters get more than one speech in Herodian. The most significant example is given by Septimius Severus, with three allocutions: 2.10.2–9; 2.13.5–9 and 3.6.1–7. Cf. also Pertinax (2.3.5–10; 2.5.6–8) and Macrinus (4.14.4–8; 5.1.2–8).

[52]Cf. Harris (2009) 289. On the other hand, this way of delivering a speech would be significant for both the internal audience of the speech and the external reader. This type of delivery makes it possible to understand both the immediate failure of the speaker before his audience and the negative presentation of this character to the readers of the work. Cf. Hidber (2004).

[53]In this respect, cf. the parallel narrative in HA *Max.* 17.7 and 18, which is based on Herodian but changes the setting of the military exhortation by framing the speech as being entirely Maximinus' work (*Max.* 18.1: *Contio denique omnis militaris fuit*). However, from my point of view, the possibility that a written copy of the speech existed is suggested by the final words of the narrative setting (*Max.* 18.1: *cuius hoc exemplum est …*). In this case, the author of the *Historia Augusta* has preferred to focus on the excessive and angry reaction of Maximinus after receiving the bad news from Rome rather than on the way in which the

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to recall Tacitus *Ann.* 13.3;[54] or Cassius Dio, who reports that the panegyric delivered by Nero after the death of Claudius would have been composed by Seneca in a clear break with the usual procedure of his predecessors (DC 61.3.1). Likewise, Fronto comes to mind, who criticised the emperor and the commanders who did not write their own speeches (*ad Verum imp.* 2.1.11).[55] Or Suetonius' censure of Domitian (*Dom.* 20.1), when he noted that the emperor had his letters and speeches written by others (*epistulas orationesque et edicta alieno formabat ingenio*). As Millar showed in detail, the ability to write and to deliver one's own speeches was a fundamental factor for an emperor's credibility and reputation in the first two centuries of the Principate.[56] Therefore, Herodian's setting is intended to show an imperial orator who is not very credible in his delivery: not only did Maximinus commission his speech, but also, and more crucially, he reads it directly from the βιβλίον he is carrying. In so doing, Herodian exacerbates his negative portrayal of Maximinus, especially in the light of the historiographical precedents which I have just mentioned.

Likewise, the closing setting provides further precious information about Maximinus' behaviour which explains his future failure (7.8.9):

> Τοιαῦτά τινα εἰπών, βλάσφημά τε πολλὰ ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην καὶ τὴν σύγκητον δι' ὧν παρεφθέγγετο ἀπορρίψας, ταῖς τε διὰ χειρὸς ἀπειλαῖς καὶ τραχέσι προσώπου νεύμασιν ὡς πρὸς παρόντας ὀργισθείς, ἐπαγγέλλει τὴν ἐπ᾽ Ἰταλίαν ἔξοδον.
>
> After this speech Maximinus made some passing remarks, in which he abused Rome and the senate roundly. Then, moving his hands around in threatening gestures and nodding his head ferociously, as though he were venting his anger on the people in front of him, he announced his departure for Italy.

The closing link provides two kinds of information. First, it clarifies that the short speech embedded by Herodian is incomplete. Indeed, it lacks many of Maximinus' slurs against Rome and the Senate which the historian considered inappropriate to incorporate in the *oratio recta*. Likewise, the speech also lacks Maximinus' decision to march to Italy. Second, what makes this final setting unusual is Herodian's accurate description of the speaker's *actio* – namely, his violent gesticulation with his hands and face as he delivered this final part of the speech.[57] These essential elements of the *actio* would be known to any rhetorician. Herodian would therefore show not only the rudeness of the speaker, but also, and more importantly, the lack of rhetorical training of Maximinus, who is precisely presented as someone who is ignorant of this decisive aspect of oratorical performance. Hence, the closing of the speech would contribute to convey the emperor's lack of rhetorical training. In so doing, the setting places Maximinus' speech within a group of texts which provide fundamental information on the execution of a speech, in almost 'technical' manner.

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speech was delivered (*Max.* 17.1: *Ubi hoc senatus consultum Maximinus accepit, homo natura ferus, sic exarsit, ut non hominem sed beluam putares*)

[54]Cf. Pitcher (2022) 340.

[55]Cf. also *Ad M. Caes.* 3.1.

[56]Millar (1977) 207. Cf. also Aldrete (1999) 85–97.

[57]Cf. Aldrete (1999).

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Finally, in this case, we must also account for the third level of the setting, especially because it offers us complementary information of great value. The third level is a passage (7.8.1–2) that highlights the concerns not only of Maximinus, but also of those around him. By contextualising the exhortation in this way, Herodian underscores the contrast between what is said in the speech (the soldiers must have confidence in their superiority over the enemy) and the actual circumstances surrounding it, which show that neither was the speaker confident, nor did the audience have trust in the speaker:

> (7.8.1) While this was the condition of the city and the state of opinion in Rome, news of the events reached Maximinus, making him an angry and extremely worried man, though he pretended to think them of little importance (σκυθρωπός τε ἦν καὶ ἐν μεγάλαις φροντίσι, προσεποιεῖτο δὲ αὐτῶν καταφρονεῖν).
>
> (7.8.2) The whole of Maximinus' army and the local population knew the reports, and everyone's spirits were in a ferment at the bold (διοίδαινον πᾶσιν αἱ ψυχαὶ), revolutionary character of these important actions. But not a word was spoken and everyone feigned ignorance (οὐδέ τις πρός τινα ἔλεγέ τι οὔτ' εἰδέναι τι προσεποιεῖτο).
>
> (7.8.2) Maximinus was so nervous (τοσοῦτος γὰρ ἦν ὁ Μαξιμίνου φόβος) that he let nothing go unnoticed (παραφυλάττεσθαι δὲ πάντων), keeping a close watch not only on people's speeches and conversations but even on the flicker of their eyes (οὐ μόνον τὰ διὰ φωνῆς καὶ γλώττης προφερόμενα ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ δι' ὄψεως νεύματα) ...

Through the third level of the setting, Herodian supplies precious information about the context of the speech and the psychological state of both its speaker and his audience. This, in turn, explains the striking delivery of the speech. Herodian puts before the eyes of his readers the concerns which tormented Maximinus. At the same time, he showcases how both the speaker and his audience (the soldiers and the people) pretended to act as if they were not aware of it. The speaker pretends (προσεποιεῖτο) not to care about the situation, whereas the others pretend to know nothing about the news coming from Rome to avoid being punished by Maximinus.[58] Ultimately, the emperor's violent hand gesticulations give his actual psychological state away, therefore precluding him from achieving his oratorical goals. In short, this is a context very much to Herodian's taste: the historian creates a stark contrast between what is said in the speech and the context in which it is uttered. This, in sum, allows the reader of the *History* to understand why Maximinus failed to meet his oratorical goals.[59]

[58]On the use of the verb προσεποιεῖτο in Hdn. 4.7.3–6 in the presentation of Caracalla as 'soldier emperor', cf. Baumann (2022) 71–2. Cf. also Hdn. 4.8.7 and 4.11.2.

[59]Cf. Kemezis (2014).

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Conclusions

To conclude, my goal here has been to analyse a crucial aspect pertaining to the 'unwritten laws' of ancient historiography. More precisely, I have studied how some of the narrative settings in Herodian's *History* supply the reader with fundamental rhetorical information about the *actio* of its speeches. As I noted earlier, scholarship is increasingly paying more attention to the narrative settings in recent years. Thanks to these scholarly efforts, we now better understand how the narrative setting was in fact a rhetorical device that allowed historians to provide nuanced information about their speeches by bringing their pragmatic, diegetic context into the picture.

I have also made the case that the settings' usefulness goes well beyond these specific functions. Indeed, these settings can be the decisive factor which determines in advance: the length of a speech (as we have seen in the case of Marcus Aurelius); the typology of an address (as in the case of Crispinus' *epipolesis*); or the characterisation of both the speaker (as in the case of Maximinus Thrax) and the audience. In sum, thanks to these settings, readers can understand why the historian chooses a particular type of speech in each narrative context. All this, in short, evinces the great care which Herodian put into the writing of these sections of his *History*.

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