DIGRESSIONS IN CLASSICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

Edited by Mario Baumann
and Vasileios Liotsakis

Digressions in Classical Historiography

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Preface

The present volume gathers the papers of the digital conference "Digressions in Classical Historiography", which was held on 26–27 September 2020 and was sponsored by the Department of Philology, University of the Peloponnese. The organizers of the conference and co-editors of this book are deeply indebted to the participants for their patience in all these years between the conference and the publication of their studies in this book. We are also grateful to the editors of the series *Trends in Classics Supplementary Volumes*, Professors Antonios Rengakos and Franco Montanari, for hosting this project in their fine series. Last but not least, special thanks are due to Anton Kürzinger and Anna Uschner, student assistants at the Institute of Classical Philology at TU Dresden, for their invaluable help in proofreading, editing and indexing the manuscript, a task they performed with enthusiasm and competence.

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Mario Baumann
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Mario Baumann and Vasileios Liotsakis

Introduction

The question of what is to be treated as a digression in Greco-Roman historiography cannot safely be answered unless we examine the matter in close relationship with the distinctive features of historiography as a literary genre in terms of both content and style. For example, the most established definitions of digression in modern scholarship, i.e. a deviation from the main subject matter of a narrative or from its linear narration, are of no value when it comes to genres other than Classical past narratives. An example from Plato's *Statesman* helps us make our case clear. The interlocutors in this dialogue, principally the Eleatic Visitor and a young boy named Socrates, embark to define statesmanship by using the method of division. After an initial, unsuccessful attempt to define the concept in question, the Eleatic Visitor decides to take a detour from the main method of inquiry, division, and to approach the matter through a past narrative on the creation and function of the world. As soon as he completes his cosmological myth, the Visitor returns to division up until the end of the dialogue. Strikingly, both before (268d5 ff.) and after his cosmogony (274e1 ff. and 283b–287b), he explains to Young Socrates that he takes it as a digression from the main line of their discussion. This example shows that what was the norm in ancient historiography, a linear account of states of affairs of the past, constituted a deviation from the norm in a philosophical dialogue.

Greek and Roman historians were generally acquainted with the literary tradition they were invited to keep up with in their decision to write their accounts. And, judging from an abundance of authorial comments on their part, we may confidently say that they definitely included linearity and a focus on past events among the main generic features in this tradition of prose writing. As is demonstrated in the papers of this volume, the majority of ancient historiographers took as digressions the cases in which they interrupted their focused chronological narration. Such cases include lengthy geographical descriptions, prolepses or analepses, authorial comments or even episodes which may belong to the temporal spectrum of their narration but have content irrelevant to the main subject matter of their work. On all accounts, Greco-Roman historiographers recognised digressive discourse in parts of their writings where they deviated from the way they had temporally and thematically organised their material.

However, although deviating from the immediate and wider narrative contexts, digressions were in many respects integral parts of the historical accounts they belonged to. This is so because ancient historiographers rarely deign to

interrupt their narration's main storyline with excursuses which are flagrantly disconnected from it. Instead, they occasionally "coat" their digressions with distinctive patterns of their own thinking, thus rendering them ideological and thematic milestones within an entire work. In some other cases, they also use digressions as a means by which to enrich the interpretive scope of their accounts. Thucydides' excursus on the tyrannicides in the middle of his narrative on Alcibiades' alleged involvement in the Herms case (Thuc. 6.54.1–59.4) helps the reader realise that on that specific occasion history repeated itself in Athens. In a similar vein, extensive characterisations of historical agents may interrupt the strict chronological unfolding of a plot but also open an enlightening window for the reader into the deeper causes of a personal decision or of a communal policy. These are only a few from among the various ways in which a digression in Greco-Roman historiography created a complex but equally instructive net of close or/and distant cross references between itself and the rest of the work.

Digressions may also constitute pivotal points in the very structure of ancient historical narratives. They can serve as introductions to units on certain periods of time. The Sicilian *Archaeology* in Book 6 of Thucydides' *History* paves the way for the entire Sicilian account of Books 6–7, while the digression on the Indian geomorphology in Arrian's *Anabasis* introduces Arrian's account on Alexander's enterprise in India. Conversely, ancient historians often used an excursus as an epilogue to an episode or even to wider narrative units, an epilogue in which the historian offered his overall verdict about a certain period of time or recapitulated the content of a narrative unit. In some other cases, a digression interrupts the plot development at climactic points of an account (such as shortly before a story's resolution) and thereby creates suspense for the reader as to when the main storyline will start again and reveal the outcome.

Apart from being especially revealing of the ways historiographers wished to structure their accounts, digressions are also of great value for any student of Greco-Roman historiography due to their intense self-referential orientation. In the process of digressing from the main focus of their accounts, ancient historians were especially disposed to proceed with authorial comments not only on the reasons why they were digressing or on their opinions about the nature and usefulness of excursuses, but also on how they wished their readers to place them in the literary tradition they belonged to. The authorial "I" is very often foregrounded in digressions in many ways and with regard to an abundance of issues. Historians introduce themselves to their audiences and use such interruptions of the plot development as integral elements of their self-fashioning. They also offer clarifications about events or express their own views on historical decisions. Last but not least, they interrupt their narration in order to share

with their audiences what they believed to be ideal conduct and attitudes, thus employing digressions as extroverted manifestations of an intense ethico-didactic flavour.

This last-mentioned aspect is one instance of a wider dynamic that underpins digressivity in Greco-Roman historiography: ancient historians use excursuses to establish a dialogue with their readers and to activate them in various ways. Polybius is a well-known example of a historian who frequently interrupts his account to address his readers directly; in doing so, he often defines the type of reader he caters to (and those audiences he does not aim to satisfy, such as the curious reader yearning for recondite details, whom he excludes from his "target group" in 9.1.2–5). This explicit demarcation of the audience is also linked to the debate about the utility and pleasure of reading past narratives: Polybius of course, in spite of his many polemics, claims that his work affords utility *and* pleasure, a contention that is at the heart of many digressions in other historians too — Diodorus Siculus is a case in point, since he carefully designs excursuses to edify his readers and, by the same token, tell them intriguing stories (see, for instance, D.S. 12.12–21).

Digressions can also initiate a dialogue with the reader in other, less overt ways. Drawing from the many cases the contributors to this volume discuss, three examples may serve to demonstrate the range of interactions with the audience which ancient historians set in motion by inserting digressions. First, ancient historiographers use excursuses to challenge, call into question or even subvert the audience's expectations. A prime example is Sallust, who employs digressions to transgress the boundaries of his narrowly defined subject matter and methodology, which forces the readers to rethink their assumptions about where to begin a historical account (see Sallust's extended digression at the beginning of his *Historiae*), how to structure it and what this means for the interpretation of history. Second, excursuses in Greco-Roman historiography are a means of communicating implicit or "coded" messages to the audience: Ammianus Marcellinus, for example, conveys in his digressions indirect criticism and hidden polemics (e.g. against Christianity in his Egyptian excursus). This strategy requires Ammianus' audience to pay attention to his hints and read his work with the broader political and social contexts in mind; the "premium" the readers get when they embark on such a mode of reception is a deeper understanding of the text and a much enriched reading experience. Third, digressions invite the readers of Greco-Roman historiography to connect seemingly distant or unrelated events, places or characters and to form a more complex and holistic view of history and of their own time. A good example is Herodian's references to the present time, sometimes reinforced by the first-person plural (cf. 2.9.6 on

a statue dedicated by Septimius Severus: μένει δὲ καὶ ἐς ἡμᾶς ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ χωρίῳ [...], "Up until our days [a statue] is still on that spot [...]"). Such digressive passages involve the readers in the historical narrative and make them reflect on what bearing past events might have on their own present.

All these aspects of digressions in Greco-Roman historiography are studied in detail in the chapters of this volume. They are summarised below.

In the first chapter, "Digressive Anecdotes, Narrative Excursus and Historical Thought in Herodotus", Ioannis M. Konstantakos elaborates on one of Herodotus' favourite types of digression, i.e. the short narrative excursus, an anecdote or brief historical legend inserted into a broader storyline with different thematic content. These digressive tales are connected with important recurrent themes and thought patterns of Herodotus' oeuvre, such as the irruption of the marvellous into ordinary human existence (Arion's salvation, 1.23–24), the confrontation between power and wisdom (Alcmeon in Croesus' treasury, 6.125) and the unexpected verification of predictions (Hippias' dream, 6.107). The most enthralling of these narrative deviations encapsulate a significant finding of Herodotus' research, an argument that is central to the author's anthropological worldview or to his exposition of historical experience. These tales look back and forward to important episodes of Herodotus' main narrative, echo characteristic statements of the author's philosophy of history, and thus serve as connective links within an intricate network of historical thought. In the most successful cases they illustrate deeper forces which underlie the development of the historical process and regulate the course of human societies. This particular aspect is analysed through the examination of a series of examples from Herodotus' work: Thrasybulus' riddling advice to Periander (5.92ζ); the confrontation of Greeks and Indians before King Darius (3.38); and the final digression of the entire work, Cyrus' dialogue with Artembares (9.122).

In her study "'I Have Written about It and Have Made This Digression from My Account ...': Thucydides' Digressions and Their Relation to the Main Work", Vasiliki Pothou argues that the creation of Thucydides' digressions is a multifaceted subject, which links to the historiographical tradition of logographers, to the procedures used for mitigating semantic deficiencies and to a personal preoccupation of the author. For Pothou, Thucydides was fully aware of the distinction between the main storyline and the narrative sections of the digression. He was innovative in as far as he addressed some issues in the thematic of digressions which had not been previously addressed by his predecessors. Thucydides aimed to highlight the difference between his own method and those of his predecessors, which is why he did not allow himself narrative digressions which might remind his readers of his predecessors, especially Herodotus.

However, the originality of Thucydides' digressions was not exclusively due to their function or content. He knew very well how and why he used his digressional material and he wanted to demonstrate it ostentatiously. The assimilation and the literary incorporation of digressions into the main storyline establish his pioneering spirit. He aimed to justify the existence of his digressions and insert them skillfully into the main narration as a unifying feature.

In the following chapter, "Emulating Herodotus: Digressions in the First Generation of Alexander Historians", Antonio Ignacio Molina Marín deals with the fact that it is difficult to say whether or not the surviving fragments of the first histories on the Macedonian king can be taken as belonging to digressions. In his effort to solve this methodological quandary, he bases his study mainly on the following observations. First, most authors contemporary or near-contemporary with Alexander who wrote about him focused in their accounts on his military and political activity. For this reason, passages on the geography and ethnography of the places visited by Alexander must be taken as thematic deviations from this focal point of interest of their works. Second, information about the geomorphology and populations of areas were up to that time traditionally offered by historians in what they treated as digressions, which is why it is reasonable to assume that the first historians of Alexander also considered such segments of their accounts to be excursuses. On the basis of this logic, Molina Marín elaborates on certain fragments of geographical and ethnographical orientation from the lost histories of Alexander the Great which, in his view, can be taken as digressions from the main narrative lines of these lost accounts. He discerns in these passages the authors' intention to follow the tradition inaugurated by Herodotus of interrupting the narration of the main subject of a story with geographical and ethnographical excursuses.

In his paper "Polybius' *Histories*: No Room for Digressions?", Nikos Miltsios elaborates on the way in which digressions energetically participate in the shaping of narrative in Polybius' account. Polybius often gives the impression of making exceptionally extensive use of digressions in his *Histories*. The intensely obtrusive narrator he constructs, who interrupts the narrative of events, often at length, to comment on and analyse various issues on the one hand, and the wealth and variety of the material he is called upon to cover in the framework of his world history on the other, makes it reasonable to suppose that this very familiar historiographic practice will self-evidently be central to his work. Polybius, however, maintains a fairly discrete stance on the use of digressions compared to that of his predecessors. The systematic alternation of theatres of action which he applies in the greater part of his work in order to depict the *symploke* of events, the process by which developments in various parts of the

world are interlinked, favouring the rise of Roman rule, treats the different narrative strands recording these developments as organic parts of a single body rather than digressions of secondary importance. At the same time, it requires the systematic and rigorous delimitation of the analytical digressions, so that readers can follow the process of *symploke* smoothly, while gaining further benefit from the narratorial commentary.

Mario Baumann approaches the issue of digressions in Diodorus' *Bibliotheke* by providing a case study. His chapter on "Why Charondas Taught the Thurians How to Read and Write, or: Digression and Narration in Diodorus' *Bibliotheke*" studies the longest digression in the extant parts of Diodorus' universal history, an extended excursus on two lawgivers of Greek cities in southern Italy: Charondas, who wrote the laws of Thurii, and Zaleucus, who did the same in Epizephyrian Locri (D.S. 12.12–21). Baumann focuses on the digression's appeal to the readers of the text: he analyses the functions of Diodorus' lawgivers excursus and shows that for each of them aspects of narrativity are central. The chapter starts with moral edification as a first function of the digression, then continues with storytelling and narrative interweaving as further key characteristics of D.S. 12.12–21, before concluding with the passage's marked self-referentiality. Baumann argues that all these functions of Diodorus' lawgivers digression can be interpreted as part of the *Bibliotheke*'s attempt to offer its audience a spectrum of interactions that is as comprehensive as possible: the text addresses the readers' moral, intellectual and affective capacities and interests, it tells its audience engaging stories and invites its readers to connect, compare and interpret these narratives, and it makes the audience aware that all this is happening and that it is intended — a fitting undertaking for a work that calls itself a historical *Library*.

In her study "Going in Circles: Digressive Behavior in Caesar, *BC* 2.23–44", Christina Kraus focuses on the narrative of Curio's exploits and eventual defeat near Utica in Caesar's *Bellum Civile*. She shows that this story, which is itself a divergence both topographically (taking place on a separate continent from Books 1 and 3) and authorially (relating events unwitnessed by Caesar) from the "main" narrative of the *Bellum Civile*, can be read as both digressive and integral to the rest of the *commentarii*, which challenges the conceptual binaries that we have often looked for in history. Kraus starts from the observation that to get to Utica from *Castra Cornelia*, the place Curio explores first, one has to "go around" (*circuitu*, 2.24.4), and points out the abundant elements typical of historiographical digression: ships, topographical descriptions, direct speech, anecdotes and other interruptions. Temporal digressiveness is implied as well: the main action oscillates between locations marked by a look back to the second

Punic war (*Castra Cornelia*) and ahead to the death of Cato Uticensis. She also corroborates the reading of the Curio narrative as a dramatic structure (cf. 2.25.1, where Caesar singles out the presence of a *theatrum* outside Utica). Kraus concludes that Curio's story finds Caesar telling a tragic tale set as a *mise en abyme* within his "primary" *commentarius* discourse, offering us different understandings of Rome's North African history.

In the next chapter, Edwin Shaw discusses "Expansion, Heterogeneity and Method in Sallust's Digressions". Examining digressive passages from Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*, *Bellum Jugurthinum* and *Historiae*, Shaw moves beyond the traditional scholarly focus on the thematic relevance of the Sallustian digressions to the narratives they belong to, and focuses instead on what he sees as Sallust's deliberate deployment of the digressions' liminality and otherness on two specific levels. First, Shaw focuses on the contrast created by Sallust between the thematic concision and selectivity of the Sallustian works and the relaxing of these restrictive bounds that takes place in certain digressions. Second, Shaw argues that in digressions Sallust often propounds a different kind of historical truthfulness from that of the main narrative body. In this light, digressions are seen by Shaw as deliberate efforts on Sallust's part to supplement, complicate or even subvert in the reader's mind the literary and historiographical norms of interpretation that are prevalent in the linear narrative of his works.

In his contribution "Inglorious History and the Tacitean Digression", Kyle Khellaf argues that the frequent minor digressions ("masqued" or "pseudo-digressions") function as vital mechanisms for understanding Tacitean historiography. The chapter begins with the notable excursus about historiographical methodology (*Ann.* 4.32–33), where Tacitus declares that, unlike previous historians who commemorated events with greater narratological freedom (*libero egressu memorabant*, 4.32.1), his own literary undertaking is "in a narrow space and inglorious" (*nobis in arto et inglorius labor*, 4.32.2). Khellaf contends that we should read Tacitus' historiographical plaints in broad, highly dialogic terms, and extend them to his minor digressions, in which he recounts paradoxographical events featuring carnivalesque individuals whose subaltern voices often remain mute in the primary sequence of history. The chapter focuses especially on Tacitus' accounts of the mutiny of the Usipi (*Agr.* 28), the imposter Nero (*Hist.* 2.8–9), and Clemens, the false Agrippa Postumus (*Ann.* 2.39–40). Khellaf shows that these episodes afford Tacitus new spaces for criticism, creating brief ruptures within the oppressive imperial narrative which otherwise allows for only a partial view of Tacitus' rebuke of its politics. Amidst the extreme senatorial and equestrian sycophancy, it is precisely these liminal personages who

succeed in breaking through the frequent imperial charades and getting at the heart (or rather *ingenium*) of the Roman principate.

In the next chapter, "Digressions as Self-Referential Narrative Milestones in Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander*", Vasileios Liotsakis analyses what he takes as the two main functions of digressions in the *Anabasis*. First, Liotsakis argues that the very few extensive digressions of the *Anabasis* have a significant role in its narrative arrangement, marking pivotal points both in the Macedonian enterprise in Asia and in the development of Alexander's character. He examines the compositional schemes in which Arrian used the few digressions in his work as narrative milestones. Second, Liotsakis elaborates on the intense meta-generic concerns of these central digressions. In particular, he argues that through a number of self-referential statements Arrian invites the reader to place the *Anabasis* next to several literary genres and thereby to define its own generic instinctiveness.

Cassius Dio's *Roman History* is the subject of Mads Ortving Lindholmer's chapter ("Digressions and the Fall of the Republic in Cassius Dio"). It focuses on a string of "institutional digressions" that Dio includes in his narrative of the Early Roman Republic: he devotes digressions to the quaestorship, the dictatorship, the tribuneship (Book 4) and the censorship (Book 6). Lindholmer argues that Dio's use of these digressions on Republican offices is strikingly sophisticated: he uses them to highlight, at an early stage and in a programmatic fashion, key problems of the Republic, such as the inherently destructive character of the tribuneship, the dangers of excessive wealth in the hands of leading politicians and the unworkability of the censorship and the dictatorship in the Late Republic. This contributes to Dio's distinctive rejection of the common historiographical idealisation of the earlier Republic. At the same time, the digressions support Dio's structural presentation of the Late Republic as inherently unworkable and fatally beset by structural problems. Lindholmer's study thus ties into recent scholarship highlighting the sophistication of Dio as a historian and a narrator.

Chrysanthos S. Chrysanthou discusses the digressions in Herodian's *History of the Roman Empire*. He argues that the excursive passages are an essential element of Herodian's historiography and have a significant function in his construction of plot, characters, and historical interpretation. In particular, Chrysanthou highlights four aspects that characterise Herodian's use of digressions: (1) More than once, Herodian's narrative excursions are carefully positioned before important historical moments (such as assassinations, assassination attempts, and battles), in order to mark the route taken by the narrative and to give a greater meaning and importance to the moment. (2) Digressions provide

an important avenue for Herodian's practice of marking parallelisms between different characters and events. These interconnections, in turn, enrich the characterisation through comparison and contrast. (3) Digressions make a contribution to Herodian's (self-)characterisation. Herodian emerges as an author of wide-ranging interests and learning who deploys digressive material to build his authority as a historian. (4) Digressions not only establish Herodian's historiographical credentials, but are also effective in drawing the readers into an active process of historical investigation, as well as in influencing their responses.

In his chapter on "Ammianus' Digressions and Their Narrative Impact" which concludes the volume, Michael Hanaghan sets out by drawing attention to the major hermeneutic challenge of interpreting Ammianus' digressions: each reader can (and must) determine for themselves to what extent a digression responds to the main narrative. Any determination about the narrative resonance of any of Ammianus' digressions is necessarily an act of interpretation, an attempt to make meaning from the text which is not explicit. The reward for navigating these interpretative dangers, Hanaghan contends, is a far richer understanding of the text and Ammianus' skill as an author. Against this backdrop, the chapter examines the impact that Ammianus' asides have on his main narrative, focusing on four case studies: Julian's Thracian campaign (22.8.1–48), the Persian pearls (23.6.85–88), the tragedian Phrynichus (28.1.2–5), and the bissextile day (26.1.7–14). These digressions suggest alternate histories, foreshadow plot developments, engage in metaliterary reflections on the narrative, and develop coded polemics, all the while providing powerful symbols for understanding the motivations and challenges of the leaders of the Roman empire in the fourth century. Each digression, as Hanaghan points out, is directly connected to the main text, situated within a network of digressions, which reflect the history and historical vantage point of Ammianus' age, and provide ample scope for metaphorical, allusive, narratological, and political implications.

Ioannis M. Konstantakos

Digressive Anecdotes, Narrative Excursus and Historical Thought in Herodotus

Abstract: This chapter focuses on the narrative digressions of Herodotus' *History*, that is, the brief tales of anecdotal or legendary type which are intercalated in a broader narrative unity with different subject matter. These enthralling excursuses of storytelling reflect central ideas and themes, which also find expression in many other episodes of Herodotus' narrative. They thus form part of an extensive network of historical thought, which runs through the Herodotean oeuvre. In particular, the digressive tales are employed to illustrate, in a graphic manner, arguments and theoretical principles of capital importance for Herodotus' worldview and his philosophy of history. A series of examples are analyzed to highlight these functions, including the cryptic communication between Thrasybulus and Periander (5.92ζ), the dispute between the Greeks and the Indians about burial customs (3.38) and Cyrus' advice to the Persian people regarding their choice of land (9.122).

Keywords: Herodotus, digressions, anecdotes, philosophy of history

1 Narrative digressions in the Herodotean oeuvre

Herodotus is one of the most digressive writers in world literature — on a par with Apuleius, De Quincey, Robert Burton, Milorad Pavić and Salman Rushdie.[1] Most ancient historiographers, from Thucydides onwards, feel the need to justify the inclusion of digressions in their work. They adduce arguments or even apologetic statements in order to explain the interruption of the linear historical narrative by excursive materials.[2] Herodotus, by contrast, is not yet affected by this general tendency of his epigones. Digressions and excursuses of various kinds (ethnographical, historical, mythical, anecdotal) are incorporated spontaneously,

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1 See, e.g., Lateiner 1989, 19; Tatum 1997, 31–32; Khellaf 2018, 169–170, 173. On the affinities between Herodotus and the master storytellers of magical realism (Rushdie, Pavić) in particular, see Hunter 2009, 178–179; Konstantakos 2018.

2 Cf. Pothou 2009, 19–21. This is indeed one of the main conclusions to emerge from the chapters of this volume, and was a crucial issue of discussion in the conference on which the volume has been based.

unceremoniously and guiltlessly in his vast exploration of the history and anthropology of the known world, like natural growths on a large physical body, like shrubs and flowers that spring up from rich soil. The author is conscious of the presence of these excursive or supplementary parts in his narrative and develops a particular terminology for them: he designates them as προσθῆκαι (4.30) or παρενθῆκαι (7.171).[3] He freely admits that these additions and intercalations are an inherent characteristic of his writing, and indeed a desirable and welcome one (4.30.1: προσθήκας γὰρ δή μοι ὁ λόγος ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐδίζητο, "my discourse has been seeking additions from the beginning"). In Herodotus' manner of thought and composition, digressing from the main narrative or thematic line is as normal and regular a phenomenon as drinking a cup of wine or smelling a flower.

Traditional philological exegesis has used criteria of content and subject matter in order to determine the concept of digression or excursus. As explained in the classic monograph by Justus Cobet, these terms are generally assigned to "those sections which, according to our understanding, interrupt the main narrative and seem, to a certain extent, to be interpolated into it". The excursive addition is "the expansion of a subject matter included in the presentation under a point of view which is no longer bound in a necessary manner with the line of thought treated in the immediate textual surroundings". In simpler words, excursus is "a convenient concept that covers all that seems, according to our perception, to deviate from its context".[4] According to an earlier definition by Maz Pohlenz, the excursus is "a presentation rounded off in itself and understandable by itself, with theme, exposition, development and conclusion, tied to a particular point of the main narrative, at times more tightly and at other times more loosely with regard to content, but always carefully in terms of form".[5]

More recent experts of ancient historiography have approached the phenomenon mostly in narratological or semiotic terms. The digression is defined as the part of the text which departs from the principal axis of the narration, that is, the axis that follows the chronological or logical order of the described

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3 For analysis of these terms, see primarily Cobet 1971, 45–59 and Spada 2008, 39–58.

4 See Cobet 1971, 4, 45–49, 78–82 (my translation from the German); repeated by Erbse 1992, 120. Cf. Munson 1986, 94, 102: "The practice of interrupting a chronological narrative with insertions, narrative or descriptive, that mark a change of time, setting or subject matter". Cf. also Spada 2008, 35–36: "tutto ciò che interrompe un filone narrativo principale, sia che si tratti solo di una breve precisazione sia che essa contenga indicazioni che si staccano dal contesto di partenza".

5 See Pohlenz 1937, 63 (my translation from the German). In general, see Spada 2008, 19–37 for a survey of such traditional approaches.

events. It is a deviation from the horizontal line of the narration, which provokes turbulence in the narrative rectilinear, an intercalated link producing an anomalous swerve in the normal storyline.[6] Irene de Jong even proposes to altogether abandon the words "digression" and "excursus" and envisage the model of Herodotus' narrative in rigorously structuralist terms, as "a main story expanded by analepses, prolepses, and descriptions" by means of which Herodotus "enlarges the scale" and "slows down the pace of narration".[7]

Given that this essay is not focused on narrative technique but rather on intellectual content and poetic meaning, I would like to suggest another approach to the concept of digression — one that might seem slightly old-fashioned in its lack of theoretical apparatus, but is quite apt with regard to Herodotus' oeuvre. Ioannis Kakridis, the patriarch of Modern Greek classical philology, is said to have suggested that in Herodotus' work a digression is more or less any piece of text which a modern academic author would place in a typographically separated section of his text, such as a footnote or an appendix.[8] In this respect, as in

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6 See Pothou 2009, 20, who overviews the definitions of French theorists.

7 See de Jong 2002, 254, 257–258.

8 Reported by Maronitis (1964, 45) (my translation from the Modern Greek): "When reading any ancient Greek text — including Herodotus — one must not forget, or rather one should forget the form of a present-day book, especially an academic one: titles, headings, chapters, prologue and appendix, footnotes, and the particular function of each one of them within the book being clearly highlighted by means of the abundant items of modern typographical craft — large and smaller fonts, normal and italics, blank spaces etc. The ancient Greek text was as a rule continuous, without divisions and chapters, and of course without footnotes. [...] This means that the tasks performed today by the advanced techniques of typography are undertaken and carried out by the ancient author himself via his own text; the author strives to find typical modes of expression to indicate the start and finish of his book or his chapter, a digression that strays from the main line of the narrative, and so forth. This was hardly an easy matter: it demanded a complex expressive process, an entire system which the author had to invent every time, depending on the needs and the nature of his work. The tracking, verification and study of this system in Herodotus have not been carried out yet, unfortunately, so as to be of aid to us now. However, such a system definitely exists, and if decoded, it would explain many of the eccentricities of construction and style of the Herodotean oeuvre, which hasty scholars have branded as clumsiness, tautologies or naive repetitions". And in a footnote to this passage: "As far as I know, this theme was given by Professor I. Th. Kakridis of the University of Thessaloniki as a topic for a doctoral dissertation, but the thesis has not been published yet". Similar thoughts had been formulated earlier by Pohlenz (1937, 85–86) and Lattimore (1958, 9–11). Later scholars have also taken up the idea. See Lateiner 1989, 19: "The modern historian [...] employs footnotes to show the workings, the raw data and their basic manipulations. Notes permit citations of sources, the presentation of tangential information, and the cumulation of proofs. They also provide an important rhetorical tool for persuading an audience of an arguable truth. [...] This double view is managed by means of a technical fiction, namely that the

others, the historian from Halicarnassus would have been a perfect academic of the old school and an excellent addition to our learned company: a polymath with an encyclopaedic range of interests, strong-minded in his proposition of overarching theories, highly critical of his predecessors, prone to peppering his researches with amusing anecdotes, and above all, addicted to large chunks of digressive, "footnote" material.

One of the favourite types of digression in Herodotus' work is the short narrative excursus: in other words, a short story — an anecdote, an episodically developed apophthegm or a brief historical legend — which is inserted, in an occasional and associative manner, into a broader storyline of overall different thematic content and thus constitutes a temporary deviation from the main stream of the narrative. Usually this kind of tale consists in the narration of a particular incident told for its own sake and to illustrate a special point; it is a small break of leisurely storytelling.[9] A primary cause for the existence of such narrative sidetracks, often adduced by scholars, is of course Herodotus' deep-rooted *Erzählfreude*, his pure love of storytelling, his fondness for graphic and poignant stories — a passion which, had the historian lived some tens of centuries later, in Renaissance Italy, might have turned him into a redoubtable rival of Boccaccio and Straparola.[10]

Another important reason is Herodotus' will to preserve within his oeuvre every memorable story he had collected in the course of his long researches. The key to understanding Herodotus' composition, well brought out by scholars

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footnotes do not interrupt the flow of the narrative. Herodotus had no such convention of footnotes (or pages, chapters, or appendices), so his digressions needed to be inserted more carefully and related more clearly to the larger narrative". Also Waters 1974, 5 and Waters 1985, 40–41, 51: "the snippets of material which would today appear only as footnotes had to be included in the main text because of the physical form of the book"; de Jong 2002, 265–266: some analepses "provide the narratees with background information which a modern text would give in a footnote".

9 On this type of digression, cf. Pohlenz 1937, 61–67; Cobet 1971, 84–85, 140–157; Munson 1986, 94–95, 102; Flory 1987, 12–21, 151–158; Gould 1989, 50–51; Erbse 1992, 119–121, 133–145; Gray 2002, 304–306; Griffiths 2006, 132–136; and the survey of de Jong 2002, 246–248, 257–258. Generally on the types of excursus that can be distinguished in historiographical works, see Cobet 1971, 43–44, 84–157; Erbse 1992, 133–179; de Jong 2002, 254–258; Pothou 2009, 21–27, 49–114.

10 See Howald 1944, 34–43; Aly 1969, 254–263, 297–301; Cobet 1971, 7–14; Waters 1974, 5–7; Waters 1985, 43, 50–52, 70–71; de Jong 2002, 247, 252. On Herodotus' inexhaustible flow of stories and its relations with earlier traditions (including Ionian *novellistica*), see the classic works of Erdmannsdörffer 1870; Hausrath 1914; Cataudella 1957, 38–61; Trenkner 1958, 1–30; Aly 1969; see further Erbse 1992, 3–117; Tatum 1997; Griffiths 2006; Müller 2006, 6–96, 153–335.

such as Wolfgang Rösler, is the author's effort to assemble in one collective and complex work the extensive and multifarious encyclopaedic knowledge, which he had stored through his travels and enquiries, during a lifetime of *historein*.[11] Herodotus' unrestrained penchant for digressions is the result of his wilful struggle to incorporate into his written product the repositories of learning he kept in his vast memory, and not to leave anything out — for anything left out would be bound to sink into oblivion. The accumulative deviations from the central narrative axis betray the author's *Angst* to include all the countless tales he had hoarded, to give them a form of existence independent of his own perishable self, so as to salvage them for posterity. Although he does not proclaim it as loudly as Thucydides does, Herodotus also envisaged his work as a κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί.[12]

However, entertaining storytelling and the preservation of memorable traditions are not the only reasons for the existence of narrative excursuses in Herodotus' work. In most cases, the digressive tales are also connected with important recurrent themes and thought patterns of the Herodotean oeuvre, and thus help to vividly illustrate these central issues and develop the historian's meditations on them.[13] Let us consider, for example, the first recognizable excursive anecdote in Herodotus' work, the famous legend of Arion's salvation by the dolphin (1.23–24). This is casually inserted into the overview of the *res gestae* of the Mermnad dynasty of Lydia (1.6–26), prompted by the narration of King Alyattes' siege of Miletus and the aid offered to the Milesians on that occasion by the Corinthian tyrant Periander, who was Arion's host and patron.

The storyline is all too well known: Arion, a famous citharode, had made a tour of South Italy and Sicily and earned a fortune there. He then sailed back on a Corinthian ship, but the crew hatched a plot to get rid of the rich musician and steal his money. The sailors gave Arion a choice between killing himself and jumping overboard into the open sea. Arion asked permission to put on his ceremonial costume and sing for the last time before ending his life. He thus stood on the thwarts of the ship and performed his song; then he threw himself into the sea, dressed up as he was, and was picked up by a dolphin, which carried him on its back to Cape Taenarum. Arion proceeded to Corinth and reported his experience to the tyrant Periander. The tyrant did not believe him at first and

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11 See Rösler 2002, 81–84, 90–94; cf. also Pohlenz 1937, 90–91; Cobet 1971, 156–157, 178–187; Asheri/Lloyd/Corcella 2007, 12–15.

12 Cf. Gould 1989, 116–120; Rösler 2002; Asheri/Lloyd/Corcella 2007, 56; and more generally Raaflaub 1987.

13 Cf. Pohlenz 1937, 67–87; Bornitz 1968, 1–5; Cobet 1971, 20–42, 140–157; Flory 1978, 420–421; Erbse 1981; Munson 1986, 94–95, 101; Flory 1987, 13–21, 67–71; de Jong 2002, 249–251, 259–266; Gray 2002, 304–306.

kept him under guard, until the sailors arrived and he had the chance to question them. When they claimed that they had left Arion safe and sound in Italy, Arion appeared before them and they were confounded.

Experts have long searched for the historical meaning of this tale, its function within Herodotus' broader narrative and its relation with the overall scope and purpose of the work. Various interpretations and cross-referencing propositions have been forwarded. Arion's adventure has been considered as an example of a basic tenet of Herodotus' religious thought: the value of virtue and the reward of justice by contrast to the providential punishment of evildoers; in other words, the existence of an ethical and rational order of things and the divine retribution against its violators. The story has also been associated with recurring themes and patterns of the historian's oeuvre: the disappointment of people who put their trust in someone or something; the insufficiency and shortsightedness of human wile in front of unpredictable circumstances or divine will; and the brave gesture, by which a man shows courageous disregard for death by continuing to pursue his normal style of life while in the gravest danger.[14]

Perhaps the most poignant aspect of this anecdote is its interconnection with another strong thematic thread which traverses Herodotus' *History*. Arion's unbelievable experience illustrates the irruption of the marvellous into the ordinary circumstances of human existence. In the familiar milieu of Archaic Greece, in a world of tyrants, wandering artists and pirates infesting the Mediterranean, suddenly a wonderful marine animal appears and displays great sensitivity to music; it salvages the unfortunate musician from the waves of the sea and securely transports him to dry land. The tale of Arion introduces this wondrous phenomenon programmatically, immediately after the beginning of the first book, and thus offers the first instance of a pattern which will repeatedly appear in the course of the following narration. Divine powers, supernatural agents or other manifestations of the transcendent intervene at crucial moments of human endeavour and influence the decisions of the powerful and the outcome of capital events. The wondrous, the divine, the inexplicable may thus determine the course of history.[15]

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14 For such interpretations, see Cobet 1971, 145–150; Flory 1978; Erbse 1981, 267–269; Munson 1986; Flory 1987, 14–15; Hooker 1989, 141–144; Perutelli 2003, 10–11; Griffiths 2006, 140–142; cf. the overviews in Long 1987, 52–53 and Gray 2001, 11.
15 Cf. Wood 1972, 23–24; Skiadas 1974–1977; Hooker 1989, 144–146; Gray 2001, 14–22; Gray 2002, 306–308, 315–316. Schwabl (1969, 259–261) adopts a similar approach, considering the story as an exemplary tale in honour of Apollo, who miraculously saves his devotees (cf. the salvation of Croesus from the pyre).

In the Herodotean oeuvre this motif of intrusive marvels does not occur only in legends about the distant or mythical past — for example, the story of Perdikkas, the legendary founder of the royal dynasty of Macedonia: Perdikkas was working as a humble shepherd in the service of a local chieftain, when the loaves of bread offered him as wages started growing double in size (8.137); the chieftain was afraid of this portent and chased Perdikkas away from his land, but the young man returned, made war and conquered the entire Macedonia. However, the same story pattern is also frequently traced in accounts of near-contemporary events, which have taken place in the author's familiar world and involve well-attested personalities of recent history. Croesus is placed on a pyre by Cyrus, to be burned alive; but he invokes Apollo, and suddenly a great rainstorm breaks out and the fire is extinguished (1.87). Alyattes inexplicably falls ill after his army accidentally causes an arson which burns down the temple of Athena near Miletus; as soon as he rebuilds two temples for the goddess on the same location, the Lydian king is miraculously cured (1.19, 1.22). When Darius' stallion wins the test of being the first to neigh at dawn, and Darius is proclaimed king of the Persians, a roll of thunder and a flash of lightning suddenly strike out of the blue, as though divine signs of confirmation (3.86). Demaratus' future mother is initially a very ugly girl; but her nurse takes her for prayer to Helen's sanctuary, and there a marvellous female figure appears, touches the child's head and transforms her into a great beauty (6.61). Xerxes is ready to cancel the expedition against Greece, but is persuaded to proceed with it by a mysterious vision of an enormous figure, who appears in his dreams and forces him to fulfill his plans of war (7.12–18). While an Athenian messenger is travelling to Sparta, before the battle of Marathon, the god Pan appears on his way; the messenger promises Pan the inauguration of an Attic cult and rituals in his honour, in return for help in the impending battle (6.105).[16]

Analogous conclusions can be reached about many other colourful digressions of the Herodotean work. Another opportune case is Hippias' dream, inserted into the description of the Athenians' preparations for the battle of Marathon (6.107). Hippias, the exiled former tyrant of Athens, was accompanying the Persian expeditionary force, to serve as their guide to the Attic landscape. On the night before the battle, Hippias dreamed that he was having sex with his mother. He thought that his dream presaged his return to his motherland and to the rule of his maternal city; he was full of hope that the Persians would win the battle and reinstate him as tyrant of Athens. On the next day, however, when he disembarked on Attic soil and began arranging the Persian troops, Hippias was

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16 See Aly 1969, 249–250 for a series of similar examples; cf. Gray 2001.

seized by a vehement fit of sneezing and coughing. As a result, one of his loose teeth fell into the earth and disappeared. Hippias spent a lot of time searching for it but failed to find it. He then understood that his dream had been unexpectedly fulfilled: the Persians were bound to lose; they would not conquer the Attic land, and Athens would never be Hippias' possession again.

As is often pointed out, this tale belongs to an important thematic current which runs through the Herodotean oeuvre: the negative portrait of tyrants and the condemnation of their wicked ways. Hippias, the decrepit exile and traitor of his country, envisages his rule over his motherland in a perverse manner, as an incestuous rape of his own mother. His tyrannical exercise of power is by definition an anomaly. In consequence, the land itself rejects him and drives him away: the soil absorbs only a tiny part of the former tyrant's body and cedes no place to the rest of his self, which has to return to exile, vanquished and crestfallen.[17] As Hippias himself admits in the conclusion of the narrative, the only bit of Attica that belonged to him has now been claimed by his tooth (ὁκόσον δέ τί μοι μέρος μετῆν, ὁ ὀδὼν μετέχει).

Considered more broadly, the story of Hippias forms a link in a long chain of episodes which also stretches all through Herodotus' work: the narratives that concern ambiguous, enigmatic predictions and their verification in an unexpected or paradoxical way.[18] This is another central phenomenon in Herodotus' view of the human world: prophecies, whether received by means of an ambivalent oracle or via a symbolic dream, very often come true in a manner that is different, more mundane or more negative, than the one expected by the human recipient. As is usual in such tales, in Hippias' case the deeper sense of the prophetic dream and the unexpected mechanics of its fulfilment are not openly explained but rather craftily insinuated in the narrative and left for the audience to deduce.

To understand the hidden pattern of meaning in Hippias' story, the reader or listener must take account of the similarity between the human tooth and semen. This archetypical analogy was doubtless inspired by the physical similarities of these two substances in terms of shape and colour.[19] It has been encoded in the oldest Greek mythical tradition, in the well-known legend of Cadmus

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17 See Immerwahr 1966, 254, 285; Erbse 1992, 104–106; Holt 1998; cf. also Jacqmin 2011.

18 Cf. Frisch 1968, 25–27; McCulloch 1982, 41; Holt 1998, 223; Hornblower/Pelling 2017, 236.

19 Cf. Harrison 1927, 435 ("the tooth [...] looks like a gleaming white seed-corn"); Onians 1951, 233–234; Griffith 1994, 122.

and the dragon's teeth.[20] Cadmus sows the ground of Thebes with the teeth of the serpent he has slain, and fully-grown men (Spartoi, "the sown ones") spring out of the earth.[21] Clearly, in this mythical paradigm the teeth operate as analogues or equivalents of semen: like human sperms, they impregnate the earth, the primordial womb of life, and give birth to human beings. The same primeval connection underlies the verification of Hippias' dream. The tyrant's tooth falls into the soil of his motherland; it becomes lost therein and does not resurface again, in the same way as a man's semen is injected during coitus into the woman's vagina, is absorbed into the female body and does not re-emerge.[22]

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20 Cf. similarly Griffith 1994; Hornblower/Pelling 2017, 237. Frisch (1968, 26–27) and Glenn (1972 and 1978) also came close to this interpretation, envisaging the tooth as a symbol or substitute of the phallus (a parallelism supported by psychoanalytic and anthropological material; cf. Lorand/Feldman 1955). Erbse (1992, 106) unfairly derides their approach. Obviously, the analogy with semen works better in the context of Hippias' particular experience. This latter explanation also meets Erbse's only valid counterargument, namely the absence of ancient Greek testimonia regarding the analogy between tooth and phallus (cf. Griffith 1994). The myth of Cadmus and the sowing of the dragon's teeth provides an archetypical model which operates behind the imagery of Herodotus' narrative and would resound in the collective imagination of the ancients.
21 See, e.g., Pherecydes, *FGrHist* 3 F22 (from Schol. Apoll. Rhod. 3.1177–1187b, p. 251 Wendel); Hellanicus, *FGrHist* 4 F1 (from Schol. Apoll. Rhod., *loc. cit.*), F51 (from Schol. Hom. *Il.* 2.494–495, I p. 290 Erbse); Eur. *HF* 4–6, 252–253, *Phoen.* 665–675; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.1. On the myth and its ancient sources, see Gantz 1993, 467–471; Griffith 1994, 122.
22 In my university lectures, by way of diversion, I enjoy making up and telling to the students an imaginary *mythos*, which provides a hypothetical "original" to Herodotus' more metaphorical variant — a pure and unadulterated form of the primary pattern which must have underlain the symbolic experience of Hippias and its parabolic imagery. The main characters of my myth are two brothers, Albus and Cyanus (viz. "White and Dark" or "Abel and Cain"), the sons of a deceased king, who quarrel with each other about the kingship of their country after their father's death. Cyanus prevails, seizes the throne and sends his brother away to exile. Albus takes refuge in a neighbouring land and persuades the local monarch to form an alliance with him; he then marches with the foreign army against his own country, in order to conquer it and reclaim the kingship. As he is approaching the borders of his land, Albus has an ominous dream at night: he sees that he is having sex with his mother. In the same way as Hippias, he concludes that he will take possession of his motherland, like a man who dominates over his wife during the sexual act. After he crosses the border of his country, however, his dream comes true in another manner. The army camps at the outskirts of the capital, to rest before the battle. Albus lies in the open air under a tree and sleeps very sweetly on his native soil. In his sleep he dreams again that he is lying with his mother; this time, his body is very much excited, Albus has a nocturnal emission and his semen flows into the earth. When he wakes up, he realizes that his dream has been fulfilled, and that he is not fated to win. In the battle that ensues the next day, he is slain.

This pattern of unexpected fulfilment of prophecies affects the fate of many of Herodotus' protagonistic figures, from Croesus and Polycrates to Cleomenes, Cambyses and Xerxes. Croesus receives an oracle that, if he marches against the Persians, he will bring down a great empire. He thinks that the Persian state is meant, but, as it turns out, his own empire is destroyed (1.53, 1.91). When Polycrates plans to sail to Asia, his daughter has an ominous dream: she sees her father lifted up in the air, washed by Zeus and anointed by Helios. She tries to dissuade her father from his journey; but Polycrates pays no attention to her and crosses over, perhaps because he takes the dream as an omen of exaltation and glory. Again, this is not expressly stated in the Herodotean narrative, but it is implied by the superficially glorifying imagery of the daughter's vision, with the tyrant's body rising upwards and tended by gods, as though in triumph.[23] However, the dream comes true in a horrible way: Polycrates is taken captive and crucified by the satrap Oroites, so that his body is hanged up in the air, washed by the rains of Zeus and anointed by sweat under the heat of the sun (3.124–125).

Further, Cambyses receives an oracle that he is fated to die at Ecbatana, and believes that he will end his life at Median Ecbatana, the summer capital of the Achaemenid kings, more or less at an advanced age and surrounded by the royal palatial luxury. Instead, he is wounded and meets his end at a homonymous place in Syria (τοῖσι ἐν Συρίῃ Ἀγβατάνοισι, probably meaning the Syrian city of Hama/Hamath on the Orontes), while he is rushing back from Egypt to Iran to suppress a rebellion (3.64).[24] Cleomenes is told by the Delphic oracle that he will destroy Argos and thinks of the homonymous city, against which he is waging war; but the prophecy is fulfilled when his army sets fire and burns down the sacred grove of the eponymous hero Argos, near the city. Cleomenes is said to have suffered a terrible death as divine retribution for this sacrilege (6.75–76, 6.80). Xerxes and Artabanus see in their dreams the vision of an enormous figure, who incites them to proceed with the expedition against Greece and warns them of severe consequences if they do not (7.12–18). They are convinced that the dream is favourable for the Persians and presages their victory over the Greeks (7.18); but the actual outcome turns out to be otherwise. Hippias' experience is a brief, vignette-like replica of the treacherous prophecies which lead astray these great Herodotean rulers and determine the history of their empires and the evolution of world-scale events.

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23 Cf. Frisch 1968, 28–29; Lévy 1995, 23.
24 See Konstantakos 2016, 61–62 with further references.

A third example of an amusing digression which illustrates a broader issue of the Herodotean work is the meeting of Alcmeon and Croesus (6.125). This tale is part of a larger excursus on the history and importance of the Alcmeonid family (6.121–131), which has been grafted onto the account of the battle of Marathon. Herodotus' ostensible purpose is to defend this prominent house of Athens from the charge of having helped the Persians and Hippias at Marathon, by stressing their long struggles against Athenian tyranny.[25] The anecdote about Alcmeon, the founder of the family, explains the provenance and antiquity of the Alcmeonids' wealth. As the story goes, Alcmeon had proved very useful and helpful to the Lydian envoys sent by Croesus to the oracle of Delphi. Therefore, Croesus invited him to Sardis in order to reward him. The Lydian king offered Alcmeon as much gold as he might be able to carry on himself, on a single occasion. The clever Athenian nobleman made up a plan to take advantage of this offer. He dressed himself in an oversized robe with deep folds and put on very large boots. In the treasury he filled his clothes and shoes with gold to bursting point and stacked gold dust on his hair and inside his mouth. Thus, when he came out from the treasury, he looked like a bundle. Croesus burst out laughing at this ludicrous spectacle and granted Alcmeon all the gold he was carrying, plus the same amount again.

In itself, this tale has been read as a piece of popular propaganda, concocted and disseminated by the Alcmeonids and their supporters. Its purpose is presumably to suggest that the wealth of this great Attic family was very old and derived from prestigious sources, namely the family's connections with and services to Croesus and his legendary treasury; their riches were not acquired, therefore, from illegal or suspicious activities of the recent past, for example, through embezzlement of funds during the restoration of the temple at Delphi.[26]

In the context of Herodotus' overall oeuvre, the episode also offers a light-hearted and humorous variation of a dominant theme of the *History*: the confrontation between oriental despotism and wisdom, the encounter of a fabulously wealthy and autocratic ruler, especially of eastern provenance, with a wise man (usually a Greek) who gives the ruler an insightful lesson about the

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25 On this part of the *History* and Herodotus' defence of the Alcmeonids, see Bornitz 1968, 95–105; Gillis 1979, 45–53; Thomas 1989, 247–251, 262–272; Duplouy 1999, 9–16; Baragwanath 2008, 27–33; Hornblower/Pelling 2017, 266–274. See also Bornitz 1968, 42–43 for further connections between 6.125 and broader historical themes in Herodotus' work.
26 See Duplouy 1999, 9–16; Hornblower/Pelling 2017, 271. On the folk substratum of the tale, cf. Aly 1969, 158–159; Thomas 1989, 98, 146–147, 266–268; Kurke 1999, 144–145; Müller 2006, 244; and see below.

human condition.[27] The most celebrated examples are the meeting of Solon and Croesus (1.30–33) and the conversations between Xerxes and Demaratus (7.101–105, 7.209, 7.234–237). Solon warns the Lydian king about the precariousness of human prosperity and felicity, the mutability of fortune and the unpredictability of life. Demaratus expounds to the Persian monarch the basic tenets of Spartan valour and the value attached by his compatriots to freedom and the law. In both these cases the wise Greek confronts the oriental ruler's display of grandeur and might with a Hellenic vision of prudent moderation or austere virtue.

In Alcmeon's tale, of course, the didactic and universal wisdom, which dominates in the aforementioned major cases of this theme, is replaced by cunning *metis*. The Lydian despot still displays his abundant wealth, coupled this time with magnanimous generosity but not devoid of a sense of boastfulness: by freely allowing Alcmeon to take as much as he can carry, and by doubling the gift in the end, Croesus emits a sense of pride at his inexhaustible resources, which are far above the capacity of any ordinary man.[28] Alcmeon, however, counters the eastern monarch's ostentatious opulence not with profound sagacity regarding the value of virtue or the meaning of human life, but with a wily artifice of unhesitating exploitation. This gives the tale a tricksterish, picaresque tone and turns it into a jesting and parodic counterpart of the grave admonitions addressed by Solon or Demaratus to the oriental king.

Indeed, Alcmeon's actions and behaviour in the story are comic, even ridiculous. The Attic nobleman puts on oriental dress and footwear, distorts and puffs up his body with an exaggerated overload of gold, so that his appearance becomes grotesque and causes hearty laughter to Croesus. Perhaps Alcmeon consciously undertakes this buffoonish pantomime, as a kind of entertaining show by which he hopes to ingratiate himself with the Lydian despot and obtain a greater boon from him.[29] His solo performance should not be read merely as a display of boorish greed.[30] Rather, it is a calculated act of cunning, by means of which Alcmeon tries to prove cleverer than his Lydian host and get the better of him. Croesus has stipulated, clearly by way of a bizarre or malicious joke, that

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27 Cf. Flory 1987, 85. For comparison between the anecdote of Alcmeon and the dialogue of Solon and Croesus in particular, cf. Strasburger 1955, 18; Bornitz 1968, 97–98; McCulloch 1982, 45; Thomas 1989, 267; Kurke 1999, 146–147; Balot 2001, 127–128; Stadter 2006, 248.
28 Cf. Thomas 1989, 267; Balot 2001, 125; Dewald 2006, 156.
29 See above all Müller 2006, 243–245; Hornblower/Pelling 2017, 272–273; cf. also Aly 1969, 158–159; Thomas 1989, 266–267; Georges 1994, 157–158; Duplouy 1999, 14–15; Kurke 1999, 144–146; Balot 2001, 124–125; Dewald 2006, 150–151, 156–157; Stadter 2006, 248; Purves 2014, 113.
30 Thus Benardete 1969, 178; Thomas 1989, 266; Georges 1994, 157–158; Derow 1995, 41–42; Kurke 1999, 144–145; Balot 2001, 124–126; Dewald 2006, 156; Forsdyke 2006, 239.

Alcmeon may carry his reward out of the treasury only on his own person and on a single occasion. The Attic guest makes the most of the circumstances and beats the Lydian tycoon at his own game, following the rules with ludicrous but lucrative precision.

This kind of facetious *poneria*, analogous to that of a folktale hero or an Aristophanic protagonist, is a form of popular sagacity; it represents a reflection of the traditional, high-brow wisdom of the classical Greek sages on the level of the collective folk imagination. Alcmeon's plan recalls indeed the feat of the central figure in a well-known folktale of international dissemination (ATU 513A, "Six Go through the Whole World"). The enterprising young hero of this tale is similarly regaled by a rich king, who permits the hero to take as much wealth as a single man can carry. The hero, however, has a servant or companion of supernatural bodily strength; this companion shoulders at once all the treasures of the king and runs away with his master, leaving the rich monarch with nothing.[31] Alcmeon's story can be envisaged as a rationalized, moderate and historically adapted transformation of the traditional magical fairytale. The wealthy Croesus is not completely despoiled of his treasures, like his analogue in the folktale, since this would have been historically impossible. Nevertheless, the clever Greek finds a way to outsmart the king and appropriate a larger share of wealth than was originally destined for his reward. This is the raw, tough, hilarious *metis* of the folk champion. Ever since the *Odyssey*, the Greek audience knew that the man of wisdom and the cunning trickster are two sides of the same coin.[32]

It is also interesting that Alcmeon's adventure revolves around Croesus' treasury, the storeroom in which the Lydian despot keeps his vast wealth. The dialogue between Solon and Croesus is set in the same milieu; the Athenian sage is shown around Croesus' treasures (1.30.1–2), and at that juncture the Lydian king takes the opportunity to ask him about his impressions. The brief anecdote of Alcmeon, placed within the same scenery, slyly points back to the great confrontation of wisdom in the first book and appears as a tongue-in-cheek parody of it.[33]

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31 See Uther 2004, 299–300 (with full bibliography); also Bolte/Polívka 1913–1932, II 79–96, III 84–85, 556–558; Scherf 1995, 243–244, 1076–1077, 1081–1084; Lox 2007. The reader will remember most vividly the wonderful versions of this tale in the collection of the Brothers Grimm (KHM 71), in Basile's *Pentamerone* (3.8) and in Gottfried August Bürger's adaptation of *The Marvellous Travels of Baron Munchausen* (1786, ch. 11).

32 Cf. Müller 2006, 245 ("Dieser Alkmeon entspricht dem unaristokratischen Odysseus-Typus"); Hornblower/Pelling 2017, 272 ("Odysseus would have thoroughly approved").

33 Cf. McCulloch 1982, 45; Hornblower/Pelling 2017, 272.

2 Digressions and the laws of human history

The examples discussed in the preceding section show how the occasional narrative digressions or anecdotal insertions in Herodotus' work reflect central themes and recurring patterns of the entire composition. Within the confines of the brief anecdotal episode, such themes may be crystallized in the lapidary manner of a vignette or a miniature; or they may be adapted and developed into variant versions, which expand and enrich the thematic repertoire of the *History*; or they may even be parodied and turned into the satirical mode, thus serving as a kind of comic counterpoint to the graver treatment of the same thematic trends in other parts of the work.

There are also some enthralling cases in which the short narrative excursus carries a greater intellectual weight and epistemological value. Herodotus uses the little story in order to encapsulate in a graphic mode a significant finding of his lifelong research, an argument or an idea that is central to his anthropological worldview or his exposition of historical experience. The exciting or entertaining plot, the speeches and the actions of the characters become the artistic means for the dramatization of an idea or a conception of the historian's mind. In this way, the Herodotean excursive tale becomes a meditative or didactic parable, a narrative expression of historical thought. Like the *mythoi* of the great fifth-century sophists, the fictional mythical apologues which thinkers such as Protagoras and Prodicus created and used as instructive *exempla* for their lectures,[34] Herodotus' digressive stories can be read as genuine *contes philosophiques*: the artifices of storytelling are harnessed to the yoke of thought; the narrative becomes a code or an ideogram for the empirical expression of an anthropological notion, a moral idea or a cosmological reflection.

Thus, what might have seemed at first sight like a peripheral anecdote, easily detachable and discarded from the surrounding narrative, turns out to be a meaningful parable, which dramatizes and enlivens an important Herodotean conception regarding ethics, political ideology, the history of civilization or the metaphysics of the *cosmos*. In such cases the anecdotal excursus looks back and forward to important episodes of Herodotus' main narrative and echoes characteristic statements of the author's philosophy of history. It thus serves as a connective link within an intricate network of historical meditation. These digressive tales schematize and illustrate deeper forces which underlie the development of the historical process and regulate the course of human societies. They give

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34 See Konstantakos 2019.

aesthetic form to basic laws which, in Herodotus' mind, determine the condition of humanity.

A prominent specimen is the story of Thrasybulus' riddling advice to Periander — a tale of two cities, Miletus and Corinth, and their rulers. The story is narrated by Socles, a Corinthian envoy present in the assembly of the Spartans and their allies in 504 BC. The Spartans have convened this gathering with a view to making war against Athens and restoring the tyranny of the Peisistratids there, so as to check the rise of Athenian power and bring the city under their control (5.90–93). Socles addresses the assembly and starkly criticizes the Spartans' intention, on the grounds that tyranny is a great evil. To illustrate his point of view, Socles presents a lengthy account of the life and works of the tyrants of Corinth, Cypselus and his son Periander, through which he demonstrates how much harm these rulers have inflicted on their land (5.92α–η).[35] The tale of the exchange between Periander and Thrasybulus (5.92ζ) is inserted into Socles' exposition like a narrative wedge, ostensibly to show how Periander, the second of the Corinthian tyrants, was definitively turned towards evil after his communication with a more experienced colleague in power.

The young Periander had recently succeeded his father in the position of tyrant and tended at first to be less cruel than his predecessor. One day, however, he sent a messenger to Thrasybulus, the tyrant of Miletus, who was a seasoned veteran in the exercise of autocratic rule. Periander asked for Thrasybulus' advice: how should he organize his government in order to securely establish his authority and manage his city? Instead of a reply in words, Thrasybulus offered a kind of visual conundrum, a dramatized riddle consisting in live actions and the manipulation of optical symbols.[36] He took the messenger to a sown field outside the city, where there were crops growing. Thrasybulus started walking there among the crops; every time he saw an ear of corn that rose higher than the rest, he cut off its upper part and threw it down (5.92ζ: ἐκόλουε αἰεὶ ὅκως τινὰ ἴδοι τῶν ἀσταχύων ὑπερέχοντα, κολούων δὲ ἔρριπτε), until he had destroyed the tallest and choicest stems in the entire field. After this exhibition, the Milesian tyrant sent the messenger back home, without adding another word. Periander's envoy did not understand this charade; he took Thrasybulus

35 On Socles' speech and its place in Herodotus' composition, see most notably Stahl 1983, 210–220; Gray 1996; Węcowski 1996; Johnson 2001, 1–20; Giangiulio 2005; Moles 2007; Buxton 2012; Hornblower 2013, 246–252; Zali 2014, 130–135; Enrico 2015. Moles (2007) admirably summarizes the earlier bibliography.

36 On Thrasybulus' visual riddle (a performed charade or *Bilderrätsel*), see Karadagli 1981, 2–3, 75–76; Rutland 1984; Merkelbach 1996, 460–468; Lateiner 1987, 99; Beta 2016, 290–301.

for a lunatic who foolishly destroyed his own property. But when he returned to Corinth and described the scene to his master, Periander immediately decoded Thrasybulus' hidden message: the Milesian tyrant was advising him to exterminate the outstanding and most distinguished citizens, if he wished to preserve his tyrannical power unharmed. From then on Periander treated his people with great brutality.

This didactic anecdote is characteristically placed more or less in the centre of Herodotus' composition, two thirds into the middle book of the *History*; it is as though the author intended this tale to form the core of his narrative world.[37] The reader finds in this episode another eloquent manifestation of the cruelty and injustice of tyrants, a theme that pervades Herodotus' work.[38] However, this particular tale seems to carry a deeper and more overreaching significance for the historian's thought and worldview, because of the peculiar imagery of Thrasybulus' symbolic exhibition. The Milesian tyrant's allegorical actions point both back and forward to other important episodes of the *History*, which contain weighty precepts about the human condition and the relations of mortals with the divine.

Firstly, the act of cutting off the upper parts of high-rising crops corresponds with exactitude to a pregnant image used later in the narrative by the Persian nobleman Artabanus, when he tries to offer some sound advice to his impetuous nephew, King Xerxes. Artabanus' counsel is formulated in the context of a capital episode of the work: the great council in which Xerxes summons his courtiers, before the inauguration of his war against Greece, in order to announce his plan and deliberate on the forthcoming expedition (7.8–11). This scene, placed at the beginning of the seventh book, serves as a new start or a kind of second proem within Herodotus' *History*, introducing the last and most extensive narrative arc of the work, the account of Xerxes' grand campaign to Greece.[39] During the court council, the wise Artabanus tries to dissuade his king from this risky enterprise. In his warning speech, he uses a meaningful simile, which may be taken to condense and distill the quintessence of Herodotus' beliefs about the human world and experience.[40] As the old counsellor notes

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37 Cf. Moles 2007, 263–264: "the centrality of Socles' speech to the purposes of the *Histories* […] Socles' speech comes roughly halfway through the *Histories*, at the centre, or 'crossing' of the narrative".

38 See Stahl 1983, 215–217; Gray 1996, 377–382; Forsdyke 1999; Johnson 2001, 17–20; Giangiulio 2005, 109–111; Moles 2007, 256, 264; Enrico 2015, 154–156, 172–175.

39 See Masaracchia 1976, 50; Vannicelli 2017, ix–xii, 308–309.

40 See handily Pohlenz 1937, 110–115; Harrison 2000, 31–63; Mikalson 2003, 39–40, 80–83, 147–152; Scullion 2006, 192–197; Asheri/Lloyd/Corcella 2007, 37–39.

with sagacity (7.10ε), the god throws his lightning on the living things that are taller and stand out, so as to prevent their display of superiority (ὁρᾷς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα ζῷα ὡς κεραυνοῖ ὁ θεὸς οὐδὲ ἐᾷ φαντάζεσθαι). It is always the highest buildings and the tallest trees on which the divine thunderbolts are hurled. The god's standard way is to curtail all the creatures that surpass the others (φιλέει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα κολούειν). Thus, even a massive army may be destroyed by a small force, if it attracts the divinity's resentment. For the god does not allow anyone but himself to have a lofty and proud mind (οὐ γὰρ ἐᾷ φρονέειν μέγα ὁ θεὸς ἄλλον ἢ ἑωυτόν).

Solon uses an analogous expression in his celebrated conversation with Croesus, near the beginning of the *History*, another episode of programmatic significance for the Herodotean oeuvre. As the Athenian sage puts it (1.33), it is necessary to consider the end of anything, to see how an issue will turn out, before pronouncing judgement on it; for the god often offers prosperity to men but then upturns them by the roots (πολλοῖσι γὰρ δὴ ὑποδέξας ὄλβον ὁ θεὸς προρρίζους ἀνέτρεψε). Although trees or plants are not expressly named in this formulation, the mention of the roots (προρρίζους) points to the same cluster of metaphorical imagery as is used in Artabanus' discourse and in Thrasybulus' symbolic performance: the god brings down the most powerful and fortunate men as though uprooting tall trees or rising sprouts.

Thrasybulus' parable about the tyrant's typical tactics is thus based on the same symbolic image as the precepts of Artabanus and Solon regarding the operation of the divine.[41] In all these instances the plants or trees that rise high up and surpass the other specimens of their kind represent the great men who excel among their fellow humans in power, wealth or glory. These leading representatives of mankind become in all stories the targets, due to their preeminence, and are destroyed. Indeed, Herodotus highlights the correspondence by putting in Artabanus' mouth the same keywords Socles had used in his account of Thrasybulus: the participle ὑπερέχοντα and various forms of the verb κολούειν (5.92ζ.2 ~ 7.10ε). However, in Artabanus' and Solon's orations the destroyer of great men is god, while in Thrasybulus' allegory this role is played by the tyrant.

This alarming equivalence brings all these stories together and makes them complement each other, like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Socles' digressive anecdote bridges two capital scenes of action from different parts of the work

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41 Cf. van Ophuijsen/Stork 1999, 116–117; Harrison 2000, 57; Hornblower 2013, 262. The analogies between Artabanus and Croesus have often been highlighted: e.g. Pohlenz 1937, 114–115; Immerwahr 1954, 38–39; Benardete 1969, 185–186; Gould 1989, 78–79; Mikalson 2003, 39–40; Scullion 2006, 194–195; Vannicelli 2017, x, 316–317.

and revealingly completes Herodotus' overarching theory about humanity. God governs the world like a tyrant. The structure of the *cosmos* is not democratic but tyrannical. Authoritarianism and arbitrariness are inscribed in the laws of nature. And conversely, the tyrant's blatant hubris is that he attempts to imitate god; he believes that he is a small god inside his city and that he has the right to subdue his fellow-men with the authority of a cosmic force. Human power has the ambition to function as a small-scale replica of the divine order of the universe; but because the worldly political power is a creation of men, it is itself subject to the unswerving divine order which it aspires to replicate. This circle determines the course of mankind according to the Herodotean worldview.

A second example of anecdotal excursus that helps highlight an important historical law is interposed in the third book, in Herodotus' long account about Cambyses' madness, his tyrannical rule and his abominable crimes (3.16, 3.25–38).[42] The historian emphasizes that the deranged Persian king, among other outrages, committed especially heinous sacrileges against the religious beliefs and traditions of his subject peoples. He desecrated temples in Egypt, burned cult statues, profaned the tomb of Pharaoh Amasis and defiled his dead body, derided the images of the Egyptian gods and even killed the sacred bull of Memphis in a fit of rage. These atrocities give Herodotus occasion to reflect that only a madman would scoff at other nations' customs (*nomoi*), given that every people in the world considers its own *nomoi* as the finest of all.

To illustrate this axiom, Herodotus diverges to tell a story about the confrontation of two different peoples, the Indians and the Greeks, before King Darius (3.38). The Persian monarch once called to his presence a tribe of Indians, known as the Callatiae, who had the custom of eating the corpses of their deceased parents, and a group of Greeks, who cremate their dead, as is well known. He then proposed to these two parties to exchange their funeral customs. The Greeks were the first to be questioned: how much money, asked Darius, would they require to be prepared to eat the corpses of their fathers? They replied of course that they would not accept to do this for anything in the world.[43] Afterwards Darius summoned the Callatiae and made them the reverse

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42 On Herodotus' account of Cambyses and his crimes, see Konstantakos 2016 with further bibliography.

43 I do not think that ἐπ᾽ οὐδενί in the Greeks' response (3.38.3: ἐπ᾽ οὐδενὶ ἔφασαν ἔρδειν ἂν ταῦτα) means "for any amount of money" (with οὐδενί as attributive, sc. ἐπ᾽ οὐδενὶ χρήματι), as it is sometimes interpreted (e.g. Godley 1928, 51; Waterfield 1998, 185; Christ 1994, 187; Rood 2006, 300). Rather, the phrase has a broader and more emphatic sense: "not on any account, nor for anything in the world" (with οὐδενί taken absolutely; cf. Benardete 1969, 81). The

proposition: for how much money would they be willing to burn the bodies of their late fathers? The Indians cried out in horror and told the king not to say such appalling things. The two groups differ in the manner and expressiveness of their respective responses. The Indians scream loudly and display their repulsion with manifest effusiveness. The Greeks, on the other hand, are superficially more reserved, although they also answer firmly with a blunt negation.[44] Whichever variances may exist in style, they should not cover up the essential sameness of the two peoples' reactions, which lies at the core of the episode: both the Greeks and the Indians refuse the exchange of burial customs with utter abhorrence.

In its immediate context, this anecdote serves to underline Herodotus' contention about the great variance of different peoples' *nomoi* and the need to respect each nation's adherence to its own customs.[45] This was actually a basic tenet of the administrative policy of the Persian Empire under the Achaemenid dynasty.[46] Darius, by carrying out this cultural experiment, is in fact staging in his court, like a didactic pageant,[47] an enlivened, dramatized version of the fundamental principle by which he governs the populations of his realm. However, the narrative also entails another instructive lesson about the process of human history — a lesson that emerges if this tale of intercultural confrontation is read in parallel with other celebrated disputes occurring in the Herodotean oeuvre.

A striking feature in the encounter of the Greeks and the Indians is the inability and indeed the unwillingness of both sides to understand the cultural and anthropological viewpoint of the other. Both the Greeks and the Indians, when confronted with the peculiar funeral *nomoi* of the opposite population, react with repulsion and cries of horror. Neither of the communities makes an effort to comprehend the usages of the other or imaginatively grasp the other people's frame of mind; the Greeks do not try to put themselves into the position of the Indians and look at the world through the Indians' eyes, and vice versa. In other

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Greeks may not express themselves as loudly as the Indians, but they do voice their repulsion at Darius' proposal in strong terms.

44 Cf. Benardete 1969, 81; Rood 2006, 300.

45 The passage has even been read as evidence for Herodotus' belief in a kind of precocious and rudimentary "cultural relativity", although sober scholars have expressed reservations at such back-reading of modern notions into the ancient historian's text. See in general Heinimann 1945, 80–82; Humphreys 1987, 211–214, 218–220; Thomas 2000, 18–19, 125–127; Munson 2001, 168–172; Rood 2006, 297–300; Asheri/Lloyd/Corcella 2007, 435–437.

46 See Briant 2002, 43–48, 79–84, 473–511.

47 Waters (1971, 98) calls it a "dramatic parable". Cf. Christ 1994, 187–189.

words, neither of the two parties attains the level of wisdom that King Darius has achieved in the narrative: the Persian monarch does perceive and acknowledge that each one of the two nations has its own customs, which are equally deserving of respect and must not be regarded as absurd or abhorrent. His subject populations, however, do not endorse this wise principle and, when confronted with alien ways of life, can only display blunt rejection.[48]

The same phenomenon is observed in a number of episodes which occupy key positions in Herodotus' work. Like the encounter of Indians and Greeks, these episodes are based on the model of the so-called "court contest", a narrative pattern or tale type which is widespread in the lore and literatures of antiquity, especially in the Near East. The court contest dramatizes the confrontation and intellectual *agon* of opposed sages (or groups of sages) in the environment of a royal court, usually in the presence of the king himself. Two or more wise men may compete with each other in developing contrasting arguments and points of view, or in interpreting enigmatic dreams, omens or riddles, while the monarch acts as judge and arbiter of their intellectual competition. In another, simpler variant of the tale type, the confrontation takes place between the wise man and the king, while the former tries to give valuable counsel to the latter or explain extraordinary events and phenomena to him.[49] In accordance with this model, the Herodotean episodes in question depict a confrontation between the representatives of contrasted nations, set in the milieu of a royal court. Each one of the opposed characters stands for a different cultural stance, which is characteristic of his own people and incompatible with the mindset of his adversary.

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48 Cf. Benardete 1969, 81; Munson 2001, 170; Rood 2006, 299–300. Christ (1994, 187–189) seems to me to stress too much Darius' authoritativeness in this episode; the Persian king is merely being utilitarian in his treatment of customs (Humphreys 1987, 218; cf. Rood 2006, 300), as the practical governor of an empire needs to be.

49 On the story pattern of the court contest, see Humphreys 1973, 214–220; Collins 1975, 219–228, 234; Niditch/Doran 1977; Wills 1990, 1–13, 18–24, 32–44, 68, 74–76, 80–87, 112–113, 121, 146–152, 193–204; Collins 1993, 42–47, 173; Wills 1995, 39–48, 66; Yassif 1999, 59, 68–69, 476; Konstantakos 2007; Holm 2013, 2–7, 29, 63–64, 97–98, 193–203, 253, 377–387, 485–488; Konstantakos 2015. The pattern is best known from Biblical and other Semitic narratives, such as the court legends of Joseph and the Pharaoh (*Genesis* 41), Daniel in the Babylonian and Persian court (*Daniel* 2, 4, 5, *Bel and the Dragon*), the intellectual competition of Darius' three bodyguards (1 *Esdras* 3–4) and the Aramaic *Story of Ahiqar*. It has also infiltrated into the Greek tradition: it underlies a number of classical narratives, such as Xerxes' council before the Greek war (Herodotus 7.8–11), Alexander the Great and the fatal portent at Babylon (*Alexander Romance* 3.30), while its ultimate roots may be traced back to epic and tragedy (cf. e.g. the confrontations between the king and a wise or warning counsellor such as Nestor, Polydamas and Teiresias).

The narrative brings forward the inability of each one of the confronted parties to comprehend and come to terms with the peculiar worldview of the other.

The most famous specimen of this group of episodes is the conversation of Solon and Croesus, which has already been signalled out as a seminal episode of the *History*, a programmatic section determining the cognitive pattern by which Herodotus organizes his historical material (1.33). Solon and Croesus stand not merely for disparate attitudes and views of life, but for two entirely different worlds, two contrasted cultures and their ideals. Solon represents the summit of the early Greek wisdom: frugality and moderation, prudence and avoidance of conceit, awareness of the complexity of the universe, in other words, that peculiar kind of intuition which the Greeks named *sophia*. Croesus, on the other hand, incarnates the luxury and magnificence of the Orient, its marvellous and stunning grandeur, but also the rash confidence in sheer magnitude and material power, which does not take account of the limitations of human existence. Inevitably, these two emblematic figures fail to understand each other, and this is not solely Croesus' fault. The arrogant despot of Lydia, notoriously, cannot comprehend the Athenian sage's insistence on prudence and just measure. On his part, Solon is also blind towards the splendour and greatness of the Lydian royal culture. Seen from the perspective of the majestic Near Eastern monarchy, Solon would appear to adhere to a rather narrow and restrictive outlook, a kind of petty householder's mettle, which identifies happiness with good reputation in the eyes of one's fellow-villagers (see especially 1.30.5, 1.31.4–5) and resembles the popular ethics of a provincial town.[50]

A similar pattern underlies the dialogues of Xerxes and the exiled Spartan king Demaratus in the latter part of the *History* (7.101–105, 7.209, 7.234–237).[51] Demaratus holds up the Greek ideals of restraint and virtue in poverty, against the magnificent vision of the Persian multitudinous armies. The Spartan king thus serves as a mouthpiece for the austere and free-minded morality of his people; from the point of view of Persian world power and imperial ideology, however, the Spartan stance seems absurd and incredible, a doomed display of parochial obstinacy in front of the inevitable course of international history (see Xerxes' reaction in 7.103, 7.105, 7.209.5, 7.237). In essence, all these episodes pertain to the central axis of the Herodotean composition, the incompatibility between Hellenism and the East, which reaches its peak with the expeditions of Darius and Xerxes against the Greek mainland. The impasse in the dialogue of the Athenian sage with the Lydian despot opens the great cycle of human affairs

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50 Cf. Asheri/Lloyd/Corcella 2007, 97–98.

51 Cf. Humphreys 1987, 211–218; Thomas 2000, 18–19, 124–126.

which will culminate with the clash of swords on the plain of Marathon, the arrows that darken the sky over Thermopylae and the shipwrecked corpses in the sea of Salamis.

Nevertheless, the same spiritual model is also traced in other tales of *agon*, outside the main thread of the Graeco-Persian conflict. When the envoys of Cambyses are interrogated by the Ethiopian king, both parties fail to understand the cultural presuppositions of the other (3.20–25).[52] The Persian monarch reacts with rage in front of the rigorous self-sufficiency of the *noble sauvage* incarnated by the Ethiopian people. The Ethiopian king, on the other hand, cannot comprehend the unrestrained dynamism and impetus of the master race, the Persians' indomitable will to conquer and expand their power — as later the Gymnosophists will only see absurdity when they encounter the same qualities in Alexander the Great.[53] Analogous schemas mark the conflict of Cyrus with Tomyris the queen of the Massagetae (1.205–206, 1.212–214) and of Darius with the Scythian nomads (4.126–134).

The court disputation of Indians and Greeks complements these weighty sequences of events like a brief paradigmatic interlude or a recapitulating coda. Collectively, these narratives spell out a momentous historical phenomenon that runs through Herodotus' overview of human experience. The entire history of mankind is an unending contest and conflict between different civilizations which are unable to understand each other. Every time, dispute and strife arise from the incapacity of opposed nations to comprehend one another's worldview, from the refusal to rise above one's own entrenched standpoint and accept the potentiality of a diverse view of things. This impossibility of mutual understanding between cultures is the prime mover of the historical process. This is the source of expeditions and wars, conquest and subjugation, the failure and collapse of great rulers and empires, the redistribution of the world map. The small digression on Greek and Indian funeral *nomoi* is a pebble in this vast mosaic of historical dialectics.

Let us conclude with the final digression of the *History*: Cyrus' dialogue with the Persian lord Artembares, placed at the very end of Herodotus' narration, as a suitable epilogue to this most digressive of compositions (9.122). The story is appended to the account of the siege and capture of Sestos, on the Thracian Chersonese, by the Athenian army — the last military operation of the Graeco-Persian conflict described in Herodotus' work (9.114–121). The local

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52 Cf. Hadas 1935; Säve-Söderbergh 1946; Lesky 1959; Hofmann/Vorbichler 1979; Asheri/Lloyd/Corcella 2007, 416–425.

53 Cf. Centanni 1988, 198–199; Stoneman 1995; Stoneman 2007, lviii, lxviii–lxix.

satrap, Artayctes, is a wicked and greedy man who, among other things, has sacrilegiously looted the treasures from the tomb of the hero Protesilaus at the Chersonese. Artayctes flees from the besieged city when the situation becomes too dire, but is apprehended by the Greek army and brought back to Sestos. Although he tries to negotiate with the Athenians and promises to pay them two hundred talents if his life is spared, he is condemned to die for his sacrilegious crimes. The Athenians therefore crucify him on the shore on which Xerxes had fixed his bridges over the Hellespont. As Herodotus notes in conclusion, an ancestor of this Artayctes was Artembares, the interlocutor of Cyrus in the final anecdote, which is thus attached to the narrative as a coda.

After the Persians have established their dominion over Asia, the nobleman Artembares makes a proposition to his comrades; they eagerly embrace it and put it before King Cyrus. Since the Persians now have wide sovereignty over many lands, and given that their own native country is rugged and poor, they should abandon it and inhabit another, richer slice of land, from among the many they have conquered. In this way, the Persian tribe will become even more admirable to the eyes of the world. Cyrus, however, is not enthusiastic about the proposal. He warns the Persians that, if they adopt this plan, they will end up being subjects instead of rulers. For soft lands breed soft men, and valiant warriors usually do not grow in fertile and idyllic regions. The Persians, appreciating the wisdom of this response, choose to keep their own rough country, the mother of valorous and hegemonic men, rather than to cultivate rich plains and be other people's slaves.

The central idea expressed in this anecdote (an infertile country makes people harder and braver, while a rich and pleasant one enfeebles them) originates in Ionian ethnography and science. It is well set out in the Hippocratic *On airs, waters, places* (12), where it is claimed that the temperate climate and fertile lands of Asia breed gentle and affectionate inhabitants who are addicted to pleasures and lack manly courage and endurance. The idea is frequently echoed in Herodotus' narrative. The Lydian sage Sandanis tries to dissuade Croesus from attacking the Persians with a similar rationale: the Persians dwell in a rough country and live on the meagre goods it affords them; as a result, they would be redoubtable opponents in war (1.71). Demaratus exalts the eternal poverty of mainland Greece, which, in conjunction with powerful law, has turned the Greeks into valiant men (7.102). On the other hand, the Ionians of Asia Minor are said to have occupied a land most perfect in natural site and mildness of climate; but the Ionian people themselves are the weakest and least worthy of all the Greeks (1.142–143). Mardonius implies an analogous evaluation, when he praises on one hand the beauty and fertility of the countries of

Europe (7.5.3), but brands the Greeks residing there as weak and incompetent fighters (7.9α).[54]

However, the setting of 9.122 in the milieu of early Achaemenid Iran, and especially Cyrus' presence in the story and his didactic confrontation with the Persian people, point back, from a thematic point of view, to a particular account from the earlier parts of the work: a characteristic episode of the first book which marks the beginning of the Persian nation's rise to world power (1.125–126).[55] Young Cyrus wished to incite the Persian people to rebel against the dominion of the Medes and their king Astyages. For this purpose he applied the following stratagem. One day he called all the Persians to assemble, each one carrying a sickle, and ordered them to clear a large tract of land, which was full of thorny shrubs. The men worked all day to carry out the task. The next day Cyrus invited them to come again, this time after having taken a bath. He himself gathered the goats, sheep and cattle of his father's property, slaughtered them and had them prepared, so as to offer the Persians a lavish feast. He welcomed the men in a meadow, provided couches for them to lie on, and offered them wine and delicious food. The Persians thus enjoyed a day of feasting. After the banquet, Cyrus asked his guests which one of their two experiences they preferred, that of the day before or that of the present day. The men naturally opted for the pleasures of the feast. Cyrus then seized the opportunity and incited the Persians to follow him into rebellion against the Mede overlords and shake off the bonds of slavery: in this way they would enjoy the benefits of freedom and the pleasures of the good life, without having to work for them like serfs.

The analogies between this episode and the final anecdote about Artembares' proposal are evident. In both cases Cyrus acts the role of the wise protagonist and gives an instructive lesson to a representative group of his people, the Persians. In both stories the land of the Persians and its cultivation are highlighted as a key element. So are also the themes of tough labour versus enjoyment of luxury and domination versus subjection. However, the overall drift of the two narratives is contradictory: in 1.125–126 the Persians choose wealth and pleasure, and Cyrus commends their desire, instructing them how to proceed so as to transform it into reality. In 9.122, by contrast, the same Cyrus

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54 Cf. Bischoff 1932, 78–82; Heinimann 1945, 23–25; Cobet 1971, 174–176; Avery 1972, 533–534; Raaflaub 1987, 244–245; Gould 1989, 59–60; Herington 1991, 155; Thomas 2000, 105–112; Munson 2001, 88; Flower/Marincola 2002, 311–312; Buxton 2012, 569–570.

55 On the thematic interconnection between these two episodes, cf. Bischoff 1932, 79; Immerwahr 1966, 146, 186; Gould 1989, 59–60; Dewald 1997, 72; Pelling 1997, 62; Thomas 2000, 107–108; Gray 2002, 314–315; Flower/Marincola 2002, 311–312; Scullion 2006, 207; Xian 2020, 19–22.

warns his compatriots against riches and luxurious lifestyle. Above all, there is one factor which creates a strong contrast between these episodes, making each one of them look like an inverted mirror image of the other. The story of the first book is placed at the beginning of the Persian people's course towards glory and world dominion: following Cyrus' advice, the Persians revolt, vanquish the Medes, and then proceed to conquer the entire Asia. On the contrary, the final excursus, although set in Cyrus' time, is narrated at the very end of the *History*, after the lengthy description of the Persian defeats at Salamis and Plataea, after the failure of Xerxes' foolhardy expedition and the ignominious return of the leftovers of the grand Persian army. Thus, the two tales, in combination, enclose into a scheme of ring composition a curve of rise and fall of the Persian Empire. This circular pattern implies that Cyrus' final warning has come true: the Persian people, through appropriating the lands of so many other nations, have eventually forgotten their tough origins, have grown soft and are now bound to be defeated by stronger races and lose their world dominion, as was evidenced already by their retreat before the Greeks.[56]

In this way, the last digression of the Herodotean oeuvre serves as an illustration of one of the author's capital historical axioms, the circularity of history. As Croesus remarks to Cyrus before the latter's fatal expedition against the Massagetae, the world of men is a circle or a wheel, a κύκλος τῶν ἀνθρωπηΐων πρηγμάτων, which turns up and down and does not allow the same men to prosper forever (1.207.2). Croesus might well have been based on his own bitter experience for the formulation of this axiom, but he also lends his voice at this point as a mouthpiece for Herodotus' own thoughts about the cosmic order.[57] The principle of historical circularity applies not only to individual grandees,

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56 On this point, see the remarks of Bischoff 1932, 78–83; Bornitz 1968, 197–199; Cobet 1971, 174–176; Avery 1972, 533–535; Raaflaub 1987, 244–246; Lateiner 1989, 48–50; Erbse 1992, 43; Dewald 1997, 71–75; Thomas 2000, 107–109, 113–114; Dewald 2003, 43; Forsdyke 2006, 232; Buxton 2012, 569–570. This line of interpretation is contested by some scholars (Pohlenz 1937, 63–64; Waters 1971, 52–53, 90–91; Flower/Marincola 2002, 311–312; Flower 2006, 287), on the grounds that Persia was still, in Herodotus' time, a vast empire and a redoubtable world power, hardly affected by the defeats and losses of the Greek wars. This kind of positivistic approach overlooks Herodotus' grander, long-range and essentially metaphysical view of the cyclical pattern of human history. The defeated Persians of Xerxes' time are just experiencing the beginning of the turn of the *kyklos*; their empire has just commenced its long course from the top of the circle downwards along the semicircular arc. Such a process may take decades to be completed, and in the case of Persia it was not rounded off until the last quarter of the fourth century. Nevertheless, Herodotus clearly perceived the start of the turn and foresaw the rest.

57 Cf. Bischoff 1932, 19–20; Immerwahr 1966, 150–152; Gould 1989, 78–80; Harrison 2000, 62–63; Rösler 2002, 92; Mikalson 2003, 163; Asheri/Lloyd/Corcella 2007, 36–37.

such as Croesus, Cyrus or Polycrates, but also to entire peoples and states. As Herodotus notes already in the first chapters of his work, many cities that used to be great in older times have now become small; and vice versa, the important cities of his own time were insignificant in the past (1.5.4). Similarly, nations which used to be valiant may grow cowardly with the passage of time, and conversely peoples of lesser mettle may become more courageous (9.27.4). The alternation of power and decline is the destiny of all nations in the long circular time of human existence.

Herodotus proved to be a prophet well in advance of his time. About a century after he wrote his final digressive tale, the Persian Empire was crashed by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and the great dynastic line that had begun with Cyrus ceased to exist. History had come full circle; this particular κύκλος of human affairs closed its centuries-long circuit. The old sage of Halicarnassus did not live long enough to see these astounding events. His writings, nonetheless, afforded the equipment to predict them.[58]

3 Epilogue

As demonstrated by most of the contributions in the present volume, digressions in ancient historiography are not superfluous; they are not pieces of detachable material which could be easily discarded. On the contrary, all the writers of history in the Graeco-Roman world make conscientious efforts to assimilate the digressive materials into the main thematic repertoire of their works, to connect their excursuses more or less directly with the overall themes, patterns and aims of their historical narrative. The digressing portions are usually placed at key points of the composition and serve to highlight important issues of historical thinking, to underscore capital events or to bring forward the characters of the main protagonists.

Herodotus, the acknowledged *maître* of the digression in the classical literary canon, was also, apparently, the first historical author to implement this principle of thematic integration. Many of his excursive tales and digressive anecdotes exemplify important recurrent themes and patterns of the *History*, such as the irruption of the marvellous into ordinary human existence, the confrontation between power and wisdom or the verification of ambiguous predictions in

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58 Waters (1971, 52–53), who warns that one must not "read too much into this final chapter", exclaims that Herodotus "hardly foresaw Alexander's conquests". See however above, n. 56.

unexpected ways. The most enthralling of these narrative deviations encapsulate in a graphic manner a significant finding of Herodotus' research, an idea that is central to his exposition of human experience, a fundamental tenet of his anthropological worldview or his philosophy of history. Digressive storytelling may thus contribute to the illustration of the basic laws which, in Herodotus' mind, determine the condition of humanity, for example, the tyrannical structure of the *cosmos*, the alternation of dominion and decline in the life of nations, the impossibility of mutual understanding between different cultures and its function as the prime mover of history.

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Vassiliki Pothou

"I Have Written about It and Have Made This Digression from My Account …": Thucydides' Digressions and Their Relation to the Main Work

In memoriam Jacqueline de Romilly

Abstract: The creation of Thucydides' digressions is a multifaceted subject, which is linked to the historiographical tradition of logographers, to the procedures used for mitigating the semantic deficiencies and to a personal preoccupation of the author. The historian was innovative in so far as he implemented some issues to the thematic of digressions, which had not been previously addressed by his predecessors. The assimilation and the literary incorporation of digressions into the main storyline establish his pioneering spirit. He aimed at justifying the existence of his digressions and at inserting them skillfully in the main narration as a unifying account. Therefore, Thucydides' digressions play an increasingly fundamental role. The digression of the *Pentekontaetia* is a key example of a narrative section inextricably linked to the main narrative exposé as an argumentative distillation. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the excessive justification of a digression emerges exclusively here.

Keywords: innovation, literary incorporation, justification, *Pentekontaetia*

The creation of digressions in Thucydides' work is a multifaceted subject, which is linked to the historiographical tradition of logographers, to the procedures used for mitigating semantic deficiencies and to the personal preoccupation of the author. The historian was innovative insofar as he incorporated new and different kinds of digressions, which had not been previously done by his predecessors. Nonetheless, the originality of Thucydides' digressions was not

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exclusively due to their function or content. The assimilation and literary incorporation of digressions into the main storyline indicate his pioneering spirit. He aimed at justifying the inclusion of his digressions and at inserting them skilfully into the main narration as a unifying account. Analysis of digressions hence involves analysis of issues of the unity of his work and of its Ionian influence. However, we should also contemplate the scientific concern of the historian, his innovative spirit and his literary talent. Therefore Thucydides' digressions play an fundamental narratological role; they are not a pleasure, but a necessity.

Generally Thucydides avoided deviating from the central narrative axis. His digressions occupy less than half of his whole work in contrast to those of Herodotus. The historian was fully aware of the distinction between the main storyline and the narrative digressions; to say otherwise would be fundamentally incompatible with the teleological reverberations of his project. Furthermore, the historian sought to justify his provisional deviations (ἐκβολή) from the principal narration, as in the case of the excursus on the *Pentekontaetia* (1.97.2). We might speak of narrative maturity. Thucydides was not the first to be aware of what constitutes a deviation from the main narrative "itinerary". This was the case for Herodotus as well (4.30).[1] The originality of Thucydides lies in his justification of his digressions. But why should a historian apologize for the creation of digressions? The answer to this question depends on the exact definition of a work's central concept.

Thucydides seems to stand at the threshold of a new period of historiography.[2] It is impossible to estimate the originality of his digressions without emphasizing the uniqueness of their author. Everything is different in his case: the choice of the subject, the collection and the verification of information, the chronological system, the causal analysis of events, the purpose of the work;[3] lastly, the orchestration of all these ambitious innovations, because the historian should remain faithful to his principal "itinerary" and not stroll into extended "passages" of digression. Thucydides aimed to highlight the distinction between his own method and those of his predecessors.[4] For this reason, he did not allow himself to include narrative digressions, which might remind his readers of his predecessors, especially his great master Herodotus.

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1 Cf. Möller 2001, 241, 247; Hardy 2020, 127. The approach of Stewart (2020, 166) that Herodotus "due to his digressions, does not always follow a close chronological account of the events" and that he does not always "take care to demonstrate the connection of the individual events with one another" seems to be rather simplistic.

2 Cartledge-Debnar 2006, 559.

3 Cf. Stewart 2020, 166.

4 See Corcella 2006, 53, 55–56; Rengakos 2011, 53.

However, Thucydides' work could not escape from the influence of the Ionian logographers, especially that of Hecataeus of Miletus and of Herodotus.[5] From a glance at the ancient historiographical tradition as a whole, it can be observed that the logographers liked digressions, such as for example Hellanicus of Mytilene, whose topics concerned geography, religion and ethnography. Thucydides introduced political digressions because his work was strongly influenced by his interest in certain issues of political philosophy. As an "internal narrator"[6] he approached military topics through his brief experience as a military leader. Also, as an innovative and independent-thinking historian, he faced many challenges in pioneering his method while embedding a sort of dialogue with his ideal readers. This is the case in confidential digressions.

The precise function of Thucydides' digressions indicates an interest in developing influential effects from one period of historiography to the next. Digressions constitute a vital element of the art of storytelling. The rationalist spirit of the historian explains their function. They can have a cognitive aspect to shed light on lack of knowledge. In this way, they bridge deficiencies of the account and facilitate its intelligibility. Explanatory digressions also aim to fill possible "shortcomings", not by means of supplementary information, but through arguments which will justify and clarify an author's conclusion. This attempt at the justification and causal analysis of digressions reveals the major influence of the Sophists on Thucydides' mentality and background conceptions.[7] Critical digressions form the third category: they allow the polemical spirit of the author to emerge, which betrays a disillusionment and reflects a certain bitterness, born from resentment and even indignation, towards the futility of people's opinions.

Large-scale digressions serve multiple functions. The multiplicity of digressions' function is well exemplified by the digression on the tyrannicides at Athens. The complexity of linguistic expressions here reflects an intellectual complexity, because language is not always able to express such an intellectual profusion. Similarly, the digression on the colonization of Sicily has three aims: explanatory and causal, because its purpose is to justify the historian's opinion on the ignorance of the Athenian people, who had no accurate knowledge of

5 Nicolai 2001, 270, 274, 284; Rood 2004, 120–121; Rengakos 2006, 280, 284, 300; Rogkotis 2006, 58 n. 5; Rengakos 2011, 52, 57.

6 The expression belongs to Rood 2004, 116.

7 Cf. Liberman 2017, 109–110; Jaffe 2017, 208.

Sicilian topography;[8] and also polemical, because it criticizes their naïveté and error of judgement: Ἄπειροι οἱ πολλοὶ ὄντες τοῦ μεγέθους τῆς νήσου καὶ τῶν ἐνοικούντων τοῦ πλήθους καὶ Ἑλλήνων καὶ βαρβάρων, καὶ ὅτι οὐ πολλῷ τινι ὑποδεέστερον πόλεμον ἀνηροῦντο ἢ τὸν πρὸς Πελοποννησίους (6.1.1). In fact, the conquest of Sicily constitutes a diachronic dream of Greek imperialism,[9] ancient and modern, which is echoed at the beginning of of Georgios Theotokas' novel *Patients and Travellers* (1950/1964). R.D. Luginbill establishes a parallel between the Athenian *hybris* in the expedition to Sicily and Herodotus' reflections on the Persian empire.[10] Probably this parallel suggests the influence of Herodotus on the causal analysis of events and repetitive nature of history by Thucydides. According to L. Kallet, the correspondences between the digression of the *Archaeology* and the digression on the colonisation of Sicily show Thucydides' aim of motivating the reader to carry out his comparisons and contrasts.[11] From a stylistic point of view, ring composition (6.2.1[12]–6.1[13]), the element of probability and uncertainty (6.2.2; 2.4)[14] and the intervention of personal elements with the use of the first person (6.2.1)[15] clarify the spectrum of possible correlations between both digressions.

As J.M. Alonso-Nuñez observes, this long digression plays a complementary role to that of the *Archaeology*. This has the practical consequence of shifting the centre of gravity from the rivalry between Athens and Sparta to the rivalry

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8 According to Clarke (2019, 195), Thucydides here exaggerates the ignorance of the Athenian *demos* for "historiographical effect" and underlines the tragic dimension of the Sicilian expedition derived from an irrational imperialistic desire (Clarke 2019, 176, 200, 203). Cf. Rogkotis 2006, 63; Rood 2007, 132, 140; Stahl 2009, 121, 191; Hardy 2020, 51, 59, 169; Hogan 2020, 161, 163, 170. However, the background of this exaggerated critique could also be a political *topos* and should be interwined with other points of critique on the Athenian *demos*, such as that in the digression on the tyrannicides (6.54.1). On the link between the Athenian involvement in Sicily, *stasis* and the excursus on tyrannicides see Mitchell 2007, 143 n. 104.

9 Cf. Clarke 2019, 194; Hardy 2020, 25.

10 "Thucydides has this Athenian hubris of near Persian proportions in mind during his brief preview of the campaign in 6.6.1": Luginbill 1997, 129. Cf. Meister 2018, 151–160; Mitchell 2007, 144 n. 105; Clarke 2019, 180, 190, 201 n. 82, 202 n. 87.

11 Kallet 2001, 24. Cf. Nicolai 2001, 266–267, 277 n. 37.

12 Ὠικίσθη δὲ ὧδε τὸ ἀρχαῖον καὶ τοσάδε ἔθνη ἔσχε τὰ ξύμπαντα (6.2.1).

13 Τοσαῦτα ἔθνη Ἑλλήνων καὶ βαρβάρων Σικελίαν ὥρμηντο (6.6.1); Nicolai 2001, 266.

14 Φαίνονται (6.2.2); ὡς μὲν εἰκὸς καὶ λέγεται (6.2.4); φασι (6.2.2); τάχα ἂν δὲ καὶ ἄλλως πως (6.2.4). On the element of uncertainty cf. Nicolai 2001, 274, 279; Clarke 2019, 176 n. 4 quoting Rood 2012, 149.

15 Παλαίτατοι μὲν λέγονται ἐν μέρει τινὶ τῆς χώρας Κύκλωπες καὶ Λαιστρυγόνες οἰκῆσαι, ὧν ἐγὼ οὔτε γένος ἔχω εἰπεῖν οὔτε ὁπόθεν ἐσῆλθον ἢ ὅποι ἀπεχώρησαν (6.2.1).

between Athens and Syracuse.[16] From a theoretical perspective, the digression on the colonization of Sicily presents certain similarities to the digression of the *Archaeology*, especially concerning the content (ethnographic aspect), the historian's method (probability, intervention of personal elements) and structure (ring composition).[17] The content of this digression does not bring it closer to the geographic-ethnographic digressions on Macedonia (2.99.2–6) and the Odrysian kingdom (2.97), because its focus lies exclusively on the history of Sicilian colonization. In other words, the digression on the Sicilian *Archaeology* moves further away from the geographic perspective of the Ionian tradition. However, the existence of these analogies can also be explained by the location of the digression in the work as a whole. The digression of the *Archaeology* is located at a programmatic point of the main narration.[18] Similarly, the digression on the colonization of Sicily is placed at an introductory point of the account on the expedition on Sicily, perceived as a near-autonomous whole.[19] Nevertheless, the function of this digression should be interpreted by looking at the entire order of the work. Therefore, the existence of a profound analogy and of an essential importance concerning the functioning of both digressions is recognized throughout the main narrative. The digression of the *Archaeology* provides an introduction to the whole Peloponnesian War, as well as to the colonization of Sicily through the Sicilian expedition, which emerges as a war in miniature.[20] The Sicilian expedition could be understood figuratively as a micrographic account of the Peloponnesian War, a second war incorporated into the midst of the great war. The historian — who exploits this possibility skilfully to increase the dramatization of his account — states this clearly: οὐ πολλῷ τινὶ ὑποδεέστερον πόλεμον ἀνηροῦντο ἢ τὸν πρὸς Πελοποννησίους (6.1.1). It is noteworthy that each war remains an autonomous historical unit. The aim of the parallels between both digressions is to bring some balance to the structure of the main storytelling process. This structural parallel is a clear indication that the creation of large digressions constitutes the final product of a profound

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16 Alonso-Nuñez, 2000, 65–66.

17 Cf. Nicolai 2001, 266, 276; Rengakos 2006, 299.

18 Cf. Rengakos 2006, 280; Rood 2007, 140; Stahl 2009, 181.

19 "The account of the Sicilian expedition is presented in the work of Thucydides as a strongly coherent whole endowed with its own unity. It begins with a special introduction, then follows a regular movement, from the causes to disaster": J. de Romilly, *Thucydide*, vol. VI note p. XI.

20 "If it can be said that for Thucydides the Peloponnesian war is in a way the crisis of Athenian imperialism, the Sicilian expedition is certainly also the very crisis of the war": J. de Romilly, *Thucydide*, vol. VI note p. XI. Cf. Rood 2007, 138.

elaboration of the whole work, the main qualities of which should be accuracy and connectivity as with the co-ordinated pieces of a puzzle.[21]

The temporal complexity and especially the mixture of present and past encourages thematic and formal associations between both digressions. The digression on the colonization of Sicily frequently refers to the past: Ὠικίσθη, ἔσχε, ᾤκουν, ἐπεσέπλεον, ἐνέμοντο, ἀνέστησαν, ξυγκατῴκισεν, ξυγκατενείμαντο, ἀντωνόμασεν, ξυνῴκισαν. Nevertheless, the historian gradually distances himself from the preceding temporal action of the account through frequent references to the present, which naturally intensify the dramatization of the account. Often the author mentions an institution or a past circumstance whose existence is prolonged until the present of the principal account and where he uses the expression ἔτι καὶ νῦν. This is what happens in the account on the inhabitants of east Sicily,[22] the existence of Sikels in Italy,[23] the occupation of the centre and the north of the island by the Sikans,[24] the location of the altar of Apollo Archegetes[25] and the expanse of the city of Syracuse.[26] Then preceding actions will be replaced by contemporaneity (actuality of events). In these instances the past references dramatize and intensify the account by complementing what is happening with the digression of *Archaeology*.

As a form of narrative discontinuity, digressions provoke a certain disruption of Thucydides' main narrative because they bring about a deviation from the norm of the "linear" development.[27] The inclusion of digressions differentiates them from the main narrative and sometimes record events taking place at different moments as *faits accomplis*. The central axis of the main narrative has two dimensions: the first is thematic and vertical — which relates to the topics covered — and the second is temporal and horizontal. The temporal point of departure is a specific date (declaration of war in the spring of 431) to make progress and leads to another precise point (the end of the summer in 411). The narrative possesses a temporal continuity and Thucydides is the creator of a new temporality "by confirmation, negation, conjunction and disjunction of

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21 "Reciprocally interacting relations between musicians in an orchestra who all play different parts that resonate together in patterns [...]": Armstrong 2020, 77.

22 Οἰκοῦσι δὲ ἔτι καὶ νῦν τὰ πρὸς ἑσπέραν τὴν Σικελίαν (6.2.2).

23 Εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἐν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ Σικελοί (6.2.4).

24 Ἔτι δὲ καὶ νῦν τὰ μέσα καὶ τὰ πρὸς βορρᾶν τῆς νήσου ἔχουσιν (6.2.5).

25 Ἀπόλλωνος Ἀρχηγέτου βωμόν, ὅστις νῦν ἔξω τῆς πόλεώς ἐστιν (6.3.1). See Sammartano 2018, 69–89.

26 Συρακούσας [...] ᾤκισε, Σικελοὺς ἐξελάσας πρῶτον ἐκ τῆς νήσου, ἐν ᾗ νῦν οὐκέτι περικλυζομένη ἡ πόλις ἡ ἐντός ἐστιν (6.3.2). Cf. Stahl 2009, 182.

27 Cf. Rengakos 2006, 286; Rood 2007, 142; Armstrong 2020, 143.

past, present and future".[28] When we admit a temporal coherence in the narrative sequence of the work, the digression provides a temporary interruption of this sequence and introduces a temporal discontinuity into the narrative, except where the narrative time of the digression is identified with the narrative time of the main narrative (as is the case with simultaneous digressions). The temporality of Thucydides' digressions shows his audacity, because he does not hesitate to make leaps in time, compelling his readers to move across space and time and disrupting the chronological order by incorporating the digressions into the main narrative. The remark of J. de Romilly on the alternation of time and space in book 8 could be extended to the entire work: "There are of course in the Peloponnesian War many other passages, where Thucydides rapidly leads his reader from one place to another. And the alternation of space or time is often even too rapid to create the dramatic effects of rapprochement or contrast that the Greek literature already knows in the Homeric poems".[29] On this point Thucydides appears to be as flexible as Herodotus; the latter also presents a very varied temporality throughout his narration. He undertakes retrospective (5.25) and prospective (3.123) digressions too. The majority of the large-scale ethnographic digressions are also written in historic present (1.215–216, 2.35–90, 3.98–106, 4.5–12, 5.3–10),[30] like the large ethnographic digressions of Diodorus (Book 3).[31]

In relation to the temporality of the main narration, a digression can be either restrospective, simultaneous or prospective. The temporality of a digression is indicated by certain lexical entities such as the tenses of the verbs or adverbs.[32] The retrospective and prospective digressions also typically deviate from the principal axis in their subject-matter and their temporality. A retrospective digression deals with an event that took place prior to the event described in the main narration. A prospective digression deals with an event that took place later than the time of the main narrative. Conversely, only the subject-matter of a simultaneous digression deviates from the principal axis, because its temporality is contemporaneous with the temporality of the narrative.[33] Yet in

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28 Parret 1993, 6.

29 *Thucydide* Book 8 n. pp. XIII–XIV. About the prolepses of Book 8 see Rood 1998, 21 n. 65.

30 Cobet 1971, 100, 103, 108, 111, 122.

31 These include digressions on the Ethiopians, the gold mines located within the confines of Egypt, the peoples who inhabit the coastline of the gulf of Arabia and the entire coastline of Ocean to India, the traditions of Libya, the Gorgons, the Amazons, Ammon, Atlas and the legends of Nysa.

32 Wildgen 1993, 148.

33 Cf. Rood 1998, 11, 21 and his reference to G. Genette's distinction between "analepsis" and "prolepsis" (*Figures* 3, Paris, 1972, 46).

reality, this tripartite distinction (retrospective, prospective, simultaneous) might be very misleading, when we try to apply it to Thucydides' digressions. For here there are no simultaneous digressions. Because the temporality of the main narrative relates to the past (being the reproduction of a personal experience),[34] all digressions which use the present tense should be considered as prospective, since they indicate a narrative time subsequent to the time of the main narration. These digressions describe the duration of a situation — geographic digressions[35] — or the diachronic character of a habit or phenomenon — religious,[36] ethnographic,[37] political[38] and military[39] digressions — as a "window of duration".[40]

Accordingly, when Thucydides generalizes on how the right side of the army overruns the left side (ὑπερφαλαγγισμός), he uses the present tense, crystalizing vividly the iterative character of this military momentum as an embodied experience: Τὰ στρατόπεδα ποιεῖ μὲν καὶ ἅπαντα τοῦτο [...] ἐξωθεῖται [...] περιίσχουσι [...] ἡγεῖται [...] ἕπονται [...] (5.71.1). A similar diachronic overtone marks the digression on the festival of Diasia:[41] Ἔστι γὰρ Ἀθηναίοις Διάσια, ἃ καλεῖται Διὸς ἑορτὴ Μειλιχίου μεγίστη [...] ἐν ᾗ πανδημεὶ θύουσι (1.126.6). A category of simultaneous digressions uses the present tense to indicate a very long temporal duration, whose limits reach the point "zero" of time, meaning the time in which the historian is writing his text. This temporal approximation between the treated events and the point "zero" becomes a coded reference through the repeated expressions ἔστι καὶ νῦν / καὶ νῦν ἔστι, as in the digression on the sanctuary of Dionysos in Limnai[42] at Athens and the Enneakrounos fountain.[43] J. Rusten has characterized it as an "orderly digression".[44] Sometimes the indi-

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34 Cf. Wildgen 1993, 133.

35 Cf. 1.36.2; 46.4; 63.2, 2.27.2; 30.2; 86.3, 3.88.1–3; 105.1; 116.1–2, 4.24.5; 42.2; 56.2, 5.6.3; 41.2, 6.1.2; 96.2, 7.19.2; 29.3, 8.10.3; 38.2; 104.5.

36 Cf. 1.126.6, 2.15.4, 3.3.3; 58.3, 4.98.2, 6.3.1; 27.1, 8.67.2.

37 Cf. 2.96.1; 96.2; 96.4; 97.6; 3.92. 2; 94.4; 94.5; 4.103.3; 109.4; 6.94.1; 7.29.4; 8.61.1; 108.4.

38 Cf. 1.87.2; 131.2; 2.99.2; 6.17.2; 8.89.3.

39 Cf. 2.81.8, 3.108.2, 5.66.3–4; 67.1; 71.1; 73.4, 7.80.3.

40 Armstrong 2020, 75.

41 Cf. Maurizio 2020, 95.

42 Καὶ τὸ <τοῦ> ἐν Λίμναις Διονύσου, ᾧ τὰ ἀρχαιότατα Διονύσια τῇ δωδεκάτῃ ποιεῖται ἐν μηνὶ Ἀνθεστηριῶνι, ὥσπερ καὶ οἱ ἀπ᾽ Ἀθηναίων Ἴωνες ἔστι καὶ νῦν νομίζουσιν (2.15.4). Cf. Price 2001, 231 n. 60.

43 Καὶ τῇ κρήνῃ τῇ νῦν μὲν τῶν τυράννων οὕτως σκευασάντων Ἐννεακρούνῳ καλουμένῃ, [...], καὶ νῦν ἔστι ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρχαίου πρό τε γαμικῶν καὶ ἐς ἄλλα τῶν ἱερῶν νομίζεται τῷ ὕδατι χρῆσθαι (2.15.5).

44 Rusten 2020, 239 n. 27.

cation ἀεί introduces the temporal marker of an atemporal experience anchored in the long duration of an unlimited present, as in the digression on the location of Skiritai, an imposing element of the Lacedaemonian army: "On this occasion the Skiritae formed the left wing, a position to which in the Lacedaemonian army they have a peculiar and exclusive right".[45]

The indication of a long duration in the present opposes the indication of a long duration in the past, as in the retrospective digression on a select regiment of the thousand Argives, "whom the city had long trained at the public expense in military exercises".[46] In fact, these two cases, although completely opposite to each other, exert their influence on the encoded temporality of the whole narrative. They extend beyond the temporal dimension conducive to the presentation of successive events, where the "window of duration" in each circumstance is punctual. Thucydides also uses this iterative present to demonstrate the symbolical power of a law embodied in temporal modalities as a distinct record of time, as in the digression on the sanctuaries that must be respected even by enemies, including in the situation of foreign occupation.[47] This diachronic form of the present tense appears in those digressional passages where the significance of an event has become generalized, as in the evocative reference to the constant terror of an army advancing during the night.[48] In such cases, the author sometimes introduces into the plot of the main narrative a diachronic present tense to emphasize the unresolved power of a general (political) principle, as in the digression on the essential difference between oligarchy and democracy. Here, the historian succeeds in transitioning from the retrospective temporality of the main narration to the diachronic temporality of the digression beyond the restrictions of space and time.[49] As to the retrospective

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45 Τότε δὲ κέρας μὲν εὐώνυμον Σκιρῖται αὐτοῖς καθίσταντο, αἰεὶ ταύτην τὴν τάξιν μόνοι Λακεδαιμονίων ἐπὶ σφῶν αὐτῶν ἔχοντες (5.67.1). Cf. Pritchett 1974, 224; Rood 1998, 104 n. 93; Pothou 2009, 95. On the particular status of the Skiritai as a special corps see Singor 2002, 247–248, 281.

46 Ἔπειτα Ἀργείων οἱ χίλιοι λογάδες, οἷς ἡ πόλις ἐκ πολλοῦ ἄσκησιν τῶν ἐς τὸν πόλεμον δημοσίᾳ παρεῖχε (5.67.2). About the one thousand Argives *logades* see Pritchett 1971, 20–21; Singor 2002, 250; Hornblower 2006, 623–624 n. 28, 626; Millender 2016, 186 n. 104.

47 Τὸν δὲ νόμον τοῖς Ἕλλησιν εἶναι, ὧν ἂν ᾖ τὸ κράτος τῆς γῆς ἑκάστης ἤν τε πλέονος ἤν τε βραχυτέρας, τούτων καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ αἰεὶ γίγνεσθαι, τρόποις θεραπευόμενα οἷς ἂν πρὸ τοῦ εἰωθότος καὶ δύνωνται (4.98.2). About νόμος cf. Price 2001, 113 n. 57.

48 Καὶ αὐτοῖς, οἷον φιλεῖ καὶ πᾶσι στρατοπέδοις, μάλιστα δὲ τοῖς μεγίστοις, φόβοι καὶ δείματα ἐγγίγνεσθαι, ἄλλως τε καὶ ἐν νυκτί τε καὶ διὰ πολεμίας καὶ [ἀπὸ] πολεμίων οὐ πολὺ ἀπεχόντων ἰοῦσιν, ἐμπίπτει ταραχή (7.80.3). Cf. Pritchett 1979, 148, 163.

49 Ἦν δὲ τοῦτο μὲν σχῆμα πολιτικὸν τοῦ λόγου αὐτοῖς, κατ' ἰδίας δὲ φιλοτιμίας οἱ πολλοὶ αὐτῶν τῷ τοιούτῳ προσέκειντο, ἐν ᾧπερ καὶ μάλιστα ὀλιγαρχία ἐκ δημοκρατίας γενομένη

digressions, they establish an "ancient" past that is prior to the timeframe of the main narrative because the central axis refers to a past which evolves,[50] as in the digression on the festival of Ionians at Delos (3.104.3–5).[51] There are two main types of retrospective digressions: the first concerns a long period of time in the past, as in the digression on the regency of Pausanias,[52] and the second merely refers to the past, as in the parenthesis on the Boeotian troops sent to Ilion.[53]

Thucydides deliberately intervenes in the temporal sequence of the story-telling to provide additional information or a more accurate explanation. Sometimes in a digression a capricious temporality emerges, consisting of references to the past and to the present,[54] references to the present and to the future[55] and references to the past, to the present and to the future.[56] This temporal plurality is a distinguishing feature of Thucydides' self-representation and reflects his conceptual creativity, while the digressions of Herodotus, Xenophon, Diodorus of Sicily, Sallust[57] and Polybius reflect a temporal homogeneity and "stillness".[58] In Thucydides the ritual passage from one temporal modality to another often

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ἀπόλλυται· πάντες γὰρ αὐθημερὸν ἀξιοῦσιν οὐχ ὅπως ἴσοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πολὺ πρῶτος αὐτὸς ἕκαστος εἶναι· ἐκ δὲ δημοκρατίας αἱρέσεως γιγνομένης ῥᾷον τὰ ἀποβαίνοντα ὡς οὐκ ἀπὸ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐλασσούμενός τις φέρει (8.89.3). Cf. Rood 1998, 277 n. 80, 283, 293 and Price 2001, 317 n. 80, 321.

50 Cf. 1.138.5; 126.3–12; 12.3; 31.2; 93.4, 2.68.4; 17.1; 3.89.5; 68.3; 34.2, 4.52.3; 80.3; 91, 5.7.4; 16.2–3; 5.1; 38.2, 6.62.3; 56.2; 2.1–6.1; 54.5–6; 72.4, 7.78.5; 50.4; 36.6, 8.24.4–5; 54.4; 96.4–5.

51 Cf. Nicolai 2001, 273.

52 Πλείσταρχον γὰρ τὸν Λεωνίδου ὄντα βασιλέα καὶ νέον ἔτι ἀνεψιὸς ὢν ἐπετρόπευεν (1.132.1). Cf. Cartledge/Debnar 2006, 566 n. 24.

53 Ἦν δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ ἀποδασμὸς πρότερον ἐν τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ, ἀφ᾽ ὧν καὶ ἐς Ἴλιον ἐστράτευσαν (1.12.3).

54 The digression on the fountain Enneakrounos (2.15.5) and on the island of Kythera and the Judge of Kythera (4.53.2–3). On the island of Kythera and Spartan dependency see Cartledge 2001, 41.

55 The digression on the greatness of cities in relation to their real power and on the dimensions of the cities of Sparta and Athens (1.10.1–3). On the "brilliant prediction" of Thucydides, see Cartledge 2001, 13–14, 25, 31, 38.

56 The digression on the Spartan constitution or the "short history of Sparta" (Nicolai 2001, 274 n. 27): 1.18.1.

57 Except for one digression on the constant fear of Romans against the Gauls: *Per idem tempus aduorsum Gallos ad ducibus nostris Q. Caepione et M. Manlio male pugnatum. Quo metu Italia omnis contremuerat. Illique et inde usque ad nostram memoriam Romani sic habuere: alia omnia virtuti suae pronia esse, cum Gallis pro salute, non pro Gloria certari*: Iug 114.

58 On temporal homogeneity and the cognitive experience see Armstrong 2020, 59, 66 and 71: "Cognitive processes that were temporally homogenous and globally hypersynchronized could not give rise to the doublings that make possible nested thought or the interaction of discourse and story".

appears to follow a cyclical schema of retrospection[59] — prospectif[60] — return to the retrospection,[61] as in the digression on the good legislation of Sparta (*eunomia*). The juxtaposition of different temporal rhythms epitomizes the historian's constant tendency to generalize the scope of events[62] (this is called a prospective), without neglecting to take his readers back to the temporality of the main narration (this is called the return to the retrospection). From a cognitive viewpoint the temporality activates through retrospection the memory and the memory accomplishes the definition of identity. Also revealing is the cyclical experience of time in the anachronistic digression on the reality of Athens' power and the "*polis* of the Lakedaimonians",[63] in comparison to its appearances and future ruins: prospective[64] — simultaneousness[65] — prospective.[66] This cyclical process, through the insertion of simultaneousness, can be explained by the historian's desire to clarify his narration, inviting the reader's contemplation.[67] Moreover, it offers the perception of continuity as compensation for the precariousness of human existence.[68] In this way, the temporal interchangeability and

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59 Ἡ γὰρ Λακεδαίμων μετὰ τὴν κτίσιν τῶν νῦν ἐνοικούντων αὐτὴν Δωριῶν ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ὧν ἴσμεν χρόνον στασιάσασα ὅμως ἐκ παλαιτάτου καὶ ηὐνομήθη καὶ αἰεὶ ἀτυράννευτος ἦν (1.18.1). Cf. Rood 1998, 195 n. 58; Nicolai 2001, 274 n. 27; Price 2001, 338; Cartledge 2001, 27, 34; Powell 2010, 87 with n. 5; Millender 2016, 173, 177. On the "myth propagated by the Spartans themselves" and the "skeptical suspension" of Thucydides see Cartledge/Debnar 2006, 568, 585.

60 Ἔτη γὰρ ἐστι μάλιστα τετρακόσια καὶ ὀλίγῳ πλείω ἐς τὴν τελευτὴν τοῦδε τοῦ πολέμου ἀφ' οὗ Λακεδαιμόνιοι τῇ αὐτῇ πολιτείᾳ χρῶνται [...] (1.18.1).

61 Καὶ δι' αὐτὸ δυνάμενοι καὶ τὰ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις πόλεσι καθίστασαν [...] (1.18.1).

62 Cf. Rengakos 2006, 298 n. 58.

63 Cf. Ducat 2010, 189, 190, 193; Cartledge 2001, 173. On a comparison with the allegory of the cave in Plato's *Republic* 7.514a–517a see Hogan 2020, 175.

64 Λακεδαιμονίων <μὲν> γὰρ εἰ ἡ πόλις ἐρημωθείη, λειφθείη δὲ τά τε ἱερὰ καὶ τῆς κατασκευῆς τὰ ἐδάφη, πολλὴν ἂν οἶμαι ἀπιστίαν τῆς δυνάμεως προελθόντος πολλοῦ χρόνου τοῖς ἔπειτα πρὸς τὸ κλέος αὐτῶν εἶναι (1.10.2).

65 Καίτοι Πελοποννήσου τῶν πέντε τὰς δύο μοίρας νέμονται, τῆς τε ξυμπάσης ἡγοῦνται καὶ τῶν ἔξω συμμάχων πολλῶν (1.10.2).

66 Ἀθηναίων δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο παθόντων διπλασίαν ἂν τὴν δύναμιν εἰκάζεσθαι ἀπὸ τῆς φανερᾶς ὄψεως τῆς πόλεως ἢ ἔστιν (1.10.2).

67 Cf. Armstrong 2020, 144.

68 The interpretation of Stewart (2020, 169) on the pessimistic message of the cyclical model of history in opposition to the linear conception is interesting, but not appropriate, for the case of Thucydides. The cyclical model indicates the repetitiveness of historical processes. The study of the past can be useful for the future. Therefore, the message of his cyclical model is not pessimistic. Besides, this interpretation contradicts the author's statement on the goal of the description of the plague in Athens and his "concrete use" in the future: Stewart 2020, 176, 187. On Thucydides' project as concerning parallels between past and present cf. Hardy 2020, 127, 131.

cyclicity that inheres in the digressions provides conceptually different horizons of time and it might be considered as a strategy of narration with consequences in cognitive experience. Through the insertion of varied temporal modalities, the content of the main narrative becomes not only more coherent but also teleological.[69] The interplay of temporal scales transforms the conceptualization of the temporal axis in its entirety, since, instead of having a temporal linearity which evolves horizontally ("Monodie"), it presents temporal diversity ("Kontrapunktik").[70] Consequently, in the world of Thucydides' digressions, time is still continuous, but *achronos*.

The incorporation of each digression into the main narration can be said to demonstrate the unity of the work with respect to the principles of consistency and causality. Thucydides aimed at inserting digressions skilfully into the main narration as a unifying account, unlike Herodotus who presents them consciously as foreign bodies isolated from the account. By contrast, Thucydides' digressions are structural elements connected with the whole account and their presence has a particular literary perspective too. They introduce a parallel level of narrative eternity. They create a memory of the narration and a complementary experience of understanding that is fulfilled through the use of a spatial metaphor. Through the inclusion of digressions around the storytelling process, the historian produces narrative inconsistencies whose power can be exploited.[71] The historian was conscious of digressions' particularity and usefulness. He knew very well how and why he used his digressional material and he wanted to demonstrate this ostentatiously. In some cases the conventional integration of digressions into the narrative is achieved through stereotyped "dowel pins" (connecting elements), such as demonstrative pronouns that make insertion awkward and inefficient. Despite the artificial nature of their integration, the diligence of the historian in not undermining the unity and consistency of the narrative is still remarkable.

The digression of the *Pentekontaetia* is a key example of a narrative section that is inextricably linked to the main narrative as an argumentative distillation. Its significance is causal because its aim is to propound the historian's theory

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69 "Thucydides' manipulation of narrative time is [...] not apologetic but a key element in his attempt to write interpretative history": Rood 1998, 22. Cf. Rood 2007, 145.

70 On the terms "Monodie"–"Kontrapunktik" cf. G. Müller, "Erzählzeit und erzählte Zeit", *Festschrift für P. Kluckhohn und H. Schneider*, Tübingen, 1948, 196, included in *Morphologische Poetik, Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Tübingen, 1968, 270.

71 "The revelatory power of narrative discontinuities [...] is parasitic on the habitual, automatic, unthinking everyday fluency of action and perception that they interrupt": Armstrong 2020, 144.

on the real cause of war.[72] The mention of the ἀληθεστάτη πρόφασις in 1.23.6 (the truest reason on the origin of the war, but which is most concealed in discussion)[73] emerges once again as falling beyond temporal and spatial restrictions. Thucydides explains that "the Spartans voted that the treaty had been broken and they must go to war, not so much persuaded by the words of their allies as afraid that the Athenians would become more powerful, since they saw that most of Greece was already under their control" (1.88).[74] As a uniform project comprising a departure (cause) and arrival (effect), the historian aimed to show how the Athenians arrived at the circumstances in which they grew in power (1.89). He unwinds the yarn of the narration of events around a central issue through an elusive filtering theme, namely the progressive establishment of Athenian hegemony: ἐν οἵῳ τρόπῳ κατέστη (1.97.2).[75] However, the analeptic ἐκβολή τοῦ λόγου is by no means a simple accumulation of facts concerning Athenian foreign policy until the thirty year treaty of 446/5 (1.115.1), as some scholars have contended.[76] The events or the episodes of the plot provide an "episodic dimension"[77] of the digression. According to N. Loraux, the world of the *Pentekontaetia* is a world of shaky equivalence, where "the fight for the hegemony dominates".[78] The argumentative function of this account is focussed on the poignant detail of a fascinating causality, which constitutes the "configurational dimension": "I have written about it and have made this digression from my account, because Hellanicus did it very briefly, and inaccurately in his chronology" (1.97.2). This shaky equivalence could also be observed at a narrative level concerning the tension between the "episodic" and the "configurational dimension" of the digression, or between segmentation and integration, as would have been observed by Armstrong.[79] Thucydides' justification of his digression seems to have been orchestrated representationally at a crucial point

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72 Stahl 2009, 11 n. 8.

73 According to Rusten 2020, 241: "the 'truest but least visible' professed justification, Spartan fear of Athenian growth".

74 Cf. Rood 2007, 140; Stahl 2009, 41, 181; Moles 2010, 27; Jaffe 2017, 135–136 n. 50 (albeit with limited bibliography), 206, 209; Hardy 2020, 20. On the use of the word πρόφασις in Books 1 and 6 see Hogan 2020, 160.

75 On the repetition of the term τρόπῳ "in key places" see Jaffe 2017, 121, 127 and Rusten 2020, 241.

76 Rhodes 1992, 40, 41, 47: "a catalogue of events"; cf. Jaffe 2017, 133 about the close of *Pentekontaetia*: "the chain of events"; "list-chronicle of the Pentekontaetia" – "impersonal list": Rusten 2020, 242, 243.

77 Armstrong 2020, 74, 77–78.

78 Loraux 1981, 75.

79 Armstrong 2020, 74, 76–77.

of its dichotomous structure as a *digression dans la digression*.[80] The justification of an ἐκβολή has been individualized through the reference to Hellanicus,[81] which draws a very clear frontier between its first and second parts.[82] And in fact, this justification embodies only a narratorial stratagem because this account is not *stricto sensu* a digression.[83] Paradoxically, Thucydides attempts to justify the insertion of an account which was not a digression. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the excessive justification of a digression emerges exclusively here. The most plausible explanation is that Thucydides conceptualized the stratagem of the ἐκβολή[84] as a heuristic mechanism primarily to critique Hellanicus' writing of *Attike Xyngraphe*.[85]

As far as its style of writing is concerned, the *Pentekontaetia* is the opposite of the *Archaeology*.[86] The two narrations form a contrasting couple in the first book[87] of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Based on this distinction with the fossilized account in the *Archaeology*[88] — a probable re-constitution of the past on the basis of speculation — in the *Pentekontaetia* there is no uncertainty. The historian provides the events categorically without leaving room for any element of doubt.[89] The personal element appears exclusively in the context of the conflict between Hellanicus and Thucydides[90] in contrast with the *Archaeology*, where the frequent use of the first person marks the whole account and reinforces the subjectivity of narration. Another difference with the *Archaeology* concerns

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80 Liberman 2017, 131, 132. Cf. Rusten 2020, 246 n. 53.

81 Even Thucydides did not dare to attack Herodotus by name. See Pearson 1942, 1; Lenardon 1981, 59–70; Harding 1994, 9; Hornblower 2006, 620; Moles 2010, 26, 28; Rengakos 2011, 54; Pothou 2012, 93–97, 220–221; Rusten 2020, 242 quoting Jacoby (2015, 35 n. 66): 'He did *continue* Herodotus, but he *replaced* Hellanicus'.

82 Westlake (1995, 54) distinguishes two parties: 89–96 and 97–118.2. Cf. Rusten 2020, 242–243.

83 Moles characterizes the digression as "deceptive": 2010, 27. See Rusten 2020, 232.

84 On the influence of Thucydides' formulation on Flavius Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* (12. 128, 137) see Pothou 2012, 220.

85 Smart (1986, 30) indicates that "in fact the excursus was certainly written in response to Hellanicus' *Atthis* and a desire to correct the misleading implications of Hellanicus' 'imprecise' chronological scheme can be detected throughout". However the differentiation with Hellanicus seems to lie beyond the borders of the chronological system. Cf. Schreiner 1977, 21, 27; Möller 2001, 259–260 n. 81; Corcella 2006, 51. Contra Schreiner 1976, 23, 35; Moles 2010, 28–29; Liberman 2017, 132–133 n. 15.

86 Contra Jaffe 2017, 139 n. 58 quoting Finley, *Thucydides,* 137.

87 Cf. Liberman 2017, 27.

88 Cf. Nicolai 2001, 279.

89 Cf. Rengakos 2011, 57: "Thucydides lets "the events themselves speak".

90 On the standard use of aorist ἔγραψα and ἐποιησάμην see Pothou 2012, 220; Rusten 2020, 244 n. 43.

the spirit of controversy.[91] The critical spirit of the historian in the digression appears dynamically only in the Hellanicus reference. The rest of the account does not contain any critical remarks with one exception: a critical comment on the Athenians' allies, who were responsible for the authoritarian character of the Athenians (1.99.1–3).[92]

For these reasons — the close connection with the principal narrative, the restricted presence of personal elements and the polemical dimension — this excursus cannot be interpreted as an independent account, but as an essential appendix of a larger whole. It is obvious that the *Pentekontaetia* cannot be considered as being composed or even conceptualized separately from the principal work. Furthermore, Thucydides' statement on the tactical justification of this digression indicates its posterior character.[93] According to E. Badian, the historian wrote this digression in a late period of his life as an interpolation for the first book, which acquired its present form not only after the end of the Peloponnesian War, but close to the end of Thucydides' life.[94] Badian also draws a parallel between the general atmosphere of the *Pentekontaetia* and the climate of the *Kriegsschuldfrage* which dramatically exploded in Germany after the First World War.[95] Investigated from an evolutionary point of view, the digression that is the *Archaeology* should be perceived as an earlier independent section, composed in an early phase of the historian's life.[96] When a short presentation of Greek prehistory was necessary, Thucydides used old material and incorporated the account of the *Archaeology* into the main narration. Although this may be nothing more than speculative, I suggest that the historian perhaps composed some separated segments as exercises, when he was in the early stages of his work. The *Archaeology* could be considered as such a segment, but *Pentekontaetia* could not. The omnipresence of common key issues that shape the whole work, such as the birth and development of Athenian sea-power,[97] cannot

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91 See Corcella 2006, 53.

92 "Because of their reluctance to campaign most of them, to avoid having to be away from home, had themselves assessed to provide the monetary equivalent instead of ships; and the Athenian navy was increased from the expenditure which they contributed […]" (1.99.1–3). Cf. Stahl 2009, 47.

93 Cf. Rusten 2020, 238, 249 n. 63.

94 Badian 1993, 73, 125.

95 Badian 1993, 73, 125.

96 Cf. Liberman 2017, 120–121: "l'Archéologie comprend des éléments de date variable et ce n'est pas parce qu'au moins une partie de 1. 20 appartient à une rédaction relativement récente que l'Archéologie n'appartient pas à une phase de rédaction plus ancienne".

97 See Hornblower 2006, 615; Stahl 2009, 53.

on its own rule out this hypothesis. The key issue of sea-power as a preserver of Athenian hegemony could have featured prominently in an independent account too, which was primarily not dependent on the main storytelling narrative. The chronological distance between the *Archaeology* and *Pentekontaetia* is obvious and each digression emblematizes a different stratum of composition.

All this having been said, the *Archaeology* might not be the only "exercise". The account on the fall of the Pisistratid tyranny in Athens (6.53.3–60.1) is a key example of a digression with an explanatory and causal purpose. The historian wanted to explain from a particular perspective why the Athenians sent the ship called "Salaminia" in order to recall Alcibiades back to Athens. Therefore, he decided to penetrate the psychology of the *demos*. The Pisistratids' digression takes the form of a narration (διήγησις) containing a story on Harmodius and Aristogiton, which evolved around a precise event in the past, namely the episode of Hipparchus' assassination. This account is directly related to another episode on the historian's scientific methodology (1.20.1–22.2) as far as the causality (the criticism) and the subject-matter (1.20.2: the assassination of Hipparchus) are concerned. Indeed, the digression on methodology includes in embryonic form the digression on the tyrannicides, while the latter seems to be nothing other than the development of an element that already appeared in the methodology[98] as a cognitive re-experience. It is for this reason that the dramatization and emotional charge of the episode are highlighted.[99] This was the first anchoring of it in the organic whole as we read it today in its classical division,[100] which demonstrates the existence of a coherent unity between the excursuses. There is also a close connection between it and the excursus on the curse of Tainaron, as well as the two excursuses on Pausanias and Themistocles. Probably this contiguity reinforces the perceptual experience of causality through the predisposition of the human brain to link causes and effects and to combine the events entangled in a story.[101] That is why it is insightful to observe the subtle ways and varying degrees in which the parallels between the two digressions could influence the reader's cognition and the different strata of their composition.

Although the primary function of the episode is aetiological, the digression also carries a polemical aspect, when Thucydides, like a thunderbolt on a clear day, rejected categorically the distorted notions and erroneous beliefs of the

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98 Cf. Liberman 2017, 65, 118, 120, 139.
99 Cf. Stahl 2009, 55; Hogan 2020, 214.
100 Cf. Liberman 2017, 27, 31.
101 Armstrong 2020, 61.

masses.[102] Hence, the digression has a demonstrative (ἀποφανῶ)[103] and even provocative character (οὔτε τοὺς ἄλλους οὔτε αὐτοὺς Ἀθηναίους […] περὶ τῶν σφετέρων τυράννων οὐδὲ περὶ τοῦ γενομένου ἀκριβὲς οὐδὲν λέγοντας). The continuous presence of the personal element is directly linked to the willingness to give a demonstration: ἐγὼ […] ἀποφανῶ (6.54.1).[104] The historian fought radically against stereotypes and against his predecessors.[105] This moment of self-individuation again is anonymously targeted against Hellanicus, as Thucydides referred to him for the first time by name in the digression of the *Pentekontaetia* (1.97.2). It also marks a fundamental point of connection between the two digressions and the second preamble, where Thucydides referred once again anonymously to Hellanicus on the chronological system (5.20.2).[106] The parallel formulation of the three passages is remarkable, which makes plausible the involvement of Hellanicus in the third (anonymous) controversy too:[107]

1.97.2: οὐκ ἀκριβῶς ἐπεμνήσθη (named reference)
5.20.2: οὐ γὰρ ἀκριβές ἐστιν   (anonymous)
6.54.1: ἀκριβὲς οὐδὲν λέγοντας (anonymous)

This digression was carefully incorporated into the main narration through the connecting element based on argumentation (6.53.3–60.1).[108] Several lexical concordances and repeated elements in the introduction and conclusion reinforce the parallelism between them (Ἐπιστάμενος ὁ δῆμος / Ὢν ἐνθυμούμενος ὁ δῆμος; Ἀκοῇ / ἀκοῇ; Ἐφοβεῖτο αἰεὶ / χαλεπὸς ἦν; Πάντα ὑπόπτως ἐλάμβανεν / ὑπόπτης). This evidence indicates that the historian composed this account as an independent and autonomous narrative section. From this point of view, the digression on the fall of the Pisistratid tyranny in Athens differentiates itself strongly from the chapter on the historian's methodology (1.20–22), a personal statement and an author's "confession" to his readers as the first enclave of the distorted tradition on Hipparchus' assassination (1.20.2).

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102 "The problem of human indifference vis-à-vis the truth": Stahl 2009, 9. Cf. Rood 2007, 140; Stahl 2009, 181.
103 Nicolai 2001, 281.
104 See Hogan 2020, 212.
105 According to Stewart (2020, 168) Thucydides seems to follow a similar strategy of critical reference to both Homer and Herodotus (1.22). See Nicolai 2001, 280.
106 Cf. Smart 1986, 23, 27, 30; Möller 2001, 260.
107 Cf. Schreiner 1976, 40.
108 Liberman 2017, 109.

A conscious decision on Thucydides' part as an omnipresent narrator reveals another perspective which the historian implemented: the narrative technique of focusing on individuals and details as a way of counterbalancing between concreteness and abstractness, an essential dualism in Thucydides' approach. Some examples include the inscription with the "faint letters" (ἀμυδροῖς γράμμασι) on the altar at the Pythium (6.54.7), the sister of Harmodius as a young girl carrying a basket in a certain procession (ἀδελφὴν γὰρ αὐτοῦ κόρην ἐπαγγείλαντες ἥκειν κανοῦν οἴσουσαν ἐν πομπῇ τινί: 6.56.1), the person among their accomplices who talks familiarly with Hippias (καὶ ὡς εἶδόν τινα τῶν ξυνωμοτῶν σφίσι διαλεγόμενον οἰκείως τῷ Ἱππίᾳ: 6.57.2) and Harmodius and Aristogiton, who already had their daggers and were getting ready to act (ἔχοντες ἤδη τὰ ἐγχειρίδια ἐς τὸ ἔργον προῇσαν: 6.57.1). A correlation is possible here with the digression of the *Archaeology*; the best example of this duality would be the mention of golden fastenings in the form of grasshoppers on the hair of older men (1.6.3).[109] On the contrary, the historian's narrative technique in the *Pentekontaetia* does not include this focus on interspersed details of persons and objects; it does not codify in a sharp focus context. Those digressions, which were likely written earlier as an exercise, gave greater attention to particular details and objects — a feature of archaic style — than the accounts which were written later in parallel with the main narration. Its account follows the accelerated rhythm of an anxious fast-moving summary.[110] In this case, "the spatial juxtaposition" seems to replace "the temporal sequence" as a principle of narrative structure.[111] The historian not only does not mention any details, but he also leaves some events without mention (for example, the issues of Megara and Aigina,[112] the "forgotten war" of Euboea[113] and the "unrecorded" Peace of Kallias[114]), because his narration develops hastily through a strict and systematic selection[115] with various gradations of abstractness. Although the remarks of

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109 On the autochthony of ancient Athenians, cf. Nicolai 2001, 269; C. Schubert (2010), "Formen der griechischen Historiographie: die Atthidographen als Historiker Athens", in: *Hermes* 138.3, 259–275. On τεττιγοφορία see V. Pothou (2006), *Θουκυδίδου Ἀρχαιολογία, Ὑπομνηματισμός*, Athens, 108–109.

110 Cf. Rengakos 2006, 291.

111 Armstrong 2020, 71. On the a-temporality of *Pentekontaetia* see Pothou 2012, 236.

112 *Contra* Moles 2010, 28–29.

113 Schreiner 1976, 28–30.

114 Schreiner 1977, 29.

115 On the selectiveness of the *Pentekontaetia* cf. Cartledge/Debnar 2006, 586; Hornblower 2006, 618; Moles 2010, 23; Jaffe 2017, 135; Rusten 2020, 238 n. 20. Schreiner (1976, 37) observes that Thucydides "arranged the events and told the story in such a way as to suit his theory of a

Liberman and Rusten on the brevity and chronological "inaccuracy" of the account are justified in comparison with the brevity of Hellanicus,[116] Hellanicus' account could be more succinct and eccentric than Thucydides' report. Perhaps what Thucydides left out is more meaningful than what he did not.

The ring composition is another specific characteristic of archaic style.[117] The account begins when Alcibiades is due to return back to Athens because of the Eleusinian Mysteries.[118] The final episode of this digression retains a closer relationship with the element of rituality and with the procession and celebration of the religious festival of the Panathenaia, no doubt a meaningful configuration.[119] In addition, certain features of the digression illustrate the historiographical *topos* of appealing to visualized emotions, such as through the use of daggers in the middle of a festival, which contains an allegorical resonance. Xenophon[120] and Flavius Josephus[121] included the same scene in a similar context. The remark of H.-P. Stahl on the contrast — carefully underlined by Thucydides — between individual destiny and public influence can be extended to the whole of the digression.[122] The drama took place on the stage of the religious festival of the Panathenaia: "The Panathenaia was an ideological drama played out on the terrain of *demokratia*, a struggle to become that *demos* and to wield that *kratos*. That is to say, the festival was democracy in action".[123]

According to the interpretation of H.-P. Stahl on Thucydides' oligarchic perspective, the historian constantly showed a certain tolerance of tyranny. The digression on the end of the tyranny provides the ultimate opportunity for

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continuous growth in Athenian power and Spartan fear all through the Fifty Years". Cf. Stahl 2009, 49.

116 Liberman 2017, 131, n. 10; Rusten 2020, 246. On the lack of clarification and accuracy of Thucydides' chronology in the *Pentekontaetia* see Schreiner 1976, 43, 49; Schreiner 1977, 35; Rengakos 2006, 281, 291. *Contra* Pothou 2012, 96–97.

117 Hogan 2020, 213.

118 Cf. Leão 2012.

119 On the "spectacular location" of "the public killing" at the Ceramicus and the "semantic reinterpretation" of "an eminently political action", see Riess 2016, 81, 97, 106.

120 Καὶ παραγγείλαντες νεανίσκοις οἳ ἐδόκουν αὐτοῖς θρασύτατοι εἶναι ξιφίδια ὑπὸ μάλης ἔχοντας παραγενέσθαι (*Hellenika* 2.3.23). As an example of the intertextual resonation of this episode, cf. M. Yourcenar 1957, *Feux*, "Léna ou le secret", Paris, 104.

121 Μεθ᾽ ἡμέραν καὶ ἐν μέσῃ τῇ πόλει φονεύοντες ἀνθρώπους. Μάλιστα [δὲ] ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς μισγόμενοι τῷ πλήθει καὶ ταῖς ἐσθῆσιν ὑποκρύπτοντες μικρὰ ξιφίδια, τούτοις ἔνυττον τοὺς διαφόρους: *The Jewish War* 2.254–255. See Brighton 2009; Swoboda 2014, 204, 210 n. 138.

122 Stahl 1966, 6 n. 4: "Thukydides kontrastiert privates Schicksal und öffentliche Wirkung durch μέν – δέ, 59, 1/2".

123 Wohl 1996, 81. Cf. Hogan 2020, 216.

understanding the reason for this political philosophy. An absurd act born from private reasons has as a result the destruction of balance in an entire community. As C.S. Hardy caustically remarks, "the Athenians' impulse in reviewing the Pisistratid episode is good. But they are not sufficiently careful about how they do it".[124] Obviously Thucydides, by adopting this oligarchic version, made a conscious choice which satisfied a clear guideline in his deep political convictions.[125] The explanation of the historian's choice could be based on the combination of the following two elements:

> The historian is concerned with reconstructing the past in exercising his critical method. This reconstruction justifies the oligarchic inclination of his political philosophy.

Was this cheerful combination of past reconstruction and the historian's political convictions accidental or intentional? Unfortunately, the veracity of Thucydides' account cannot be incontestably proved and the discrepancy between the accounts of Thucydides and Aristotle on Thessalos remains enigmatic.[126] Therefore, the judgement on his objectivity remains unclear. On the other hand, his responsibility is gloriously illustrated: he does not impose his account as a conscious oligarch, but attempts to prove the authenticity of his oligarchic account using persuasive arguments. The interchangeability in the temporal sequence within the Pisistratid tyranny digression depends on its unorthodox structure, with consequences for the reader's cognitive experience and the narrative configuration. Therefore, contrary to the large scope and the vague temporal character of the digression, the digression on the fall of the Pisistratid tyranny has a concrete temporal order. In its entirety the digression is retrospective and relates to a point well anchored in the past. However, the temporal priority intervenes through some brief generalizations on the approachable character of Hippias[127] and on carrying weapons during religious processions,[128] generalizations which appear in the form of parentheses. Similarly, the posteriority intervenes through the references to Hippias' and Hipparchus' work (54.5–6), to Hippias' son Pisistratus (54.6–7), and especially to Hippias' end (59.2–4). These

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124 Hardy 2020, 130.

125 "He ended his life as he had begun it, a confirmed oligarch who had never renounced the creed of his fathers": McGregor 1956, 102. See also de Ste Croix 1954/1955, 31. Cf. Nikolai 2001, 282 n. 45, quoting Paradiso 1995, 36: "the Thucydidean version of the murder of Hipparchus is unpatriotic".

126 Liberman 2017, 109.

127 Ἦν δὲ πᾶσιν εὐπρόσοδος ὁ Ἱππίας (6.57.2).

128 Μετὰ γὰρ ἀσπίδος καὶ δόρατος εἰώθεσαν τὰς πομπὰς ποιεῖν (6.58.2).

sections constitute internal prospective digressions. Hence, the temporal order-
ing of events combines synchronization with diachronization,[129] encapsulating
explicitly some aspects of the Pisistratid tyranny within the story of Hipparchus'
assassination. The historian codifies the atemporal experience of an analysis,
when he aims to underline the notion of duration through time as a mark of
high-quality, which effectively abolishes time entering a unique eternity. Time
is an indicator of changes and weakness, while oligarchy implies duration and
power. The element of atemporality contributes meaning to the digression on
the growth of Athens and Sparta and the real nature of their power (1.10.2).
Conceptually both digressions underline the historian's approval of oligarchic
power. On the other hand, the laudatory presentation of Athens' endurance
even after his *kakopragia* — a necrology of Athens' greatness — offers an atem-
poral aspect too (2.65.11–12), without deviating from the main narration. Conse-
quently, the historian seems to instrumentalize the digressions on the Pisis-
tratid tyranny and the real power of the cities through an atemporal horizon,
possibly to defuse the emphasis on his oligarchic tendency.

It would not make sense to scrutinize here all of Thucydides' digressions,
which use a variety of techniques to relate to the main narrative. By way of con-
clusion, it should be emphasized that the historian exercises intense control on
all levels of his digressional material. Digressions reflect the historian's self-
definition and critical stance. They guide the credibility of reported narrations
and the evaluation of the storytelling process. When Thucydides composed his
digressions is a subject too multifaceted to be discussed here.[130] The cases of
Pentekontaetia and the fall of Pisistratid tyranny in Athens have been examined
because they represent the most fascinating pregnant interventions. In the di-
gression on the fall of the Pisistratid tyranny, Thucydides makes his presence
felt as an omnipresent narrator, while in the *Pentekontaetia* he writes as a histo-
rian. In the case of the *Pentekontaetia* Thucydides instrumentalized the justifi-
cation of ἐκβολή around the attack against Hellanicus, which is evidence that
he created this intervention later than the rest of the digressions. The excursus
on the fall of the Pisistratid tyranny includes epic traces such as ring composi-
tion, focus on details and dramatization. Its style indicates that it might have
been composed earlier as an independent narrative. Thucydides chose to criti-
cize Hellanicus by name only in the case of the *Pentekontaetia*. Conversely, the
anonymity of the other references can be explained by the fact that, firstly, it
would not be clever to attack Hellanicus by name more than once, and, secondly,

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129 Cf. Armstrong 2020, 58–59; Rengakos 2011, 50.
130 Cf. Rusten 2020, 250 n. 65.

the *Pentekontaetia* is the least digressive of all his digressions, the most dependent on the main narrative, and therefore, the most untypical in light of his predecessors. It is not a surprise that the historian deliberately chose the most unconventional "digression" as a key tool to develop his polemical argumentation against one of his "conventional" predecessors.

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Appendix
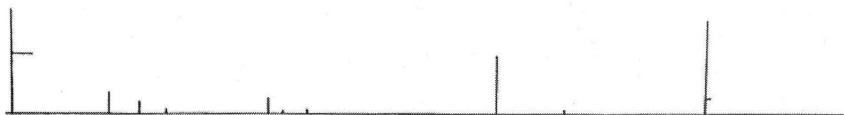
25 cm

Fig. 1: Thucydides Book 1: 2,988 lines (Teubner).

1. *Archaeology* (2–19) 366 lines
    The dimensions of the cities of Athens and Sparta as an indication of greatness (10) 13 l.
    (an internal digression)
2. The historian's method (20–22) 56 l.
3. The city of Epidamnus (24) 12 l.
4. Aktion (29) 2 l.
5. The port of Cheimerion (46) 7 l.
6. The harbour at Sybota (50) 1 l.
7. The city of Anaktorion (55) 1 l. (see IV 49)
8. *Pentekontaetia* (89–97) 186 l.
9. The Helots descendants of the ancient Messenians (101) 3 l.
10. The defilements (126–138) 320 lines
    The Kylon Affair
    The Curse of Tainaron
    The Curse of Athena of the Brazen House (Chalkioikos)
    Excursus on the fate of Themistocles
    The festival of Diasia (126) 3 l. (an internal digression)

Total percentage of digressions: **31.92%**

20,2 cm

Fig. 2: Thucydides Book 2: 2,425 lines (Teubner).

1. The synoicism of Attica (ch. 15) 37 lines
2. The Pelargikon below the Acropolis (17) 11 l.
3. The territory of Thyrea (27) 2 l. (cf. 4.56.2)
4. The story of Teres, father of Sitalkes (29) 16 l.
5. The position of the island of Kephallenia (30) 3 l.
6. "Everything living must eventually decay" (64) 1 l. (a digression in Pericles' speech)
7. The hostility between the Ambraciotes and the Amphilochians (68) 15 l.
8. The Rhium in Peloponnese (86) 5 l.
9. The Getae (96) 2 l.
10. The Dii (96) 3 l.
11. The Odrysian kingdom (97) 35 l.
12. Macedonia (99) 25 l.
13. The river Acheloos (102) 30 l.
    The story of Alcmaeon, son of Amphiareus (102) 14 l. (an internal digression)

Total percentage of digressions: **7.62%**

20,2 cm

Fig. 3: Thucydides Book 3: 2,426 lines (Teubner).

1. Notium, the port of Colophon (ch. 34) 5 lines.
2. Kleon's theory on the effectiveness of immediate punishment (38) 4 l.: a digression in Kleon's speech
3. "Revolt implies oppression" (39) 1 l.: a parenthesis in Kleon's speech.
4. The honours accorded to the ancestors of the Lacedemonians killed by the Medes (58) 6 l.: a digression in the speech of the Plataians
5. The Aiolian Islands (88) 10 l.
6. Tidal wave and flooding at Orobiae in Euboea (89) 6 l.
7. The Malians (92.2) 2 l.
8. The city of Heracleia (92. 6) 3 l.
9. The Aitolians (94.4) 4 l.
10. The Eurytanians (94.5) 3 l.
11. The tradition on the death of Hesiod 'the poet' (96) 3 l.
12. The purification of Delos (104) 45 l. The Ionian festival and the Homeric Hymn to Apollo (104.3–5) 27 l. (an internal digression)
13. Olpae, a strong fort (105) 2 l.
14. The Ambraciotes (108) 2 l.
15. The hills of Idomene (112) 1 l.
16. The eruption of Mt. Etna (116) 5 l.

Total percentage of digressions: **4.2%**

24 cm

Fig. 4: Thucydides Book 4: 2,870 lines (Teubner)

1. Pylos (ch. 3) 4 lines
2. The island of Sphakteria (8) 7 l.
3. Sparta as a land power / Athens as a sea power (12) 4 l.
4. The whirlpool Charybdis (24) 7 l.
5. The Solygian hill (42) 7 l.
6. Crommyon of Corinth (45) 1 l.
7. The city of Anactorium (49) 2 l. (cf. 1.55.1)
8. The vicinity of Ida (52) 3 l.
9. The island of Cythera (53) 10 l.
10. The city of Thyrea (56) 3 l. (cf. 2.27.2)
11. The village of Tripodiscus (70) 3 l.
12. Anaia, a site on the mainland opposite Samos (75) 5 l.
13. The seaport town of Siphae (76) 2 l.
14. The city of Chaeronea (76) 3 l.
15. The city of Amphipolis (102) 18 l.
16. The people of Argilus (102) 1 l.
17. The island of Thasos (104) 2 l.
18. The city of Myrcinus (107) 3 l.
19. The colonies Galepsus and Oesime (107) 1 l.
20. Acte, the peninsula of Chalcidice (109) 11 l.
21. The temple of the Dioscuri (110) 1 l.
22. The Scionaeans (120) 4 l.
23. The independent mode of fighting (126) 2 l.
24. The temple of Hera at Argos was burnt down (133) 9 l.

Total percentage of digressions: **3.9%**

18.1 cm

Fig. 5: Thucydides Book 5: 2,167 lines (Teubner).

1. The place of Cerdylium (ch. 6.3) 3 lines
2. A Note on Chronology (20) 10 l.
3. The Second Preamble (26) 30 l.
4. The territory of Cynuria (41) 3 l.
5. The organization of the Lacedaemonian army (66) 11 l.
6. The select troop of the thousand Argive "logades" (67) 2 l.
7. "All armies have a tendency to lengthen their right wing when claiming" (71) 11 l.
8. The hope and its extravagant nature (103) 1 l.

Total percentage of digressions: **3.2%**

20 cm

Fig. 6: Thucydides Book 6: 2,402 lines (Teubner).

1. The colonization of Sicily (ch. 2–6.1) 117 lines
2. "One admires that which is far away": a digression in Nicias' speech (11) 2 l.
3. The mixture of populations in Sicily: a digression in Alcibiades' speech (17) 2 l.
4. "Greece greatly over-estimated the force of heavy infantry": a digression in Alcibiades' speech (17.5) 4 l.
5. The "philosophy" of πολυπραγμοσύνη: a digression in Alcibiades' speech (18.7) 6 l.
6. The square pillars Hermae (27) 2 l.
7. "It is necessary to punish an enemy not only for what he does, but also for his intentions too": a digression in Athenagoras' speech (38.4) 3 l.
8. The difference between oligarchy and democracy: a digression in the Athenagoras' speech (39) 13 l.
9. Digression on Pisistratids and the story of Harmodius and Aristogiton (53.3–60.1): 137 l.
10. Hyccara, a petty Sicanian seaport (62.3) 2 l.
11. The excessive number of the generals (πολυαρχία) in the Syracusan army (72.4) 3 l.
12. "A tyrant is only interested in his own profit": a digression in Euphemos' speech (85) 4 l.
13. "Athens' omnipotence imposes calm in Greece": a digression in Euphemos' speech (87.4) 7 l.
14. The definition of democracy: a digression in Alcibiades' speech (89.4) 1 l.
15. The locality of Epipolai (96.2) 4 l.
16. The peninsula of Thapsos (97.1) 3 l.

Total percentage of digressions: **12.9%**

Antonio Ignacio Molina Marín

Emulating Herodotus: Digressions in the First Generation of Alexander Historians

Abstract: This paper analyzes the role of the digressions in the works of the Alexander historians. This is, in fact, a very difficult labor, given that all their books were lost in antiquity. Even so, it is possible to write about this question because of the vast amount of fragments that have been preserved. Besides, we use the *Histories* of Herodotus as an instrument to know better these historians, given that he was an author well-known to all of them. In comparing the fragments, we can observe that geographical digressions were a common element in the Alexander historians.

Keywords: Alexander historians, Nile, Alexander the Great, geographical digressions, Herodotus

The Oxford Reference defines digression as "a temporary departure from one subject to another more or less distantly related topic before the discussion of the first subject is resumed. A valuable technique in the art of storytelling, digression is also employed in many kinds of non-fictional writing and oratory". Taking this definition into consideration, it is easy to see the problems that have to be faced in order to study the first generation of historians who wrote about Alexander the Great (henceforth, 'the Alexander historians'). Although there is a substantial collection of the fragments from their histories,[1] nevertheless the works of some forty contemporary or near-contemporary Alexander historians have been lost. Many, but not all, fragments are preserved in the *Anabasis* of Arrian (such as Ptolemy, Nearchus, Aristobulus, Megasthenes, and others). However, it is clear that the Alexander historians do not fit into the conventional definition of digression for several reasons:

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1 On the fragments of these authors cf. Jacoby, *FGrHist*; Pearson 1960; Pédech 1984; Prandi 1985; 1996; Auberger 2001; Gilhaus 2017.

a) Since only a few fragments have remained of their works, these passages cannot be fully appreciated, as that it is impossible to contextualize them together in a whole book.[2] In other words, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to tell whether these fragments are digressions or not.

b) Although digressions in ancient historiography are often signaled by certain set formulae,[3] whenever these formulae are found in the fragments there is no way of knowing whether they come from the Alexander historians or from the later authors who use their own sources.

c) Moreover, it is no less complicated to distinguish, within a quotation of a classical author, whether it mostly belongs to the cited author or whether the writer is adding material from his own research. It is also possible that a decontextualized passage could be interpreted as a digression when in fact it is an essential part of the original narrative.

Therefore, the classical definition of digression is not appropriate for the Alexander historians. However, this study will argue that it is still possible to examine digressions, despite its difficulties, for several reasons.

Firstly, although the exact chronology of their works is not known,[4] many of the historians of Alexander followed Callisthenes of Olynthus[5] (*FGrHist* 124), the nephew of Aristotle, either directly or indirectly. Callisthenes was in fact the closest thing to an official historian of the Macedonian expedition, given that he was the first to write one and he did so by order of Alexander.[6] Thus, it can be said with confidence that his influence on the other Alexander historians was significant. Unfortunately, his work has been lost.

Secondly, it is assumed that the main topic of the Alexander historians was the Macedonian king himself, given that the primary focus of this genre of writing dealt with military and political events that involved historical personalities. The titles of their lost histories seem to confirm this view.[7] Therefore, it can be

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2 Zambrini 2011, 211: "The modern reader and scholar confronts a difficult situation: the disappearance of the 'historians of Alexander.' Among the historians of the first generation, those who followed Alexander in his expedition, nothing survives, outside of the material used by later authors."

3 Ash 2010, 267.

4 Pearson 1960, v–vii; Bosworth 1988, 2–3; Goukowsky 1991, 136–165.

5 Berve 1926 II 191–199 nº. 408; Pearson 1960, 22–49; Heckel 2006, 76–77.

6 "Callisthenes wrote with the clear purpose of magnifying Alexander" (Pearson 1960, 263).

7 Callisthenes (*FGrHist* 124): "The exploits of Alexander" (Str. 17.1.43); Onesicritus (*FGrHist* 134): "How Alexander was led" (Diog. Laert. 6.84); Chares (*FGrHist* 125): "Stories of Alexander" (Ath. 12.538b); Aristobulus (*FGrHist* 139); Nearchus (*FGrHist* 133): "Indica"; Ptolemy (*FGrHist*

concluded that any issue not directly related to Alexander may be regarded as a digression.

Thirdly, there is one author who is quoted and followed by almost all of the Alexander historians: Herodotus of Halicarnassus,[8] who was one of Alexander's most well-known authors.[9] Herodotus' *Histories* have been preserved completely; therefore, his work can be used as a resource in order to study and compare the digressions of our historians. To date, most scholars have written about the works possibly read by Alexander the Great.[10] The so-called "father of history" played an important role in the evolution of Macedonia, given that he was so responsible for introducing this kingdom to the Greeks.[11]

Fourthly, a digression, in the case of the Alexander historians, cannot simply be considered a sign of redactional activity, since most of the potential digressions are geographical in nature. There was never a real separation between history and geography, as both were considered literary genres or disciplines during antiquity.[12] However, topographical and ethnographical information was generally offered in the course of digressions from the main chronological narrative in historical works, in order to introduce to the readers the place about which the author was writing.[13] Through this kind of excursus, the author displayed his knowledge about the subject matter, outlining the geographical area in which the fact took place and shedding light in this way on military or historical events. Over time, the geographical digression became a way of testing the individual skills of a writer as a narrator and displaying his own erudition. Consequently, it becomes a standard feature and an essential part of historiographical narration that gives unity to the different parts of one book.

Finally, there is another kind of digression that is focused on luxury and *tryphe*[14] (softness). This word is synonymous with vice or lack of self-control. Excessive luxury is responsible for the decline of kings and civilizations. Therefore,

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138); Polycleitus (*FGrHist* 128): "Stories" (Ath. 12.539a); Clitarchus (*FGrHist* 137): "Peri Alexandrou" (Diog. Laert. 1.6); Medeius (*FGrHist* 129) "Archaeologia of Armenia" (Str. 11.14.12–14).

8 Although we find the name of Herodotus is only quoted directly by Medeius of Larissa (*FGrHist* 129 F1) and Nearchus (*FGrHist* 133 F17) his influence can be observed in many of the Alexander historians.

9 Snyder 1966, 91; Hamilton 1969, 56; Badian 1982, 34; Bowersock 1989, 414; O'Brien 1992, 223; Bosworth 1996a, 149.

10 Brown 1967, 359–368; Molina Marín 2018, 80–81; 2022, 161–175.

11 Molina Marín 2022, 163–164.

12 Jacob 1991, 171; Nicolet 1991, 66; Romm 1992, 3; Molina Marín 2011, 18.

13 Pothou 2009, 49; Dueck and Brodersen 2012, 8; Gerrish 2019, 109.

14 Quint. *Inst.* 4.3.15; Tac. *Ann.* 3.55.

digressions on *tryphe* also explain how wealth brings with it lack of self-discipline and moral corruption. This last type of digression is not common in Herodotus' work, but was used by other historians of Alexander. Chares of Mytiline,[15] who wrote an anecdotal history of Alexander and his campaigns in ten books, appears to have used this type of narration in his *Histories of Alexander*, so a part of this study will analyze Chares' descriptions of the banquets in the Persian and Alexandrian courts.

In sum, the main goal of this paper is to propose a new form of analyzing the relationship between the Alexander historians and Herodotus through the study of the use of digressions by the first generation of these authors.

1 The historians of Alexander

Before proceeding to the study of the fragments, there is a question that needs to be answered first: who were the historians of Alexander? This term is used to designate the first generation of historians who wrote during or shortly after Alexander's lifetime. The most important of these were Callisthenes of Olynthus (*FGrHist* 124), Onesicritus of Astipaleia (*FGrHist* 134), Aristobulus of Cassandreia (*FGrHist* 139), Nearchus of Crete (*FGrHist* 133), Ptolemy, son of Lagos (*FGrHist* 138), Polycleitus of Larissa (*FGrHist* 128), Chares of Mytiline (*FGrHist* 125), Clitarchus of Alexandria (*FGrHist* 137) and Megasthenes[16] (*FGrHist* 715). Unlike our sources of the Roman age, this first generation of Alexander historians has not generated much interest from scholars.[17] This is partly the result of a lack of information and source material, given that only a few fragments exist at best, but it is also a consequence of their poor reputation from antiquity. The fragments of Strabo, who strongly criticized the historians, are good evidence of this:

> Generally speaking, the men who hitherto have written on the affairs of India, were a set of liars (ψευδολόγοι). Deimachus holds the first place in the list, Megasthenes comes next, while Onesicritus and Nearchus, with others of the same class, manage to stammer out a few words [of truth]. Of this we became the more convinced whilst writing the history of

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15 Berve 1926 II nº. 820, 405–406; Pearson 1960, 50–61; Heckel 2006, 86.

16 Although Megasthenes is not included among the Alexander historians by some scholars, I follow A.B. Bosworth 1996b, 113 ff. in considering this author to be sent by Sibirtius to the Chandragupta court during the lifetime of the king Porus. Therefore, he was a contemporary of Alexander, and deserves to be included among these authors.

17 Brown 1949 (Onesicritus); Prandi 1985 (Callisthenes); 1996 (Clitarchus); Payen 2007 (Chares); Bucciantini 2015 (Nearchus).

Alexander. No faith whatever can be placed in Deimachus and Megasthenes (Str. 2.1.9, translated by H.C. Hamilton 1903).

This writer (Onesicritus) may as well be called the master fabulist as the master pilot (τῶν παραδόξων ἀρχικυβερνήτην) of Alexander. For all those who accompanied Alexander preferred the marvelous to the true, but this writer seems to have surpassed all in his description of prodigies. Some things, however, he relates which are probable and worthy of record, and will not be passed over in silence even by one who does not believe their correctness (Str. 15.1.28 translated by H.C. Hamilton 1903).

In a previous paper I argued that these criticisms could be explained because the Alexander historians were fundamental sources of Eratosthenes and Strabo's main purpose was to surpass this geographer in his *diorthosis*.[18]

However, we should also bear in mind that, with the exception of Callisthenes, none of the Alexander historians was commissioned to write an official account of the expedition. The reason for this is very simple; they were not professional historians or writers. Onesicritus was a helmsman (Str. 15.1.28), Aristobulus an architect and engineer (Str. 15.3.7; Arr. *Anab*. 6.29), Nearchus an admiral (Arr. *Anab*. 6.2.3; *Ind*. 18.10), Ptolemy a warrior (Arr. *Anab*. 4.24.3–4) and Chares of Mytilene a chamberlain (Plut. *Alex*. 46.2). However, it was quite common in antiquity that the main activity of any writer was not limited to the world of culture. One of the greatest historians of ancient times, Thucydides, was also a general (Thuc. 5.26). Furthermore, the ancient sources were apparently more well-educated than most of the Alexander historians.[19] However, some of them had illustrious mentors, such as Ptolemy (Aristotle) and Onesicritus (Diogenes).[20]

But why did these historians write so many books in such a brief period of time? Although there are various reasons for this, one is that some geographical areas of the Persian Empire piqued the curiosity of Greek readers, specifically India, Arabia and Egypt. Above all, these readers were interested in any aspect related to Alexander the Great. Each one of the Alexander historians was able to write about both topics because they had *autopsia*, that is to say, firsthand

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18 Molina Marín 2017, 295–296: "However, the historians of Alexander are usually criticized for being too dependent on earlier traditions and topics prior to the Macedonian expedition, which is an absolute contradiction to the notion of new geographical and intellectual horizons […] However, it is very probable that his opinions about Alexander's historians may have been deeply affected by his *epanorthosis/diorthosis* (rectification) of Eratosthenes (Str. 1.2.21)."

19 Molina Marín 2011, 133: "We must not underestimate the knowledge of our sources or overestimate it".

20 Ellis 1976, 161–162, argues that Ptolemy was a pupil of Aristotle at Mieza; Bosworth 1993, 421, claimed that Nearchus had been imbued with the geographical doctrines of Aristotle because he was in contact with his ideas.

knowledge. Nor must it be forgotten that, in antiquity, the writer who narrates the events was usually an eyewitness.[21] To see and to know come from a single verb in ancient Greek.[22] Traditionally, ancient geographers and historians based their knowledge on their own *autopsia*. In other words, these authors were qualified to write because they had seen what most men could not.

Within the geographical digression, tradition and *autopsia* are inextricably linked. The historians of Alexander could thus combine their own testimonies with the Greek geographical tradition in their excursuses.

2 Theopompus' epitome of Herodotus' work

However, since some of them were poorly educated, their debt to the Greek literary tradition is more appreciable than with other historians because they wanted to demonstrate that they were no less significant than their predecessors and the best way to do it was by writing about the same topics. Consequently, one of the ways that they showed that they were great authors was by repeating the same accounts that were being told even before the Macedonian expedition. In this way they could demonstrate that the tradition was known and so win the confidence of their readers. Despite the importance of *autopsia*, it is evident that, if a story stood in direct conflict with the previous tradition, *autopsia* had the strong chance of losing to tradition because something completely new and alien could not be believed.

This study focuses not only on the official history of Alexander's campaign, that was written by the much-cited Callisthenes, but also other authors who wrote about the regions that the Macedonians had conquered.

One of these authors was Herodotus and it is known that Theopompus of Chios made an epitome of his *Histories*: "Theopompus of Chios wrote an Epitome of the *Histories* of Herodotus in two books, a *Philippika* in seventy-two books, and *Hellenic*" (*FGrHist* 115 T1).

It has been suggested that the epitome was not really a separate work but merely formed part of the *Philippika*.[23] Specifically, Christ, followed by Horn-

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21 Nenci 1953.

22 Vernant 1991, 22.

23 Christ 1993, 47: "Theopompus' mysterious *Epitome of Herodotus*, I will suggest, is best taken not as an independent work, but as a portion of the *Philippika* in which Theopompus incorporated and adapted a significant body of Herodotean material. This fact, taken together with Theopompus' polemical statements about his predecessors, suggests that Theopompus

blower, has claimed that this epitome was "a portion of the *Philippika* in which Theopompus incorporated [a] significant body of Herodotus". However, this theory is not satisfactory. Moreover, even if it is right, this work would have been written during Theopompus' stay at the court of Philip II in Macedonia, given that the *Philippika* is dated at this time, and therefore it could have been a commission by the king himself.[24]

This would explain why the vast majority of the Alexander historians knew his account. Callisthenes was a fervent admirer of Herodotus.[25] Onesicritus,[26] Nearchus,[27] Chares,[28] Polycleitus,[29] Clitarchus[30] and Megasthenes[31] all also followed the same historiographical models of the father of history. To some extent, it can thus be said that the first Alexander historian was not Callisthenes but Herodotus. If Philip II commissioned the epitome of Theopompus, this would show that it was related to the expedition that this king was planning. It was the first known epitome of an earlier work in antiquity, possibly because it

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boldly challenged Herodotus on his own turf, confident he could improve upon him". Flower 1997, 161: "The fact that Theopompus made an epitome of Herodotus, which was the first of its kind in Greek literature, regardless of whether it was intended for publication, is of the greatest significance".

24 Flower 1997, 28: "The epitome of Herodotus was apparently a unique work for its time and we can only guess why and when Theopompus wrote it. It is generally assumed that he made it either for his own private use, or for the use of someone else, such as Philip (on the presumption that Philip was interested in Herodotus because he was intending to invade Asia".

25 Murray 1972, 205: "Callisthenes too is known to have followed Herodotus almost word for word on occasions"; Prandi 1985, 82: "La conoscenza dell'opera di Erodoto che Callistene rivela attraverso i frammenti delle *Alexandrou Praxeis* non è certo motivo di stupore: i logoi dello storico di Alicarnasso costituivano per gli intellettuali del IV secolo, come già per quelli della fine del V, la fonte più organica e ricca di notizie sull'entità geografico-etnica che era politicamente controllata dall'impero persiano; Erodoto era inoltre lo storico del conflitto greco-persiano nella sua fase "eroica" e il teorizzatore di quella antilogia fra libertà greca e schiavitù barbarica che informò di sé il pensiero greco e che si riproponeva in tutta la sua (propagandistica) attualità in concomitanza di una spedizione antipersiana"; Hornblower 2006, 310: "Callisthenes followed Herodotus closely"; Squillace 2010, 264: "Callisthenes modeled his narrative after Herodotus"; Howe 2015, 173: "Kallisthenes made extensive use of Herodotos".

26 Brown 1949, 87.

27 Pearson 1960, 118–131; Murray 1972, 205–207.

28 The title of his book, *Stories of Alexander* (Ath. 12.514e = F2), reminds us of Herodotus' work. Cf. Pearson 1960, 57.

29 Like Herodotus, Polycleitus also said that the Caspian Sea was an inland sea.

30 Pearson 1960, 219.

31 Murray 1972, 208; Beggiora 2017, 250: "Many have noticed the affinity of what was reported by Megasthenes with the documentation of the seven castes of ancient Egypt by Herodotus".

was still the main source of information about the Persian Empire at the end of the fourth century.

3 Geographical digressions

Having arrived at this point, we may now advance to analyze the geographical digressions preserved in the fragments.

3.1 The Nile floods

The origin of the rise of the Nile in summertime represents one of the most famous mysteries of antiquity. Why do the Nile's floods, unlike those of all other rivers, occur in the summer? Herodotus tried to find a solution to this enigma, as did other authors before him.[32] One of these, Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, stated that the origin of this rise was the snow from the mountains of Ethiopia.[33] This theory was refuted by many historians, due to the fact that snow did not fall in Ethiopia because of the very high temperatures in the region.

Herodotus objected to previous theories and considered that the best explanation was the influence of the Sun on the waters of the river and its different positions during the winter and summer. The father of history himself acknowledged that there was no one in Egypt who had been able to tell him anything certain about this question:

> The third opinion is by far the most plausible, yet the most erroneous of all. It has no more truth in it than the others. According to this, the Nile flows from where snows melt; but it flows from Libya through the midst of Ethiopia, and comes out into Egypt. How can it flow from snow, then, seeing that it comes from the hottest places to lands that are for the most part cooler? In fact, for a man who can reason about such things, the principal and strongest evidence that the river is unlikely to flow from snows is that the winds blowing from Libya and Ethiopia are hot. In the second place, the country is rainless and frostless; but after snow has fallen, it has to rain within five days; so that if it snowed, it would rain in these lands. And thirdly, the men of the country are black because of the heat. Moreover, kites and swallows live there all year round, and cranes come every year to these places to winter there, flying from the wintry weather of Scythia. Now, were there but the least fall of snow in this country through which the Nile flows and where it rises, none of these things would happen, as necessity proves (Hdt. 2.22, translated by A.D. Godley 1920).

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32 Priestly 2014, 119.
33 Aetius 4.1.3; Arist. Fr. 248; Sen. *QNat.* 4a.2.17. Cf. Curd 2007, 118–119.

In the fourth century, Aristotle, who wrote a whole book discussing the enigma of the Nile,[34] claimed that the rains were the cause of this phenomenon. During the Roman Empire, Arrian considered as ridiculous the theories explaining the rise of the Nile due to the snows of the Ethiopian mountains, believing rather that the rainfall during the summer was the most credible explanation, in a similar way to India:

> from these, therefore, one can gauge the flooding of the Nile, since probably the mountains of Ethiopia receive rain in summer, and from them the Nile is swollen and overflows its banks on to the land of Egypt; the Nile therefore also runs turbid this time of the year, as it probably would not be from melting snow; nor yet if its stream was dammed up by the seasonal winds which blow during the summer; and besides the mountains of Ethiopia are probably not snow covered, on account of the heat. (Arr. *Ind*. 6.6–7, translated by Robson 1929).

This report led some ancient sources to believe that Alexander organized an expedition, in which Callisthenes took part, in order to discover the sources of the Nile. On this point Curtius (4.8.3) states that a journey to Ethiopia was made during this period:

> for the desire (*cupido*) had come over him (understandable, indeed, but ill-timed) to visit not just the Egyptian interior but Ethiopia as well. In his longing to explore antiquities, the famous palace of Menmon and Tithonus was drawing him almost beyond the boundaries of the sun (Curt. 4.8.3, translated by J.C. Rolfe 1946).

Lucan also mentions an unfinished expedition:

> By Memphis worshipped, Alexander grudged to Nile its mystery, and to furthest earth sent chosen Ethiops whom the crimson zone stayed in their further march, while flowed his stream warm at their feet (*Pharsalia* 10.272–275, translated by Sir Edward Ridley 1905).

The veracity of this expedition has been questioned by various scholars,[35] since, Alexander, during his stay in India, still believed that the Indus and Nile were the same river. A good example of this conflation are the fragments that come from Nearchus:

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[34] The *Liber de Nilo* is attributed to Aristotle and preserved in a Medieval Latin translation. Cf. Sharples 1998, 197.

[35] Pearson 1960, 31: "It is hardly necessary to believe on such evidence that Callisthenes had actually been to Ethiopia"; Thomson 1965, 136: "Unreliable seem two late statements that, inspired by his old tutor, he did in fact send explorers, who already saw the mountain rains that swell the river"; Bosworth 1993, 418: "Callisthenes' expedition is a near absurdity, and indeed it is impossible to countenance any new discoveries in Alexander's reign".

> He had already seen crocodiles in the Indus, and in no other river except the Nile; and besides this had observed on the banks of the Acesines beans (flower of Lotus) growing, of the same sort as the land of Egypt produces; and having heard that the Acesines runs into the Indus, he fancied that he had found the origin of the Nile. His idea was that the Nile rose somewhere thereabouts in India flowed through a great expanse of desert, and there lost its name of Indus (Nearchus *FGrHist* 133 F32 = Arr. *Anab.* 6.1.2–3, translated by Robson).

> Nearchus says that the old question concerning the rise of the Nile is answered by the case of the Indian rivers, namely, that it is the effect of summer rains; when Alexander saw crocodiles in the Hydaspes, and Egyptian beans (lotus flower) in the Acesines, he thought that he had discovered the sources of the Nile, and was about to equip a fleet with the intention of sailing by this river to Egypt (*FGrHist* 133 F20 = Str. 15.1.25).

A common source of Arrian and Strabo was Nearchus, but they also used Aristobulus (Str. 15.1.25 = *FGrHist* 133 F20). Both authors say that Alexander personally concluded that the Nile and the Indus were the same river because of the similarities that these rivers presented in their biological diversity; both contained crocodiles, lotus flower and a common river mouth.

It is also known from Herodotus that Scylax of Caryanda had previously stated that the Indus River was inhabited by crocodiles:

> But as to Asia, most of it was discovered by Darius. There is a river, Indus, second of all rivers in the production of crocodiles. Darius, desiring to know where this Indus empties into the sea, sent ships manned by Scylax, a man of Caryanda, and others whose word he trusted (Hdt. 4.44, translated by A.D. Godley 1920).

The passage of Strabo is extremely relevant to this issue, since Nearchus explained the traditional question of the Nile's floods by the observation of Indian rivers, which rise in summer because of rainfall. In fact, Nearchus regarded the plains of India as a creation of the Indus River, in the same way that Herodotus considered Egypt a gift of the river:[36]

> Nearchus, speaking of the accretion of earth formed by the rivers, adduces these instances. The plains of Hermes, Caÿster, Mæander, and Caïcus have these names, because they have been formed by the soil which has been carried over the plains by the rivers; or rather they were produced by the fine and soft soil brought down from the mountains; whence the plains are, as it were, the offspring of the rivers, and it is rightly said, that the plains belong to the rivers. What is said by Herodotus of the Nile, and of the land about it, may be applied to this country, namely, that it is the gift of the Nile. Hence Nearchus

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36 However, this famous expression is doubtfully attributed to Hecataeus by Arrian (*Anab.* 5.6.5). Cf. Liotsakis 2019, 211.

> thinks that the Nile had properly the synonym of Egypt (*FGrHist* 133 F17 = Str. 15.1.16, translated by H.C. Hamilton 1903).
>
> If he has sense, that that Egypt to which the Greeks sail is land deposited for the Egyptians, the river's gift (καὶ δῶρον τοῦ ποταμοῦ Hdt. 2.5, translated by A.D. Godley 1920).

Onesicritus also compared the delta of the Nile to the delta of the Indus (Str. 15.1.33) and stated that both rivers contain crocodiles and hippopotami: "In them there are fish and other water animals, like the Nile has, except for the hippopotamus, and Onesicritus at least says that they even have hippopotami" (*FGrHist* 134 F7 = Arr. *Ind*. 6.8, translated by Robson). Although other authors denied the existence of these creatures, it was mentioned by Onesicritus to strengthen the similarities between the Nile and Indus.

Polycleitus does not mention the flood of the Nile at all in the extant fragments, but states that the Euphrates does not overflow, and was different from the Nile in this respect:

> But Polycleitus says that the Euphrates does not overflow its banks, because its course is through large plains; that of the mountains (from which it is supplied), some are distant [by] 2000 [stadia], and the Cossæan mountains scarcely 1000 stadia, that they are not very high, nor covered with snow to a great depth, and therefore do not occasion the snow to melt in great masses (*FGrHist* 128 F5 = Str. 16.1.13, translated by Hamilton 1903).

During their stay in India, Nearchus and Aristobulus had the opportunity to see the monsoons *in situ*:

> Nearchus gives the same account, but does not agree with Aristobulus concerning the rains in summer, but says that the plains are watered by rain in the summer, and that they are without rain in winter. Both writers, however, speak of the rise of the rivers. Nearchus says that the men encamped upon the Acesines were obliged to change their situation for another more elevated [position], and that this was at the time of the rise of the river, and of the summer solstice (*FGrHist* 133 F18 = Str.15.1.18, translated by Hamilton 1903).

The summer rains must have been a great surprise to the Greeks who were used to summer droughts. On the other hand, the identification of India and Ethiopia appears to be a recurring phenomenon in Greek thought.[37] Indeed, Ethiopians used to be compared to Indians because of the color of their skin and the similarities of their rivers.

Aristobulus follows Aristotle's theory that placed the sources of the great rivers in the great mountains, and therefore he does the same with the rivers of India. Placing their birthplace in the Caucasus, he may have explained the

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37 Aesch. *Supp*. 284–286. Cf. Karttunen 1989; Albaladejo Vivero 2005, 23; Molina Marín 2011, 98.

flooding of the Indian rivers by the snow of the Caucasus mountains, that is to say, using a similar theory to Anaxagoras' explanation of the floods of the Nile (Hdt. 2.22).

As has been noted, the historians of Alexander used the work of Herodotus as a tool which guided their approach to the floods of the Nile and the rivers of India. Nearchus' comparison of the Nile and the Indus demonstrates how Herodotus was an obligatory starting point when writing these geographical digressions.

It is possible that they also took over theories or expressions of other authors such as Anaxagoras (snow), Scylax (crocodiles) and Hecataeus (gift of the river) from the *Histories*, since all were mentioned by Herodotus himself.

It is clear that the perceptions of the historians of Alexander on India was influenced in part by Herodotus' account of Egypt. Scholars such as Vasunia have argued whether this interest in Herodotus could have been due to later authors such as Strabo and Arrian, or whether the historians of Alexander were able to access Herodotus' work upon their return from India.[38] The view taken in this study is that the Macedonians had already read Herodotus' *Histories* when they were in India for several reasons: 1) they had the epitome made by Theopompus; 2) Callisthenes, the official historian of the campaign, used Herodotus before all of them; and 3) Alexander and his royal house, the Argeads, were related to this author even before the start of the expedition.[39]

Every time that an ancient historian changes geographical scenery, he introduces a geographical digression. A good example is the discussion by Arrian on the limits of Asia:

> Thence he (Alexander) advanced to the river Tanais. The springs of the Tanais too, which Aristobulus says is called another name by the natives, the Jaxartes, rite on Mount Caucasus; and this river also flows out into the Hyrcanian Sea. The Tanais of which Herodotus the historian tells us that it is the eighth of the Scythian rivers, rises and flows out of a great lake, and [which] runs into a greater lake, called Maeotis, will be a different Tanais. Some authorities regard this Tanais as the boundary between Asia and Europe (Arr. *Anab*. 3.30.7–9).

A new area gives way to a new geographical digression on the borders between Asia and Europe. Aristobulus and Herodotus are mentioned simultaneously by

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38 Vasunia 2001, 261: "Again it is possible that some Alexander's marshalls only after they returned from the campaign and when they started writing down their accounts; it is also possible that some Herodotean elements are due to later authorities such as Arrian and Strabo".
39 Molina Marín 2022.

Arrian. Herodotus and the Alexander historians discussed this issue, with Polycleitus of Larissa being the most well-known example:

> This river then they called Tanaïs, and alleged, as a proof that it was the Tanaïs mentioned by Polycleitus, that the country on the other side of the river produced the fir-tree, and that the Scythians there used arrows made of fir-wood. It was a proof also that the country on the other side of the river was a part of Europe and not of Asia, that Upper and Eastern Asia do not produce the fir-tree (*FGrHist* 128 F7 = Str. 11.7.4, translated by Hamilton 1924).

Finally, as has already been noted, the geographical digression was used to establish connections among different areas. We know that the main function of the digressions is to connect parts or chapters of one work. Digressions thus give unity by connecting events in the past and present. In the same way, the geographical digression links areas and countries. Consequently, the historians of Alexander could write on the floods of the Nile when they described the geography of Egypt and also when writing about India or Ethiopia.

The historians of Alexander emphasized the similarities between India and Egypt, and also between India and Ethiopia, because of the many resemblances of their rivers, animals, and weather. However, a reader can only understand an unknown geographical space if it is compared to another one that is familiar to him. Descriptive metaphors are used to shed light on an unfamiliar world. Thus, Onesicritus (*FGrHist* 134 F7; 22; 26) may also have compared the Euphrates to the Nile, as this river was more familiar to his readers.

4 Ethnographical digressions

Many readers read Herodotus for entertainment, and the same could be said about the first generation of Alexander historians. Like Herodotus before them, the historians of Alexander highlight the unfamiliar and wondrous characteristics of different places, while at the same time giving their accounts credibility through the inclusion of details that arouse the curiosity of their readers. A fine example of this are the stories on the gold-digging ants mentioned by Herodotus:[40]

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40 Mel. 3.62; Str. 15.1.37; 44; 69; Ael. *VH* 3.4; Plin. *NH* 11.111; 33.66; Prop. 3.13.5: "*Inda cavis aurum mittit formica metallis*"; D. Chr. 35.23–24; Heliod. *Aeth*. 10.26; *Mahabharata* 2.47–48. Cf. McCartney 1953/1954, 234: "It has long been natural to compare to ants groups of people industriously working the earth".

> In this sandy desert are ants, not as big as dogs but bigger than foxes; the Persian king has some of these, which have been caught there. These ants live underground, digging out the sand in the same way as the ants in Greece, to which they are very similar in shape, and the sand which they carry from the holes is full of gold (Hdt. 3.102.2, translated by A.D. Godley 1920).

Nearchus and Megasthenes are both most interested in the gold-digging ants:

> About ants also Nearchus says that he himself saw no ant, of the sort which some writers have described as native of India; he saw, however, several of their skins brought into the Macedonian camp (*FGrHist* 133 F8 = Arr. *Ind*. 15.4).

This writer says that he saw skins of the myrmeces (or ants), which dig up gold, as large as the skins of leopards. Megasthenes, however, speaking of the myrmeces, says, among the Derdae a populous nation of the Indians, living towards the East, and among the mountains, there was a mountain plain of about 3000 stadia in circumference; that below this plain were mines containing gold, which the myrmeces, in size not less than foxes, dig up. They are excessively fleet, and subsist on what they catch. In winter they dig holes, and pile up the earth in heaps, like moles, at the mouths of the openings (*FGrHist* 715 F23a = Str. 15.1.44).

Although Nearchus did not claim to have seen these ants himself, the Cretan said that he saw 'many' of their skins being brought into the Macedonian camp. Similarly, Nearchus described a tiger, making the same point about his lack of *autopsia*; the Cretan did not see a tiger alive, but he saw the skins (cf. Arr. *Ind*. 15.1–3).

Herodotus states something similar when he explains that he traveled to the city of Buto in Arabia to learn about the existence of winged serpents:

> There is a place in Arabia not far from the town of Buto where I went to learn about the winged serpents. When I arrived there, I saw innumerable bones and backbones of serpents: many heaps of backbones, great and small and even smaller (Hdt. 3.102.2, translated by A.D. Godley 1920).

Thus, Nearchus seems to have followed Herodotus in order to mitigate his lack of firsthand knowledge. It appears that it was more important to prove that he knew Herodotus than say something new and original.

In such ethnographical digressions fantastic animals allude directly to the places where these creatures live. But they also establish a connection between the reader's homeland and the place these creatures inhabit. The absence of these creatures means that this territory is civilized, while their presence indicates the frontier to the uncivilized world. In other words, these animals point to

two significant geographical concepts: center and periphery, or, in other words, civilization and barbarism.

Ethnographical digressions offer the perfect opportunity to introduce a genre very popular among the Greek thinkers: utopia. It was a recurring fact during the fourth century BCE that Greek authors created fictitious spaces in which imaginary societies lived. The Atlantis of Plato and the Merope of Theopompus are two famous examples. But lands (Ethiopia) and peoples (Agathyrsoi) with utopian qualities can already be found in Herodotus' *Histories*:

> The Agathyrsoi are the most luxurious of men and wear gold ornaments for the most part: also they have promiscuous intercourse with their women, in order that they may be brethren to one another and being all nearly related may not feel envy or malice one against another. In their other customs they have come to resemble the Thracians. (Hdt 4.104, translated by A.D. Godley 1920).

According to this tradition, Onesicritus described Musicanus' realm as a type of ideal communistic society in which the kings have great longevity:

> He expatiates also in praise of the country of Musicanus, and relates of the inhabitants what is common to other Indian tribes, that they are long-lived, and that life is protracted even to the age of 130 years (the Seres, however, are said by some writers to be still longer lived), that they are temperate in their habits and healthy; although the country produces everything in abundance. The following are their peculiarities: to have a kind of Lacedaemonian common meal, where they eat in public. Their food consists of what is taken in the chase. They make no use of gold nor silver, although they have mines of these metals. Instead of slaves, they employed youths in the flower of their age, as the Cretans employ the Aphamiotae, and the Lacedaemonians the Helots. They study no science with attention but that of medicine; for they consider the excessive pursuit of some arts, as that of war, and the like, to be committing evil. There is no process at law but against murder and outrage, for it is not in a person's own power to escape either one or the other; but as contracts are in the power of each individual, he must endure the wrong, if good faith is violated by another; for a man should be cautious whom he trusts, and not disturb the city with constant disputes in courts of justice (*FGrHist* 134 F24 = Str. 15.1.34).

The absence of slavery was a peculiarity of this land and has been taken as evidence of Onesicritus' antagonism to slavery.[41] In the same way, Megasthenes noted the absence of slavery throughout the whole of India, a country where there was no litigation, no written laws and practically no theft.

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41 Bosworth 1996a, 85; Stoneman 2021, 218.

Onesicritus also described the kingdom of Cathea, where the kings were chosen for their physical beauty,[42] which was an alteration with respect to the usual behavior in Greece.

Distant and exotic places were the perfect candidates to locate these utopian digressions, not only because these spaces offer some hints about their probable truthfulness, but also because they allow for political and social debate about the customs and laws of the Greek *poleis*, since the reader is made aware that another form of political organization is possible.

The resemblances of these ideal societies to the mythological depiction of the Golden Age is used to point to a decline in the Greek *poleis* compared to the moral purity and primitivism of the utopias. These digressions thus present a way of making a veiled criticism on the home-societies. They look to a different way of living than that of their typical Greek readers.

5 Ceremonial digressions

The last type of digression is not geographical, but is related to another area: the royal court and the royal symposium. The luxury of the Persian and Macedonian courts aroused much curiosity among Greek readers. The sumptuous nature of the kings, their lavish dinner parties and ostentatious buildings were not only fascinating to readers interested in gossip, but were also an essential narrative element to describe the degeneration and decay of a people and their ruler. Excessive opulence was a significant element in explaining the superiority of the Greek people over the Persians.[43] Herodotus in his *Histories* also described the pernicious effects of wealth by drawing a causal relationship between opulence and military weakness.[44]

Thus, when reading about the luxury of Alexander's court, a relation is envisioned not only to anecdotal details but also another topic: the degeneration and transformation of the Macedonian into the Persian King and his lack of self-restraint.[45]

Among the Alexander historians the author most prominent for this historiographical topos was Chares of Mytilene, the *eisangeleus* (royal usher) of Alexander. Possibly this was due to his knowledge of the Persian language and customs,

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42 Lens Tuero 1994, 23–31; Stoneman 2021, 248.
43 Briant 2002a, 286–292; 2002b, 201–210.
44 Hdt. 9.122. Cf. Gorman and Gorman 2014, 86.
45 Liotsakis 2019, 133.

since his countryman Laomedon also spoke Persian (Arr. *Anab.* 3.6.6). A passage of Athenaeus is a good example of this:

> But Chares of Mitylene, in the fifth book of his History of Alexander, says — "The Persian kings had come to such a pitch of luxury, that at the head of the royal couch there was a supper-room laid with five couches, in which there were always kept five thousand talents of gold; and this was called the king's pillow. And at his feet was another supper-room, prepared with three couches, in which there were constantly kept three thousand talents of silver; and this was called the king's footstool. And in his bed-chamber there was also a golden vine,[46] inlaid with precious stones, above the king's bed" (Ath. 12.514e–f., translated by C.D. Yonge 1854).

The Persian luxury or *tryphe* explains the military weakness of the contemporary Persians and their defeat by the Macedonians:[47]

> While the Macedonians read these details of the Persian monarch's dinners, with admiration of the happiness of a prince, who displayed such affluence; Alexander ridiculed him, as an unfortunate man, who could wantonly involve himself in so many trivial cares; and ordered the pillar, on which these articles were engraved, to be demolished: observing to his friends, that it was no advantage to a king to live in so luxurious a manner; for cowardice was the certain consequence of luxury (ἀσωτίᾳ) and dissipation (τρυφῇ). Accordingly, added he, you have experienced that those, who have been used to such revels, never knew how to face danger in the field (Polyaenus, *Strat.* 4.3.32, translated by R. Shepherd 1793).

The display of luxury at the Macedonian royal banquet is another example of corruption and the transformation of Alexander into another Great King, which can be seen in the description of the wedding ceremonies held in Susa (Ath. 12.538b–539a; Polyaenus, *Strat.* 4.3.24) or the bedroom of the Macedonian king.[48] Although the conqueror had initially criticized this Asian luxury,[49] he is eventually overpowered by Persian customs.

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46 This golden vine described by Chares was seen by Antigonus in 316 BC when he seized the royal treasury of Susa (D.S. 19.48.6–7).
47 Hobden 2013, 95.
48 Ath. 12.539a: "But Polycleitus of Larissa, in the eighth book of his *History*, says that Alexander used to sleep on a golden couch", translated by C.D. Yonge 1854.
49 Plut. *Alex.* 20.8: "And when he saw the basins and pitchers and tubs and caskets, all of gold, and curiously wrought, while the apartment was marvelously fragrant with spices and unguents, and when he passed from this into a tent which was worthy of admiration for its size and height, and for the adornment of the couch and tables and banquet prepared for him, he turned his eyes upon his companions and said: 'This, as it would seem, is to be a king" (translated by Perrin 1919).

Unlike the cases described above, this digression is not always related to space, but sometimes a physical object is sufficient to begin a new excursus, for example the royal tent of Alexander or the story of Zariadres and Odatis (Ath. 13.575f):

> And the story of this love is often told by the barbarians who dwell in Asia, and is exceedingly admired; and they have painted (ζωγραφοῦσιν) representations of the story in their temples (ἱεροῖς) and palaces (βασιλείοις), and also in their private houses. And a great many of the princes in those countries give their daughters the name of Odatis (translated by C.D. Yonge 1854).

A picture discovered in a palace is the origin of a love story by Chares and the perfect excuse to introduce the deviation in the storyline.

6 Conclusion

To conclude, the influence of Herodotus on the Alexander historians was enormous. Yet these historians did not always follow Herodotus closely. When they had to describe an old anecdote or story, they for example repeated the story of the gold-digging ants, but when they were describing geographical areas or phenomena with their digressions, they preferred to appeal to their own *autopsia*. If Herodotus was influenced by the Ionian geographers and Hippocrates, Alexander the Great's historians were influenced by the sophists and Aristotle. But even they challenged some ideas of Aristotle, such as the swimming skills of the elephant.[50]

Herodotus was the only author who had written about the whole of the Asian continent, especially Egypt and India. The similarities between India and Egypt become stronger as a result of the dependence of these authors on his work. On the one hand, they want to link themselves to the father of history, and, out of this desire, they link the geographical regions to each other indirectly. On the other hand, as with many digressions, a link is established among seemingly unrelated passages, with the geographical digressions of Alexander's historians creating a strong connection between India and Egypt. If a literary digression establishes an indirect connection between speeches or parts of a book, a geographical digression does the same with places. Much has been written on the alteration of space by the historians of Alexander (Str. 11.5.5; 11.7.4; 15.1.7; Arr. *Anab*. 5.3.1–4), but it must be remembered that the digressions

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50 Arist. *Hist. A*. 9.46.3; Nearchus (*FGrHist* 133 F22 = Str. 15.1.43).

played a significant role in this process, since they allowed modifications in Greek geographical thought through comparisons between different regions of the world.

In a sense, these authors should not be underestimated, since they created through their digressions the mental map of Asia that would persist for most of antiquity. To this extent, the historians of Alexander were as great as the Macedonian king.

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Nikos Miltsios

Polybius' *Histories*:
No Room for Digressions?

Abstract: Polybius' extensive use of analytical passages and narratorial interventions often creates the impression that he is especially fond of digressions. Nevertheless, as regards the narration of events, his approach to this common historiographic practice is quite discrete. The method of organizing his material, which he normally employs in the greater part of his work in order to convey the process of *symploke,* that interrelation of historical developments in the Mediterranean region which eventually led to Roman domination, treats the different story lines recounting these developments as organic components of his masternarrative rather than subsidiary digressions. In this way, Polybius turns the use of digressions into a structural principal of his narrative that acts as a literary depiction of the unification of history on a global level and the steadfast progress of Rome to universal rule.

Keywords: Rome, *symploke,* universal history, σωματοειδής

"Es gibt keine Polybiosfrage" — "Polybius presents no problems", Howald once wrote, in a phrase often used to describe the Megalopolitan historian's tendency to be explicit and leave nothing obscure or unclear in his work which might risk being misinterpreted.[1] The digressions of the *Histories* have played an important part in shaping this impression of Polybius, as it is there that we usually find the lengthy analyses by which he communicates to his readers all he deems necessary for them to follow his narrative smoothly and understand it without getting confused. While, however, the *Histories* are full of such analytical digressions, in which Polybius comments on events, characters and anything to do with his authorial choices and the writing process itself, they also betray a notable reluctance to include narrative material that is explicitly described as digressive. Polybius, like Herodotus before him, composed a historical work that falls under the heading of universal history. Contrary to the father of history, though, who uses the huge variety of people and places as a springboard to intersperse his narrative with relevant information in the form of digressions, for Polybius

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the events taking place in different parts of the world all serve the same purpose, the emergence of Rome as the new dominant superpower, and are therefore not presented as digressions but as organically connected and interdependent parts of a unified whole.[2]

One, perhaps not unexpected, starting point for investigating the digressions in the *Histories* is 38.5–6, where Polybius compares his method of organizing and presenting the material with the tendency of many of his fellow historians to frequently interrupt the narrative of events by inserting digressions of various kinds. As he says, he is well aware that some people will accuse him of rendering the narrative of events "imperfect and disconnected" (ἀτελῆ καὶ διερριμένην), when, for example, he sets out to describe the siege of Carthage and then leaves it in the middle (μεταξὺ ταύτην ἀπολιπόντες), to move on to events taking place in Greece, Macedonia, Syria and elsewhere, although this practice clashes with the readers' wish to know what happens next and how things turn out (38.5.1–3). However, Polybius defends this tactic by invoking human senses on the one hand, which, like the intellect, are not content to be exposed to the same stimuli all the time but seek variety (38.5.4–9), and, on the other, earlier authors' habit of using digressions in their work in order to offer their readers a breathing space (38.6.1–2).

The discussion above may create the misleading impression that Polybius is examining the way in which he himself handles the issue of digressions. Indeed, in a recent study Khellaf interprets 38.5–6 in precisely this way, arguing that Polybius wishes to show that he is following an extremely common historiographical practice, while also highlighting his personal contribution to its development and perfection, by stressing that, unlike the others who have applied it irregularly (ἀτάκτως), he has done so with a certain regularity (κεχρημέ- νους γε μὴν ἀτάκτως, ἡμᾶς δὲ τεταγμένως, 38.6.3).[3] However, at 38.5–6 Polybius

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2 For an overview of the interpretative approaches to the digressions in Herodotus, see de Jong 2002, 255–258, who stresses the need to abolish the term in the analysis of Herodotus' work because it often refers to narrative sections which not only are not digressive but actually play a key role in the construction of the meaning. Cf. Konstantakos in this volume.

3 See Khellaf 2018, 176: "Not surprisingly, it was Polybius who first identified the digression as a necessary element in the historiographical tradition; who saw reason to define what consti- tuted an appropriate usage of the narratological device; and who was the first writer to suggest that he perfected this historical practice that had previously been used irregularly"; 184: "Yet, more noteworthy still in the lengthy Book 38 excursus are the statements in which Polybius situates his digressions not only as part of the larger historiographical tradition, but also as innovating and standardizing the position and role of the digression within that broader can- on"; 186: "Yet where others have done so without a strong organizing principle (κεχρημένους

is not referring to his digressions but to the particular method by which he organizes and presents his material in the greater part of his work. The comparison with the digressions of his colleagues is made in order to show that the incomplete and interrupted narrative of events that is regularly seen in the *Histories* is not unprecedented, inasmuch as something similar is found in most works, due to the frequent digressions generally used by historians. This, though, is essentially the only point which the digressions of historiographical works have in common with the method Polybius is referring to here.

In most of his work, Polybius presents historical events by year, following a specific pattern. He begins with occurrences in Rome and Italy, moving on to Sicily, Spain and Carthage before describing the events of the same year in Greece and Macedonia, Asia and Egypt. He then goes on to present the events of the following year, starting again at Rome and Italy.[4] At 38.6.5–6 Polybius actually refers to this method of organizing the historical material, and to the different results of its application compared to the digressions of other historians, as follows:

> But I myself, keeping distinct all the most important parts of the world and the events that took place in each, and adhering always to a uniform conception of how each matter should be treated, and again definitely relating under each year the contemporary events that then took place, leave obviously full liberty to students to carry back their minds to the continuous narrative and the several points at which I interrupted it.

Consequently, when Polybius notes that all historians move from one subject to another ἀτάκτως, while he does so τεταγμένως, he is not trying to show that he has perfected the digressionary practice so widespread among his fellows, but is referring to the set order in which events are presented in his work due to his adherence to this pattern.

Although, as I have noted elsewhere, the faithful and almost invariable application of this structural pattern in the greater part of the *Histories* may be a literary depiction of the steady determination with which Rome expanded its dominion from Sicily to Spain and Carthage during the First and Second Punic Wars, and, in later wars, as far as Greece and even further east,[5] it would be

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γε μὴν ἀτάκτως), he himself has arranged his narrative excursions carefully (ἡμᾶς δὲ τεταγμένως)".

4 See in detail Walbank 1972, 103–105.

5 See Miltsios 2013, 60. For a similar picture see Khellaf 2018, 181, who notes that the tendency of Roman historians such as Livy and Tacitus to move from Roman domestic affairs to events taking place in other geographical regions may reflect the influence of Polybius and especially the new situation in the Hellenistic world, where small cities (and their local histories) were

misleading to see the presentation of Italian and Roman events by year as the main narrative line, and that of the parallel developments around the Mediterranean as digressions interrupting it. The systematic transition from one geographical region to the next which characterizes the main part of the *Histories* is the method Polybius uses to depict the phenomenon of *symploke*, the process by which history in his time begins to form an organic whole and become a unified body (σωματοειδής). As he explains in the opening of the first book (1.3.1–6), before the period he examines in his work, developments in various regions of the world were unrelated to each other, nor did they interact as to their aims and outcomes. However, from the 140th Olympiad (220–216 BC) onwards, the date he sets as the official beginning of his account, the affairs of Italy and Libya began to be interlinked (συμπλέκεσθαι) with those of Asia and Greece, favoring the expansion of Roman rule and its rise to a world power.

Faced with such an unprecedented and striking phenomenon, Polybius' decision to write a work belonging to the genre of universal history is presented as self-evident and necessary. He actually uses two similes to demonstrate that his colleagues' attempt to treat the events of this time by examining local wars and isolated episodes is futile and doomed to failure. As he notes, authors of historical monographs are like people who think that they can acquire a comprehensive knowledge of the world by visiting the main cities one by one, or those who, seeing the limbs of a creature that was once alive and beautiful, believe they are in a position to enjoy its true energy and grace (1.4.6–7). If, however, one could put the severed limbs back together and show it to them whole and perfect, as when it was alive, they would admit that they were formerly as far from the truth as a person dreaming (1.4.8). Since, then, the part only gives an idea of the whole, it is only by connecting and comparing all the separate parts that one can gain secure knowledge and that general view of things which will allow one to "derive both benefit and pleasure from history" (1.4.11: ἅμα καὶ τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ τὸ τερπνὸν ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας ἀναλαβεῖν).

The tactic of systematic transition from one region to another implemented in the main part of the *Histories* is particularly useful in highlighting the various interconnections and correlations between the events described, their similarities and differences (1.4.11: ἔτι δ᾽ ὁμοιότητος καὶ διαφορᾶς), which Polybius considers so vital to the deeper understanding of the knowledge offered by history. It is significant that at 1.4.1 Polybius refers to the phenomenon of *symploke*

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now dependent on great empires. I must stress, however, that, in my interpretation of Polybius' tactic, the events in other parts of the world described alongside developments in Italy are given equal stature to the latter, rather than being subordinate to or dependent on them.

as a singular quality of both his age and his work (τὸ γὰρ τῆς ἡμετέρας πραγματείας ἴδιον καὶ τὸ θαυμάσιον τῶν καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς καιρῶν). Just as, in his time, global events have been interlinked and guided in the same direction to the same end, so too must his work depict the process by which this came about (ὑπὸ μίαν σύνοψιν ἀγαγεῖν τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι τὸν χειρισμὸν τῆς τύχης).[6] It appears, therefore, that the particular method by which Polybius follows the events taking place in different parts of the world according to year is the solution he came up with precisely in order to incorporate and depict in his narrative this impressive phenomenon of his era.

Polybius explicitly links the tactic of alternating geographical regions with the process of *symploke* at 4.28, when describing the way in which he handled the account of the Hannibalic War and the Social War, two enterprises that unfolded at the same time. As he notes, if Hannibal's first activities in Spain had been connected to the operations of the Social War, he would have had to narrate the events in Greece alternately (ἐναλλάξ) with the events in Spain (4.28.2). Since, however, although the two wars came to the same conclusion, they had different beginnings, he deemed it better to treat them separately, "until reaching the date when these conflicts came into connection with each other (συνεπλάκησαν [...] ἀλλήλαις) and began to tend towards one end" (4.28.3), and then continue their presentation according to his usual method of organizing his material. In this way, he stresses, the account of their beginning is made clear and the interconnection between them becomes evident (4.28.4: ἥ τε συμπλοκὴ καταφανής).

6 At 1.4.1, as at 8.2.3–4 (τίνι τρόπῳ καὶ τίνι γένει πολιτείας τὸ παραδοξότατον καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς ἔργον ἡ τύχη συνετέλεσε; τοῦτο δ᾽ ἔστι τὸ πάντα τὰ γνωριζόμενα μέρη τῆς οἰκουμένης ὑπὸ μίαν ἀρχὴν καὶ δυναστείαν ἀγαγεῖν), the unification of history and its turn in this direction is described as the result of chance. These passages, however, apparently conflict with others in which Polybius attacks those who attribute the Roman successes to chance, arguing that they are due to the Romans' effectiveness on the battlefield and the military experience they acquired through their many struggles. Cf., e.g., 1.63.9–64.1; 18.28.4–5. The contradiction is not as serious as it seems at first sight. It has been observed that the passages in which fortune is presented as intervening in history and shaping it to the benefit of the Romans are programmatic, and therefore highly rhetorical, with the aim of arousing the readers' interest and highlighting the importance of the events described. One could even argue, in an attempt to eliminate the contradiction altogether, that the well-known concept of double determination seems to be operational here. Fortune, in other words, favors the Romans, making events throughout the world serve the expansion of their dominion, precisely because their abilities and particular characteristics make them worthier than anyone else to assume the role of global power at this particular juncture. For the function of τύχη in Polybius see Roveri 1956; Pédech 1964, 331–354; Walbank 1972, 58–65; Ferrary 1988, 265–276; Hau 2011.

Polybius' analysis at 4.28 very satisfactorily explains how he handles the tactic of alternating geographical regions in his work generally. As his clarifications show, the aim of this tactic is to throw the various interconnections between the events described in the context of *symploke* into high relief. It certainly does not mean that the narrative lines that develop in parallel with the first in the sequence are digressions, in the sense that they treat events of secondary importance. On the contrary, as we see from two enlightening passages, Polybius applies this tactic precisely because he believes in the importance of the events he is recording, and chooses to abandon it only when the events described are not worthy of this special narrative treatment. Indeed, at 14.12.1–4 he explains that he has preferred to narrate some events from Egyptian history in full, from beginning to end rather than by year according to his habit, because after the war for Coele-Syria Ptolemy IV abandoned everything good and his government had nothing memorable to show. So Polybius decided to describe Ptolemy's rule once and for all, as a unified body (σωματοειδῆ), rather than referring by year to minor matters unworthy of attention 14.12.5 (μικρῶν [καὶ] οὐκ ἀξίων ἐπιστάσεως πραγμάτων). Something similar occurs at 32.11.5–7, when he announces his intention of presenting an account concerning the city of Oropus in full, going back to the past and also announcing future events in advance. Otherwise, as he says, he would be obliged to tell the story of a rather unimportant event piecemeal, under different dates, producing an insignificant and obscure narrative. When, however, the overall presentation of the affair is hardly capable of attracting any interest, he cannot expect his readers to turn their attention to events presented disjointedly and in fragments (32.11.7: τοῖς κατὰ μέρος ἐκ διαστήματος λεγομένοις).

Summarizing the conclusions of the analysis so far, we observe that at 38.5–6 Polybius is clearly referring to the method he applies in the *Histories* to organize and present his material, mentioning the digressions so familiar in historiographical texts because they, too, involve interrupting the historical narrative and switching to other subjects; this does not mean, however, that he treats the parallel narrative lines that develop in his work due to his particular method as digressions. These parallel narrative lines follow events in various parts of the world which are inextricably linked, favoring the global expansion of Roman dominion and rendering the history of the period a unified, body-like whole (σωματοειδής). And, according to Polybius' simile (1.4.7–8), these events, like the narrative lines recording them, as organic parts of a single body, are necessary to its function, and certainly not to be considered secondary and be severed from the whole without direct consequences for its survival.

Given that the tactic of alternating geographical regions is the literary depiction of the *symploke* of events, that important and unprecedented historical phenomenon which Polybius promises to record in the *Histories*, its application is a key feature of his work, beginning fairly early on and continuing throughout most of its length. We cannot, therefore, accept Khellaf's proposal that this is an authorial choice which arose gradually and in more advanced stages of the work.[7] Polybius' much-discussed statement in the overview of the contents of the *Histories* at the opening of the third book, when he says that he decided to narrate the events of the period following the battle of Pydna and the fall of the Macedonian dynasty "as if starting on a fresh work" (3.4.13: προήχθην οἷον ἀρχὴν ποιησάμενος ἄλλην γράφειν), cannot be seen as hinting at a differentiation in the classification and presentation of the material, and specifically the adoption of the tactic of alternating geographical regions, in the last ten books of the work. The method of alternating regions is inextricably linked with the phenomenon of *symploke*, and at 3.4.2 Polybius stresses that the period of fifty three years in which Roman dominion spread across almost the whole world was completed in 167 BC with the fall of the Macedonian kingdom, and that the growth and advance of the Roman state was completed with it. Of course, Polybius does not explicitly state that the phenomenon of *symploke* also ends here; in any case, he continues to apply the same method of presenting his material in the last ten books, where his aim is no longer to show how events in various parts of the world led to the expansion of Roman dominion, but to demonstrate the behavior of Rome as a controller of developments on a global scale.[8]

Nor, obviously, is the fact that the discussion of the difficulty, which the systematic transition from one geographical region to another may cause certain readers, is positioned towards the end of the *Histories* (38.5–6) evidence

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7 See Khellaf 2018, 183: "Given the parallels between this earlier criticism, where Polybius censures Theopompus (for a similar narratological act of shifting narrative subjects), and the Book 38 digression, where he defends his own changing narratives, Polybius might in the latter instantiation be making an essential back-pedal — highlighting a mobile narrative process that was, at least to some degree, forced to evolve over so lengthy and geographically expansive a historiographical endeavor, and likely motivated by contemporary historical events".

8 Pédech (1964, 508) and Walbank (1985, 324) believe that after Rome became mistress of the world in 167 BC, *symploke*, the process that brought this about, ceased to operate. The fact, however, that Polybius continues to apply the method, so closely connected to *symploke*, of alternating geographical regions in the final part of his work may indicate that the global supremacy of Rome consolidated the unification of history "like a body" (σωματοειδής) in the preceding period, meaning that the presentation of historical events required this narrative treatment.

that the method began to be applied at an advanced stage of the work. Polybius tends to discuss his authorial decisions and basic methodological issues at different opportunities. Something similar occurs, for example, at 36.17.2–4, when he argues that historians should only resort to supernatural explanations of events if they are unable to identify their causes within the sphere of human action. Although the particularly late appearance of this passage might prevent it from being seen as a programmatic statement and lead to its interpretation on a contextual basis,[9] comparison with other cases in which Polybius recommends that historians adopt a similar stance to the issue of causality shows that both these views apply equally.[10] In any case, Polybius refers to the method of alternating geographical regions very early on in his work. We have seen that at 4.28 he distinguishes the beginning of the Hannibalic and Social Wars from their end both historically and narratively, based on their interconnection at the level of *symploke* and documenting that interconnection in their later stages using this method. Even earlier, though, at 3.32, Polybius asserts that, in spite of the great length of his work, its main advantage over historical monographs is that it allows readers to follow, through forty books "all as it were connected by one thread" (3.32.2: καθαπερανεὶ κατὰ μίτον ἐξυφασμένας), how the events taking place simultaneously in different parts of the world are interlinked and lead in the same direction.

Polybius' central idea, that the historical developments which he records in his work are interlinked and tend towards the same aim, actually runs counter to the logic of digressions, since it does not leave much room for the presentation of events that do not form organic parts of the wider whole. This observation may sound strange in connection with a work whose main feature is the frequency

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9 See Hau 2011, 188, who believes that this passage comes too late to be programmatically valid with regard to the way in which historians should handle the issue of causality, and that it therefore mainly serves Polybius' intention of highlighting the absurdity of the Macedonian decision to ally themselves with Andriscus against the Romans.

10 At 2.38.4–9, for instance, he says that one should not seek the cause of the prosperity of the Achaean League in fortune but in the political principles and beliefs underpinning the relationships among its members. In a similar vein, at 3.47.7–9 he criticises certain authors who describe Hannibal's crossing of the Alps for inflating the difficulties he faced in an effort to impress and then having to present gods and heroes as helping him to overcome them, even though they have admitted that he was an exceptionally astute and capable general who would leave nothing to chance. Similarly, at 10.2.5–13 Polybius notes that Scipio Africanus the Elder did not "always owe the most part of his success to the unexpected and to mere chance" (ἐπιτυχῆ τινα καὶ τὸ πλεῖον αἰεὶ παραλόγως καὶ ταὐτομάτῳ κατορθοῦντα τὰς ἐπιβολάς), as some writers assert, believing that they will thus make him appear yet more admirable; on the contrary, he was successful because he systematically acted based on his intelligence and acuity.

and length of its narratorial interventions, the sections in which Polybius interrupts his account to address his readers personally. Polybius himself uses the term παρέκβασις to refer to such parts of his work — for example the detailed description of the treaties between the Romans and the Carthaginians at 3.33.1 (τὴν γὰρ παρέκβασιν ἐντεῦθεν ἐποιησάμεθα), and the description of the means and activities by which Scipio Aemilianus was able to develop his virtues and abilities at 31.30.4 (ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἡμεῖς διεληλυθότες κατὰ τὴν παρέκβασιν).[11] Polybius also uses the aorist of the verb παρεκβαίνω to state that he has digressed from the main line of the narrative, e.g. at 2.36.1 (ἀπὸ γὰρ τούτων παρεξέβημεν τῆς ἐξηγήσεως) and 6.50.1 (τίνος οὖν χάριν εἰς ταῦτα παρεξέβην;).[12]

I am not attempting, therefore, to argue that there are no digressions in the *Histories*, which would contradict Polybius' own use of the term for parts of his work; rather, I am trying to show that the sections of the *Histories* which could be or actually are defined as digressions present characteristics that set them apart from the usual narrative connotations associated with the term. As a rule, Polybius does not deviate from the main line of the narrative in order to tell different stories, but to set out and support his views on the events and characters described, his work and his authorial choices, and also the genre of historiography in general and his fellow historians.[13] In the *Histories*, therefore, we find numerous sections where the narrative is interrupted in order to point out the advantages of universal history as opposed to historical monographs and the way in which historians should handle the question of causality,[14] to identify and correct the methodological and historical errors of authors such as Philinus and Fabius, Phylarchus, Theopompus, Zeno and Antisthenes,[15] and to provide additional information on various characters and geographical regions

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11 Cf. also 1.15.13 (ἡμεῖς δ᾽ ἐπειδὴ τοὺς ἁρμόζοντας πεποιήμεθα λόγους ὑπὲρ τῆς παρεκβάσεως); 3.9.6 (τὴν γὰρ παρέκβασιν ἐντεῦθεν ἐποιησάμεθα).

12 Cf. also 4.9.1 (ἀπὸ γὰρ τούτων περεξέβημεν); 5.13.1 (ἀπὸ γὰρ τούτων παρεξέβην).

13 The account of the fall of Hieronymus, the tyrant of Sicily, and the Roman conquest of Syracuse (7.2–8, 8.3–7, 37) is a narrative section which Polybius himself terms a digression (κατὰ παρέκβασιν δηλώσομεν, 3.2.7) in the general overview of the contents at the opening of the third book, although it is unclear why he does so.

14 For the advantages of universal history over monographs see, e.g., 3.32, 29.12; for the issue of historical causality see 3.6–7, 36.17.

15 See, e.g., 1.14–15 (Philinus and Fabius); 2.56–63 (Phylarchus); 8.9–11 (Theopompus); 16.14–20 (Zeno and Antisthenes). For Polybius' criticism of his fellow historians, see Walbank 1962; Lehmann 1974; Meister 1975; Boncquet 1982–1983; Schepens 1990; Vercruysse 1990; Schepens and Bollansée 2005.

presented in the work.[16] In other cases, the narrative of events offers the opportunity for moral or political precepts, such as the correct behavior of the victors to the vanquished (5.9–12), or specialized military subjects, such as how to calculate the length of scaling ladders (9.19.5–9) or the system of fire signaling (10.43–47).

In these analytical first-person interventions, even when there is some narrative, the events described form part of the arguments supporting the issue under discussion. This is the case, for example, at 8.10.5–12, where the achievements of Philip II and his companions are mentioned as part of Polybius' polemic against Theopompus, in order to demonstrate the falsity of his accusations against them. Similarly, at 9.17–19 the failures of Aratus at Cynaetha, Cleomenes at Megalopolis, Philip V at Melitaea and Nicias at Syracuse serve to show how essential a basic knowledge of astronomy is to military leadership and the planning of military enterprises. In this way, the main line of the narrative remains clear and there is no danger of confusion about what events it includes. The same aim is served by Polybius' tendency to signal the end of his digressions by mentioning that he is now taking up the thread of his narrative at the point where he left off.[17] It has been observed that the strict authorial control to which Polybius subjects his material may be due to the impressively wide temporal and geographical range of his work, and that it reflects his ideological convictions on the necessity of imposing control and order on society.[18] I would maintain that the high level of precision is dictated not so much by the range of the subject alone as by Polybius' aim to provide as systematic a presentation as possible, in order to bring out very clearly the interlinked events which favored the expansion of Roman dominion across the world, drawing universal history together into a unified whole, and also to show how their interconnection led to the resulting outcomes.

Polybius explicitly states how careful he is not to stray from the main theme of his history at 3.57, when explaining to his readership why, although he refers to Africa and Spain, he does not discuss certain subjects which are extremely popular or even controversial among contemporary authors, such as the Pillars of Hercules, the Ocean, the tin mines of Britain and the silver and gold mines of

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16 See, e.g., 9.22 (Hannibal); 10.2–5 (Scipio Africanus); 10.21–24 (Philopoemen); 1.42.1–7 (Sicily); 4.39–45 (Black Sea and Bosporus); 10.10–11.4 (New Carthage).

17 See, e.g., 3.39.1: ἀφέμενοι δὲ τούτων τρεψόμεθα πρὸς τὸ συνεχὲς τῆς προκειμένης ἡμῖν διηγήσεως; 4.21.12: αὖτις ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκτροπὴν ἐπάνιμεν; 4.34.1: τοῦτο γὰρ συνεχὲς ἦν τοῖς προειρημένοις; 31.30.4: αὖθις ἐπάνιμεν ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκτροπὴν τῆς ὑποκειμένης διηγήσεως.

18 See Rood 2004, 152.

Spain. As he explains, he has not omitted these matters because he thinks they have no place in his work, but "because I did not wish to be constantly interrupting the narrative and distracting readers from the actual subject" (3.57.4: οὐ βουλόμενοι παρ᾽ ἕκαστα διασπᾶν τὴν διήγησιν οὐδ᾽ ἀποπλανᾶν ἀπὸ τῆς πραγματικῆς ὑποθέσεως τοὺς φιληκοοῦντας). Polybius also says that he intends to present these subjects at the appropriate opportunity and in a special section of his work, obviously referring to Book 34, which is devoted to geographical matters (3.57.5). He then goes on to compare readers of historical works who enjoy being constantly bombarded with such information to greedy diners at a banquet who nibble at everything in front of them. Just as the diners take neither pleasure nor profit from their meal, so do readers with the same mindset derive neither temporary entertainment nor future benefit from the study of history (3.57.8–9).

Polybius' clarifications at 3.57 are illuminating regarding his handling of deviations from the main theme in general. At 3.57.6, indeed, he points out that readers should bear what he has said in mind whenever he avoids mentioning such matters in the rest of the work (διόπερ οὐ χρὴ θαυμάζειν οὐδ᾽ ἐν τοῖς ἑξῆς). Polybius argues that frequent digressions prevent history from accomplishing either its entertaining or its didactic aims. The problem does not seem to lie in the frequent change of subject, since the discontinuous narrative of events imposed by his particular method of organizing and presenting the material is a basic feature of his work, and at 38.5.4–9, as we saw above, he defends this practice precisely on the grounds that thematic variety is beneficial to the reader. However, while the alternation of geographical regions and the events taking place in them is an integral component of his main theme, serving to demonstrate the *symploke* of events, the further information presented in the form of digressions disorients readers and prevents them from following the process smoothly.

In such a tightly organized narrative, where non-essential information is deliberately limited in order to make it easier to follow, digressions from the main theme must not only be signaled but also justified. Polybius thus tends to close his digressions by stating the reason he included them or the category of reader to whom the resulting lesson is addressed. At 10.33.6–7, for example, he stresses that he mentions his observations on the duty of generals to ensure their personal safety and not expose themselves to the same risks as simple soldiers, for the benefit of those who might make similar mistakes, either from vanity and youthful impetuosity or from inexperience or contempt of the enemy. Similarly, at 31.30.1–3 he explains that he has spoken at length about the process by which Scipio Aemilianus acquired his virtues and abilities because he believes

this to be a subject that offers enjoyment to the old and benefit to the young, and also to make his account more credible, so that readers will not doubt the great achievements he goes on to describe, attributing them to chance because they are ignorant of their true causes.[19] Such observations may well betray Polybius' wish to defend his decision to stray from the main line of the narrative; however, this is not, as one might think, because in his own or earlier times including digressive material in a work of historiography was controversial or problematic.[20] Polybius obviously did not want to be thought of as one of those authors who interrupt their narrative every so often to satisfy readers' curiosity, bombarding them with titillating details and pieces of information. On the other hand, though, as he points out at 38.6.1, digressions were an extremely common practice among his fellow historians,[21] although, again, in his own work the alternation of subjects is implemented in a systematic and accurate way, due to his particular method of organization and presentation of the material. I would argue, therefore, that concluding observations such as those mentioned above mainly serve to render the narrative even more organized and systematic, signaling the end of the digressions and the return to the presentation of the main subject. At the same time, of course, and equally effectively, they serve the didactic aim of the digression by summarizing the conclusion to be drawn from the preceding discussion.

If Polybius considers it necessary to underline the role and usefulness of his longer or shorter digressions, he could hardly not do the same for the three books of his work which constitute digressions in their entirety. These are Book 6, which deals with the composition and operation of the Roman constitution and some peculiarities of the Roman mentality and way of life; Book 12, which is devoted to the polemic against Timaeus of Tauromenium and other writers; and Book 34, which examines geographical matters. Of the three books, the sixth is the one for which Polybius provides the most clarifications on its inclusion. This may, of course, be a coincidence due to the fragmentation of the surviving text, but is it more likely to be connected to the importance of this book as a key part of the *Histories*. In the opening of Book 1, Polybius declares that he will narrate how and with what *politeia* (πῶς καὶ τίνι γένει πολιτείας)

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19 Cf. also 3.38.4–5; 4.8.12, 21.10–11, 33.11–12, 42.6–8; 9.10.13; 10.5.9.

20 For this view see Khellaf 2018, 182: "In Polybius' time, however, the inclusion of separate narratives into one's primary historical sequence was still a matter of debate, as is evinced in the fact that Polybius finds even greater need than Thucydides to defend his digressive method".

21 Cf. also 12.28.10, where Ephorus is praised for, among other things, his digressions (δεινότατός ἐστιν ἐν ταῖς παρεκβάσεσι).

almost all the nations of the world were subjected to Roman rule in less than 53 years, showing how decisive a role he believes the Roman constitution to have played in the shaping of this new situation (1.1.5). Moreover, in the preface to Book 6 he repeats the same programmatic statement, calling the knowledge of this process the best and most beneficial lesson (κάλλιστον [...] ἅμα δ' ὠφελιμώτατον) to be derived from his work (6.2.3). He immediately follows this by explaining why he has chosen to place the analysis of the Roman constitution at this point in the work. Just as when one attempts to evaluate people's character, he says, one does not examine their behavior in times of peace and calm but in adversity, to demonstrate their ability to face it, so when one wishes to judge the effectiveness of a constitution, one should choose a difficult and problematic period (6.2.5–6). In the case of the Romans, one could not easily find a greater test than that which they experienced after their defeat at Cannae (6.2.7). So with regard to the sixth book, Polybius provides a detailed explanation both of the vital role this book plays in the effective treatment of the central theme of the work and its reception by the readers, and of the point at which it is inserted in the narrative.[22]

As regards the other two books in the same group, Books 12 and 34, Polybius' observations essentially refer to their contribution to the general economy of the work. For Book 34, on geography, we saw earlier that at 3.57.4–6 he clarifies that he avoids discussing details of certain regions that attract his contemporaries' interest, because, in his desire not to distract readers' attention from his main theme, he intends to develop these matters in an appropriate part of the work. Similarly, for Book 12, having noted that he will have to digress from his subject (καὶ ταύτῃ τῆς πραγματείας ἀναγκασθήσομαι παρεκβαίνειν) in order to correct some errors of Timaeus on the Epizephyrian Locrians, he says that he has chosen to gather all his criticisms of Timaeus together in one place so as not to make frequent digressions, neglecting his task (12.11.6–7). Polybius thus shows that the presence of digressions covering whole books in his work not only does not risk diverting attention from the main theme, but on the contrary is intended to limit distractions. Once again, the strict organization and systematic elaboration of the narrative appear to enable Polybius to incorporate digressions on the issues that interest him, without affecting the presentation of the interlinked events or preventing readers from following them smoothly.

The combination of constant, uninterrupted third-person narrative and well-defined first-person interventions and digressions is the method Polybius

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22 For Polybius' sixth book see Pédech 1964, 302–330; Walbank 1972, 130–156; Trompf 1979, 1–115; McGing 2010, 169–202; Erskine 2013.

applies to compose a work that his readers will find beneficial and enjoyable. Although his fierce criticism of writers whose aim is to titillate and impress readers temporarily, and his emphasis on the permanent benefits of studying history, might give the impression that he rejects pleasure and only cares about utility, Polybius holds that both are equally legitimate aims of a work of history. Readers can derive both benefit and pleasure from historical texts; not, of course, as in the works of the writers he criticizes, by the invention of moving details and distortion of the truth, but through narratives that describe events accurately and reliably. Wiater has recently argued that Polybius' narrative may also claim aesthetic merit because it records the aesthetically satisfactory phenomenon of *symploke*.[23] 1.4.11, where it is stated that it is only by comparing and contrasting the various events and understanding their similarities and differences that one can truly "derive both benefit and pleasure from history" (καὶ τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ τὸ τερπνὸν ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας ἀναλαβεῖν), shows that this interpretation is on the right track.

It may be worth pausing to consider that Polybius' discussion of the benefits and pleasure offered by history is usually encountered within a polemical context. Irrespective of whether his criticism is directed against a group of historians who, it has been argued, stung by Aristotle's famous observation that poetry is more philosophical than history because it expresses the universal, whereas history expresses the particular,[24] attempted to upgrade history by means of poetry, or simply believed that titillating readers was the most convenient way of getting them to absorb historical knowledge, Polybius is apparently attempting to prove that his own approach is superior to that of the writers he targets.[25] In his own historical work, Polybius counters the tendency towards unbridled and unsubstantiated emotionalism by offering a narrative which, by accurately describing the true events and the ways in which their interconnections lead to an aesthetically pleasing result — the unification of history on a global level — manages to offer both benefit and pleasure simultaneously.

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23 See Wiater 2017, 203–205.

24 Arist. *Poet.* 9, 1451b5–7.

25 For the school of so-called "tragic history" and its connection with Aristotle, see Schwartz 1903, 1905; von Fritz 1958; Brink 1960. Most scholars, however, believe that no such school of historiography existed, and that Polybius is criticizing the widespread tendency among historians of the Hellenistic period to attract readers through titillation and sensationalism. See, e.g., Walbank 1955, 1960; Zangara 2007, 70–85; Marincola 2013. For a different approach see recently Hau 2020, 81–103, who argues that the emotionalism which Polybius criticizes in Phylarchus and other historians who treat their subject like tragic poets may have been, in their view, the means best suited to transmit the knowledge and teachings of history.

Of these two legitimate aims of the *Histories*, or indeed of any historical work, Polybius' digressions are associated with and serve the purpose of benefit. Their didacticism has often laid him open to criticism. Philologists discern ideological prejudices and professional jealousy behind his methodological observations, while his advice to aspiring military commanders is considered too specialized to attract the interest of a wider reading public.[26] Nonetheless, this criticism, which sometimes reflects established perceptions of the superiority of classical over later historiography, is unfair to Polybius. Among his numerous digressions, alongside ideologically charged polemic and specialized information on technical matters, one can find observations that attest to a genuine interest in the methodology of historiography, and analyses that make use of the events described to identify patterns of diachronic value and utility. The methodical way in which he handles the digressions allows Polybius to avoid interrupting the narrative of events, so as not to hinder the presentation and tracking of their *symploke* on the one hand, and in order to add to his work the critical gaze ensured by temporal distance from the action on the other. And if the discussion of the benefit and pleasure derived from the study of history is indeed related to Aristotle's comparison of poetry that treats the universal to history that treats the particular, then the analytical digressions are a powerful tool by which Polybius, unlike his fellow historians who resort to emotionalism, attempts to help his readers absorb the teachings of history.

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26 See, e.g., Walbank 1972, 54–55; 1990, 266; Schepens 2005, 157.

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Mario Baumann

Why Charondas Taught the Thurians How to Read and Write, or: Digression and Narration in Diodorus' *Bibliotheke*

Abstract: This chapter analyses the longest digression in the extant parts of Diodorus' *Bibliotheke*, an extended excursus on two lawgivers of Greek cities in southern Italy: Charondas, who wrote the laws of Thurii, and Zaleucus, who did the same in Epizephyrian Locri (D.S. 12.12–21). It focuses on the various functions of Diodorus' lawgivers digression and shows that they can all be interpreted as part of the *Bibliotheke*'s attempt to offer its audience a spectrum of interactions that is as comprehensive as possible: the text addresses the readers' moral, intellectual and affective capacities and interests, it tells its audience engaging stories and invites its readers to connect, compare and interpret these narratives, and it makes the audience aware that all this is happening and that it is intended — a fitting undertaking for a work that calls itself a historical *Library*.

Keywords: Diodorus Siculus, lawgivers, reader/reading, narrativity, moralism, self-referentiality

This chapter approaches the issue of digressions in Diodorus' *Bibliotheke* by providing a case study: I will analyse the longest digression in the extant parts of Diodorus' universal history, an extended excursus on two lawgivers of Greek cities in southern Italy, Charondas who wrote the laws of Thurii and Zaleucus who did the same in Epizephyrian Locri. This digression is part of the *Bibliotheke*'s twelfth book (D.S. 12.12–21). The narrator inserts it at the end of his account of the foundation of Thurii which forms the greater part of the passage devoted to the year 446/5 BC (12.7–21). Beginning and end of the excursus are explicitly marked and thus clearly signalled to the *Bibliotheke*'s readers. Having

gone through the foundation history of Thurii,[1] the narrator transitions to its lawgiver, Charondas, and announces the digression (12.11.3–4):[2]

> εἵλοντο δὲ καὶ νομοθέτην τὸν ἄριστον τῶν ἐν παιδείᾳ θαυμαζομένων πολιτῶν Χαρώνδαν. οὗτος δὲ ἐπισκεψάμενος τὰς ἁπάντων νομοθεσίας ἐξελέξατο τὰ κράτιστα καὶ κατέταξεν εἰς τοὺς νόμους· πολλὰ δὲ καὶ ἴδια ἐπινοησάμενος ἐξεῦρε, περὶ ὧν οὐκ ἀνοίκειόν ἐστιν ἐπιμνησθῆναι πρὸς διόρθωσιν τῶν ἀναγινωσκόντων.

> They [sc. the Thurians] also chose as their lawgiver the best of all citizens that were highly esteemed for learning: Charondas. This was the man who, after making a study of all legislations, picked out the best elements in them, which he then embodied in his own laws. But he also worked out and formulated many ideas of his own, and these it will not be irrelevant to put on record here, for the better instruction of our readers.

In 12.21.3, the narrator closes his excursus and takes up the main thread of his narrative again:

> πολλὰ δὲ καὶ ἄλλα τῶν συμβολαίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον ἀμφισβητουμένων καλῶς ἐνομοθέτησε, περὶ ὧν ἡμῖν μακρὸν ἂν εἴη γράφειν καὶ τῆς ὑποκειμένης ἱστορίας ἀνοίκειον· διόπερ ἐπὶ τὰ συνεχῆ τοῖς προειρημένοις ἀναβιβάσομεν τὸν λόγον.

> He [sc. Zaleucus] wrote excellent laws on many other vexed aspects of life, including contracts; but it would take too long to recount these, and they are not germane to the plan of this history. We shall therefore resume our narrative at the point where we left it.

Equally clear as its opening and closure is the structure of the digression: the narrator singles out a number of remarkable laws by Charondas and Zaleucus for detailed discussion and combines these narrative close-ups with occasional summaries or allusions to further legislation to form a long, but well-structured and engaging "story" of these exemplary lawgivers.[3] The digression's appeal to

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1 For a historical analysis of the foundation of Thurii in light of the extant sources, see Mele 2017. On the historical questions that are specifically raised by Diodorus' account, see the comments in Green 2006.

2 I quote, with occasional modifications, Green's translation for book 12 and Oldfather's translation for the other books of the *Bibliotheke*.

3 See the appendix of this chapter for an overview of the structure of the lawgivers digression. It is worth noting that there is virtually no overlapping between Diodorus' account of Charondas' legislation and what we learn elsewhere about the Thurian lawgiver — in other words: none of Charondas' laws (with maybe one exception) referred to by other ancient authors/texts is mentioned in Diodorus' digression, and "none of the laws Diodorus does describe is referred to in connection with Charondas elsewhere" (Green 2006, 196–197 n. 63). This idiosyncrasy of Diodorus' Charondas narrative is one of the reasons why it is impossible to determine the source(s) of his lawgivers digression (on this, see Mele 2017, 324).

the readers of the text is precisely what I will focus on in this chapter: I will analyse the functions of Diodorus' lawgivers excursus and show that for each of them aspects of narrativity are central. I will start with moral edification as a first function of the digression, then continue with storytelling and narrative interweaving as further key characteristics of 12.12–21 and conclude with the passage's marked self-referentiality.

1 Moral edification

The first function of the lawgivers digression is expressly named by the narrator in his introductory comment already quoted above: the edification (12.11.4: διόρθωσις,) of the readers. Two traits of the passage work in this direction. First, the narrator frequently points out that, by making Charondas and Zaleucus the subject of an extended digression, he gives an anthology of the very best legislation: Charondas, the narrator claims, used the best elements (τὰ κράτιστα) of existing laws and combined them with his own ideas (12.11.4), which led to many new and highly useful legal principles, and these outstanding examples of the art of lawgiving are precisely what the narrator focuses on.

Thus, Charondas' law on the keeping of bad company is marked off as "un-paralleled" and "something that all other lawgivers had overlooked" (12.12.3: ἐξηλλαγμένον καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις νομοθέταις παρεωραμένον). The law that intro-duced publicly funded teaching of reading and writing was, according to the narrator, even "superior, and similarly overlooked by previous lawgivers" (12.12.4: κρείττονα καὶ τοῖς παλαιοτέροις αὐτοῦ νομοθέταις ἠμελημένον). Char-ondas' law dealing with the guardianship of orphans, in turn, is said to reveal, when subjected to close scrutiny, "great zeal and high merit" (12.15.1: μεγάλην [...] σπουδήν τε καὶ δόξαν), and to be testimony to "the lawgiver's outstanding ingenuity" (12.15.2: ἐπίνοια τοῦ νομοθέτου περιττή). Moreover, the narrator stresses that Charondas' legislation was both more humane than its equivalents elsewhere, and more effective in deterring undesired behaviour (cf. 12.16.2 on the punishment of deserters); he adds that Charondas managed to ensure the maintenance of his norms through their stringency (12.16.3: διὰ δὲ τῆς ἀποτομί-ας τῶν νόμων διέσωσε τοὺς νόμους ὁ νομοθέτης). In short: everyone willing to learn about good legislation has to look no further; the Charondas digression provides a model of effective and lasting, yet thoughtful and humane lawgiving that is worthy of praise and emulation. The short section on Zaleucus corroborates this picture: similar to Charondas in his way of life (12.19.3), Zaleucus invented many laws "with outstanding wisdom" (12.20.3: πολλὰ [sc. νομοθετήματα] παρ'

ἑαυτοῦ προσεξεῦρε μάλα σοφῶς καὶ περιττῶς), effective again in directing his citizens to right behaviour (cf. 12.21.2) — another excellent example of artful (12.21.1: φιλότεχνον) lawmaking.

But there is even more the readers can draw from the Charondas/Zaleucus digression in terms of instruction or edification. The passage not only describes two models of lawgiving, it is, more specifically, also a "piece of moral didacticism" as L. Hau has called it.[4] Many of the laws cited or described in the digression have a strongly moralising character,[5] i.e. they aim to eradicate personal or social vices and foster the citizens' virtues. It is important to note that the "didacticism" of the passage consists not simply in naming and expressly devaluating reprehensible habits or actions and, by doing so, appealing to and corroborating the presumable moral convictions of the readers. The narrator does more than that: he "paints" little narrative scenes around these laws, scenes that involve a visual token which epitomises the wrong behaviour and involves the readers by exciting their imagination.

A first case in point is Charondas' law against *sykophantia*,[6] described by the narrator as follows (12.12.2):

> τοὺς δ' ἐπὶ συκοφαντίᾳ καταγνωσθέντας προσέταξε περιπατεῖν ἐστεφανωμένους μυρίκῃ, ὅπως ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς πολίταις φαίνωνται τὸ πρωτεῖον τῆς πονηρίας περιπεποιημένοι. διὸ καί τινας ἐπὶ τούτῳ τῷ ἐγκλήματι καταδικασθέντας τὸ μέγεθος τῆς ὕβρεως οὐκ ἐνεγκόντας ἑκουσίως ἑαυτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ ζῆν μεταστῆσαι. οὗ συντελεσθέντος ἐφυγαδεύθη πᾶς ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ὁ συκοφαντεῖν εἰωθώς, καὶ τὸ πολίτευμα μακάριον εἶχε βίον τῆς τοιαύτης κακίας ἀπηλλαγμένον.

> Those found guilty of sykophantia, he decreed, should, when they went out, wear a tamarisk wreath, so as to make clear to all their fellow citizens that they had won first prize for base conduct. In consequence, certain persons who had been condemned on this charge, unable to bear such great humiliation, voluntarily removed themselves from the company of the living. When this happened, all who had regularly practiced sykophantia were [scared into] fleeing the city; and the government, rid of this plague, thenceforth enjoyed a happy existence.

The wrong conduct of the *sykophantes* is not only "made clear" (φαίνωνται) to their fellow citizens; it is also visually demonstrated to the readers of the pas-

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4 Hau 2016, 82.

5 To such an extent that modern readers may feel put off by it, cf. Hölkeskamp's complaint about the "penetrante[n] moralische[n] Tendenz" of the "story" told in 12.18.1–2 (1999, 139; see also his similar remarks on p. 141).

6 On the rather broad meaning of συκοφαντία which includes, among other things, calumny, false accusation, malicious prosecution and blackmail, see Green 2006, 197–198 n. 67.

sage who are turned into spectators who join the ranks of Thurians watching the graphic scene of tamarisk-wearing wrongdoers.

Similarly vivid and, by the same token, clear in its argument is the narrator's take on Charondas' law about deserters (12.16.1–2):

> ἕτερον δὲ ἔθηκε νόμον κατὰ τῶν λιπόντων τὴν ἐν πολέμῳ τάξιν ἢ τὸ σύνολον μὴ ἀναλαβόντων τὰ ὅπλα ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος. τῶν γὰρ ἄλλων νομοθετῶν κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων τεθεικότων θάνατον τὸ πρόστιμον, οὗτος προσέταξε τοὺς τοιούτους ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ ἐφ' ἡμέρας τρεῖς καθῆσθαι ἐν ἐσθῆσι γυναικείαις. ὁ δὲ νόμος οὗτος ἅμα μὲν φιλανθρωπότερός ἐστι τῶν παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις, ἅμα δὲ λεληθότως τῷ μεγέθει τῆς ἀτιμίας ἀποτρέπει τοὺς ὁμοίους τούτοις τῆς ἀνανδρίας· κρεῖττον γάρ ἐστιν ἀποθανεῖν ἢ τοιαύτης ὕβρεως ἐν τῇ πατρίδι πειραθῆναι· ἅμα δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἁμαρτάνοντας οὐκ ἠφάνισεν, ἀλλὰ τῇ πόλει πρὸς τὰς πολεμικὰς χρείας ἐτήρησε, διορθωσομένους τῇ διὰ τῆς ὕβρεως κολάσει καὶ σπεύδοντας ἑτέροις ἀνδραγαθήμασιν ἐξαλεῖψαι τὴν προγεγενημένην αἰσχύνην.

> He also drafted a law aimed at those who deserted their post in wartime, or flatly refused to take up arms at all in defense of their fatherland. Whereas other legislators had stipulated death as the punishment for such men, Charondas decreed that they should sit in the marketplace for three days dressed as women. Now this law is both more humane than its equivalent elsewhere, and also, because of the extreme humiliation it inflicts, tends subconsciously to deter those similarly inclined from cowardly behaviour; for death is preferable to suffering so great an indignity in one's native city. At the same time, he did not do away with the offenders, but saved them for the state's military needs, his belief being that the punishment meted out for their disgraceful offense would make them determined to vindicate themselves, and by fresh deeds of valour wipe out their past shame.

The mechanism described here, shaming actual and potential offenders into over-compliance with the norms of the polis, is made comprehensible, and even palpable, by the drastic visualisation of ἀνανδρία enforced by Charondas' law.[7] Imagination and instruction go hand in hand, and in this case, the readers are also invited to put themselves into the offenders' position — this, it seems, is the function of the extended description of the punishment's effects on the psyche of the culprits and those similarly inclined: they are the narrative focalisers for the greater part of the quoted paragraph,[8] which makes the readers picture how it would actually feel to sit there in the marketplace and be the object of public contempt.

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7 "Drastic" presumes that readers do feel that sitting in a marketplace dressed as a woman is shameful for a man — a plausible assumption at least for the ancient audience of the *Bibliotheke*.
8 On the term "focaliser", see Bal 1997, 144–149. For an analysis of the use of focalisers in the *Bibliotheke*, see Baumann 2020, 43–50, 129–131, 173–174. — Soraci (2003, 25–26) rightly stresses that Charondas' law "intendeva provocare [...] nell'animo dei cittadini una reazione psicologica", but does not mention the *Bibliotheke*'s readers.

The technique of "moral scene painting" is even more prominent in another case, a law on erring wives (and husbands) attributed by the narrator to Zaleucus. Here, a whole series of settings — and actors within this scenery — is conjured up (12.21.1–2):

> τῶν γὰρ ἄλλων ἀπάντων ἁμαρτανουσῶν γυναικῶν ἀργυρικὰς ζημίας τεταχότων οὗτος φιλοτέχνῳ προστίμῳ τὰς ἀκολασίας αὐτῶν διωρθώσατο. ἔγραψε γὰρ οὕτω· γυναικὶ ἐλευθέρᾳ μὴ πλείω ἀκολουθεῖν μιᾶς θεραπαινίδος, ἐὰν μὴ μεθύῃ, μηδὲ ἐξιέναι νυκτὸς ἐκ τῆς πόλεως εἰ μὴ μοιχευομένην, μηδὲ περιτίθεσθαι χρυσία μηδὲ ἐσθῆτα παρυφασμένην, ἐὰν μὴ ἑταίρα ᾖ, μηδὲ τὸν ἄνδρα φορεῖν δακτύλιον ὑπόχρυσον μηδὲ ἱμάτιον ἰσομιλήσιον, ἐὰν μὴ ἑταιρεύηται ἢ μοιχεύηται. διὸ καὶ ῥᾳδίως ταῖς τῶν προστίμων αἰσχραῖς ὑπεξαιρέσεσιν ἀπέτρεψε τῆς βλαβερᾶς τρυφῆς καὶ ἀκολασίας τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων· οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἐβούλετο τὴν αἰσχρὰν ἀκολασίαν ὁμολογήσας καταγέλαστος ἐν τοῖς πολίταις εἶναι.

> For instance, where all other societies imposed financial penalties on erring wives, he [sc. Zaleucus] found a most artful device whereby to curb their licentiousness, through the following laws that he drafted. A free woman could not be escorted abroad by more than one female attendant — unless she was drunk. Nor could she leave the city at night — except to commit adultery; nor could she wear gold jewellery or a purple-bordered dress — unless she was a courtesan. A husband, similarly, could not wear a gilded ring or an outer garment in the Milesian style — unless set on whoring or adultery. As a result, by imposing a sense of shame in lieu of the old penalties, he had no trouble in steering [citizens] away from damaging luxury and licentious practices; for no one wanted to become a laughing-stock among the other citizens by openly admitting to such shameful and self-indulgent habits.

The narrator's remarks are short, but give sufficient stimulus to the readers' imagination. The audience only need to activate their knowledge of (New) Comedy to turn the visual hints of the narrator into full scenes conjured up before their mind's eye, complete with costumes and props like golden rings. Again, vivid narration and moralism are closely interlinked, in other words: the narrator's account is instructive, but also entertaining, which is true for the whole digression that effectively combines the utility of learning about good legislation with the pleasure of reading captivating stories.

2 Storytelling

Telling the reader fascinating stories is precisely what defines the second function of the lawgivers digression. This aspect is in fact — beyond the implicit appeal of the various narrative scenes pointed out above — also explicitly named by the narrator who uses the key term παράδοξον to highlight the most

brilliant pieces of narrative within the digression. It is no accident that the two passages where this word occurs form the end of the Charondas "story": there is a progression in the narrator's account towards a double culmination, Charondas' provisions to make his legislation permanent (12.17–18) and his death (12.19). In what sense, then, are these last deeds of Charondas, and the narrative about them, a παράδοξον? Several connotations of this multi-faceted term are relevant here: these acts/stories are surprising, they are idiosyncratic or peculiar, but also amazing and fascinating.[9] All these qualities, of course, make them worthy objects of the readers' attention and curiosity.

Charondas' peculiar way to ensure the continued existence of his laws is the first case in the digression where the narrator foregrounds his storytelling with the word παράδοξον (2.17.1–2):[10]

> τὸν δ' οὖν Χαρώνδαν φασὶ παραδοξότατον νενομοθετηκέναι περὶ τῆς διορθώσεως τῶν νόμων. ὁρῶντα γὰρ αὐτὸν ἐν ταῖς πλείσταις πόλεσι διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἐπιχειρούντων ἐπανορθοῦν τοὺς νόμους λυμαινομένους μὲν τὰς προϋπαρχούσας νομοθεσίας, εἰς στάσεις δὲ τὰ πλήθη προαγομένους, ἴδιόν τι καὶ παντελῶς ἐξηλλαγμένον νομοθετῆσαι. προσέταξε γὰρ τὸν βουλόμενον διορθῶσαί τινα νόμον, ὅταν ποιῆται τὴν περὶ τῆς διορθώσεως συμβουλίαν, τὸν ἑαυτοῦ τράχηλον εἰς βρόχον ἐντιθέναι, καὶ μένειν ἄχρι ἂν ὅτου τὴν κρίσιν ὁ δῆμος περὶ τοῦ διορθουμένου νόμου ποιήσηται, κἂν μὲν ἡ ἐκκλησία προσδέξηται τὸν ὕστερον γραφόμενον, ἀπολύεσθαι τὸν εἰσηγησάμενον, ἐὰν δὲ ἄκυρον ποιήσηται τὴν διόρθωσιν, παραχρῆμα θνήσκειν ὑπὸ τοῦ βρόχου σφιγγόμενον.

> However, what has been described as the most amazing legislation by Charondas is that to do with his revision of the legal code. Remarking that in most cities the sheer number of efforts to revise the laws both debased established legislation and encouraged civil dis-

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9 For the meaning and the implications of the term παράδοξον, in the specific context of paradoxography (or related genres or discourses) and beyond, see Giannini 1963, 249–251; Jacob 1983, 122; Schepens/Delcroix 1996, 381–382; Pajón Leyra 2011, 41–50. There is one further connotation of παράδοξον which does not come to the fore in the lawgivers digression: a παράδοξον can also be an incredible thing or story; in D.S. 12.12–21, however, there is no hint by the narrator that the readers should call the credibility of the narrative into question (see Baumann 2018 for other passages of the *Bibliotheke* where the narrator actually "exploits" this connotation of the term παράδοξον).

10 Demosthenes describes an identical provision to keep laws unchanged (24.139–141) which he attributes to Epizephyrian Locri. The way he relates the story is quite different from Diodorus' digression: no lawgiver is named by Demosthenes, and neither παράδοξον nor similar terms occur; it fits into the picture of a much "drier" account that Demosthenes refers to only one instance of a successful change of legislation in Locri, while the *Bibliotheke's* narrator tells of three such cases in Thurii. Cf. Plb. 12.16 for yet another version of the story, also set in Locri (there again, no παράδοξον is mentioned, but the entertaining character of the anecdote is highlighted, cf. 12.16.14).

sension in the masses, he drafted a decree that was both personal and quite extraordinary. His ruling was that anyone wishing to amend a law should put his neck in a noose when advancing his proposed revision, and so remain until the demos returned a verdict on it. If the assembly accepted the amendment, the proposer would be released; but if his proposal was voted down, he was to be hanged on the spot.

What Charondas does is, in the narrator's word, a very personal (ἴδιον) way of securing the stability of his legislation — this takes up the narrator's introductory remark in 12.11.4 that Charondas, apart from picking out the best elements of existing legislations, also formulated many ideas of his own (πολλὰ δὲ καὶ ἴδια ἐπινοησάμενος ἐξεῦρε) —, and it is a peculiar thing to do too (ἐξηλλαγμένον); this term also appears elsewhere in the digression[11] and helps to focus the readers' attention on Charondas' specific approach to lawgiving and, by the same token, on the equally remarkable story told about him in the *Bibliotheke*.

The examples of successful changes of laws in Thurii as related by the narrator also exhibit the qualities of ἴδιον and ἐξηλλαγμένον: all these changes are proposed by certain individuals for highly personal reasons, and they pertain to unusual or unforeseen, in one word: peculiar situations. The first case of an amended law illustrates well how the narrator uses the form of short, self-contained anecdotes to tell the noteworthy stories of people risking death by hanging to find acceptance for their interpretation of what is right (12.17.4–5):

> νόμου γὰρ ὄντος, ἐάν τίς τινος ὀφθαλμὸν ἐκκόψῃ, ἀντεκκόπτεσθαι τὸν ἐκείνου, ἑτερόφθαλμός τις ἐκκοπεὶς τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν καὶ στερηθεὶς ὅλης τῆς ὁράσεως τῷ τὸν ἕνα ἀντεκκεκόφθαι τὸν δράσαντα ἔλαττον ὑπέλαβε πρόστιμον ἐκτῖσαι· τυφλώσαντα γὰρ ἕνα τῶν πολιτῶν, εἰ τὸ κατὰ νόμον πρόστιμον ὁ πράξας ὑπομένοι, μὴ τετευχέναι τῆς ἴσης συμφορᾶς· δίκαιον οὖν εἶναι τὸν ἑτερόφθαλμον τὴν ὅρασιν ἀφελόμενον ἀμφοτέρους ἐκκόπτεσθαι τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς, εἰ μέλλει τὴν ἴσην ἀναδέχεσθαι τιμωρίαν. διὸ καὶ περιαλγῆ γενόμενον τὸν ἑτερόφθαλμον ἀποτολμῆσαι λόγον ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ διαθέσθαι περὶ τῆς ἰδίας συμφορᾶς, ἅμα μὲν τοῖς πολίταις ἀποδυρόμενον τὴν ἰδίαν ἀτυχίαν, ἅμα δὲ συμβουλεύοντα τοῖς πλήθεσι διορθώσασθαι τὸν νόμον· τέλος δὲ δόντα τὸν τράχηλον εἰς βρόχον καὶ ἐπιτυχόντα τῇ συμβουλίᾳ, ἀκυρῶσαι μὲν τὸν ὑπάρχοντα νόμον, βεβαιῶσαι δὲ τὸν διορθωθέντα, καὶ διαφυγεῖν τὸν τοῦ βρόχου θάνατον.

> In the first case, there was a law that if a man put someone's eye out, he himself should lose an eye by way of reprisal. Now a certain one-eyed man had had that eye destroyed, and thereby lost his sight entirely. He therefore argued that the offender, by forfeiting one eye only in return, had paid less than a fair penalty, since he who blinded a fellow citizen, and paid only the penalty prescribed by law, would not have suffered a comparable loss.

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11 Cf. 12.12.3: ἔγραψε δὲ ὁ Χαρώνδας καὶ περὶ τῆς κακομιλίας νόμον *ἐξηλλαγμένον* καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις νομοθέταις παρεωραμένον ("Charondas also wrote an *unparalleled* law on the keeping of bad company, something that all other lawgivers had overlooked").

To be fair, and make the punishment equitable, anyone who robbed a one-eyed man of sight should have both his eyes put out. Thus the one-eyed man, who had become extremely embittered, had the courage to raise in the assembly the matter of his personal loss, and while lamenting to his fellow citizens over the mishap he had suffered, also proposed to the commons a revision of the law, winding up by putting his neck in a noose. He got his proposal carried, had the law as it stood revoked and the amendment confirmed, and also escaped death by hanging.

The narrator gives his story a distinctly emotional note: the man is "extremely embittered" (περιαλγῆ), expresses this emotion by lamenting (ἀποδυρόμενον) over his case and thus moves the audience, his fellow citizens. Again, the narrative is vivid, even dramatic, and invites the readers to share the feelings of the audience.[12] That this emotionalism is a characteristic trait of the narrator's storytelling is underlined by the end of the third (and last) example of a revision of Charondas' legislation: here, an orphaned and poor heiress persuades the *demos* to change the law concerning heiresses (which is disadvantageous to her) by weeping over her misery in front of the audience; they amend the law out of pity (12.18.4: διὰ τὸν ἔλεον), which again can be read as an appeal to the emotions and, more specifically, sympathy of the readers.[13]

The question of the stability of legislation links the anecdotes about legal revisions with the description of the lawgiver's death, the end and climax of the Charondas narrative — and the second passage in the digression where the narrator calls an event (and the story about it) a παράδοξον. What makes this episode peculiar — again an aspect that is expressly named by the narrator — is that Charondas himself, albeit unintentionally, jeopardises the maintenance of his laws. As A. Szegedy-Maszak puts it, the legal code is confronted in this story with a challenge "which is paradoxically *created by* the lawgiver's authority".[14] This happens because Charondas violates his own statute (12.19.1–2):

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12 In Demosthenes' account already quoted above (24.140–141), emotions are hardly put into relief (the only rather vague mention of an emotion is χαλεπῶς ἐνεγκὼν ὁ ἑτερόφθαλμος in 24.140; there is no reference to any laments or any emotional reactions by the audience). His version of the story is also much less drastic than the one in the *Bibliotheke*: in Demosthenes' speech, the crime (the destruction of the eye) is only threatened while in the *Bibliotheke* the victim has actually been blinded. So contrary to what Green (2006, 204 n. 80) claims, the two stories are not identical. Arist. *Rh*. 1365b16–19 and Ael. *VH* 13.24, quoted in various studies in connection with D.S. 2.17.4–5 because of the recurring motifs of blinding and punishment (cf. Mühl 1929, 109 and 432; Hölkeskamp 1999, 139 with n. 59; Green 2006, 204 n. 80; Mele 2017, 321–322), either do not tell any story at all (Aristoteles) or tell a different one (Aelian).
13 For the importance of emotions in the *Bibliotheke* in general, see Bommelaer 1989, xlv–xlix.
14 Szegedy-Maszak 1978, 206.

Λείπεται δ' ἡμῖν εἰπεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ Χαρώνδου τελευτῆς, καθ' ἣν ἴδιόν τι καὶ παράδοξον αὐτῷ συνέβη. ἐπὶ γὰρ τὴν χώραν ἐξιὼν μετὰ ξιφιδίου διὰ τοὺς λῃστάς, καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐπάνοδον ἐκκλησίας συνεστώσης καὶ ταραχῆς ἐν τοῖς πλήθεσι, προσέστη πολυπραγμονῶν τὰ κατὰ τὴν στάσιν. νενομοθετηκὼς δ' ἦν μηδένα μεθ' ὅπλου ἐκκλησιάζειν, καὶ ἐπιλαθόμενος ὅτι τὸ ξίφος παρέζωσται, παρέδωκεν ἐχθροῖς τισιν ἀφορμὴν κατηγορίας. ὧν ἑνὸς εἰπόντος Καταλέλυκας τὸν ἴδιον νόμον, Μὰ Δι', εἶπεν, ἀλλὰ κύριον ποιήσω· καὶ σπασάμενος τὸ ξιφίδιον ἑαυτὸν ἀπέσφαξεν. ἔνιοι δὲ τῶν συγγραφέων τὴν πρᾶξιν ταύτην περιτιθέασι Διοκλεῖ τῷ Συρακοσίων νομοθέτῃ.

It remains for us to speak of Charondas' death, concerning which a most peculiar and unlooked-for accident befell him. When he left town for the country, he had armed himself with a dagger as a defence against highwaymen. On his return he found the assembly in session and the populace greatly upset, and being curious as to the cause of dissension, he went in. Now he had once passed a law that no one should enter the assembly carrying a weapon, and it had slipped his mind on this occasion that he himself had a dirk strapped to his waist. He thus offered certain of his enemies a fine opportunity to bring a charge against him. But when one of them said, "You've revoked your own law," he replied, "No, by God, I shall maintain it," and with that drew his dirk and killed himself. Certain writers, however, attribute this act to Diocles, the lawgiver of the Syracusans.

In the end, the law is maintained, but at the price of the lawgiver's death — a true paradox, and certainly an intriguing and entertaining anecdote which effectively rounds off the Charondas narrative.

In addition to bringing out the narrative qualities of the lawgivers digression, telling of παράδοξα also serves the purpose of linking the digression with other parts of the *Bibliotheke*. This brings us to the third function of the Charondas/ Zeleucus passage: these chapters also form a narrative intersection within the larger context of Diodorus' universal history.

3 Narrative interweaving

This aspect of the digression is evident from the last sentence of the suicide episode quoted above: the narrator concludes his anecdote with the remark that "certain writers, however, attribute this act to Diocles, the lawgiver of the Syracusans" (12.19.2: ἔνιοι δὲ τῶν συγγραφέων τὴν πρᾶξιν ταύτην περιτιθέασι Διοκλεῖ τῷ Συρακοσίων νομοθέτῃ). There were, of course, other noteworthy lawgivers apart from Charondas and Zeleucus, and by explicitly pointing to one of them, the narrator invites the readers to draw comparisons and reflect on this panorama of lawgiving. To do so, the reader does not even have to turn to other texts than the *Bibliotheke*, for there is a passage in the *Bibliotheke*'s following book where Diocles appears in the narrative and is indeed said to have suffered

the same fate as Charondas. This story is part of the account of the Athenians' Sicilian Expedition (and in particular of the aftermath of their defeat) and closes the *Bibliotheke*'s treatment of the year 413 BC (13.33.2–3):

> Μετὰ δὲ τὴν κατάλυσιν τοῦ πολέμου Διοκλῆς τοὺς νόμους ἀνέγραψε τοῖς Συρακοσίοις, καὶ συνέβη παράδοξον περὶ τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον γενέσθαι περιπέτειαν. ἀπαραίτητος γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ἐπιτιμίοις γενόμενος καὶ σκληρῶς κολάζων τοὺς ἐξαμαρτάνοντας, ἔγραψεν ἐν τοῖς νόμοις, ἐάν τις ὅπλον ἔχων εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν παραγένηται, θάνατον εἶναι πρόστιμον, οὔτε ἀγνοίᾳ δοὺς οὔτε ἄλλῃ τινὶ περιστάσει συγγνώμην. προσαγγελθέντων δὲ πολεμίων ἐπὶ τῆς χώρας ἐξεπορεύετο ξίφος ἔχων· αἰφνιδίου δὲ στάσεως καὶ ταραχῆς κατὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν γενομένης, ἀγνοήσας μετὰ τοῦ ξίφους παρῆν εἰς τὴν ἀγοράν. τῶν δὲ ἰδιωτῶν τινος κατανοήσαντος καὶ εἰπόντος, ὅτι τοὺς ἰδίους αὐτὸς καταλύει νόμους, ἀνεβόησε, Μὰ Δία οὐ μὲν οὖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κυρίους ποιήσω. καὶ σπασάμενος τὸ ξίφος ἑαυτὸν ἀπέκτεινεν.

> After the termination of the war Diocles set up the laws for the Syracusans, and it came to pass that this man experienced a strange reversal of fortune. For having become implacable in fixing penalties and severe in punishing offenders, he wrote in the laws that, if any man should appear in the market-place carrying a weapon, the punishment should be death, and he made no allowance for either ignorance or any other circumstance. And when word had been received that enemies were in the land, he set forth carrying a sword; but since sudden civil strife had arisen and there was uproar in the market-place, he thoughtlessly entered the market-place with the sword. And when one of the ordinary citizens, noticing this, said that he himself was annulling his own laws, he cried out, "Not so, by Zeus, I will even uphold them." And drawing the sword he slew himself.

The stories are virtually identical, and the narrator uses the term παράδοξον here in the same way, and for the same effect, as he does in the Charondas digression. For a reader who reads both passages, these parallel stories are an instance of repetitive narration.[15] Such a comparative reading is motivated by the text itself, since the mentioning of Diocles in 12.19.2 comes close to a cross-reference — within the context of a universal history, every reader can and will expect a treatment of Syracuse in the work, and will thus be prompted to interpret the narrator's remark as an implicit and "open", i.e. not fully specified, crosslink.[16]

What the readers get when they actually step onto the bridge offered by the narrator's remark on the varying attributions of the suicide story is an entry to an extensive and fruitful comparison between lawgivers. For in book 13, the

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15 Cf. Genette 1972, 145–156.

16 Cross-references are frequent in the *Bibliotheke*, and they show a great variety as to their degree of specification; cf. Rubincam 1989, 40–43. See Baumann 2022, 100 for the cross-references as a hallmark of the "bookishness" and self-referentiality of the *Bibliotheke*.

narrator also gives a detailed account of the merits of Diocles' legislation beyond the story of his death (13.35):[17] if one compares this evaluation with what the narrators says about Charondas and Zaleucus, both similarities and differences appear. In all three cases, the wisdom and reflexion of the lawgivers is stressed (cf. 12.15.1, 12.20.3, 13.35.4), but whereas Charondas' laws are characterised by their mildness and humanity vis-à-vis other legislations (12.16.2, cf. the similar, albeit more implicit, notion in 12.21.1–2 (Zaleucus)), Diocles' main trait is that "he sets heavier penalties against all wrongdoers than any other legislator" (13.35.4: διὰ τὸ πάντων τῶν νομοθετῶν πικρότατα πρόστιμα θεῖναι κατὰ πάντων τῶν ἀδικούντων), and while the narrator puts much emphasis on Charondas' and Zaleucus' relation to older legislations (cf., e.g., 12.11.4, 12.21.2), he focuses on the *Nachleben* of Diocles' laws which, he claims, many Sicilian cities continued to use down to the time of Roman rule over the island (13.35.3).

Thus, the *Bibliotheke* shows its readers a whole range of models of legislation, and of narrative perspectives on them. The full picture only emerges when the readers take these passages together, compare the information given by the narrator and combine the various narrative "approaches", which enables them to learn even more from the text and at the same time enjoy further storytelling. How intimately both aspects, instruction (or edification, to pick up the term used above) and narration, are connected in the *Bibliotheke* is illustrated precisely by the "bridge" between the two passages discussed here, the παράδοξον of the lawgivers' suicide: in the Diocles account, the narrator gives an explicit interpretation that is missing in the Charondas digression,[18] that Diocles' "dramatic death" (13.35.5: ἡ περὶ τὴν τελευτὴν περιπέτεια) is testimony to his virtue (ἐμαρτύρησε [...] αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀρετήν) — a "lesson" every reader can easily apply to Charondas as well. At the same time, a striking difference in the narrative sequence invites the readers to reflect on the various ways to relate a story and what this means for the appreciation of a narrative: Charondas' death is, in keeping with the chronological order of events, placed at the end of the digression devoted to him, while Diocles as a lawgiver[19] is introduced by the story of

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17 The closing remark of 13.35.5 in which the narrator justifies the length of this chapter (ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἀκριβέστερον εἰπεῖν προήχθην διὰ τὸ τοὺς πλείους τῶν συγγραφέων ὀλιγωρότερον περὶ αὐτοῦ διειλέχθαι, "now these qualities of Diocles I have been moved to set forth in considerable detail by reason of the fact that most historians have rather slighted him in their treatises") is very similar to phrases used to mark off digressions, so we might consider this passage to be a kind of excursus too.

18 A *Leerstelle*, to borrow W. Iser's famous term (cf. Iser 1984, 280–355).

19 As a politician in a broader sense he is introduced in 13.19.4 where he advocates a tough stance towards the captured Athenians — an analogy to his strictness as a lawgiver?

his suicide — how he came to act as a lawgiver and what he did in this capacity is told later, in 13.35 as mentioned above.

This makes the readers wonder: does the picture of a lawgiver change when his story is narrated from the end — even if the end remains the same? What aspects of the lawgivers' character and achievements are thrown into relief by the two forms of narrative, and could Charondas' life also be told the other way, i.e. starting from his end? All these questions are inextricably tied to the specific storytelling of the *Bibliotheke*, which means that inviting the readers to think about them is a form of self-referentiality of the text. This aspect, that the *Bibliotheke* self-consciously directs the readers' attention to its own literary "make-up", is another function of the lawgivers digression, the last one I will discuss in this chapter. But before I elaborate on this point, one further narrative link which the lawgivers digression offers its readers should at least be mentioned: there is yet another "bridge" provided by the motif of παράδοξον, in this case not to a further Greek model of lawgiving, but to Egypt.

Every reader of the lawgivers digression who is interested in the connection of legislation and παράδοξον finds a parallel in the *Bibliotheke*'s first book where the narrator gives a detailed account of the many peculiar customs and laws of the Egyptians (1.69–98). Terms as ἴδιον and ἐξηλλαγμένον, alongside παράδοξον, abound in these chapters;[20] a good example of the "mood" of strangeness and idiosyncrasy created by the narrator is the passage on the Egyptian law on theft (1.80.1–2):

Ὑπῆρχε δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν κλεπτῶν νόμος παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις ἰδιώτατος. ἐκέλευε γὰρ τοὺς μὲν βουλομένους ἔχειν ταύτην τὴν ἐργασίαν ἀπογράφεσθαι πρὸς τὸν ἀρχίφωρα, καὶ τὸ κλαπὲν ὁμολόγως ἀναφέρειν παραχρῆμα πρὸς ἐκεῖνον, τοὺς δὲ ἀπολέσαντας παραπλησίως ἀπογράφειν αὐτῷ καθ' ἕκαστον τῶν ἀπολωλότων, προστιθέντας τόν τε τόπον καὶ τὴν ἡμέραν καὶ τὴν ὥραν καθ' ἣν ἀπώλεσεν. τούτῳ δὲ τῷ τρόπῳ πάντων ἑτοίμως εὑρισκομένων, ἔδει τὸν ἀπολέσαντα τὸ τέταρτον μέρος τῆς ἀξίας δόντα κτήσασθαι τὰ ἑαυτοῦ μόνα. ἀδυνάτου γὰρ ὄντος τοῦ πάντας ἀποστῆσαι τῆς κλοπῆς εὗρε πόρον ὁ νομοθέτης δι' οὗ πᾶν τὸ ἀπολόμενον σωθήσεται μικρῶν διδομένων λύτρων.

The Egyptian law dealing with thieves was also a very peculiar one. For it bade any who chose to follow this occupation to enter their names with the Chief of the Thieves and by agreement to bring to him immediately the stolen articles, while any who had been robbed filed with him in like manner a list of all the missing articles, stating the place, the day, and the hour of the loss. And since by this method all lost articles were readily found, the owner who had lost anything had only to pay one-fourth of its value in order to recover just what belonged to him. For as it was impossible to keep all mankind from stealing,

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20 See Baumann 2020, 27–34.

> the lawgiver devised a scheme whereby every article lost would be recovered upon payment of a small ransom.

No lawgiver is named here, but again the *Bibliotheke*'s account combines the usefulness of showing an ingenious take on a legislative problem (how to deal with theft?) with an appeal to the reader's interest in what is fascinating and entertaining — a fusion of intended effects that is neatly summed up by the narrator in the introduction to that part of 1.69–98 which deals with the Egyptians' individual laws (1.77.1):

> Ἐπεὶ δὲ τῆς νομοθεσίας ἐμνήσθημεν, οὐκ ἀνοίκειον εἶναι τῆς ὑποκειμένης ἱστορίας νομίζομεν ἐκθέσθαι τῶν νόμων ὅσοι παρὰ τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις παλαιότητι διήνεγκαν ἢ παρηλλαγμένην τάξιν ἔσχον ἢ τὸ σύνολον ὠφέλειαν τοῖς φιλαναγνωστοῦσι δύνανται παρασχέσθαι.

> Since we have spoken of their legislation, we feel that it will not be foreign to the plan of our history to present such laws of the Egyptians as were especially old or took on an extraordinary form, or, in general, can be useful for lovers of reading.

The usefulness (ὠφέλεια) is stressed, and by calling the readers φιλαναγνωστοῦντες ("lovers of reading"), strong connotations of curiosity, of readers eager to follow a well-narrated story into detail and to its end, are also conveyed.[21] All the narratives of laws and lawgivers in the *Bibliotheke* cater to such readers, and by following the explicit or implicit links between them and thus juxtaposing the various accounts, the φιλαναγνωστοῦντες can make the most of them.[22]

4 Self-referentiality

I now return to self-referentiality as the last aspect of the lawgivers digression that will be discussed in this chapter. In addition to what I have already pointed out above, a specific law written by Charondas, and the narrator's comment on it, demonstrate that the digression consciously mirrors key aspects of the

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21 See 2.54.7 and 16.1.2 for other occurrences of φιλαναγνωστοῦντες in the *Bibliotheke* which demonstrate these connotations.
22 See Muntz 2017, 191–214 for a decidedly political interpretation of the *Bibliotheke*'s first book and its intended usefulness: Muntz claims that Egypt is shown here as a paradigm, a positive model Diodorus' contemporary Roman readers should follow, not least as for its laws. This requires, of course, that readers draw a comparison between their own legislation and the Egyptian laws, and act upon this juxtaposition (in Muntz' words, "pick and choose" (214) from the Egyptian legal paradigm).

Bibliotheke's concept of historiography. The law in question is Charondas' provision that all citizens of Thurii should learn to read and write (12.12.4):

> ἔγραψε δὲ καὶ ἕτερον νόμον ἀπὸ τούτου κρείττονα καὶ τοῖς παλαιοτέροις αὐτοῦ νομοθέταις ἠμελημένον· ἐνομοθέτησε γὰρ τῶν πολιτῶν τοὺς υἱεῖς ἅπαντας μανθάνειν γράμματα, χορηγούσης τῆς πόλεως τοὺς μισθοὺς τοῖς διδασκάλοις. ὑπέλαβε γὰρ τοὺς ἀπόρους τοῖς βίοις, ἰδίᾳ μὴ δυναμένους διδόναι μισθούς, ἀποστερήσεσθαι τῶν καλλίστων ἐπιτηδευμάτων.

> He also framed another law of greater merit even than this one [sc. than the law on the keeping of bad company], and similarly overlooked by previous lawgivers. This laid down that all the sons of citizens should learn to read and write, and that the state should be responsible for paying teachers' salaries. His assumption here was that the indigent, who could not afford such fees from their own resources, would [otherwise] be deprived of the best and highest pursuits.

From a strictly historical point of view, it is at least doubtful whether such a law could actually have been passed in the fifth century BC.[23] Given that the closest proven parallels of institutionalised state-funded education are from the Hellenistic period,[24] some form of backprojection seems to be at play in the Charondas account as presented by the *Bibliotheke*. But for the purpose of this chapter, the more important question is what the *Bibliotheke* and its narrator make of the "story" of Charondas providing free education to the young Thurians. From this perspective, the narrator's comment on Charondas' law is most interesting — he gives a eulogy of literacy which clearly echoes what the *Bibliotheke* as a written universal history is all about (12.13):

> τὴν γὰρ γραμματικὴν παρὰ τὰς ἄλλας μαθήσεις προέκρινεν ὁ νομοθέτης, καὶ μάλα προσηκόντως· διὰ γὰρ ταύτης τὰ πλεῖστα καὶ χρησιμώτατα τῶν πρὸς τὸν βίον ἐπιτελεῖσθαι, ψήφους, ἐπιστολάς, διαθήκας, νόμους, τἄλλα τὰ τὸν βίον μάλιστα ἐπανορθοῦντα. τίς γὰρ ἂν ἄξιον ἐγκώμιον διάθοιτο τῆς τῶν γραμμάτων μαθήσεως; διὰ γὰρ τούτων μόνων οἱ <μὲν> τετελευτηκότες τοῖς ζῶσι διαμνημονεύονται, οἱ δὲ μακρὰν τοῖς τόποις διεστῶτες τοῖς πλεῖστον ἀπέχουσιν ὡς πλησίον παρεστῶσι διὰ τῶν γεγραμμένων ὁμιλοῦσι· ταῖς τε κατὰ πόλεμον συνθήκαις ἐν ἔθνεσιν ἢ βασιλεῦσι πρὸς διαμονὴν τῶν ὁμολογιῶν ἢ διὰ τῶν γραμμάτων ἀσφάλεια βεβαιοτάτην ἔχει πίστιν· καθόλου δὲ τὰς χαριεστάτας τῶν φρονίμων ἀνδρῶν ἀποφάσεις καὶ θεῶν χρησμούς, ἔτι δὲ φιλοσοφίαν καὶ πᾶσαν παιδείαν μόνη τηρεῖ καὶ

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23 But scholarly opinions differ, see Hölkeskamp 1999, 142 ("[es] erscheint [...] höchst fraglich, ob der Kern der Sache, nämlich dieses 'Gesetz', wenigstens als Maßnahme des Sophisten und Gesetzgebers Protagoras für Thurioi denkbar ist") and Green 2006, 199 n. 70 ("it is more than possible, then, that Charondas did legislate for state-sponsored education") for the sceptical and the appreciative ends of the spectrum.

24 See Andriolo 1998, 51: "Di scuole di 'Stato', pubbliche, regolarmente istituite e funzionanti, senza interruzioni, si hanno esempi solamente in età alessandrina."

τοῖς ἐπιγινομένοις ἀεὶ παραδίδωσιν εἰς ἅπαντα τὸν αἰῶνα. διὸ καὶ τοῦ μὲν ζῆν τὴν φύσιν αἰτίαν ὑποληπτέον, τοῦ δὲ καλῶς ζῆν τὴν ἐκ τῶν γραμμάτων συγκειμένην παιδείαν. ὅθεν ὡς μεγάλων τινῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀποστερουμένους τοὺς ἀγραμμάτους διωρθώσατο τῇ νομοθεσίᾳ ταύτῃ καὶ δημοσίας ἐπιμελείας τε καὶ δαπάνης ἠξίωσε, καὶ τοσοῦτον ὑπερεβάλετο τοὺς πρότερον νομοθετήσαντας δημοσίῳ μισθῷ τοὺς νοσοῦντας τῶν ἰδιωτῶν ὑπὸ ἰατρῶν θεραπεύεσθαι, ὥσθ’ οἱ μὲν τὰ σώματα θεραπείας ἠξίωσαν, ὁ δὲ τὰς ψυχὰς τὰς ὑπ’ ἀπαιδευσίας ἐνοχλουμένας ἐθεράπευσε, κἀκείνων μὲν τῶν ἰατρῶν εὐχόμεθα μηδέποτε χρείαν ἔχειν, τοῖς δὲ τῆς παιδείας διδασκάλοις ἐπιθυμοῦμεν ἅπαντα τὸν χρόνον συνδιατρίβειν.

Indeed, this lawgiver ranked literacy above every other kind of learning, and was right to do so: for this is what enables the bulk — and the most valuable part — of human affairs to be carried out: voting, letter-writing, the engrossment of laws and covenants, and all other things that most contribute to the proper regulation of life. Who could sufficiently praise the acquisition of letters? It is by this alone that the dead survive in the memory of the living, or that people in places widely separated one from the other communicate, even with those at the greatest distance from them, by means of the written word, just as though they were close by. Also, as regards wartime treaties between peoples or monarchs, the firmest guarantee that such agreements will hold good is provided by the specificity of a written text. In sum, this is what alone preserves the most satisfying pronouncements of wise men and the oracles of the gods, not to mention philosophy and all educational knowledge, and is forever handing them on to generation after generation down the ages. Thus, while we must acknowledge that nature is the cause of life, we must also agree that the good life is brought about by an upbringing grounded in literacy. It was, then, to right the wrong done the illiterate (in thus depriving them of certain enormous benefits) that [Charondas] by his legislation judged them deserving of public concern and expenditure; and whereas earlier legislators had decreed that private individuals, when sick, should enjoy medical services at the expense of the state, he went far beyond what they did, since they [merely] thought bodies worth healing, while he offered care to souls burdened through lack of education. Indeed, while we must pray that we never stand in need of those [other] physicians, we most heartily desire that all our time may be spent among such teachers of knowledge.

This is not just a "philosophic-pedagogical addition" to the law proper as Hölkeskamp contended.[25] It is a programmatic statement that closely ties in with the *Bibliotheke*'s "project": making the dead survive in the memory of the living and handing knowledge on to future generations (12.13.2) is of course what the *Bibliotheke* aims at (cf. 1.2.3–5), as much as any other work of historiography. More specifically, as a universal history, the *Bibliotheke* claims to "record the affairs of the entire world, as though they were the affairs of some single city" (1.3.6: τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου πράξεις, ὥσπερ τινὸς μιᾶς πόλεως, [...] ἀναγράψαι; cf. 1.1.3), which chimes with what the narrator says about literacy in 12.13.2, that this is what enables "people in places widely separated one from the other [to]

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25 Hölkeskamp 1999, 142 ("spätere philosophisch-pädagogische Zutat").

communicate, even with those at the greatest distance from them, by means of the written word". If one also takes into account that the *Bibliotheke* shows a marked interest in inscriptions and other writing practices, as appears from the numerous references to epigraphical material, and that these references cover a broad range of topics which are in tune with what the narrator highlights in 12.13 (cf. 12.13.1: "laws and covenants", 12.13.2: "pronouncements of wise men"),[26] a dense network of connections between the praise of literacy in book 12 and the other parts of the *Bibliotheke* becomes evident.

Moreover, the *Bibliotheke* has rightly been called a "book history",[27] for its technique of compiling older historiographical material into one new and coherent "Library" as much as for its insistence on the benefits of reading such an account: throughout the proem to his work, the narrator stresses that the *Bibliotheke* provides a safe (1.1.1–2) and effortless (1.3.8) way of gaining knowledge — one simply has to read its well-structured, so the narrator asserts, and easy to grasp (1.3.8: εὐπαρακολούθητον) narrative of mankind's past. This claim to readability plays an important role in recent efforts to pin down the *Bibliotheke*'s intended audience in sociological terms: M. Rathmann has convincingly argued that what he calls a "provincial middle class" was probably the audience Diodorus primarily wrote for — precisely the social group the *Bibliotheke*'s author himself in all likelihood belonged to.[28] For such readers the "story" that all citizens of Thurii, regardless of their economic status, were given free education and the narrator's ensuing praise for this legislation must have been of particular significance and interest. But even beyond this primary "target group", the explicit narratorial voice in 12.13 makes sure that the basic self-referential point of this passage cannot be lost on the *Bibliotheke*'s audience, whatever their social background: they are readers of a literary work whose manifold benefits are closely linked to its specific mediality, its "bookish" take on historiography.

In fact, all the functions of Diodorus' lawgivers digression that I have highlighted in this analysis — moral edification, storytelling, narrative interweaving, and self-referentiality — can be interpreted as part of the *Bibliotheke*'s attempt to offer its audience a spectrum of interactions that is as comprehensive as possible: the text addresses the readers' moral, intellectual and affective capacities and interests, it tells its audience engaging stories and invites its readers to connect, compare and interpret these narratives, and it makes the audience

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26 See Liddel 2018, esp. 456–462 and the appendix (with a useful list of references, 467–469).

27 On this way of writing historiography and how it differs from Polybius' concept of pragmatic history, see Wiater 2006, esp. 248–260.

28 See Rathmann 2016, 142–147 (and 65–68 on Diodorus' social background).

aware that all this is happening and that it is intended — a fitting undertaking for a work that calls itself a historical *Library*.

5 Appendix: The structure of the lawgivers digression (D.S. 12.12–21)

1. Laws given by Charondas:
- "First, there is the decree he instituted regarding such men as brought in a stepmother to be in charge of their existing children: these he banned from serving as counselors for their fatherland" (12.12.1).
- "Those found guilty of *sykophantia*, he decreed, should, when they went out, wear a tamarisk wreath, so as to make clear to all their fellow citizens that they had won first prize for base conduct" (12.12.2).
- "The lawgiver banned all friendship and intimate association with base persons, drafted laws against the keeping of bad company, and by means of stringent penalties discouraged those about to commit such errors" (12.12.3).
- "He framed the law that all the sons of citizens should learn to read and write, and that the state should be responsible for paying teachers' salaries" (12.12.4–13.4).
→ "Both of the earlier laws here mentioned have received witness from many poets in verse: that on keeping bad company as follows: [...] while the law regarding stepmothers produced this: [...]" (12.14).
- Law dealing with the guardianship of orphans: "the property of orphans should be managed by the next of kin on the father's side, but the orphans themselves should be brought up by their relatives on the mother's side" (12.15).
- "He drafted a law aimed at those who deserted their post in wartime, or flatly refused to take up arms at all in defense of their fatherland. [...] Charondas decreed that they should sit in the marketplace for three days dressed as women" (12.16.1–2).
- "He prescribed obedience to the law whatever the circumstances, even if it had been fundamentally ill-drafted; at the same time, he allowed for redrafting should the need arise" (12.16.3–5).
- Legislation which related to revision of the laws: "His ruling was that anyone wishing to amend a law should put his neck in a noose when advancing his proposed revision, and so remain until the *demos* returned a verdict on it.

If the assembly accepted the amendment, the proposer would be released; but if his proposal was voted down, he was to be hanged on the spot" (12.17–18). Three cases of revised laws:

    a. "law that if a man put someone's eye out, he himself should lose an eye by way of reprisal", 12.17.4–5,

    b. "law giving a wife the right to divorce her husband and [thereafter] marry whomsoever she pleased", 12.18.1–2,

    c. law concerning heiresses, 12.18.3–4.

– Death of Charondas, law that no one should enter the assembly carrying a weapon (12.19.1–2).

[Transition to Zaleucus, 12.19.3]

2. Laws given by Zaleucus:

– "In the general preamble to his legislation, he stated that the city's inhabitants must, first and foremost, by reason as by faith, believe that the gods do indeed exist" (12.20.2).

– "He tacked on a further requirement, that they should treat none of their fellows as an irreconcilable enemy" (12.20.3).

→ Short reference to further legislation (12.20.3).

– Laws "to curb the licentiousness of erring wives"; three cases described in detail (12.21.1–2).

→ Mention of "laws on many other vexed aspects of life, including contracts"; end of the digression (12.21.3).

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Christina S. Kraus

Going in Circles: Digressive Behavior in Caesar, *BC* 2.23–44

Abstract: Caesar's *commentarii* contain ekphrastic elaborations of engineering or topography which invite discussion of the balance and composition of their surrounding historiographical narratives. Caesar's style may march along as do his soldiers, but *loci* like the Gallo-Germanic ethnography in *BG* 6 or the tower at Massilia in *BC* 2 allow that legion to throw down its packs and take up a different rhythm. How stable is the traditional binary of "primary" text and digression? In attempting to shed some light on these questions as they apply to Caesar's extant writing, this essay examines the story of Curio in North Africa (*BC* 2.23–44), in which Galen Rowe identified a circular, "tragic" plotting. But circularity is at home in digressive structures as well, notably at their framing points, which are often marked with ring composition. So the "road" of historiography makes its own circles and detours on its way down a chronological path. I read Caesar's distinctive Curio narrative as both digressive and integral to the rest of the *commentarii*, understanding its textual geography and plotting as supplementary — both addition and challenge — to Caesar's primary authorial perspective and voice. I conclude that Curio's story finds Caesar telling a tragic tale set as a *mise en abyme* within his "primary" *commentarius* discourse, offering us different understandings of Rome's North African history.

Keywords: Caesar, North Africa, *commentarius*, topography, disorder

1 Setting the scene

Long-standing discussions about the artistry and rhetorical character of Caesar's surviving books continue. Some contributions have concentrated on a perceived increase in ornamentation, an accumulation from *Bellum Gallicum* (*BG*) to *Bellum civile* (*BC*) of elements commonly associated with rhetorical

historiography.[1] Others have focused more on the role of rhetorical decorum, seeing variation in Caesarian style as reflecting demands and invitations of particular content, including changes in authorial stance.[2] The most immediately perceptible of stylistic variations, Caesar's ekphrastic descriptions[3] and other forms of digression (including ethnographies), are infrequently included in these considerations of the evolution/variations of Caesar's prose style, except when they have been deemed interpolations.[4] These sections, which direct attention to their difference from the surrounding narrative, have of course received great attention on their own.[5] But in all cases, these ekphrastic elaborations, whether of engineering or topography, must invite discussion of the balance and composition of their surrounding historiographical narratives. Caesar's style may "march along, orderly as a legion, setting out intelligibly and with intelligence the course of action," in Adcock's famous characterization — but *loci* like the Gallo-Germanic ethnography in *BG* 6 or the tower at Massilia in *BC* 2 allow that legion to throw down its packs and take up a different rhythm.[6]

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1 These elements have traditionally included *sententiae,* direct speech, choice language, and changes in sentence structure and syntactical habits (e.g. Ihm 1892–1893; Klotz 1917; Schlicher 1936; Preiswerk 1945. I include here only selected studies and only those essentially philological in nature; I do not include works such as Riggsby 2006, 133–155 on the *commentarius* itself). Krebs has taken the discussion to a new level of sophistication in his revelatory work on Caesar, especially his forthcoming commentary on *BG* 7 (Krebs 2023, Introduction sections 3(a) and 3(b)); cf. also Krebs 2018, 123, 128. In the *corpus Caesarianum*, such analysis contributes to new understanding of authorial attribution (e.g. Gaertner/Hausberg 2013).

2 E.g. Schadee 2008; Krebs 2011; Kraus 2013; Nousek 2018, all with further bibliography; see now Krebs 2021 on writing within the *BG*.

3 Listed and discussed by Dodington 1980.

4 Creer (2019) has useful bibliography on the question, while he himself uses the ethnographic sections of the *BG* to advocate for serial compositional structure and dating.

5 E.g. Scarola 1987 (the Gallic wall); Erickson 2002 (the Veneti); Kraus 2007 (the tower at Massilia); Brown 2013 (the Rhine bridge).

6 Adcock 1956, 71–72. Digressive and ekphrastic passages do figure in general discussions of the proper balance and composition of historiographical narrative. See Fowler 1991 for essential theoretical background on the interaction between narration and description. In historiography, the latter can articulate a text's architectonics (Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum* is a good example, in which the African ethno-geography (17–19) separates one phase of Jugurtha's activities from the next, and the excursus on the *Arae Philaenorum* (79) helps to divide Metellus from Marius; see Khellaf 2018, 155–161). They may add to the historian's authority (so the Gallic wall, *BG* 7.23 with Kraus 2010, 46–49; or the ethnography in the *Agricola*, where Tacitus contradicts Caesar, Fabius, and Livy: *Agr.* 10–12 with Kraus in Woodman 2014); or they may complicate understanding of the text's historiographical and cultural traditions (e.g. the "barbarology" at Tac. *Hist.* 5.2–13; see Feldherr 2009).

The question then becomes: how stable is the traditional binary of "primary" text and digression? Though digression is baked into historiographical narrative from the start — following Herodotus' Odyssean wanderings, or even, perhaps, the Hecatean genealogical rhizomes — it also from the start sets itself up as different from the straight road. The situation is classically deconstructive: is digression contrastive to historical narrative, or constitutive of it? And if the latter, how does it affect our understanding of the history being written?[7]

In attempting to shed some light on these questions as they apply to Caesar's extant writing, this essay examines an episode in the *BC* that has long been considered separate from "straight" Caesar, the story of Curio in North Africa (*BC* 2.23–44). Galen Rowe identified in it a circular, "tragic" plotting and accumulation of *oratio recta*, a mode otherwise rare in the *commentarii*, to argue that it shows Caesar's style developing from *commentarius* to *historia*.[8] But circularity, at least in a formal sense, is at home in digressive structures as well, notably at their framing points, which are often marked with ring composition (see below, n. 37). So the "road" of historiography, while not rounded off like a tragic plot, makes its own circles and detours on its way down a chronological path.[9] I am interested in how we might read Caesar's distinctive Curio narrative as both digressive and integral to the rest of the *commentarii*, understanding its textual geography[10] and plotting as supplementary — both addition and challenge — to Caesar's primary authorial perspective and voice.

The episode centers on C. Scribonius Curio, whose adventure begins with a complex naval maneuver and gathering of his legions (2.23); it ends with the death of Curio and all his soldiers and a battle with the troops commanded by

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7 This paper is primarily a response to the work of Kyle Khellaf, which asks: "by undermining normative historical aspirations to impose a straightforward teleology of events on its historical narratives, [how do] digressions open their works to a variety of countercultural histories and dialogic perspectives"?, Khellaf 2018, i. On "history's digressive origins", see Khellaf 2018, Chapter 1.

8 Building on Klotz 1910, among others, he argues for a "steady literary development" and an "increased depth of [...] historical perspective" (Rowe 1967, 399). Along with Curio, Rowe studies three other *Bellum civile* narratives which exhibit the tragic plotting of good fortune ~ *hybris* ~ *peripeteia* and catastrophe: Petreius and Afranius in *BC* 1; the campaign of Varro in *BC* 2; and the whole last third of *BC* 3, from Dyrrachium to Pharsalus.

9 On historical journeys see Wood 2016. The difference between road and plot, in Rowe's sense, is akin to that between parataxis and hypotaxis; on periodicity see below, 136, 140.

10 I borrow the term from Scanlon 1988.

P. Attius Varus (2.42–44).[11] Once settled on shore, Curio leaves his legions with a legate and performs one of the most important of a general's tasks, scouting for a camp (2.24):

> *Curio Marcium Vticam navibus praemittit. Ipse eodem cum exercitu proficiscitur biduique iter progressus ad flumen Bagradam pervenit. Ibi C. Caninium Rebilum legatum cum legionibus reliquit. Ipse cum equitatu antecedit ad Castra exploranda Cornelia quod is locus peridoneus castris habebatur. Id autem est iugum directum eminens in mare, utraque ex parte praeruptum atque asperum sed tamen paulo leniore fastigio ab ea parte quae ad Vticam vergit. Abest directo itinere ab Vtica paulo amplius passus mille. Sed hoc itinere est fons quo mare succedit longius, lateque is locus restagnat. Quem si qui vitare voluerunt VI milium circuitu in oppidum perveniunt.*

> Curio had Marcius sail ahead to Utica. He himself headed there with his army and after a two-day advance reached the Bagradas River. There he left his officer Gaius Caninius Rebilus with the legions. He went ahead with the cavalry to scout Castra Cornelia, since this location was thought to be eminently suitable for a camp. It is a straight ridge projecting into the sea, steep and rugged on both sides but nevertheless with a slightly gentler slope on the side facing Utica. By a straight-line route it is a little more than a mile from Utica. But in this direction there is a spring, and the sea comes up rather close to it, and the area is marshy for a wide stretch. Anyone who wants to avoid it reaches Utica after a six-mile detour.[12]

This passage, containing the first description of the *Castra Cornelia*, sets us up for literal digression, as from this place one has to go around (*circuitu*) to get to the object, Utica. Despite its seemingly ordinary Caesarian content — marching, a legate's assignment, cavalry scouting, a typical environment of hills and marshes[13] — this passage is far from unremarkable. Its non-ordinariness begins as Curio heads for the camp, with an artistic hyperbaton of a type discussed by J.N. Adams and restricted in prose: *ad **Castra** exploranda **Cornelia***. The choice of word order emphasizes by bringing the disjoined word (here, *Cornelia*) "into relief," specifying exactly which *castra* Caesar means.[14] Further choice elements

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11 I concentrate on the first portion of the story, before the Numidian king Juba's fatal intervention, that is, on chapters 24–37, a section bracketed by the *Castra Cornelia*, which Caesar describes twice (24.2–3, 37.5–6).

12 All translations from *BC* are from Damon 2016. The text of *BC* is from Damon 2015, that of *BG* from Hering 1987. On these camps see Lézine 1956; for exploration in Caesar generally, Ezov 1996.

13 For the typical Caesarian landscape see Riggsby 2006, 21–45; 2009, 154–159.

14 Adams 1971, 2; figures for Caesar on p.6. These increase, "with the most remarkable accumulations in passages which Caesar obviously took trouble to elaborate (e.g. the pair of [Curio's] speeches at *BC* 2.31–32, which contain 10 examples)." For periodic suspension see further below, 136, 140.

in this topographical ekphrasis include two words first attested here in Latin and *hapax legomena* in Caesar, *peridoneus* and *restagno*; two unparalleled collocations, *iugum derectum* (though Pomponius Mela has *iugum rectum* at 3.69) and *iugum eminens* (though rocks and mountains are elsewhere *eminentes*, as at 2.23.2 *duobus eminentibus promunturiis*), and a use of *fastigium* to mean "slope" or "declivity" that is an innovation with Caesar.[15] Figurative language puts us on our guard: any kind of rhetorically marked diction digresses from an imagined straight line of meaning, as evident from the kinds of metaphors with which ancient literary critics described it: not only digression (*parekbasis*, *digressio*), but enough figures are named as trans-, hyper-, or para-gressive that it seems clear that any rhetorical figuration could be seen as forming a kind of excursion.[16]

Along with the figurative language in 2.24, there are no fewer than three kinds of water intervening between the "particularly suitable" place to camp and the city: *fons, mare,* and *stagna* (in *restagnat*). Caesarian water features, including marshy ground, break up open space. Characters can move around or, much more rarely, through them.[17] So these Cornelian waters may indicate, allusively, that this was a good place for a defensive camp.[18] But Caesar seems not to be describing a marsh *per se,* but an area made periodically marshy by tidal water; moreover, he specifies that the water's effect is felt not by attackers but by those within the *castra*. A slight unease might also be marked with the choice *restagnat*,[19] which avoids a description familiar to readers of Caesar, who dotted the landscape of the *BG* with *paludes*, pointing them instead to the strange and mutable landscape of the north African coast.[20] Different types of

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15 *TLL* s.v. *fastigium* 1.C.1; it is taken up by Vitruvius and Curtius Rufus. See Krebs 2023 *ad* 73.5, 85.4.

16 Cf., e.g., *hyper-baton, kata-khresis, par-onomasia, par-enthesis,* etc., and the sense of σχῆμα from which "figure of speech" is derived ("acting posture, gesture": *LSJ* 7), or τρόπος, a turning (away). For the metaphors used in ancient literary theory, see Assfahl 1932, Meijering 1987, Connors 1997, and Worman 2015, all with further bibliography; on figurative language as shorthand for language's "uncontrollable, irrational, and seductive power" see Connolly 2007, 219; on metaphors themselves as *ainigmata* ("riddles") see Arist. *Poet.* 1458a26–27, and on literary interpretation as being a solving of these riddles (*ainissomai*), see Nünlist 2009, 237.

17 Riggsby 2006, 26, 40. For a particularly juicy analysis of Caesarian waters and the tug of war between writer and readers, see Erickson 2002 on the Veneti, taken up by Khellaf 2018, 118–137.

18 See examples cited by Krebs (2023) *ad BG* 7.69 (Numantia, Alesia), and Damon 1994 (also below, n. 27, 33) on Caesar not telling the reader everything he knows.

19 *Restagno* is associated with *paludes* at Livy 44.46.5, Ov. *Met.* 11.364, Sil. *Pun.* 4.752, 8.382.

20 See Delile *et al.* 2015; on "Africa" see below, 144.

water (and dryness) serve as common metaphors for style and *genera dicendi*,[21] while historiographical water can carry significance in ways akin to poetic water, often forming a narrative barrier or offering an excuse for or invitation to digression.[22] So the *fons* (etc.) here seem to figure as inviting, indeed necessitating, a *circuitus*.[23] What is more, when the *castra* return (37.5), they are described quite differently, with waters specifically tied to military function and logistics (see below, n. 56). Here, then, as we begin this narrative, these triple waters suggest a stylistic and generic digressiveness, inviting us to a round-about reading via this *descriptio loci*.

On the level of story, the *Castra Cornelia's* waters force a choice of route. In Latin poetry, different roads mark different stylistic choices;[24] in historiography, the topography of a place with two possible *itinera* sets up a particular and dangerous story. I give two telling examples. The very beginning of the Gallic War narrative presents a choice of entry into the *bellum Helveticum* via two different roads (*BG* 1.6.1–2):

> *Erant omnino itinera duo, quibus itineribus domo exire possent. unum per Sequanos, angustum et difficile, inter montem Iuram et flumen Rhodanum, vix qua singuli carri ducerentur, mons autem altissimus impendebat, ut facile perpauci prohibere possent; alterum per provinciam nostram, multo facilius atque expeditius, propterea quod inter fines Helvetiorum et Allobrogum, qui nuper pacati erant, Rhodanus fluit isque nonnullis locis vado transitur.*

> There were, in all, only two suitable routes by which they could leave their home territory, The route through the territory of the Sequani, between the Jura mountain range and the Rhône river, was narrow and difficult. Wagons in single file could scarcely be driven along it. Worse, an extremely high mountain range looms above it, so that a tiny force could easily prevent their advance. The other route was through our Province, and there they could travel much faster and more easily; the course of the Rhône forms the border between the

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[21] Assfahl 1932, 116–121; on the relationships between landscape and poetics in general see now Worman 2015.

[22] Jones 2005; see also n. 44. Kyle Khellaf suggests to me that *fontes* can find a natural place in narratives of treachery and boundary breaking, citing e.g. Prop. 4.4.5–7 (Tarpeia and Titus Tatius, on which see Heyworth 2007, 447–448).

[23] *Circuitus* is defined by Cicero as a synonym for *periodos*, along with *ambitum, comprehensio, continuatio,* and *circumscriptio* (*Orat.* 204); it can also indicate a euphemistic periphrasis (Mart. Spect. 11.15.8); cf. *circumitus* = digression (Sen. *Vit. Beat.* 7.3.2). See Lausberg 1998, §§ 590 (periphrasis), 926, 930 (periodicity).

[24] Bramble 1974, 170.

Helvetii and the Allobroges, who had recently been pacified, and in some places it is shallow enough to ford it.[25]

The interloping Helvetii choose to go the "easier" route which takes them into the Roman *provincia* and triggers their — and our — entry into Roman time and eight books of war.[26] Though the narrow, difficult path had been possible to block, the Sequani were not hostile to the Helvetii at that point; Caesar implies that it is the latter's desire for ease and for speed that brings about their eventual defeat.[27] Approximately thirty years later, Livy introduces the underworldly nightmare that is Caudium with the two-roads *topos* (9.2.6–7); I have indicated the elements that seem to echo the Caesar passage:

> *duae ad Luceriam ferebant viae, altera praeter oram superi maris* (~ the Rhône passage), *patens apertaque sed quanto tutior tanto fere longior* (~ Caesar's comparatives), *altera* (~ *alterum*) *per Furculas Caudinas, brevior; sed ita natus locus est: saltus duo alti angusti* (~ *angustum*) *siluosique sunt montibus circa perpetuis* (~ *inter montem* [...] *mons altissimus*) *inter se iuncti.*

> There were two roads to Luceria. One skirted the Adriatic, and though open and unobstructed, was long almost in proportion to its safety. The other led through the Caudine Forks, and was shorter, but this is the nature of the place: two deep defiles, narrow and wooded, are connected by an unbroken range of mountains on either hand.[28]

Given these historical precedents — and despite the presence of the great Scipio Africanus in the camp's name — as an opening move in his campaign against Attius Varus, Curio's accepting the *Castra Cornelia*'s reputation (*habebatur*) for being *peridoneus* may seem downright foolish. *Habebatur*, as Philip Hardie points out to me, flags the *castra* as potentially exemplary;[29] it certainly suggests

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25 Translations of *BG* are from Raaflaub 2017. For the "Bellum Helveticum" see Lohmann 1990; on the roads themselves, and Caesar's availing himself of the "geographische Unkenntnis" of the Roman reader in order to direct his narrative, see Walser 1998, 46.

26 BG 1.6.4–1.7.1 *omnibus rebus ad profectionem comparatis diem dicunt, qua die ad ripam Rhodani omnes conveniant. is dies erat a. d. v. Kalendas Apriles L. Pisone, A. Gabinio consulibus. Caesari cum id nuntiatum esset* [...] ("When everything was ready for setting out, they named a day for the whole expedition to gather on the bank of the Rhône. This was March 28, during the consulship of Lucius Piso and Aulus Gabinius. When a report reached Caesar [...]").

27 The topography and alliances are changeable, and Caesar's readers find out only later that the Sequani are hostile to the Helvetii (*BG* 1.9.1): see notes *ad locc.* in Raaflaub 2017, 6–11 and above, n. 18, on Caesar's withholding information until he needs it.

28 Translation by Foster 1926; classic discussion of the scene in Morello 2003.

29 On communal judgment making something exemplary see Roller 2018, 5–8; on Curio in Africa and *fama* see Hardie 2012, 192–196.

that Curio is operating not on his own judgment but on the received opinion of others. For Caesar to evaluate other authorities in putting together his narratives is one thing (see below); for a lesser man, such interpretation is likely to go wrong — as we see later in the episode more than once, most damningly at 2.39.2, where Curio's mishandling of interrogations leads to him assuming a false and deadly equivalency: *"Videtisne," inquit* [sc. *Curio*], *"milites, captivorum orationem cum perfugis convenire?"* (Curio said, "Do you see, soldiers, that the prisoners' words agree with the deserters?").[30] Curio can neither be fast, straight, or accurate in his readings: nor — therefore — can he be Caesar.[31]

A final note on 2.24: it is only gradually that we come to understand that the *Castra Cornelia* are not in fact where Curio encamps. His actual bivouac — not identified as such until after the introduction to the *Castra Cornelia* analysed above — is on the banks of the local river, where Curio left his legate with the legions (2.24.2a). It is not until 2.26.1, however, that we learn that Caninius made a camp there: *His rebus gestis Curio se in castra ad Bagradam recipit* ("After these successes Curio went back to the camp at the Bagradas").[32] Though the *Castra Cornelia* are introduced with an implication that they are Curio's aim for his base camp, they will function in the Roman strategy only as a place of (un-successful) retreat (2.30.3, 2.37.3). Whether this gradual revelation of their purpose is one of Caesar's "practical prose" moments, in which he does not have to tell us the actual *castra* location because as educated readers we already know

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30 Curio may simply be checking the accuracy of his sources, but one of them is lying and he does not spot it. Helping to direct our attention to the separation of word and fact (or *species* and *res*) is the remarkable density of naming and opinion in the episode: forms of *appellare* at 2.23.2, 25.1, 26.1, 28.2, 28.3, 32.14, 35.1, 35.2; of *opinio* at 27.2, 27.3, 29.2, 31.5, 33.2, 40.3; and of *auctor* at 29.2 (2×), 32.1, 37.3, 38.2.

31 Kyle Khellaf points out the "good writer" hiding in Curio's name *Scri-bon-ius* — but not, of course, as good as Caesar, or as caring a leader (on the <u>cura</u> of the ideal leader see Woodman 1977, 145 and on *curare* Woodman 2014, 176). Curio, unlike many of his peers, seems not to have composed anything but *orationes*; on his speeches see Cic. *Brut.* 279–280 and Vell. Pat. 2.48.3 *vir* [...] *eloquens* [...] *et facundus malo publico*). He may have served as Caesar's mouth-piece in the Senate at *BC* 1.1.1 (Dio Cass. 41.1.1) and was certainly misled by Caesar's letter at *BC* 2.37.2 into overconfidence (Henderson 1996b, 268). On Curio's own *celeritas* see Grillo 2012, 32–35, with Cic. *Brut.* 280 *nihil expeditius*. Finally, Cynthia Damon suggests to me that the implied target of Curio's *aemulatio* may be Scipio Africanus as much as it is Caesar.

32 The *res gestae* — which lead to Curio's being hailed *imperator* (2.26.1) — comprise the initial reconnoitering of Utica, a cavalry skirmish, and the (bloodless) diversion of the merchant vessels stationed at Utica (2.25). *Se* [...] *recepit* at 2.26.1 does not indicate retreat or withdrawal, but elsewhere in the episode it does (2.23.4, 25.6, 26.4, 34.3, 6, 35.6, 37.3, 41.6, 42.5); a curious choice of words for a success, then, and one whose contradictory semantics seem to foreshadow Curio's bad end.

it was the Bagradas, or whether it is deliberately vague or even misleading, is impossible to tell.[33] For this reader, however, the prominence of the *Castra Cornelia* at the start of Curio's story is a digressive tease, which invites us to go in one direction while the main narrative goes in another.[34] As such, though the narrative to come is not marked explicitly as an excursus, this opening description marks it as one flirting with digression.

2 Digressive narration

How is this borne out in the Curio episode proper? Curio's activities are divergent from the primary (= Caesarian) narrative of the *Bellum civile* both topographically, since they take place on a separate continent from the action of Books 1 and 3,[35] and authorially, since they are unwitnessed by Caesar. Caesar has a habit of topographically isolating such unwitnessed narratives: the defeats of Cotta, Sabinus, and Cicero happen in the woods in *BG* 5, the action so restricted that not even messages can get in and out (*BG* 5.45, 48); Labienus in his sideshow in *BG* 7 operates on the Parisian island with its endless *paludes* (*BG* 7.57.4). Underscoring Curio's relative isolation and sealed-off quality is the accumulation of *circum*-words in *BC* 2. All but three occur in the Utican episode (13×); the exceptions relate to the tower in the Massilian siege, another self-enclosed topography.[36] This *circum* vocabulary is not unusual in the *commentarii*, as Caesar is constantly encircling one enemy or another; but in *BC* 2, it clusters in the Curio narrative, maintaining its *circum*-ferential feel. Circularity in the form of ring composition is a fundamental marker of digression, both in thought, as

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33 On his "practical prose" see Damon 1994, and on his deliberate use of a style that requires interpretation see Grillo 2012, 35–36.

34 The misdirection is perhaps also hinted at with 2.24.4 *abest derecto itinere* which suggests a meaning "was distant from the direct path" before it is resolved with *ab Vtica* to mean "by a straight-line route it is [distant from] Utica"; cf. Livy 9.17.1 *ab rerum ordine declinarem* ("that I bend away from the straight order [of my story]") at the start of the Alexander digression. Caesar normally has ablative + preposition for the latter meaning, but cf. *BG* 1.36.5 and Eden 1962 on his experimental use of the ablative.

35 Not unlike Herodotus 2, itself a whole (digressive?) book on a separate continent.

36 Massilia siege: 2.9.5 *circum turrim*; 10.1 *ex ea turri quae circum essent opera*; 16.2 *muro turribusque circumiri*; Curio episode: 28.2 *circumire*, 30.2 *circumventus*, 32.4 *circumvenire*, 34.3 *circumveniebantur*, 34.6 *circumveniri*, 35.3 *circumventus*, 36.1 *circumvenire*, 40.1 *circum se habere*, 41.2 *circumire*, 41.5 *circumire*, 41.6 *circumibant*, 41.8 *circumdata*, 42.3 *circumsistens*.

in *paradeigmata*, and in form.[37] In an author as conscious as Caesar is of all aspects of his own language, as well as of the relationship between language and landscape, we might think about the role of circuity in sentence composition, and how "going around" on the ground metanarratively evokes circumscription on the page — and again, we might consider the "written up" nature of this particular episode, in which Caesar piles on the ornamentation at least in terms of plot and *oratio recta*, speech being the natural home of periodic composition.[38]

Finally, the Curio episode exhibits not only spatial digressiveness and a metaphorical stepping aside from the primary narrative but implies temporal digressiveness as well. The military action oscillates between locations marked by a look back to the second Punic war (the *Castra Cornelia* was the site of Scipio Africanus's camp in 204–203 BCE) and ahead, through Utica itself, to the death of Cato Uticensis in 46. Analepsis, looking backward, is at home in digressive passages, of course, especially historical ones; to the extent that prolepsis involves an exercise of the imagination, often heterodiegetic, it, too, is digressive.[39] Aside from these temporal sideshows, the problems with chronology in Book 2 as a whole, particularly the difficulties in situating the Utican story vis à vis the action at Massilia and in Spain, have led Grillo to read the battle of Bagradas and the closure of Book 2 as an "alternative conclusion […] a blueprint for the post-civil war Rome under Pompey."[40] If he is right, then as a thought experiment the second half of *BC* 2 is altogether digressive.

I move from these larger spatial and temporal considerations of *BC* 2.23–37 to a look at the details. The episode exhibits many elements that are either typical of historiographical digression or — in the case of *oratio recta* and *sententiae* — atypical enough of Caesarian narrative to count as a marked departure from the *iter directum* of his prose. They continue, therefore, the figuration in 2.24 (discussed above), a figuration which sets this prose off from "ordinary" language.[41] I can give only a brief account of them here. A narrative sidestep is flagged from the beginning as Caesar shifts from Massilia to North Africa with *isdem temporibus C. Curio in Africam profectus ex Sicilia* (23.1, "At this same period Gaius Curio was leaving Sicily for Africa"). *Isdem temporibus*, an expression like *eodem loco*

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37 Willcock 1964 (the starting point for discussions of circular *paradeigmata*); on ring composition see Khellaf 2018, 19–24, with further references.
38 Assfahl 1932, 69–72, 97; Butler 2011, 47–48. See also above, 136 with n. 23.
39 De Jong 2007.
40 Grillo 2012, 167.
41 All language is figurative, of course: but that is another discussion — or even another academic specialty.

(at 33.2), in Khellaf's words "through temporal simultaneity transports the reader to a different geographic locale, thus giving it a kind of pseudo-digressive quality."[42] We subsequently encounter repeated topographical descriptions (*regionum/locorum descriptiones*), one of Cicero's desiderata for literary historiography (*De or.* 2.63.1), which are ekphrastic/digressive in nature: aside from the passage we have already examined on the *Castra Cornelia* (24.3), these are introduced at 23.2 *hic locus abest*, 25.1 *ad portam quae appellatur* (the gates and theater of Utica), 34.1, 5 *erat vallis*, and 37.5–6 *castra erant* (the *Castra Cornelia*'s return).[43] Ships, which are naturally affiliate with digressions, appear and disappear in mini-catalogues (23.1, 3–5; 25.6), lastly at 2.43, when the Roman survivors are trying to escape.[44] There is a *sententia* (2.27.2 *nam quae volumus ea credimus libenter, et quae sentimus ipsi, reliquos sentire speramus*)[45] and an anecdote (2.35, the story of Fabius Paelignus).[46]

Central and most remarkable are the two passages of *oratio recta* (2.31–33), the longest in Caesar:[47] the first Curio's speech to his *consilium*, the second a *contio* to the legions. That *contio* is interrupted repeatedly (*crebro*) by its audience (*BC* 2.33.1–2):[48]

> *Qua oratione permoti milites crebro etiam dicentem interpellabant, ut magno cum dolore infidelitatis suspicionem sustinere viderentur. Discedentem vero ex contione universi cohortantur magno sit animo neu dubitet proelium committere et suam fidem virtutemque experiri. Quo facto commutata omnium et voluntate et opinione consensu suorum constituit Curio cum primum sit data potestas proelio rem committere.*

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42 Khellaf 2018, 268; see also Levene 2010, 54–52; on temporal sequences see Chausserie-LaPrée 1969, 24–39.

43 For *est locus* (etc.) introducing *descriptiones regionum* see de Jong 2012, 26 and Krebs 2023 *ad* 7.19.1.

44 Khellaf 2018, 258–272 on "the interrupting sea," with examples and bibliography; on the Ur-ship digression, the Homeric catalogue, see Sammons 2010, 135–196.

45 Rowe 1967, 399 with bibliography; there is another after the section on which I am concentrating, 2.39.4 *Haec tamen ab ipsis inflatius commemorabantur, ut de suis homines laudibus libenter praedicant* ("But there was still exaggeration in their report, given that men are inclined to boast about their praiseworthy actions").

46 For similar Caesarian inset narratives of soldierly excellence see Brown 2004 (on Pullo and Vorenus) and Kraus 2010, 56–57 (on Fabius at Gergovia); for a start on anecdotes in ancient historiography see Saller 1980.

47 Rasmussen 1963, 106–113, Grillo 2018, 141–142.

48 Those interruptions may hint at the tribunician roots of contional speech (Pina Polo 1989, 52). Cf. also Rasmussen 1963, 109: Curio "ist ein Mann des Forums, er ist Demagoge." On Curio's oratory see above, n. 31.

> Provoked by this speech, the soldiers repeatedly interrupted while Curio was still talking, making it apparent that they endured with great indignation the suspicion of disloyalty. But as he was leaving the meeting they all urged him to take heart and not hesitate to join battle and put their loyalty and courage to the test. As a result, the general inclination and opinion shifted, so Curio had the agreement of his side when he decided to commit the issue to battle as soon as an opportunity presented itself.

That inarticulate interruption, which seems to be in response to Curio's accusations of treachery (*ut* [...] *uiderentur*), leads into a *hortatio* of the general by the soldiers. The echoing present participles (*dicentem* [...] *discedentem*) offer a quick *repraesentatio* of an interchange which, though not as horrific as that between Drusus or Germanicus and the soldiers (Tac. *Agr.* 1.25, 1.34), is still alarming.[49] The interruption effects a kind of role reversal in which the soldiers, rather than their leader, deliver the effective *hortatio*; that reversal is marked by *commutata*, a word whose associations include not only a change in fortune (*OLD* s.v. 3) but also a *locus communis* on the mutability of things (*locus de rerum commutatione*, cf. *Rhet. Her.* 2.26.2) and a rhetorical surprise, as at *Rhet. Her.* 4.39.1: *Commutatio est, cum duae sententiae inter se discrepantes ex traiectione ita efferuntur, ut a priore posterior contraria priori proficiscatur, hoc modo: "Esse oportet, ut vivas, non vivere, ut edas."*[50] From this rhetorical change in turn derives the main plot change that leads Curio to engage in battle, a crucial *peripeteia* in the story.[51] Curio's forces will win this upcoming battle, but, encouraged by that victory, his natural overconfidence leads directly to his mistakes about Juba, and to his death.

The battle will take place "in the same place" (2.33.2 *eodem loco*) as Curio's and Varus' armies had taken a stand in the previous days:

> [*Curio*] *productos eodem loco quo superioribus diebus constiterat in acie collocat. Ne Varus quidem dubitat copias producere, sive sollicitandi milites sive aequo loco dimicandi detur*

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49 I thank Tony Woodman for help on this question. He compares Tac. *Agr.* 35.1 *Et adloquente adhuc Agricola militum ardor eminebat, et finem orationis ingens alacritas consecuta est, statimque ad arma discursum* ("Even as Agricola was still speaking, his soldiers' ardor was mounting; a mighty eagerness followed the end of his speech and there was an immediate scramble for arms"). Quintilian singles out *interpellatio* as one thing that might necessitate a digression to produce a desired effect on a judge (*Inst.* 4.3.16; see Lausberg 1998, § 341).

50 "Reciprocal Change occurs when two discrepant thoughts are so expressed by transposition that the latter follows from the former although contradictory to it, as follows: 'You must eat to live, not live to eat,'" transl. Caplan 1954.

51 For forms of *mutari* marking such sudden shifts in historiography cf. Livy 5.19.1, 27.10 and Luce's influential piece on the second half of Livy 5 (1971); for Caesar see Rowe 1967, 403.

occasio, ne facultatem praetermittat. Erat vallis inter duas acies, ut supra demonstratum est, non ita magna at difficili et arduo ascensu.

The next day he led his men to the position they had held previously and placed them in battle formation. Attius Varus did not hesitate to lead his forces out, either, so as not to pass up a chance, if he got the opportunity, of either appealing to Curio's soldiers or fighting on favorable ground. [34] There was a ravine between the two lines, as was indicated above. It was not particularly large but had a difficult and steep ascent.

That *eodem loco* marks both a topographical shift and what looks like the formal closure of a digression (see above, 141), as with it the story moves back to where it was at the end of chapter 27: *qua opinione adductus Varus postero die mane legiones ex castris educit. Facit idem Curio. Atque una valle non magna interiecta suas uterque copias instruit* (27.4)[52] — that is the *vallis* Caesar flags at 34.1 with *ut supra demonstratum est.* Curio's long speeches and their setting (*consilium* and *contio*, 31–32) have indeed functioned as a kind of inset digression.[53] Lest we miss it, the end of the inset panel is doubly determined, closed not only by *eodem loco*, but also by the kind of repetition typically found when narratives resume after an excursus. When Caesar picks up at 34.1 the military action he suspended at 27.3, he gives us more information about the *vallis*. Not only is this not a large valley (*non magna*, as we learned at 27.3) but it is marked by a difficult and steep climb (*valle non ita magna sed difficili et arduo ascensu*).

This small, rugged valley performs two narratological functions. First, with *interiecta* at 27.3, it hints at the inserted digressive scene to come, whose opening and closing it marks.[54] Second, this natural feature has two slightly varying descriptions, one as *non magna,* the second as *non ita magna sed difficili et arduo ascensu.*[55] When we arrive at it a second time, its landscape has been revised. That may be a result of different perspectives — the first time it is closely linked to the commanders' decisions; the second, with *ut supra demonstratum est*, to

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52 "Induced by this view of things Varus led his troops out of camp the following day. Curio did the same, and they drew up their forces on either side of a shallow ravine."

53 On the structure see, briefly, Gärtner 1975, 126–127.

54 *Intericere* and *interiectio* can describe inserting passages into a larger composition: *Rhet. Her.* 2.2.3; *Rhet. Her.* 1.6.9, Quint. *Inst.* 4.2.121, 8.2.15, 9.3.29, 11.3.37.

55 This gestures at the historiographical *topos* discussed above, of an easy versus a hard road. Together with the two routes from the *Castra Cornelia*, Caesar may be creating suspense by mapping Curio's bad choice onto what will turn out to be innocent landscape — for neither of these doubled routes in fact leads to a Caesarian defeat, even though the valley's topography worsens (2.34.5 "The ravine was so difficult to negotiate that the leaders in the ascent had a hard struggle unless they were assisted from below by their own men"). It is Curio's bad decisions later, not here, that doom him.

the Caesarian author, who perhaps sees difficulty that the eager generals do not[56] — or of the changeability of the African terrain. For we are now in Africa — or better, "Africa" — whose unreliable topography produces and encourages roundabout and disorderly motion, motion which is often neither safe nor easy.

That "African" disorder, as most prominently displayed in Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum*, is comprised most distinctively of topography that is hard to interpret (shifting sands, indefinable shorelines, mirages) and an enemy who is never quite where you think they are, with an ability to move with improbable speed across large areas.[57] So here in *BC* we find differing descriptions of the same place (above, on *Castra Cornelia*); motion faster than is probable (2.23.1–2 with Damon 2015 *ad loc.*); mirages (2.26.2, 43.2, cf. Sall. *Iug.* 53.1). The duplicity of the terrain may infect the characters: perhaps the most telling aspect of "African" disorder is the role-playing that its avatars engage in, manifest especially in doubling of actions and character.[58] Aside from Curio's doubled speeches and threatened substitution by his exhorting soldiers, there are two (unrelated) Varuses, both on the Pompeian side; the cognomen, as Emily Gowers acutely notes, means either knock-kneed or bowlegged, a doubled, opposite configuration.[59] Lies and misunderstandings proliferate, even when congruence appears (it is unclear whether the deserters speak truly or not, 2.27.2; Juba lies to the Romans, 44.2); Fabius Paelignus masquerades as a Pompeian (2.35.1–2, cf. Sall. *Iug.* 101.6); Curio repeatedly misreads people and reports (2.37.2 *nuntiis ac litteris*, 38.2 *auctoribus*, 39.2 *orationem*; see also above, n. 31).

It is fitting, therefore, that Caesar singles out a theater as one of the structures helping to fortify the Varan camp and restricting access to it (2.25.1):

Hoc explorato loco Curio castra Vari conspicit muro oppidoque coniuncta ad portam quae appellatur Belica, admodum munita natura loci, una ex parte ipso oppido Vtica, altera [a]

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56 A similar switch in focalization occurs with the two different descriptions of the *Castra Cornelia*, the first (above) emphasizing only its watery difficulties, the second (at 2.37.5–6) its fertility and abundance of salt, its defenses, and proximity to the sea. While it is possible that this description is focalized through Curio's optimism, it is presented in the indicative and apparently confirmed by the agreement of Curio's men (2.37.6 *Itaque omnium suorum consensu* [...] *bellum ducere parabat*, where the *itaque* refers to the positive characterization of the *Castra* as an ideal place from which to fight).

57 Scanlon 1988, Wiedemann 1993, Kraus 1999; on the idea of "Africa" in Pollio's narrative of these events see Henderson 1996a, 104–108 and in general, see Mudimbe 2004.

58 For "African" substitution, doubling, and masquerade, see Kraus 1999, 237–242.

59 The adjective proper is unusual at this period (earlier only at Plaut. *Merc. 639*, *Sitell. Frg.* 1.3, Lucil. 542, and Cic. *Part. or.* 126), though the cognomen is attested already in the fifth century BCE (Kajanto 1965, 242).

theatro, quod est ante oppidum — substructionibus eius operis maximis, aditu ad castra dif-ficili et angusto.[60]

When the narrowness of the camp's gate returns as a plot point at 2.35.3, the theater is not mentioned.[61] I see the theater's solo appearance at 2.25.1 as a kind of parallel *avant la lettre* to Vergil's cave of the nymphs, and indeed to his Carthage. In those scene-setting moments — the only two occurrences of *scaena* in the poem outside Dido's nightmare of being chased on the stage by Aeneas at 4.471 — Vergil presents Carthage as a place of theatricality both natural (in the harbor, *Aen.* 1.164 *tum silvis scaena coruscis*) and artificial (the only physical structure explicitly described in the new city is a theater, *Aen.* 1.422–429).[62] So here in Caesar, the theater marks the entire Curio episode as theatrical and constructed.[63] It is even possible that Caesar — that expert at political shade — is winking at Curio's own theater, described by Pliny the Elder (*HN* 36.116–118), itself a digressive passage forced (*degredi cogit*) on Pliny by the material:

> *Aufert animum et a destinato itinere degredi cogit contemplatio tam prodigae mentis ali-amque conectit maiorem insaniam e ligno. C. Curio, qui bello civili in Caesarianis partibus obit* [...] *theatra iuxta duo fecit amplissima ligno, cardinum singulorum versatili suspensa libramento, in quibus utrisque antemeridiano ludorum spectaculo edito inter sese aversis, ne invicem obstreperent scaenae, repente circumactis — ut constat, post primos dies etiam sed-entibus aliquis — cornibus in se coeuntibus faciebat amphitheatrum gladiatorumque proelia edebat* [...] *populum Romanum circumferens.* [...] *quae vilitas animarum ista aut quae querela de Cannis!*

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60 "After scouting this site Curio viewed Varus' camp adjacent to the city wall near the gate named for the god Baal, a camp well fortified by the nature of its site, on one side by Utica itself, on the other by the theater in front of the city, the foundation of that building being very large and the approach to the camp difficult and narrow." Note the similar sentence ending of theater-adjacent *castra* and doubled *vallis*: 25.1 *difficili et angusto* ~ 34.1 *difficili et arduo ascensu*.

61 *Hac fugientium multitudine ac turba portae castrorum occupantur atque iter impeditur, pluresque in eo loco sine vulnere quam in proelio aut fuga intereunt* ("The large crowd of fugitives filled the gateway of the camp and obstructed the road, and more men perished there unwounded than fell in the battle or retreat"). The topography of ancient Utica is as yet insufficiently understood, partly owing to a "steady eradication of previous structures" after the Caesarian period; see Ben Jerbania et al. 2019, 92. I thank Josephine Crawley Quinn for sharing Kallala et al. 2010; on the movement of the river and the coastline see Delile et al. 2015.

62 On this Vergilian passage see Polleichtner 2013.

63 Utica itself later becomes a kind of shadow for Carthage, frequently paired with it in subsequent literature: Pomponius Mela 1.34 (*Vtica et Carthago, illa fato Catonis insignis, haec suo*); Plin. *HN* 5.24, 5.76; Flor. 2.13.70 (Utica is *uelut altera Africae claustra*); Sil. 3.242; Oros. 5.11.4.

> Thoughts of this wasteful behaviour distract our attention and force us to leave our intended course, and entwine another, larger fantasy in wood. Gaius Curio, who died during the Civil War while fighting on Caesar's side [...] built close to each other two very large wooden theaters, each poised and balanced on a revolving pivot. In both of these, during the forenoon, a performance of a play was given once they had been revolved in opposite directions so that the two stages should not disturb each other. Suddenly the theatres wheeled around (and it is agreed that after the first few days they did so with some still seated), their corners met, and Curio made an amphitheatre and produced fights between gladiators, whirling the Roman people around. [...] What a contempt for life was this, or what of our complaint about Cannae![64]

Not only is the passage digressive, but like its subject, it entwines (*conectit*) one *insania* with another, greater one, which is itself double (*theatra duo* [...] *cardinum singulorum*), revolving (*versatili* [...] *aversis*), and round-about (*circumactis* [...] *in se coeuntibus* [...] *circumferens*). Read along with other temporary theatres by Amy Russell as a "way of exerting communal elite control" over political space, this theater was also a shocking example of illogic.[65] A shifting construction that rendered the now world-conquering Romans as helpless as they had been as losers at Cannae, it exploits the potential in spectacle to interchange the audience and the actors, ultimately presenting us with a structure in which theater and amphi-theater — singular and double shapes — have no meaningful difference. Curio's double theater is, then, like a rhetorical figure which projects *res* into *species*. I read the theater at Utica, shimmering into and out of existence depending on how it is needed in the plot, as converting the associated action into a projected space in which temporal shifts will invite both imaginative reconstruction of the past and fictional projection of the future.

3 Conclusions

Much of this narrative, of course, is very like other Caesarian narrative, and one could argue — as scholars have — that its abundance of ornament (for lack of a better word), especially the long direct speeches, is designed to magnify the hapless Curio. So Grillo: "The zealous lieutenant is portrayed with affection, his mistakes are blamed on his youthful overconfidence [...] while his death is made

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64 Translation by Eichholtz 1962, modified.
65 Russell 2016, 171; on the theater itself, with good remarks on spectacle and actors, see Schultze 2007, especially 143 on *cura*.

into an exemplum of *virtus*."[66] Topographical features are a regular part of Caesar's style everywhere; it has been noted, indeed, by Rüpke that he begins the *Bellum Gallicum* by signaling that he is writing a geographical *commentarius*.[67] Both ethnographical and military anecdote are found throughout his texts, not simply in the official "digressions". Concentration on the actions of lieutenants is amply paralleled,[68] as is the reporting of actions Caesar did not witness (the best parallel is also a disaster, the above-mentioned defeat of Sabinus and Cotta in *BG* 5). To that extent, therefore, Curio's story in the *Bellum civile* is an integral, not digressive, part of its texture. And the implied temporal shifts both forward to the end of the civil war and backward to the Hannibalic conflict can easily be understood as a means of anchoring this narrative in the larger story of Rome's actions in North Africa. Here we might cite David Levene's piece (1992) on the *Bellum Iugurthinum* as fragment, in which he argues that some of the main devices Sallust uses to embed his monograph in a larger whole are analogous temporal side- and fore-shadowings. It is the miniaturization of the narrative here — together with Caesar's typical allusiveness — that makes these digressive elements seem marked in Curio's case. But that digressive writing is in some ways indistinguishable from non-digressive writing is surely the point — and here I return to Khellaf's work. He argues that historiographical digressions, particularly those involving ethnography, the sea, and the imaginative or marvelous, in their "carnivalesque blending of historical modes and alternative genres" are a "form of 'double-voiced discourse'" which breaks down the neat conceptual binaries that we have often looked for in history, including those of the built environment and the natural, reported and direct speech, the straight and the circular.[69] One might add that the extensive direct speech in this episode magnifies the distributed authorship so familiar from the *BG*, allowing in a loud and heterodox voice which challenges the authorial narrative precisely in a moment when the story has wandered off the supervised path.[70] Curio's story, with its feints at digressiveness via the theater, *descriptiones loci*, and ships; its marked *oratio recta*; and above all its circling paths, finds Caesar telling a tragic tale set as a *mise en abyme* within his "primary" *commentarius* discourse, offering us different understandings of Rome's North African history.

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66 Grillo 2012, 34; cf. Gärtner 1975, 126, "Curio ist der tragische Held."

67 Rüpke 1992 and see above, n. 6.

68 Welch 1998.

69 Khellaf 2018, 249.

70 I thank Ingo Gildenhard for helping me think about voice here; see also Batstone/Damon 2006, 98–101. See also Krebs 2021 on distributed authorship in Caesar, with further bibliography, and above, n. 31 on Curio the (non-)writer.

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Edwin Shaw
Expansion, Heterogeneity and Method in Sallust's Digressions

Abstract: Sallust's use of digression is a significant feature of his historiography: in addition to the volume of such passages he includes, his use of digressions draws particular force from the ways in which they subvert the otherwise tightly delimited formal characteristics of his works. The role of digressions in echoing the themes and ideas foregrounded in Sallust's narratives has been well-studied; in this chapter I focus instead on the formal expansiveness of Sallust's deployment of digressions. In addition to their thematic relevance, digressions represent calculated challenges to the coherence and uniformity of the historical text; as well as expansions of historical subject-matter, digressions represent moments of expansion on the more profound levels of the historian's voice and the historiographical norms which obtain in his text, extending even to the attitude towards historical truthfulness demonstrated in different parts of his historical work.

Keywords: Sallust, digression, truth, monograph, expansion

A particular freedom in digression has long been identified as characteristic of Sallust's works. Indeed, the second century AD historian Granius Licianus commented explicitly on Sallust's willingness to reach beyond his immediate subject: for Licianus, such digressiveness was in fact such a feature of the Sallustian text that it interfered with its very generic status as history. *Nam Sallustium non ut historicum aiunt, sed ut oratorem legendum. nam et tempora reprehendit sua et delicta carpit et contiones inserit et dat invicem loca, montes, flumina et hoc genus alia, et culpat et conparat disserendo* ("Sallust, they say, must be read not as a historian, but as an orator. For he attacks his own times and picks fault at their misdeeds, adds in *contiones*, and gives us places, mountains, rivers, and other things of this sort; he lays blame, and makes comparisons through analysis.").[1] For Licianus (and the other critics suggested by his verb *aiunt*), such freedom provided an example of Sallustian over-reach — Sallust's excesses are implicitly compared with the more focused account of Licianus

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1 Gran. Lic. 36.31–32 C.

himself.[2] For better or worse, Sallust's text offered a powerful example of the use of digression within the historiography, and the connection between "digressiveness" and the overall effect of a historical work.

Consideration of Sallust's historical works — *Bellum Catilinae*, *Bellum Iugurthinum*, *Historiae* — demonstrates the accuracy of Licianus' assessment, in terms of Sallust's willingness to depart from the narrative subject-matter indicated by his works' titles and statements of theme.[3] Formal definition of historiographical digression is complex (I will return to this question below); but the varied subject-matter Sallust includes reveals a series of examples of passages which interrupt or deviate from the professed themes of the texts, as well as from the immediate thread of the narrative.[4] Among the most overtly digressive passages are discussions of other periods outside the bounds of Sallust's historical subject-matter, geographical and ethnographical descriptions, and — as indicated by Licianus — passages in which the historian offers explicit moral and political assessment.[5]

Although this would seem to support Licianus' assessment of Sallust's subject-matter, later readers have been less ready to dismiss Sallust as "an orator, rather than a historian", or to see his digressions simply as deviations: in keeping with more sophisticated approaches to historiographical digression generally (as attested in the other contributions to this volume) the focus of more recent work on Sallust's digressions — as on his speeches — has been on the contribution they make to his broader historiographical project.[6] In particular, the digressions have been read as thematically resonant with ideas developed elsewhere.[7] Indeed, I have recently offered a systematic treatment of Sallust's digressions,

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2 Licianus himself promises that *moras et non urgentia omittemus*, "we shall leave out delays and material which is not pressing" (36.30); to judge from the surviving text, his account was stylistically laconic.

3 For surveys of Sallust's use of digression generally, see Thiessen 1912, 1–39; Perrochat 1950; Büchner 1982, 131–160; on specific digressions see also the works in note 7 below.

4 On defining historiographical digression, see Shaw 2022a, 79–84, offering a narratological definition based on the relationship between digressions and the chronology of the main account; even on the basis of a more arbitrary definition Sallust's digressiveness is apparent.

5 An example of *analepsis* is the *archaeologia* at *Cat.* 6–13; of geographical description, the description of the continent of Africa at *Iug.* 17; of political assessment, the *synkrisis* at *Cat.* 54.

6 For recent studies of Sallustian speech emphasising its sophistication and thematic relevance, see, e.g., Batstone 2010; Marincola 2010, 279–286; Feldherr 2012.

7 Important pieces reading Sallust's use of digression in terms of thematic echoing include Scanlon 1988; Wiedemann 1993; Feldherr 2021, 172–194 (all dealing with the digressions of the *Bellum Jugurthinum*); Heldmann 1993, 93–117 (on *Cat.* 6–13); Boyd 1987 (on the sketch of Sempronia at *Cat.* 25).

arguing that such passages represent significant *loci* of analysis, and opportunities for the development of a coherent set of historical and political ideas.[8] It is in this sense that the definition of historiographical digression is more complex than it might initially appear: in that digressions might make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of a work, defining them purely against a criterion of narrative relevance is potentially reductive. I use the term here, then, for convenience rather than as an endorsement of all of its (negative) connotations.

However, although Sallust's digressions are certainly more than mere irrelevances, we should not, I think, go so far as to assimilate them entirely with the rest of the historical text, as Catherine Sensal has suggested. Sensal argues that in fact Sallust does not digress at all — so relevant and important are the passages so conventionally termed that they should be considered as central components of the historical text.[9] Although Sallust's digressions are important passages, in my view they do remain textually distinct in significant ways, and to elide that distinction is to minimise some of their particular power: I want here to consider the sense that as well as supporting Sallust's historical interpretation, they also at times and in various ways subvert or complicate it.

In this chapter I will explore some aspects of Sallust's digression beyond the idea of thematic relevance; while this is important, its counterpoint is the sense of deviation and difference which is inherent in the form. The question is simple: why does Sallust digress, and what is to be gained by so doing? I will suggest here that digression — which in Sallust's usage is a particularly clearly marked intrusion on the concision of the whole — introduces a deliberate otherness into the historical account, in a way which points towards further interpretative and historiographical complexity: in his use of such passages, Sallust draws on and indeed thematises the difference inherent within digression to achieve particular effects.

While deviation is obviously inherent within digression as a literary technique, by focusing on the liminality of Sallust's digressions I will suggest that they represent points at which not only the historian's subject-matter is relaxed, but in which central characteristics of Sallust's historiographical approach also slip: digressions in Sallust deviate not just in terms of their subject-matter, but also in more fundamental respects. I will begin by demonstrating the particular importance and expansive qualities of Sallust's inclusion of digressions in the text; in the second part of the chapter, I will consider a further example of how

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8 Shaw 2022a. In this chapter I have attempted to explore a different side of Sallust's usage.
9 Sensal 2010.

digression as a text-type subverts and expands the characteristics of Sallust's historiography.

1 Selectivity, concision and the otherness of digression

In stressing the otherness of Sallust's digressions, we must begin once again from fundamentals, and the relationship between digressive passages and the historical narratives from which they deviate. This conditions the role of digressions in the text, and points already towards the importance of Sallust's deployment of the form. Sallust's use of digression, I suggest, derives particular meaning from one of the most characteristic features of his historiography: his tight narrative focus, and the strict bounds Sallust places on his historical subject-matter. The concision of Sallust's historical subject-matter lends digressions a special significance, and — in throwing digressive passages into such sharp relief — highlights especially what we might term their liminal qualities.

The narrow historical scope of Sallust's works was an unusual and important feature of his writing. The selection of subject-matter (especially starting- and ending-points) for historiographical treatment was and remains the historian's most fundamental decision, and brings with it clear interpretative implications. As Hayden White and others have shown, periodisation and the definition of a particular episode are inescapably partial, and are tied to the historian's interpretation of a period more widely: the definition of subject-matter, and the bounding of the historical subject, are critical elements within the emplotment of a history as a whole.[10] Indeed, this was recognised by classical theorists of historiography: Sallust's near-contemporary Dionysius of Halicarnassus includes in his *On Thucydides* a discussion of the alleged failures of Thucydides in precisely this decision.[11] We might well take issue with the suggestion made by Dionysius that the historian should begin at the earliest conceivable point (by what measure?) — but this demonstrates the attention paid to issues of historical periodisation, selectivity and emplotment, and recognition of the ways

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10 Hayden White's fundamental work on historiographical emplotment is White 1973.

11 D.H. *Thuc*. 10; cf. *Pomp*. 3 on the selection of a good and noble subject for history as a morally charged decision, and as one of the criteria by which a historian might be judged (see further on this criterion Sacks 1983, 66).

that such decisions might condition the message of a historical work as a whole.[12]

The events of the Catilinarian Conspiracy provide a perfect illustration of the interpretative decisions involved in the definition of subject-matter, and the significance of Sallust's tight emplotment of the material. Sallust's version has a coherence of its own, from inception of the conspiracy through to an arguably tragic *denouement* in Catiline's death at the battle of Pistoia: these bounds frame a "Catilinarian" version of events, at least in terms of where they place the episode's historical emphasis, and the wider meaning they draw out of it.[13] The conspiracy constitutes a self-contained narrative of political and military strife; the identification of the episode with the life of Catiline himself not only stresses his importance, but also the lack of resolution of the wider tensions out of which Catiline emerged.[14] However, this was of course not the only possible version of these events; in fact, Cicero himself had suggested a quite different one in a well-known letter to his friend the historian Lucceius (which was apparently widely disseminated).[15] Cicero there envisages a version of events with a coherence of its own (*argumentum unum*, "a single theme") — but rather than bounding it by the activities of Catiline, it is to be framed around Cicero himself, and to encompass not just the suppression of the conspiracy but also its consequences, in Cicero's exile and eventual (triumphant) return.[16] The Ciceronian framing, then, offered an alternative version, placing the narrative stress on Cicero himself and drawing in a different cast of characters (including presumably a second major villain in Clodius); but it also points towards a much more positive reading of the wider significance of the episode, with the conspiracy only the first act in a wider Ciceronian drama (with a happy ending). Both histories are *de coniuratione Catilinae*; but the meaning derived from events is fundamentally shaped by the bounds which the historian sets on them.[17]

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12 On the importance of the end-point of a historical account in shaping its meaning, see Marincola 2005.

13 On the *Cat.* as tragic text see Späth 1998 and Foucher 2000, 787–789. The work's famous ending highlights the ambiguous quality of victories in civil war (*Cat.* 61.9).

14 On the monograph's paradoxical memorialisation of Catiline, see Shaw 2022a, 292–307, 323–335. On Sallust's manipulation of common closural devices (death and victory) to point towards unresolved aspects see Marincola 2005, 302–304.

15 Cic. *Fam.* 5.12; for its wider circulation see Cic. *Att.* 4.6.4, encouraging Atticus to make sure he gets hold of a copy.

16 *Fam.* 5.12.4; 5.12.2: *argumentum unum*.

17 Kierdorf (2003, 72) reads Sallust's selection of the Catilinarian conspiracy as itself driven by the possibilities of emplotting it in a distinctive and productive way.

In light of the importance of these issues, Sallust's tight delimitation of his narratives is clearly central to his historiographical project more generally. This is also given particular force by Sallust's pointed deviation from the well-established forms of earlier Roman writing.[18] Avoiding the large-scale *ab urbe condita* narratives of many of his predecessors, but at the same time also departing from the other major model for Roman historiography in the more chronologically limited but still eclectic accounts of authors like Sempronius Asellio, Sallust had promised at the beginning of his historiographical career to treat Roman history *carptim*, "by individual episodes": that is, to write history not as a continuous stream, but rather as separated out (chronologically and thematically) into discrete units.[19] Sallust here sets forth a distinct and important methodological position — and indeed all three of Sallust's works fulfil his promise of thematic concision, maintaining a focus on unified sets of events or carefully delimited periods. The promise to write *carptim* is made concrete in the monographic form for Sallust's first two works: this was an unusual choice in comparison to earlier Roman historiography, but one which embedded the focus of Sallust's subject-matter in the structure of the text itself.[20] Indeed, in practice the subject-matter of both *Bellum Catilinae* and *Bellum Iugurthinum* is reduced to a single narrative thread, with as little as possible conceded even to the immediate consequences of the conflicts treated (the *Bellum Iugurthinum* does not even cover the death of its eponymous anti-hero).[21] Even within the period of the narrative, Sallust avoids events outside his chosen subject. Towards the end of the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, for example, the reader is suddenly confronted with the looming threat of the Cimbri and Teutones advancing on Italy from the North after the battle of Arausio: Sallust's emphasis on the severity of this threat is striking, given that it has so far gone entirely unmentioned in the monograph.[22]

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18 For a general overview of Latin historiography before Sallust, see Mehl 2011, 41–62 (emphasising the two established subjects of writing *ab urbe condita* and more contemporary periods; cf. (still) Badian 1966.

19 *Cat*. 4.2: *statui res gestas populi Romani carptim, ut quaeque memoria digna videbantur, perscribere*: "I resolved to write up the deeds of the Roman people by individual episodes, as they seemed worthy of memory".

20 On monographic history at Rome and Sallust's place in relation to it, see Puccioni 1981.

21 *Iug*. 114.3 refers to the magnificence of Marius' triumph, in which Jugurtha appeared; but his death is not mentioned. On the *Jugurtha* as "historical fragment" thematising its own incompleteness, see Levene 1992. Note recently Stover/Woudhuysen 2015, arguing that the end of the *Bellum Iugurthinum* as transmitted may not have been the original ending of Sallust's text, and that some report of Marius' triumph may be missing; this does not fundamentally alter the concise emplotment of the whole.

22 *Iug*. 114: the reference is partly included in that it precipitated the next phase of Marius' career.

Indeed, it is worth noting that even by comparison with earlier examples of the monograph, Sallust's works are remarkable for the restriction of their scope. The only earlier example known in Latin, written in the late second century BC by Coelius Antipater, had treated the whole of the Second Punic War in seven books; Thucydides' history, which had originated the form, is comparable in scale and coverage to Coelius'. In comparison even to these examples of historical focus, the concision of both Sallust's subject and scale is of a different order of magnitude:[23] the *Bellum Catilinae* is in its range roughly equivalent to the single episode of Corcyraean *stasis* to which Thucydides devotes one of his most famous set-pieces.[24] Even in the traditionally more expansive form of Roman *annales* which Sallust adopted in the *Historiae*, the focus remains clear: a period of around fifteen years, covering the aftermath of the Sullan settlement and the rise of Pompey, viewed from a clearly established thematic perspective.[25] Given the work's fragmentary state, it is difficult to assess its thematic coherence and bounds; but the historical subject-matter is again carefully considered, in selecting a brief, illustrative period out of the wide sweep of Roman history against which Sallust contextualised his selection in the work's preface.[26]

The concision of Sallust's subjects is mirrored in other aspects of his approach, which further embed the same taut rapidity: for example, it is echoed in his linguistic *brevitas*, a manner of writing clipped to the point of occasional obscurity, and the widely-recognised keynote of Sallustian style.[27] The compression of Sallust's language (what Quintilian termed his *immortalis velocitas*, "imperishable speed") reinforces the urgency created by Sallust's narrative focus.[28] Seneca the Younger in a letter referred to Sallust's *amputatae sententiae et verba ante expectatum cadentia*, "truncated thoughts, and words cut off

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23 Coelius Antipater is *FRHist* 15: see Briscoe's discussion *ad loc.* for the reconstruction of his work. Although Coelius had innovated the historical monograph in Latin, in practice Sallust owes little to his work (although Krebs [2015, 519] suggests a reference back to Coelius in the inclusion of *Bellum* in the titles of Sallust's monographs).

24 Thuc. 3.81–84.

25 On the scope of the *Historiae* see McGushin 1992, 10–15; on their thematic coherence, Rosenblitt 2019, 131–139.

26 The preface of the *Historiae* did contain large-scale reflections on the trajectory of Roman history (see, e.g., *Hist*. 1.10–15R); these are distinguished from the fuller and more immediate context which follows (which Ramsey's edition separates out under the heading "Historical background"). On the preface of the *Hist*. see especially La Penna 1963; Scanlon 1998; McGushin 1992, 64–84.

27 On Sallustian style see Kroll 1927 and Syme 1964, 240–273; on his *brevitas* see Dziuba 2008 (noting the tension between *brevitas* and Sallust's tendency to digress).

28 Quint. *Inst*. 10.1.102.

before one expects"; Seneca the Elder similarly reports Sallust's concern in using his Greek sources to cut out anything extraneous in the service of the most compressed possible expression.[29]

This concision of scope and expression sets Sallust's work against that of his historiographical predecessors and contemporaries. Perhaps echoing elements of the Neoterics' poetic agenda, Sallust applied high polish to smaller-scale subjects, a model diametrically opposed to the Livian conception of historiography as vast *monumentum*, and to the "milky richness" of his style.[30] This concision is directly tied to the broader project of Sallust's work: as his prefaces make clear, the point is not to offer an expansive retelling of established narratives of the Roman past, but to articulate something sharper via carefully chosen examples.[31] Chronological and thematic concision focuses the audience's attention on what Sallust considered truly meaningful: Sallust forces his reader to confront the darkest parts of Rome's recent history, using individual examples as emblematic of wider historical dynamics and ideas.

This careful concision makes digression a particularly striking technique for Sallust as a historian. Digressions — deviations from and intrusions onto the work's stated subject — provided Sallust with an opportunity for the temporary relaxation of the tight limits set on the historical subject-matter; in the context of such a focused account, digressive material is set apart especially clearly, in its juxtaposition with the concision of the main narrative. When digressions do appear, they therefore take on a special significance; moments of suspension of the text's self-imposed bounds are invested with particular meaning. The retarding qualities of digression are also important and clearly marked, against the rapidity of Sallust's style; this, too, configures digression as a striking formal interruption.

The contrast here between tightly controlled narrative and the expansiveness of digression gives Sallust's digressions a particular liminal status: at the same time integrated into the historiographical whole, but also "set off" by transgressing the distinctive limits the historian had set on his work. This sense of transgression, of course, is also seen in other historians' deployment of the

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29 Sen. *Ep*. 114.17; Sen. *Controv*. 9.1.13–14.

30 For the painstaking efforts Sallust expended on his writing, see Quint. *Inst*. 10.3.8; for neoteric polish see, e.g., Catullus' description of Helvius Cinna's highly worked *Zmyrna* at Catull. 95. For Livy's conception of history as *monumentum* see Livy, *praef*. 6; for the "milky richness" of his style (directly contrasted with Sallust's), Quint. *Inst*. 10.1.32.

31 On the connection been Sallust's form and his purpose, see recently Papaioannou 2014, 115 (reading the monographs as illustrative manuals of political crisis for practical instruction); cf. Shaw 2022a, 29–40.

form: Livy's well-known Alexander digression, for example, draws us away from the historical core of the Roman narrative via an extended counterfactual.[32] However, the effect of digression in Sallust's case is especially striking, because of the heterodox minimalism of his historical subject-matter: in the context of a work with such a clearly established agenda of concision, digressions sharply intrude upon the reader, and challenge the steady progression of the narrative.[33]

The heterogenous qualities of Sallust's digressions are also illustrated in the way these passages are articulated, and in particular how Sallust closes digressive passages to return to the main stream of his work. The specific wording of such closing formulae varies; but one repeated version is some variation on *ad inceptum redeo*.[34] While this is usually taken as marking a return to the starting-point *of the digression itself*, the sense of a return to *Sallust's historiographical undertaking more widely* is also relevant here.[35] Stressing this sense of such return-formulae emphasises the sense of formal distinction in Sallust's use of digression, further setting off such passages from the body of the historiographical narrative (as well as making better sense in some contexts than the alternative translation).[36]

For Sallust, an author who drew heavily on jarring and dislocative effects in his writing, I suggest that the intrusiveness of digression is precisely part of its significance: this is not digression simply for the refreshment of the audience,

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32 Livy 19.17–19; on this digression, and particularly its deployment of counterfactuals as a tool of historical thought, see Morello 2002.

33 The disruptive quality of Sallust's digressions is noted in relation to the *Bellum Iugurthinum* by Évrard (1998, 36–41).

34 *ad inceptum redeo*, *Iug.* 42.5; cf. *Cat.* 7.7, a denial of further digression on the grounds that *ea res longius nos ab incepto traheret*, "this would take us further from our undertaking". Other formulae include *nunc ad rem redeo*, "now I return to my subject" (*Iug.* 79.10), with similar significance, *de superiore coniuratione satis dictum*, "enough has been said about the first conspiracy" (*Cat.* 19.5) and similarly *de Africa et eius incolis ad necessitudinem rei satis dictum* "enough has been said about Africa for the requirements of my subject" (*Iug.* 19.8). All of these highlight the liminal quality outside the emplotment of the whole piece of the digression so concluded.

35 Sallust uses *inceptum* to refer to his historiographical undertaking more generally in the programmatic introduction of his project at *Cat.* 4.2.

36 See *nunc ad inceptum redeo* at *Iug.* 4.9: this usage has frustrated some scholars (Wiedemann 1979; 1980; Earl 1979; 1981; Malcolm 1980) in that it applies the closing formula for a digression to a passage which is not actually digressive (in that it is part of the preface); but translating *inceptum* as "undertaking" rather than "starting-point" offers a much clearer sense of generic return.

but as a pointed deviation from the concision of his historical style.[37] This again foregrounds the contribution that digressions might make to the themes of the text: overt digression prompted the reader to consider the relevance of the material so included, placing the interpretative onus onto the audience in a manner familiar from Sallust's practice elsewhere.[38] However, it also points towards a different set of effects, derived precisely from the formal contrast of such passages and relating to the construction of the historical account itself. Digressions — suspensions of historiographical norms — allow Sallust to expand and vary his historical repertoire; in some cases they also represent moments at which the coherence of the historical text is itself subverted, and at which some broader historiographical questions might be thematised. In the light of the contrast between concision and expansiveness, digressions offer a kind of alternative sidelight not just on Sallust's historical subject-matter, but on the norms of the historical account itself, calling into question some of its formal characteristics. Considering Sallust's digressions in this light echoes stimulating recent readings of Sallust's work as in various ways drawing attention to its own problematic qualities, or its inadequacy to properly compass the complexity of historical events.[39]

Two examples will illustrate these ideas: both are clearly set off from the body of the historical account, and deploy this sense of difference in particular ways. My first example is drawn from among Sallust's most apparently conventional digressions: "apparently conventional", in that the passage is a historical digression (i.e. an *analepsis* covering an earlier period of Roman history) and serves broadly to contextualise the historical narrative which follows. Such a contextualising role for digression was well-established: however, this passage deviates from the established model in ways which emphasise its jarring and expansive aspects. It demonstrates the special importance of digression against Sallust's regular concision, and the expansive possibilities of the form in Sallust's usage.

The example is drawn from the fragmentary *Historiae*: I have chosen it in part because it has been much less extensively studied than those in the monographs. Of course, the poor preservation of the *Historiae* generally (predomi-

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37 On the dislocative and unsettling effects of Sallust's style, see Syme 1964, 257: "In style as in sentiments, the determinant in Sallust is opposition and revulsion." See further Kroll 1927, 283–288 on juxtaposition and *inconcinnitas* in Sallust's work; O'Gorman 2007 on style as echo of Sallust's historical convictions.

38 On this aspect of Sallust's practice see Shaw 2022b.

39 See the path-breaking work of Batstone 1988 and 1990, and especially now Feldherr 2021.

nantly via short quotations from later authors, especially grammarians) can make it difficult to identify structural features such as digressions;[40] however, this passage is better preserved than much of the rest, its content can further be reconstructed from later authors who made use of it, and its digressive quality (marked by its subject-matter) has been agreed by editors of the text since the nineteenth century.[41] As such, it offers a useful model for the possible role of digression even in a work of increased scope such as the *Historiae*.

Sallust began the *Historiae* with a very clear statement of theme: in the opening sentence, he set out his subject in the familiar annalistic manner as events from the consulship of Catulus and Lepidus (78 BC) onwards.[42] However, immediately after the preface Sallust seems to have contradicted this by addressing not the events of 78, but the bloody decade of civil strife which had preceded it: the account seems to have constituted a significant digression, distinguished from the historical remarks of the preface by the scale and detail of the account. Indeed, the period covered in the digression is comparable to that treated in the whole of the rest of the *Historiae*.[43] The reconstruction of the digression is open to some debate (including the attribution of specific fragments), but studies of the passage agree on its broad outlines:[44] it covered Sulla's initial march on the city and Marius' flight, the return of Marius and Sulla's absence in the east in the mid-80s, his return after the peace of Dardanus, and the civil war between Sulla and the remaining Marians down to the reduction of remaining centres of resistance in 81.[45] Throughout, there seems to have been an emphasis on the brutality of civil strife across these years: many of the fragments deal with the grisly violence perpetrated by both sides.[46]

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40 On the transmission of the *Historiae* see succinctly McGushin 1992, 5–10.

41 E.g. Maurenbrecher 1893, 9–12; McGushin 1992, 84–85; Ramsey 2015, 16–36; La Penna/ Funari 2015, 63–70. See independently Rawson 1987, Fantham 1987 and the synthesis of Konrad 1988 on the use of this digression by scholiasts on Lucan, which can be valuable in reconstructing its scope.

42 *Hist*. 1.1R: *res populi Romani M. Lepido Q. Catulo consulibus ac deinde militiae et domi gestas composui* "I have written up the deeds of the Roman people, in the field and at home, from the consulship of M. Lepidus and Q. Catulus onwards." All references to the fragments of the *Historiae* are per Ramsey's Loeb edition 2015.

43 For brief discussion of the scope and character of the digression as a whole, see Konrad 1988 and 1997, 57–58.

44 I will not here engage with questions around the attribution of specific fragments; these issues do not change my interpretation of the passage as a whole.

45 See *Hist*. 1.22–47R with Ramsey's comments *ad loc*. for the attributions.

46 See, e.g., 1.36–37R on the grisly death of Marius Gratidianus; 1.38–40R on the Sullan proscriptions.

On the most superficial level, this passage thus frames the beginning of the historical account by setting out the immediate historical context of the year 78: indeed, much of the business of the year revolved around responses to Sulla, in the immediate aftermath of his regime.[47] Beyond this, and in keeping with the thematic echoing of Sallustian digression, the significance of such a digression as a kind of thematic key or paradigm is also clear: in introducing his account of the aftermath of the Sullan settlement with a discussion of its violent prehistory, Sallust set out a programmatic understanding of recent Roman politics to colour the rest of his work. A detailed account of the violence which Sulla had precipitated immediately complicated his claim to have resettled the state with his reforms; if we see the *Historiae* as heavily concerned with Sulla's traumatic legacy (as Alison Rosenblitt has argued), opening the work with a digression on the violence of the decade which had brought him to power clearly set the tone, and conditioned the reader's response to the narrative which followed.[48] In this sense, the digression clearly illustrates Sallust's use of digression to echo the themes of his historical narratives.

However, beyond this the digression also exemplifies the kind of historiographical expansion and perhaps subversion which I have suggested above is also characteristic of Sallust's use of the form. The inclusion of the digression here prompts a series of further questions, playing on the inherent deviation of digression as a form, and the relationship between this passage and the project of the *Historiae* more widely. In the first place, although we do not know how the passage was introduced, it is striking that this material sharply confutes the statement of theme of the work's first sentence, issuing an immediate challenge to the coherence of the period Sallust had selected for his subject. To begin not with the stated subject but immediately to digress was a historiographical move familiar from Sallust's first monograph (which had done something similar with the *archaeologia*, the large-scale treatment of Roman history which obtrudes on Sallust's account of the beginnings of Catiline's conspiracy) as well as from earlier historians' works such as Thucydides' and Polybius'.[49] However, it derives additional force here from the similarity of period between digression and main narrative; this is not large-scale contextualisation of the narrative against the

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47 See, e.g., the speech of Lepidus at *Hist*. 1.49R, a polemic (and chronologically peculiar) attack on Sulla; on the themes of this speech and its importance within the *Historiae* as a whole see Rosenblitt 2013.

48 See Rosenblitt 2019, 93–99; cf. Sensal 2009.

49 *Cat*. 6–13. Thucydides digresses in Book 1 with not just his *archaeologia* (1.2–20) but also the *Pentecontaetia* (1.89–117). The whole of Polybius' first book is effectively a digression on the First Punic War, which predates his stated subject of the Second (explained at Plb. 1.3).

long trajectory of Roman history (or even the provision of recent political context, in the manner of Thucydides' *Pentecontaetia*), but a far more detailed narrative account, apparently treated at least in part in fully worked-up detail.[50] The effect of this marked deviation — a subversion of expectations for Sallust's readers — is immediately to subvert the coherence of the starting-point Sallust had selected for his work, and the idea that 78 BC could represent any kind of meaningful beginning. The digression calls into question the historian's choice of theme itself, immediately complicating the question of historical beginnings, and with it questions of historical responsibility and culpability thematised in the *Historiae* more generally.[51] Right from the beginning, the relationship between Sulla and his inheritors is brought to the surface by the formal contrast: the intrusion of the digression prompts a series of questions about the period more generally, and immediately complicates the emplotment of the period implied by the bounds Sallust set on his history.

We might also consider the formal implications of the digression: in particular, how it relates to Sallust's newly-adopted annalistic format. As noted above, Sallust's statement of theme had clearly signalled the annalistic formal conventions which would obtain for this final work (i.e. year-by-year narrative, covering Rome's wars and internal politics); to judge from the fortuitous evidence of a palimpsest of a later part of the *Historiae*, this was borne out in the structure of the text.[52] To therefore begin with an episodic narrative of civil strife, diverting from the systematic and comprehensive qualities of annalistic narrative, was a further complication of the historiographical unity of the work. In fact, this digression seems almost to embed a kind of monographic treatment within the annalistic account, in that the digression allows a return to the focused investigation of a given theme familiar from his practice in his earlier works, here facilitating a detailed investigation of the enormities of civil violence.

This digression, then, expands Sallust's form by effectively reconciling the thematically unified treatment of the monographs with the broader ambitions of the *Historiae*; the deviation from and complication of the established emplotment of the period immediately contributes to the historical argumentation of the whole piece: it subverts the narrative coherence of the whole, while at the

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50 See, e.g., *Hist*. 1.45R, a (historically secure) description of the execution of Carbo.

51 Again, note the connection here to the competing assessments of the legacy of Sulla in the speeches of Lepidus (1.49R) and Philippus (1.67R) in book 1 of the *Historiae*.

52 Bloch 1961; on the structure of the work more generally see Perl 1975; Ramsey 2015, xv–xviii; La Penna/Funari 2015, 45–48. On the flexibility of the annalistic format, see Rich 2011 (with discussion of the *Historiae* at 24–29); the content of the digression nonetheless clearly demonstrates a suspension of annalistic norms.

same time supplementing its analytical potential. This relies, I think, on the explicit and marked liminality of Sallust's use of digression: these effects are vested with particular force by the tension created by the digression's position within the *Historiae* as a whole.

The value of considering Sallust's digressions in terms of difference as well as relevance is also illustrated by one of the digressions of the *Bellum Iugurthinum*. Sallust's treatment of the Philaeni brothers appears two thirds of the way into the monograph, in the context of Sallust's account of Metellus' campaigning in Africa.[53] In fact, part of the role of the passage is structural, in that it marks the interruption of the campaign by the winter of 108/107.[54] This part of the monograph is focused on the military aspects of Sallust's subject-matter, and Metellus' gradual prosecution of the war: although the opening section of the *Bellum Iugurthinum* had dealt extensively with Roman politics, and political discord re-emerges later in the monograph (with the clash between Metellus and his lieutenant Marius), the immediate context is of Metellus' success against Jugurtha, and specifically the capture of the town of Thala.[55] At this point, Sallust inserts a digression on the marvellous deed of two Carthaginian brothers who had by their valour made a significant contribution to the fortunes of their state.

This digression has been quite extensively studied, in particular (as with Sallust's digressions generally) considering the thematic resonances of the text for the rest of the monograph. Commentators have focused in particular on the significance of the thematics of virtue and concord in the passage: the Philaeni have been read variously as illustrative of the triumph of virtue over (Cyrenean) perfidy, or as a model for what might be achieved via co-operation (as opposed to the internal conflict thematised elsewhere in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, including in the clash between Metellus and Marius which emerges shortly after this passage).[56] The passage's theme of shifting and unfixed borders has also been read as echoing the uncertainty and mutability characteristic of Roman perceptions of Africa as a continent, and of Jugurtha himself.[57] These echoes are certainly part of the importance of the passage; it plays a role within the thematic economy of the monograph as a whole.

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53 *Iug*. 79.

54 For the digression's chronological significance see Syme 1964, 145.

55 The siege of Thala is at *Iug*. 75–76.

56 See Scanlon 1998 and Wiedemann 1993 for these readings.

57 See Kraus 1999 and Feldherr 2021, 168–211. On Roman ideas about Africa as characterised by unknowability and instability see Evans 1999, esp. 54–57.

However, beyond this thematic echoing, I want to consider here the sense of historiographical variegation and difference created by the passage. I suggest that the inclusion and themes of this formally distinct passage creates a kind of counterfactual effect which is not just historical — contrasting with the characteristics of Sallust's historical subject-matter — but also what we might term historiographical, in offering an opportunity to reflect on the characteristic features of Sallust's historiography.[58] In addition to the thematic resonances between the digression and the historical subject-matter, this digression, I think, also illustrates some more meta-historiographical concerns.

As suggested above, these effects are lent force by the overtly deviant qualities of the passage against the core military narrative of this part of the *Bellum Iugurthinum*. The digression is introduced via the geographical spur of the Altars of the Philaeni (Sallust suggests that "the place itself calls the story to mind").[59] This mode of logical connection is strongly reminiscent of Herodotus' digressive practice, but is unparalleled in Sallust; generally the freely associative quality of the historian's introduction of the episode is contrary to Sallust's usage elsewhere, where analeptic digression is customarily justified rather by reference to the inherent significance of the material.[60] In fact, the geographical relevance is itself questionable: the region concerned was not itself the site of any campaigning, and the supposed events which had drawn the historian's focus there (a threat of revolution in the town of Lepcis) were historically insignificant.[61] In chronological terms, too, the passage is distinct not just in terms of the specific time when events occurred (obviously deviating from the thread of the monograph) but in the whole tone of the chronological setting: Sallust refers to the vaguely-drawn period "when the Carthaginians ruled the majority of Africa".[62] This, once again, is notable in reference to the tight bounds of the monograph as a whole, and this part of the military narrative in particular; in a work defined by

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58 On the importance of counterfactuals in historiographical digression see Morello 2002, esp. 83–85.

59 *Iug.* 79.1.

60 See, e.g., in relation to early Rome the introduction *res ipsa hortari videtur* [...] *supra repetere ac paucis instituta maiorum domi militiaeque* [...] *disserere*, "the matter itself seems to urge me to go back and briefly to discuss the institutions of our ancestors, at home and in the field" (*Cat.* 5.9); in relation to Africa and African history, *res postulare videtur Africae situm paucis exponere et eas gentis*, "the matter seems to suggest that I discuss briefly the location and peoples of Africa [...]" (*Iug.* 17.1). In both cases Sallust presents the digression as emerging out of the requirements of his historical text.

61 See *Iug.* 78 with Shaw 2022a, 110–111.

62 *Iug.* 79.2.

the person of Jugurtha himself, the shift into an only loosely defined African past is striking, and even more so since elsewhere in the monograph Sallust had very explicitly refused to treat Carthage on the grounds precisely of concision and relevance.[63]

These qualities highlight the difference of the passage; they are echoed in the way that the details of the episode configure the whole story as a sort of historical counterfactual, not just offering a reversal of themes such as *concordia* but actually inverting aspects of the Jugurthine War itself. In the digression, a long and fierce border dispute is turned by agreement into a contest of individual valour; this is the opposite trajectory from that of Jugurtha, whose individual hunger for power escalates into an extended and exhausting conflict.[64] In the digression, the valour of the Philaeni is recognised and commemorated at home: this is in sharp contrast to the events of the monograph so far, where the Romans deputised to Africa had met with a harsh reception on their return for their alleged moral failings. Indeed, the deed of the Philaeni, accepting the harsh condition of death in order to serve their country's interests, inverts Jugurtha's ultimatum to Aulus Albinus earlier in the text, that he should either die or make a humiliating surrender.[65] In the Philaeni story, the uncertainty characteristic of the north African desert is overcome by the power of individual virtue; in the broader context of the Jugurthine War, it is precisely that uncertainty (thematised in the passage preceding the introduction of the digression, and reiterated in Jugurtha's subsequent actions) which allows Jugurtha to maintain his resistance to Rome.[66] Existing scholarship on the passage has noted the sense that the Philaeni offer a counter-example of virtue to set against the failings of the Roman protagonists; but the sense of inversion and counterfactuality in the passage runs deeper.

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63 Cf. *Iug.* 19.2: *nam de Carthagine silere melius puto quam parum dicere, quoniam alio properare tempus monet*. "About Carthage I think it better to be silent than to say too little, since time warns me to hurry on to other matters."

64 Sallust's statement of theme in the *Iugurtha* describes the war as *magnum et atrox variaque victoria*, "great, fierce and of varying fortunes" (*Iug.* 5.1); the introduction to the episode of the Philaeni presents it as the result already of a *magnum diuturnumque bellum* ("a great and long drawn-out war"), with many losses on both sides (*Iug.* 79.1–2).

65 Compare *Iug.* 79.8–9 with *Iug.* 38.10 on Aulus Albinus, *quae quamquam gravia et flagiti plena erant, tamen quia mortis metu mutabantur, sicuti regi lubuerat pax convenit* "although these conditions were serious and shameful, nonetheless since they were the alternative to the fear of death they made peace in a way agreeable to the king". On the reception of the two groups at home compare *Iug.* 79.10 with *Iug.* 39–40.

66 Cf. *Iug.* 74 and *Iug.* 80 on Jugurtha's escapes into the unknown.

The clear otherness of the passage prompts consideration of its wider historiographical significance: the sense of difference here reflects on the themes of Sallust's text in a more profound way, complicating the significance of the narrative as a whole (as with the *Historiae* passage above). In particular, the virtuous behaviour contained in this mirror-image points towards questions of individual commemoration and memory itself. The positive moralistic commemoration of the Philaeni points towards a kind of prelapsarian exemplary historiography; the Philaeni here are really the only unambiguously positive *exempla* in the whole of the monograph, by contrast reiterating the sense of pervasive moral decline which is characteristic of Sallustian historiography.[67] Indeed, the loose and free-associative quality of the whole passage (including its chronological non-specificity) configures exemplary behaviour itself as not of the "real world" of Sallust's subject-matter, but something of another time. That exemplary behaviour is only to be found in the counterfactual world of the digression is a commentary not just on the *mores* of Metellus and Marius, but of the world of Sallust's historical narrative more generally.[68] Playing on the liminality and contrast in Sallust's digressions, the world of *exempla* is itself framed as different and separate. In this light, it is further striking that the exemplary material Sallust offers here in fact relates to two Carthaginians: not only are they thus further distinct in being not Roman, this connects the narrative back to another era of Roman history, the period before the destruction of Carthage during which (Sallust's analysis runs) virtue *had* been characteristic of Roman society.[69] The location of exemplary virtue thus only in the liminal world of this digression provides a commentary on the nature of Sallust's historiographical project more widely. The inversions of the Philaeni passage are a part of its broader significance: the construction of difference in the digression itself serves to highlight some of the distinctive qualities of Sallust's historical account, and the convictions which underpin it.

I have so far explored the special significance with which digressions are vested in Sallust's work, based particularly on the formally restricted qualities of his historical subject-matter elsewhere: this not only configures these pas-

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67 Sallust's work in its avoidance of moral sureties contrasts strongly with the Livian conception (*praef.* 10) of offering models of behaviour for emulation or avoidance; indeed, Sallust explicitly marks by *praeteritio* his refusal to treat Roman history in simple exemplary terms (*Cat.* 7.7). On the complexity and anti-exemplarity of Sallust's commemoration of individuals see Shaw 2022a, 286–342.

68 On the significance of the destruction of Carthage, making the sacrifice of the Philaeni moot, see Feldherr 2021, 189–194.

69 Sallust's clearest formulation of this is at *Iug.* 41.2.

sages as important, but also emphasises their subversive potential, and the sense that they might offer alternative perspectives on the historical text. Digressions in Sallust's usage offer considerable variation of texture: their distinctive status moves us away from a monolithic idea of his text, and towards a reading emphasising subtle variation and the suspension of established textual norms in the service of particular historical and literary effects.

2 Pluralities of truthfulness in the digressions

With these distinctive qualities in mind, we might now move on to consider a more specific side of Sallust's use of the technique. Building on the liminal qualities of digressions, I suggest that digressions also provide an opportunity for the expansion or subversion of one of the most basic generic characteristics of historical writing — that is, its method, and in particular its reference to factual truthfulness.

The question of the truth-value of classical historiography is a complex and much-debated one, particularly in the wake of the more literary-focused readings of the genre which have proliferated in the last thirty years.[70] In keeping with the profoundly literary qualities of the form, a good deal of recent scholarship has tended to consider factual accuracy as a consideration of the classical historians' writings with a different force from that of a modern historical text; while the ancient historians regularly emphasise the truthfulness of their works, what exactly the ancient historians actually meant by that claim (as well as how far it governed their actual writing) has been shown to be mutable.[71] In contrast to more "traditional" approaches to the historians' works, which saw them as basically aiming at the same goals in terms of truthfulness as modern historians, such approaches have offered a view of the classical historians as much less bound by the limitations of their reconstruction of the facts in writing up a literary account: claims to truthfulness, the argument follows, operated with a different understanding of that concept, which allowed for a great deal more historical leeway than might be included under a modern idea of historical truth.[72]

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70 Wiseman 1979, 1981, and 1993 and especially Woodman 1988 were fundamental contributions in reshaping the debate about the truthfulness of the ancient historians' works, and have provoked many responses.

71 For the historians' claims to truthfulness and their significance, see Marincola 2007.

72 See again fundamentally Woodman 1988, 48–95.

This is not the place for a full recapitulation of this debate.[73] However, one broad conclusion that might be drawn from the discussion is that the truth-value of the works of the classical historians is varied, and should be seen along a spectrum: some historians were more concerned than others with a positivistic idea of historical truth, and this depended not just on the aptitude or conscientiousness of the historian but on a series of interrelated questions around genre, subject-matter and aims.

Indeed, this conclusion has been pushed further, to suggest that on the basis of a pluralistic and varied conception of historical truth, different ideas of truthfulness might in fact apply in different parts of the same work: this is a position explored by many of the papers in Ian Ruffell/Lisa Hau's recent edited volume *Truth and History in the Ancient World*, and set out in detail in the editors' introduction.[74] According to this reading, varied attitudes might be deployed in different ways and contexts, in order to respond to the specific literary requirements of a given part of a work: a historian's understanding of truthfulness itself need not remain fixed, but might be relaxed in specific contexts.[75] This understanding of the dynamics of truthfulness emphasises the literary sophistication of the genre (in terms of careful adjustment of the historiographical norms obtaining in different parts of the text); but it also maintains a consistent sense of historical truthfulness as a goal of authors in the genre, albeit applied in different ways at different times.[76] It also focuses our attention on the interactions of multiple levels of truthfulness across a work, as invoked for specific literary aims or to appeal to the audience in different ways. This is a very useful formulation, in highlighting the heterogeneity and layered quality of the historiographical text: it is also a very relevant model against which to consider digression, as itself a means of variegation of historiographical texture.

Based on these ideas, one further aspect of the liminality of Sallust's digressions worth consideration is the sense in which they deploy such shifting modes of truthfulness: as the digressions are *loci* of alteration of basic characteristics of Sallust's work such as its thematic focus, so too might they be focal points for the relaxation of this historiographical assumption. In practice, I suggest, Sal-

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73 For a recent overview with further bibliography see Ruffell/Hau 2016.

74 Hau/Ruffell 2016.

75 See, for example, Baragwanath 2016, drawing out the implications of the different truth-regimes invoked by Xenophon's allusions to either Herodotus or Thucydides; this invocation of different modes of truth through historiographical positioning is a relevant model for my study of Sallust here.

76 As such, this perspective reconciles the historians' claims to truthfulness with their actual practice, rather than simply seeing them as lip-service or exaggerations.

lust's digressions often operate with a more free idea of historical truthfulness than his main historical narratives do: indeed, it is this more relaxed conception which makes possible some of the distinctive and important argumentative contributions of the digressions. Drawing on the liminality and expansiveness of digression as a form, Sallust in these passages applies some different rules, drawing on the transgressive quality of digression as a form to vary the assumptions obtaining in the text.

As noted above, ideas of truthfulness in the classical historians' works exist along a spectrum, based not just on the historian's conscientiousness or skill but also on other factors, including the nature of his subject-matter and the effects his work was intended to achieve.[77] Among the chief determinants of the position of a given text on this spectrum was the chronological relationship between the historian and his material: again bearing in mind the variations in practice between different historians and in different contexts, the idea of truthfulness which obtained in a work of contemporary history, founded on the historian's enquiries and critical assessment of his sources, was generally closer to a more modern conception than in a work of non-contemporary history, dealing with a distant period, within which a greater degree of literary latitude was expected.[78]

Sallust's position on the spectrum in the bulk of his work is towards the positivist end of the scale (i.e. closer to what we would consider the truthfulness expected of a modern historical account, in terms of sticking closely to established factual material).[79] Sallust's works are not contemporary history in the same sense as other important texts from antiquity, in that they seldom rely on the kind of autopsy or personal enquiry familiar from (for example) Thucydides' statement of method;[80] but although the events of the *Bellum Iugurthinum* had happened some seventy years before Sallust's composition of the text, his approach and methods

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77 Variations in truth-value according to the historian's aim are exemplified in Polybius' well-known polemic against the inaccuracies of Phylarchus, based on that author's emotive and tragic working-up of his historical account (Plb. 2.56); Marincola (2013) argues persuasively that the failures of Phylarchus' account in Polybius' assessment are not its emotional colouration *per se* but the violence this does to its truthfulness.

78 See Wiseman 1981, 390, distinguishing the latitude afforded to non-contemporary historians to reconstruct on the basis of plausibility from the more stringent requirements of more recent and thus better-known subject-matter.

79 On truthfulness and truth-claims in Sallust generally, see Funari 1999 and Büchner 1967: both stress Sallust's concern for accuracy and explicit discussion of difficulties of reconstruction.

80 There are exceptions to this, particularly in the *Bellum Catilinae* (Sallust's most contemporary work) — e.g. the reference to material heard directly from Crassus at *Cat*. 48.9.

remain closer to those of a contemporary work than to the very different norms of a text like the early books of Livy.[81] Sallust's works operate more within the model of contemporary historiography — with its associated methodological considerations, consultation of a wide range of sources and more restrictive relationship to factual truthfulness — than non-contemporary work. Indeed, the *topoi* of Sallust's historiographical self-presentation fit into this pattern: the claims he makes to be free from partisanship and bias are more meaningful (and more customary) in a contemporary historiographical context than a non-contemporary one;[82] where he is able to, he does make reference to his enquiries, and the difficulties of ascertaining the truth.[83] In general terms — and befitting subjects which at least some readers would remember, and for which plenty of other types of source, not least oratory, were available — Sallust represents historical events closely, and with only limited narrative working-up. There are exceptions to this — such as the working-up of speeches and battle-scenes, well-established even in contemporary histories as a set-piece opportunity for the historian to expand on his material — but in general Sallust's narratives demonstrate sustained attempts to assess the material in the search of an accurate version, and to stick relatively closely to a modern, positivistic understanding of truthfulness.

Digressions vary and distort this set of assumptions about the historical truthfulness of Sallust's work in a number of different ways. In the first place, of course, the chronological disjunction of some of Sallust's digressions points towards the variegation of truthfulness in his work: digressions on distant periods took Sallust into the realm of material appropriate for a different sort of historical enquiry, as such relaxing the methodological assumptions of the rest. We might expect digressive passages like the *archaeologia* of early Rome in the *Bellum Catilinae* or the African history of the *Bellum Iugurthinum* to manifest a more relaxed attitude, in confronting the methodology appropriate to contemporary historiography with methods expected of more distant subject-matter.[84] Indeed, it is striking that in both cases these passages are introduced with gestures towards the different expectations which the audience should apply to

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81 On the latitude in reconstruction (and "unhistorical thinking") of early Livy and the other annalists, see Wiseman 1979, 9–53.

82 See, e.g., *Cat.* 4.2 with Luce 1989: Sallust's claims to truthfulness are based on the avoidance of partiality, in the manner of contemporary works.

83 E.g. of the accusation that Catiline had bound the conspirators by drinking human blood, *Cat.* 22: *nobis ea res pro magnitudine parum comperta est*, "the matter is not securely enough known for its importance" (and as such Sallust does not vouch for its accuracy].

84 *Cat.* 6–13; *Iug.* 18. I have treated both of these digressions in detail elsewhere (Shaw 2022a, 117–195), so I consider them only briefly here.

them, through Sallust's reference to their relationship to other historical traditions: in the *archaeologia* Sallust explicitly frames the account as based presumably on his research and consideration (*sicuti ego accepi* or perhaps "as I have understood" or "as I have gathered"), and in the African *excursus* he entirely abrogates responsibility for the content to his privileged source, the Punic books of King Hiempsal (even though as Sallust notes this diverges considerably from the more usual account).[85] Sallust marks the deviation with explicit reference to the changed authority of the account which follows, drawing the differentiation of his methods here to the reader's attention; the identification of a single authority for each passage sets them apart from the assumptions of the rest.

However, it is striking that Sallust's practice in these passages is not limited to the adoption of the literary norms appropriate to different sorts of historiography — these digressions go beyond this, deviating from the truthfulness applicable elsewhere in the work in a more fundamental way. In both cases, it is striking how relaxed is the mode of historiographical truthfulness which the content of each digression actually illustrates in practice: Sallust's freedom here goes well beyond the different expectations of the non-contemporary narrative, but takes that distinction as a kind of jumping-off point for a version playing much more loosely with established traditions (again, in a way which draws on the liminality of Sallust's digression generally). This is not just a shift into a different historiographical register, but the introduction of material which obviously diverges from established accounts, for argumentative purposes. In the *archaeologia*, Sallust's version of the foundation of the city strikingly dispenses entirely with well-established Roman tradition of the city's past, which had been established in outline since Fabius Pictor and had recently received authoritative reinforcement by Varro;[86] he departs from any known Roman version in ascribing the foundation of the city immediately to Aeneas, his men and the *aborigines* (that is, eliding the carefully-constructed period of the Alban kings, which the Romans had adopted in order to reconcile the Greek Aeneas story with their own Romulus myth).[87] In the light of the unusualness of this version, the *sicuti ego accepi* with which Sallust introduces the passage should be seen rather as a statement of the heterodoxy of his version and its relaxed attitude to accepted fact than — as most have read it — a marker of adherence to tradi-

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85 *Cat*. 6.1; *Iug*. 17.7.

86 On the establishment of the tradition here and its implications, see the full treatment of Cornell 1975.

87 *Cat*. 6.1. For full discussion of the Sallust's deviance here see Shaw 2022a, 144–145.

tion.[88] Elsewhere in the passage, Sallust's account remains similarly distinct, and out of keeping with core elements of the Roman historical tradition; there is no mention, for example, of the Struggle of the Orders which looms so large in Livy's history and Cicero's account of early Rome.[89] The digression reframes Roman history in a very specific way, less constrained by adherence to the accepted details of the material than the content of Sallust's main narrative; the liminal quality of the passage, beyond the limitations of the central historical subject, makes possible such relaxation and abstraction, in a way which allows Sallust to configure the Catilinarian conspiracy at the end of a very specific historical trajectory of rise and decline, and to present a very partial framing of Roman history in keeping with his moralistic agenda.[90]

The same is true of the African *excursus*; the narrative which Sallust ascribes to the "Punic books" again not only marks a shift in the derivation of his historical knowledge, but again introduces a deeply unusual account, beyond the established conventional version. Among its most striking deviations are its unusual derivation of the first wave of immigrants to Africa from Persians and Armenians (a historically unparalleled claim), and in particular the almost total elision of Carthage from an account, which is rather presented as a narrative of unbroken Numidian success (an obvious distortion for a Roman author, in whose historical tradition the Punic Wars loomed so large).[91] In this light, the reference to the "Punic books" as his source seems almost ironic — it seems inconceivable that Punic books would not have treated Carthage's dominance of the continent, and equally inconceivable that his Roman readers would have failed to notice the elision of their great enemy. Once again, the clearly marked digression makes possible a more partial and less constrained historical approach than that which obtains elsewhere in the text.

In both cases, these passages do not just signal a shift of expectations towards a model more suited to the distant subject-matter described; they present

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88 Reading this as a marker of Sallust's adherence to existing traditions: e.g. Vretska 1976, 146–151; McGushin 1977, 66–70.

89 The theme dominates much of Livy's first pentad, and is a key theme of Cicero's discussion of the evolution of the Roman constitution at *Rep.* 2.52–63.

90 The version of Roman history constructed here supports Sallust's contention that early Rome was a golden age, free of even political disagreement (*Cat.* 6–7, 9; note especially 9.2: *iurgia, discordias, simultates cum hostibus exercebant, cives cum civibus de virtute certabant*, "Strife, discord and hatred they practiced on their enemies; citizen vied with citizen only in virtue").

91 Derivation of the initial immigrants to Africa: see *Iug.* 18.3–5. On the significance of the absence of Carthage see Feldherr 2021, 180–181.

a much more significantly relaxed model, in which the historian is free to alter even fundamental aspects of the tradition (on Rome and on Africa) in the service of particular argumentative aims. These deviations would certainly have been noted by Sallust's audience; the deviation from the care which he takes to construct an impression of truthfulness elsewhere in his text is quite marked. Digression, in these examples, seems to offer the opportunity to relax the historical assumptions of the rest, to present a more impressionistic and argumentative version.

Even beyond this differentiation of form in keeping with the invocation of a different type of historiography, Sallust's digressions allow a more relaxed version of historical truthfulness than that which obtains elsewhere in his accounts: some of Sallust's digressions leverage the same liminal qualities of digression as a form, relaxing the criteria of truthfulness which apply elsewhere even without the chronological disjunction illustrated in the passages discussed above. Such passages manifest the same expanded freedom within the text, and illustrate in a sharper way the sense of digression as an opportunity for a looser narrative, perhaps less constrained by the historian's usual methods and responsibilities. In the same way as I noted above that digression is marked by its juxtaposition with the tautly constructed central narratives, Sallust, I think, sometimes introduces material as digressive precisely in order to mark it off as textually distinct, separated off from the historiographical norms which apply elsewhere and thus perhaps exempt from criticism of its truthfulness.

A particularly interesting example of this is provided by the digression on the so-called "first conspiracy of Catiline": in this passage, Sallust reaches back before the beginning of Catiline's conspiracy proper in order to consider an earlier, abortive, episode of Catilinarian intrigue.[92] Although the episode might be considered profoundly relevant to the subject-matter of the monograph as a whole (and indeed it does play a role in the characterisation of Catiline), it is nonetheless clearly set off as digressive, stressing its textual otherness. In the first place, it is notable that the "first conspiracy" has been fundamentally divorced from the coherence of the whole Catilinarian episode: had Sallust wished to emplot his monograph as a coherent account of Catiline's revolutionary designs, he clearly could have done so (indeed, he did something comparable in his second monograph, in treating the youth of Jugurtha as a coherent part of the broader narra-

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92 *Cat*. 18–19. Another example is the character-sketch of Marius at *Iug*. 63: the narrative of Marius' early career here brushes silently over the well-known reverses of Marius' early attempts at politics (see e.g. Plut. *Mar*. 5.1–2 for Marius' unprecedented and well-known failure in two elections on one day).

tive), so to separate off this earlier episode from the thematic coherence of the whole must serve some purpose. Secondly, the "first conspiracy" episode is explicitly marked as digressive by its introductory and concluding *formulae*; the former explicitly breaks the temporal continuity of the text with its emphatic *sed antea*, "but before then [...]", while the latter deploys one of Sallust's characteristic formulae for return from digression.[93] Finally, the episode is placed in an obtrusive place within the plotting of the monograph as a whole, interrupting the unfolding conspiracy narrative by separating the setting of the dramatic scene of Catiline's house from the speech which he supposedly delivered there, and which marked the beginning of the conspiracy proper.[94] Again, this is a significant structural decision; Sallust clearly could have incorporated this account within his wider emplotment of the Catilinarian episode, but he rather inserts it at a pregnant dramatic moment, retarding the progress of the whole. Despite its relevance to the subject-matter of the narrative, the passage is thus clearly marked as digressive: why, then, introduce this deliberate deviation from the characteristic concision of the Sallustian text?

The reason, I think, is that by framing the episode in the form of a digression from the main Catilinarian narrative — rather than as an integral part — Sallust marks it off as beyond the usual bounds of the history, and thus perhaps beyond its conventional expectations. The idea of relaxation of the truth-value of this part of the text is borne out in practice; as scholars have noted, this account of the "first conspiracy" is in fact much more tendentious, speculative and unsubstantiated than the rest of Sallust's account of Catiline (and in fact, some have argued that the whole episode is a kind of historical chimera, concocted — or at least amplified — in the rhetoric of Cicero's consular canvass).[95] As opposed to the more complex, ambiguous and historically careful position which Sallust adopts towards Catiline elsewhere in the text — for example, in his hesitancy to endorse an accusation that Catiline had made the conspirators drink human blood — this narrative of Catiline's culpability is tendentiously derived from the most inflammatory and partisan of Cicero's rhetoric.[96] Whether Sallust did this in order to deliberately introduce a more tendentious position (calculat-

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93 *Cat*. 18.1, 19.5 (*de superiore coniuratione satis dictum*, "enough has been said about the first conspiracy").

94 Catiline assembles his men at *Cat*. 17.2; he speaks to them immediately after the digression at *Cat*. 20.

95 The passage seems to draw heavily on Cicero's *In Toga Candida* (see Seager 1964); see Syme 1964, 84–102 and McGushin 1977, 298–301 on the historical weaknesses of its arraignment of Catiline.

96 *Cat*. 22.

ed to make a strong contribution to the characterisation of Catiline he offers elsewhere), or because his sources were lacking for the "first conspiracy", is not clear; but the "hedging around" of the passage clearly marks it off as distinct, in terms of the criteria of truthfulness which it manifests.

One further aspect of Sallust's introduction of the passage deserves comment: his claim to discuss the first conspiracy *quam verissume potero*, "as truthfully as I am able".[97] While this might initially suggest a reinforcement of the modes of truth which apply elsewhere in the text, its effect is surely rather to draw attention to the particular *difficulties* or *limitations* of truthfulness in the episode; the claim itself marks the distinctive status of this passage as against the rest of the Catilinarian narrative, and perhaps the different modes of historical accuracy which should be taken to apply here. In the same way as his protestations about his sources in the *archaeologia* and African digression, and again in the light of the marked difference of this digressive passage, the reference to truthfulness serves to highlight the problematic aspects of historical knowledge which apply here.

Based on these latter examples I suggest that Sallust's digressions, at the same time as departing from the immediate narrative thread also represent points at which a fundamental quality of the historian's account — its truth-claims, and the expectations of the method which the historian applies — might be relaxed or adapted. The range of material contained in these passages, together with the distinctive ways in which they are introduced, illustrates the possibility of varying the historian's methodology, such that he is able to apply different methods as appropriate to different contexts; applying this also to more contemporary parts of his account serves again to mark out digressions as points where the audience's expectations should not necessarily remain consistent with the central narratives, and where the liminal quality of digressions is deployed to vary basic methodological aspects. Digression enables Sallust to abrogate responsibility for the factual accuracy of particular stretches of the text (as we have seen with Sallust's reference for example to the Punic Books of Hiempsal), and to give details considerably outside the "accepted version", or which were historically problematic.

These digressions serve as a tool for variation of the account, but also as an argumentative technique; in that they allow more freedom in relation to strict veracity, they allow Sallust to develop ideas which cast light on and condition the audience's response to the rest of the text. While the material on the "first conspiracy" is not treated with the same historical nuance as the rest of the

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97 *Cat*. 18.2.

material, it inevitably contributes similarly to the reader's idea of Catiline which is developed in the text; the historically simplified genealogy of the Numidians in the African digression creates an impression of Numidian strength which amplifies the theme of Sallust's monograph.

3 Conclusion

I have here suggested a different side to Sallustian digression from the ideas of thematic relevance usually stressed: one that continues to emphasise the important connections between digressions and the central core of Sallust's historiography, but which also emphasises some of the literary effects which result from the subversive and liminal qualities of the form. Digressions, as illustrated here, are an important resource in Sallust's writing: they not only supplement the self-imposed limits of his historical narrative, but also offer the opportunity to vary fundamental characteristics of the historiographical voice in the service of particular literary effects. Sallust's deployment of digression echoes recent scholarship on the sophistication of classical historiography as a form, and the sense that it might draw on a varied set of voices even within the compass of a single work. In the light of this, the question of narrative relevance from which we began emerges as itself simply irrelevant: indeed, the idea of relevance is itself expanded, in that Sallust's digressions invoke deliberately *inconsistent* literary characteristics. The formal variegation of Sallust's histories should, I think, be considered an integral part of its texture: Sallust's expertise in digression, *contra* Catherine Sensal, is especially demonstrated in his nuanced manipulation of the possibilities it offered within the norms of classical historiography.

This sense of digressions as subversive moments in the Sallustian text fits well with recent approaches to the author and his historical ideas as in various senses inconsistent and contradictory. The idea that Sallust's texts are deliberately problematic and incoherent has been a sustained theme in recent scholarship: works by William Batstone and Andrew Feldherr in particular have highlighted ways in which the Sallustian text draws attention to its contradictions and inconsistencies in order to make a wider argument about the characteristics of the society in which the author was writing.[98] While I would not suggest that Sallust's subversive use of digression necessarily be tied specifically to comment on the political and cultural context within which he was operating, the incon-

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98 See note 39 above.

sistent qualities of Sallust's work which are brought to the fore in the digressions do provide further evidence of the thematisation and manipulation of contradiction and subversion in Sallust's text.

The key point of all of this is, I think, the very sophisticated flexibility with which Sallust writes, and his careful pursuit of specific argumentative and interpretative aims out of the textual resources available to him. Indeed, perhaps in this light we might return, finally, to the assessment offered by Licianus. While Sallust's digression does not remove his work from the field of historiography in general terms, the sense that Sallust does something historiographically distinctive with his use of digression does receive some support: Sallust's invocation of formal devices such as digression does have a special role of its own in his distinctive historiographical project.

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Kyle Khellaf
Inglorious History and the Tacitean Digression

Abstract: By the time Tacitus began composing histories, the digression had long been a mainstay of the genre. Tacitus' works show a keen awareness of this tradition, including multiple instances of ethnographic, etiological, and wonder-driven digression. This paper explores two unique Tacitean innovations. First, it examines his shift from historical preface to digression for describing the challenges to historiography under imperial rule (*Ann.* 4.32–33). In so doing, it illustrates how the digression reproduces in narrative form key Tacitean criticisms about the loss of freedom and the resulting increase in trivial subject matters. Second, it extends this analysis to three of Tacitus' pseudo-digressions (*Agr.* 28, *Hist.* 2.8–9, *Ann.* 2.39–40) — paradoxographical episodes that masquerade as digressions — which recount rebellious acts by seemingly insignificant groups or individuals of servile status, yet contain significant disruptive potential. Furthermore, it contends that these seemingly distinct innovations to digression should be read in tandem as a deliberate narratological strategy in Tacitus' criticisms of imperial Rome.

Keywords: pseudo-digression, Tacitus, Clemens, digressive mimesis, carnivalesque, masquerade

By the time of the High Roman Empire, historiography had been influenced by a number of literary genres, typologies, and subject matters. The digression, as this volume affirms, was no exception. In addition to the numerous categories of excursus that developed over nearly a millennium of historiography (e.g. ethnographic, explanatory, etiological, counterfactual, paradoxographical, and even nautical), a number of rhetorical and antiquarian treatises illustrate how its ideal use was both highly contested and constantly evolving throughout classical antiquity.[1]

Digression becomes synecdochic, even mimetic, for history and the debates it engenders. An excursus can represent, even overrepresent, the history in

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[1] Beyond the polemic about digression in historiography (Hdt. 4.30.1; Thuc. 1.97; Plb. 8.11.3–5, 12.28.10, 38.5–6; Tac. *Ann.* 4.32–33), consider also Cic. *Fam.* 5.12; D.H. *Pomp.* 6; Aelius Theon, *Prog.* 2.80.27–81.4; and (*per* Woodman 1998, 134) Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.33 and Plin. *Ep.* 2.5.5.

which it appears (synecdochic). A prime example is Herodotus' account of Arion and the Dolphin (1.23–24). Therein the author takes what will become his key modus operandi of "telling wonders" — that is, going out of his way (often via longwinded narrative digressions) to memorialize peoples, places, and things imbued with *thōma* (i.e. "wonder, marvel") — and presents his audience with a particularly dramatic rendition whose connection to the primary narrative is merely a temporal overlap with Periander of Corinth.[2] A digression can also imitate history (mimetic). Sallust's African ethnography (*Iug.* 17–19) may offer readers a literary replica of the triumphal parade of captives from the Jugurthine War (i.e. the digression displays what an imperially-minded Roman would expect from a *Bellum Iugurthinum*).[3]

One might even contend that the entire "super-genre" of historiography,[4] taken in its broadest conceptualization to include all forms of writing about the past, originates in digression. This remains true whether we begin from the Homeric poems, whose digressive catalogues, genealogies, and ekphrastic histories expand the narrative to more distant peoples, places, and events (both geographically and temporally);[5] or from Herodotus, our earliest fully extant prose "inquiry" (*historíē*), which arises directly from excursionary explorations, and reproduces these peripatetic pursuits of knowledge in circuitous narrative form (again, digression as mimesis).[6] Taking the idea to its logical conclusion, we might reasonably conclude that all history is digression. Its entire raison d'être — retelling, recreating, "re-presenting" the past (both presenting it again and bringing it forth to the present audience) — presupposes a break from cur-

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2 Namely that "in his lifetime the greatest wonder came to pass" (ἐν τῷ βίῳ θῶμα μέγιστον παραστῆναι, Hdt. 1.23) The essential work on Herodotean *thōma* remains Munson 2001. See also Thomas 2000, 135–153. For the Arion digression in particular, see Munson 1986, who notes (p. 98), "This short narrative passage is structurally analogous to the work as a whole," and Gray 2001 for insights into the digression's link to Periander, Alyattes, and Thrasybulus. A broader treatment of *thauma* across multiple genres and sensory categories can be found in Lightfoot 2021. Cf. Konstantakos in this volume.

3 The mimetic link I have suggested is most clearly articulated in Dench 2005, 78–80 (see also Riggsby 2006, 68–71, 195–205). Clarke 1999, 1–76; Dench 2005, 37–92, and 2007 explore the relationship between ethnography and historiography. For Sallust's ethnographies as digressions, see Scanlon 1988; Green 1993; Wiedemann 1993; Oniga 1995; Morstein-Marx 2001; Khellaf 2021; and Shaw 2022, 42–195.

4 I borrow the term "super-genre" from Hutchinson 2013.

5 These topics are explored by Beye 1964; Austin 1966; Alden 2000; Grethlein 2008; Sammons 2010; Varto 2015; and Alden 2017.

6 Important studies include Cobet 1971; Lang 1984; Dewald 1987; Munson 2001; Boedeker 2002; Cartledge and Greenwood 2002, 361–362; de Jong 2002; Purves 2010, 118–158; and Wood 2016.

rent events in order to explain how those events came about. Moreover, time moves forward perpetually; so too the vantage from which the historian composes. This, in turn, necessitates an ever expanding series of ring compositions. Forays into the past become digressions from the present in search of exempla, didactic lessons, foundational causes, encounters with the Other, vicissitudes, sources of wonder from even the most unlikely of subjects: essentially all the conditions of history's ever-expanding teleologies.

The digression, through its act of discontinuity, offers its own unique insights into the creation, development, and reception of "past studies" in the Western literary tradition (to use Hayden White's terminology): movement beyond the boundaries of traditional emplotment can be understood as a primary rather than a secondary feature of historical narration.[7] Michel Foucault offers a similar appraisal: "For history in its classical form, the discontinuous was both the given and the unthinkable: the raw material of history."[8] Foucault's sole mistake was to view discontinuity as an "obstacle" in need of excision, and that its development into a "working concept" only emerged in the 20th century.[9] Without digression in antiquity, without discontinuity as an inseparable component of historical inquiry (*historía*), Mediterranean historiography — had it even developed into genre at all — might have taken a completely different turn.

The Roman historian Tacitus appears to acknowledge as much in a famous methodological digression (*Ann.* 4.32–33), declaring that earlier annalists "commemorated" a range of subjects "with unrestrained digressiveness," in contrast to his own work, which he considers to be "restricted and inglorious."[10] Yet constrained as it now seems by the imperial family and its repressive dynamics, Tacitean historiography nonetheless provides many disruptive, far-flung narratives involving slaves, imposter emperors, and other figures or groups of lower social status, whose occasional "15 minutes of fame" become all

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7 Kleinberg and White (2018) discuss past studies as a broader alternative to history. Various definitions of historical emplotment — "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by representing* them" (again, with historiography as a form of mimesis) — can be found in White 1973, 2, 5–11; but also White 1972 and 1974.

8 Foucault 1972, 8. I discuss Foucault's idea alongside Polybius' digressions in Khellaf 2018.

9 Foucault 1972, 8–9.

10 Victoria Pagán remarks that while these two concepts seem synonymous, they actually set up a typical Tacitean contradiction: "restricted"/*in arto* = unable to speak about things that matter, versus "inglorious"/*inglorius* = able to speak at length about things that supposedly "do not" matter (all undated, full name references refer to comments received on an earlier draft of this paper).

the more remarkable in the ever-widening shadow of the emperor. What to make of this seeming paradox? One possible answer arises in the Herodotean intertext from the same digression: "Nevertheless, it will not have been ineffectual to look within those things at first sight slight, from which the movements of great events often arise."[11]

This paper argues that these episodes — some overt digressions, others covert digressions (or pseudo-digressions) — function as vital mechanisms for understanding Tacitean historiography. It begins with a reexamination of Tacitus' major digression about historiographical methodology (*Ann.* 4.32–33)[12] — itself a notable innovation to ancient historical writing — and considers how Tacitus' plaints therein encourage us to trace a connection among (a) ostensibly trivial historical subject matters (particularly in times of repressed authorship under imperial rule); (b) concerns about narrative scope (amidst the political sea change and its accompanying sense of decline); (c) the nonlinear paths such engagements entail (digressions); and (d) the unique truths such tangential narratives are able to speak (voiced as they are by unexpected actors, generally well outside the imagined senatorial audience, in some instances slaves playing at emperor).[13] It then examines three of these minor ("masked") digressions, one from each of Tacitus' historical works: the mutiny of the Usipi (*Agr.* 28); the imposter Nero (*Hist.* 2.8–9); and the false Agrippa Postumus (*Ann.* 2.39–40). These afford Tacitus with new spaces for criticism, creating brief ruptures within the oppressive imperial narrative, which otherwise allows for only a partial view of Tacitus' rebuke of its politics.[14] Amidst the extreme senatorial and equestrian sycophancy, it is precisely these liminal personages — scarcely afforded space in the primary sequence of history — who succeed at breaking through the

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11 Cf. Hdt. 1.5.3–4 (*per* Moles 1998, 118–119).

12 We often refer to Tacitus' works as either the *opera minora* or the *opera maiora*. This same framework might also be employed for Tacitus' digressions. The Tacitean digression is schematized extensively by Mendell (1957, 189–198), more simply in Khellaf 2023. I discuss the concept of "covert" or "pseudo-digressions," and my rationale for their role alongside well demarcated "overt digressions," later in this paper.

13 Here I have in mind the notions of "theatricality" and "doublespeak" proposed by Bartsch (1994), but expanded to include both new cast members (e.g. slaves, conscripts, minor provincial administrators, etc.) and new modes of encoding veiled criticism (i.e. the digression).

14 Clarke 2002, 86–88 is helpful. Writing about the biographical foregrounding of Sejanus in *Annals* 4, she notes (p. 87) that "within this intensely biographical section of the *Annales*, Tacitus raises doubts about the usefulness of even this as a framework for understanding imperial history."

frequent imperial charades and getting at the heart (or rather *ingenium*) of the Roman principate.[15]

1 *Nobis in arto et inglorius labor*: History displaced

At *Annals* 4.32, Tacitus digresses in order to explain the reasons for his choice of subject matter and the challenges of writing history under the emperors:

> *Pleraque eorum quae rettuli quaeque referam parva forsitan et levia memoratu videri non nescius sum: sed nemo annales nostros cum scriptura eorum contenderit, qui veteres populi Romani res composuere. ingentia illi bella, expugnationes urbium, fusos captosque reges aut, si quando ad interna praeverterent, discordias consulum adversum tribunos, agrarias frumentariasque leges, plebis et optimatium certamina libero egressu memorabant: nobis in arto et inglorius labor; immota quippe aut modice lacessita pax, maestae urbis res, et princeps proferendi imperi incuriosus erat. non tamen sine usu fuerit introspicere illa primo aspectu levia, ex quis magnarum saepe rerum motus oriuntur.*

> I am not unaware that many things which I have recounted and which I will recount perhaps seem small and trivial for commemoration. But let no one compare our annals with the writing of those who composed the affairs of the Roman people of old. Those men commemorated massive wars, the sacks of cities, kings routed and captured, or, if ever they turned their attention to domestic affairs, the conflicts of consuls against tribunes, agrarian and grain laws, struggles between the plebs and the optimates — and they did so with unrestricted egress. Our labor is in a narrow space and it is inglorious. For there was unmoved or minimally challenged peace, affairs in the city were gloomy, and the emperor was uninterested in expanding the empire. Nevertheless, it will not have been ineffectual to look within those things at first sight slight, from which the movements of great events often arise.[16]

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15 I employ the word *ingenium* given its significance in the closing remarks to the Tiberian Hexad of the *Annals*, wherein the final period of Tiberius' life is described in pejorative terms (6.51.3) one might expect for the notorious actions of slaves and individuals of low status in Tacitus' digressions. For Tiberius' obituary, see Kraus and Woodman 1997, 103–109 and Woodman 1998, 155–167 (which contains a bibliography of earlier studies). Woodman 1998 is indispensable for many key passages dealing with senatorial sycophancy; more recently, Strunk 2017 and O'Gorman 2020.

16 All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. I follow the Heubner 1978 and 1994 Teubner editions for the *Histories* and *Annals*, Woodman 2014 for the *Agricola*, and the Winterbottom and Ogilvie 1975 OCT for the *Dialogus*. Various v/u spellings follow Teubner and OCT standards for consistency.

Tacitus lays out all the standard fanfare of earlier Roman history, contrasting this with the limitations to his own annalistic endeavor. The expression *libero egressu memorabant* suggests an expansive semantic range, especially given its periodic placement within a digression: (a) political, as the "freedom to explore,"[17] prior to imperial constraints on literary production; (b) topical, with *egressus* having a primary sense of "movement out from," suggesting the vast range of foreign wars, events, peoples, and subject matters available to earlier writers;[18] and (c) narratological, through a textual presentation that revolves around digressive pivots (*praeverterent*), narrative obstacles, and Tacitus' attempt to negotiate these in "narrow" episodes (*in arto*) amidst "inglorious" (*inglorius*) historiography.[19]

The location of the phrase in a sentence dealing with traditional *res externae* ("foreign affairs") and *res internae* ("domestic affairs") is significant. This was a highly charged arrangement (especially in his annalistic predecessors Polybius and Livy), already tied to the practice of digression, that was manipulated to

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17 This particular translation is that of Woodman 2004, but follows ideas of Moles 1998, 104 n. 12 ("Lack of freedom (implicit) vs free digressiveness"); 123–130 (the digression as a political reflection on changes to the Roman state); and 134–169 (the digression's relation to the subsequent account of the historian Cremutius Cordus' *maiestas* trial). Note also the transgressive sense of the cognate *egredior* ("To pass the limit of, exceed, overstep," *OLD* 4b), which finds parallel in some English meanings of "digression" (*OED* 1b and 1c). Finally, consider the line from Tac. 15.36.3 (a passage examined by Woodman 1998, 168–189) focalized from Nero's perspective: *vidisse maestos civium vultus, audire secretas querimonias, quod tantum <itineris> aditurus esset, cuius ne modicos quidem egressus tolerarent, sueti adversum fortuita adspectu principis refoveri*.

18 The motion element, as denoted in both *OLD egredior* 1, "To go or come out," and *OLD* 1b "to march out (to battle, etc.)," the latter a staple of *res externae*, is summarized at Moles 1998, 104 n. 12, 119 n. 39, 127. Rhiannon Ash notes that Roman warfare (and its historiographical narratives) ideally consist of pitched battles on *aperti campi* as opposed to cramped spaces where *clades* often result. Additionally, the use of *motus* to denote the origins of "great events arising" can be seen in the closing remarks of *Ann.* 4.32.2. Hutchinson 2020, 118–152, analyzes motion in Tacitus' *Annals* at length, with a significant analysis (pp. 118–127) built around the digression at *Ann.* 4.32–33 (see p. 118 for the broad semantic possibilities contained in the phrase *libero egressu*). So too does Damon 2010, 355–358, specifically in parsing motion and spatial imagery in Tacitus' authorial digressions about method.

19 See *OLD egredior* 3 ("To deviate, stray" and "to digress") and *OLD egressus* 2 ("Deviation from one's main theme, digression"). Again, note the primary translation by Moles 1998, 97 ("with free digressiveness"), as well as his thematic summaries at 104 n. 12 ("Digressiveness vs orderly narratives"), and 105 n. 12 ("Digressions vs narrative"). *Pace* Hutchinson 2020, 188 n. 1: "digression is not relevant to the argument of the passage (and Tacitus is in mid-digression himself)." Digression is relevant to the argument of the passage precisely since Tacitus is in mid-digression.

great effect by Tacitus.[20] For instance, Polybius includes a lengthy digression (38.5–6) on how the expanding scope of historical events resulting from Rome's imperial growth, as well as her resulting conflict with the kingdoms of Alexander's successors, required a shift to an "incomplete and disconnected diegesis of historical events" (38.5.1.: ἀτελῆ καὶ διερριμμένην [...] τὴν ἐξήγησιν τῶν πραγμάτων) — with all of the narratological "swerves" this entailed (38.5.2: ἀπολιπόντες καὶ μεσολαβήσαντες [...] μεταβαίνομεν) — albeit at "orderly" intervals (38.5.3: τεταγμένως).[21] Tacitus, however, suggests a major turning point has been reached after centuries of annalistic historiography, famously declaring, "Our undertaking is in a narrow space and is inglorious" (*Ann.* 4.32.2: *nobis in arto et inglorius labo*), and that Tiberius, "uninterested in expanding the empire" (*princeps proferendi imperi incuriosus*), has left Rome in an "unmoved" (*immota*) state of peace.

This contrasts with the "variety-infused" subject matters found in earlier historiography (4.32.1: *qui veteres populi Romani res composuere*), already cited in a long list at the outset of the digression,[22] that now finds itself compressed, even "abridged, summarized" (4.32.2: *in arto*)[23] in the second half of the excursus (not quoted above): "the geographic locations of peoples, the changing fortunes of battles, and the famed departures of leaders" (4.33.3: *situs gentium, varietates proeliorum, clari ducum exitus*). By mentioning these yet again, Tacitus recalls the prime *topoi* of Polybian and Livian annalistic history, some found in generalized *res externae* (*varietates proeliorum, clari ducum exitus*), the rest specifically in ethnographic digression (*situs gentium*).[24] The digressive element

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20 The seminal work on Tacitus' annalistic focalization (and distortion) is Ginsburg 1981. Combining her analysis with that of Moles 1998 provides a basis for the arguments in this paper, already begun by Clarke 2002, 85–86. See also Martin and Woodman 1989, 171–172 on *libero egressu*: "*libero* suggests freedom to choose between domestic and foreign affairs (either because both were available or because the historians themselves were unconstrained)." Cf. Woodman 2018, 177.

21 Khellaf 2018, 186–187.

22 For the referential possibilities, see Martin and Woodman 1989, 171. Ginsburg 1981, 7 ("These are the very subjects of *Ab urbe condita*") and Woodman 2018, 175, believe Tacitus is comparing himself specifically to Livy at *Ann.* 4.32.1.

23 OLD *artum* 1b.

24 The significance of the phrase *situs gentium* as a marker for ethnography is highlighted in Thomas 1982, 3; Dench 2005, 42–43; and Kraus' contribution to Woodman 2014, 125–128. Cf. Tac. *Agr.* 10.1, Sall. *Iug.* 17.1, and Caes. *BG* 3.12.1 and 4.1.3. For the entire Tacitean phrase, and the argument that such subject matters are in fact present throughout Tacitus' *Annals*, see Levene 2009, 226–227, 231–232; for *situs gentium* as more than "a reference to the sort of ethno-

is given further attention when he states that such topics "retain and renew the mind of readers" (4.33.3: *retinent ac redintegrant legentium animum*), since this quality is linked to narrative excursions by historians, antiquarians, and rhetoricians alike.[25]

Such recurring statements in the excursus further align with a seeming absence of ethnographic digressions in the *Annals*.[26] The closest thing to a *situs gentium* (*in arto*) is the brief aside concerning the Armenians that conflates traditional ethnographic motifs (*res externae*) with Tacitean pessimism about obsequiousness: "although they are closer to the Parthians owing to the location of their lands and the affinity of their customs, and more inclined in that way towards servitude from being intermixed in their marriages and since freedom was unknown" (13.34.2: *situ terrarum, similitudine morum Parthis propiores conubiisque permixti ac libertate ignota illuc magis* [*ad servitium*] *inclinantes*). The language of servitude therein extends from ideas of Romanization in the *Agricola* (the transition from *res externae* to *res internae*) to the utter abject servility of the Roman elite in the *Annals* (*res internae*).[27] By contrast, we find traditional ethnographic excursions scattered not only across most of Tacitus' predecessors' works, but also within his own earlier writings. These include Tacitus' British ethnography in the *Agricola* (10–17) and his Jewish ethnography in the *Histories* (5.2–10).[28] Furthermore, the *Germania*, as its own detached tract of

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graphic and geographical digressions that one finds scattered through ancient historiography," but to military terrain "even in the absence of formal digressions," 234–237.

25 Examples include Livy's "Alexander Digression" (9.17.1); Polybius' "digression on digression" (38.5.9); Cicero's Letter to Lucceius (*Fam.* 5.12.4–6); Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata* (2.80.27–81.4); and Quintilian (*Inst.* 4.2.19, 4.2.49).

26 With the caveat, suggested by both Rhiannon Ash and Victoria Pagán, that said absence may be due to the loss of sections of the *Annals* featuring Roman conquests (Ash suggests Tiridates' visit to Rome in 66 AD corresponding to the lost Neronian books; Pagán an account of Alexandria or the Jews in the lost Caligulan books; I might posit a Mauretanian ethnography and a mock "British" ethnography in the lost Caligulan books). Yet the lack of ethnographic digressions in the extant Tiberian and Claudian books suggests that we use caution when imagining such "losses."

27 The ethnographic markers in this example are noted by Kraus in Woodman 2014, 128. The other intertexts I suggest include Sall. *Cat.* 6.1–2 and *Iug.* 18.1–7 (ethnographic digressions); Tac. *Agr.* 21.2, 30–32 (Roman enslavement of foreigners); and Tac. *Ann.* 1.7.1 and 3.65.3 (Roman debasement under Tiberius).

28 I follow Kraus in Woodman 2014, 125, who considers the entirety of *Agr.* 10–17 as a "double digression" (including the earlier history of the Roman conquest of Britain after the ethnography proper). I extend this idea to the Jewish ethnography in his *Histories*, which likewise features an account of previous Roman conquests. As such, these "double digressions" exhibit their own liminal transitions (i.e. *res mediae*) from independent foreign peoples (*res externae*)

Tacitean ethnographic writing, draws additional attention to the absence of such material in the *Annals*.[29]

The inherent quality of expansion one expects under *imperium Romanum* — including its outward facing ethnographic excursions (i.e. *liberi egressus*) — would seem ill-suited to the novel confinement (*in arto*), introspection (*introspicere*), and seemingly trivial matters (*illa primo aspectu levia*) heralded by the excursus.[30] Yet Victoria Rimell finds many Roman authors modeling an "inward turn" under empire:

> But when Roman literary texts from the late first century BCE to the second century CE inhabit a series of 'small worlds', those interiors are set — in highly culturally specific terms — against a backdrop of (expanding and transforming) empire. In an era which saw power concentrated in a single leader, and witnessed a burgeoning interest in cartography — the mapping and symbolic shrinking of imperial space enabled by a growing body of military knowledge — the discourse of 'retirement' is often presented as a turning away or exclusion from political life, and from the invasive gaze of imperial power [...] Just as Rome itself grew from a tiny village, or from the modest confines of Romulus' hut, into a vast, microcosmic city, so it provided the stimulation for daring poets to chronicle 'great things' in 'small spaces' (*per exiguos magna referre modos*, Ovid *Fasti* 6.22).[31]

This peculiar spatial conundrum, already manifest in Tacitus' earlier writings such as the *Agricola*,[32] is brought to a head in the paradoxical confinement heralded by a digression that speaks of its own historiographical incarceration

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to conquered, and by extension Romanized, provincials (*res internae*). I thank Vassiliki Pothou for asking about the Jewish ethnography during the conference. Feldherr 2009 and Gruen 2011, 179–196, offer detailed studies of this digression.

29 On the *Germania*, see O'Gorman 1993, Rives 1999, and Thomas 2009 (esp. p. 63: "Where ethnographical description normally functions as a digression within historical writing, in the *Germania* it is the other way around — the historical is a digression from the ethnographical").

30 For expansion as one of three overarching qualities of empire (along with hierarchy and order), see Colás 2007. Victoria Pagán has suggested to me that digressions can both compress (big stuff in a little chapter) and magnify (little stuff in a big chapter), and so Tacitus may be playing with this flexible paradox. For *introspicere* in this passage (and in Tacitus more broadly), see Lana 1989; Damon 2010, 357–358; Malloch 2013, 463; Woodman 2018, 178.

31 Rimell 2015, 3–4. Although Tacitus' highly spatialized comments at *Annals* 4.32–33 do not feature in Rimell's analysis, the tension of "the movability or paradox of enclosure as secure yet terrifying, walled yet penetrable space" (p. 7) that the digression underscores nevertheless fits well within the framework of her analysis.

32 Note esp. Clarke 2001 on Britain's position as a semi-detached space, wherein Agricola is finally able to attain greatness away "from the invasive gaze" of Domitian (using Rimell's terminology). Interestingly, he retreats to domestic life upon his clandestine, nocturnal return to Domitianic Rome (*Agr.* 40.3).

(when digressions are typically outwardly expansive narrative acts — often following the pattern of *liber egressus*).[33] Similarly, Ovid's call (voiced by Juno) — "Dare to bring back great matters using scanty meters" (*Fast*. 6.22: *ause per exiguos magna referre modos*) — aligns closely with Tacitus' closing words from the first part of the digression (*Ann*. 4.32.2: *non tamen sine usu fuerit introspicere illa primo aspectu levia, ex quis magnarum saepe rerum motus oriuntur*). The Ovidian phrase combines the language of daring, revival of traditional literary themes, confined space, trivial subject matters, expulsion, and exile.[34] It also precedes Juno's imperialist rhetoric (*Fast*. 6.45–64) that celebrates Rome's victories over Carthage, the Greek *poleis*, and various neighboring Italic peoples (i.e. the territory of previous Roman annalists, per *Ann*. 4.32.1). The Tacitean-Ovidian intertexts[35] create a deeper irony: Rome — with its unrelenting brutality (4.33.3: *nos saeva iussa, continuas accusationes, fallaces amicitias, perniciem innocentium et easdem exitii causas coniungimus*) — has become far worse than the "savagery" Ovid lamented at Tomis (e.g. *Tr*. 3.10, 5.7, 5.10); barring any

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33 This expansive quality lies at the very core of digressive semantics: *digressus*, from *digredior*, "to go apart" or "depart"; *egressus*, from *egredior*, "to go out" or "go outside of"; and Gk. *parekbasis*, from *parekbainō*, "to go out alongside of." Nevertheless, consider also the astute observation by Woodman (2018, 176–177), who remarks, "*liber egressus* is found elsewhere only in Columella (4×), where it is used literally to refer to the free movement of animals and birds," albeit (upon closer examination of these passages) a "free movement" that is only discussed as a secondary element within the broader context of domestication and confinement (6.23), often to be prevented at all costs (8.8 and 9.1).

34 All of these *topoi* appear in Tacitus' digressions (and covert excursions). For daring, see Tac. *Agr*. 28.1 (*magnum ac memorabile facinus ausa est*), *Ann*. 2.39.2 (*ausa eius impedivit tarditas onerariae navis*), and *Ann*. 2.40.3 (*nec Tiberius poenam eius palam ausus*). For digressions as narrative modes of exile, see Khellaf 2018, 178–179 and 2021, 278–279 n. 41. For the Ovidian terminology, see *OLD refero* 3 ("return to a subject"), 11 ("to trace back to a cause or originator"), 16 ("to revive"), and 17–18 ("to recall in speech or writing"); *OLD exigo* 1 ("to exile"); *OLD exiguum* 1b ("a confined space"); and *OLD exiguus* 2, 5 ("scanty, meager, slight"), and 6 ("of small importance, trivial").

35 Rhiannon Ash notes a further Ovidian intertext (*Tr*. 1.3.25). Consider the spatial leitmotifs found throughout the surrounding passage (1.3.21–26): "In whatever direction you looked, grief and lamentation were resounding, and inside (*intus*) was the appearance of a non-silent funeral (*non taciti funeris*). Man and woman, children as well mourned over my funeral, and within my house every nook (*angulus omnis*) possessed tears. If one be permitted to use grand *exempla* in small matters (*si licet exemplis in parvis grandibus uti*), such was the appearance of Troy when it was captured." Given Ovid's use of *egredior* for his first steps out of his house towards exile (1.3.89), these parallels merit further examination. Bhatt 2018, 216–217, compares Ovid's accounts from Tomis with Tacitus' "exile at Rome," writing, "Tacitus' narrative challenges the ontological notion of home as one's due, right, or true place of belonging."

outward escape (i.e. *liber egressus*), including exile (with its endless pleas to return to Rome), introspection into seemingly trivial, yet actually significant matters (*introspicere illa primo aspectu levia*) may offer its own sort of reprieve from the literary internment of imperial censorship.[36]

Finally, it should be emphasized that Tacitus' *Annals* are the first (extant) historical text in antiquity to substitute the digression for the preface when it comes to discussing broader historiographical methods, motives, and purposes for the work at large.[37] Apart from what are termed "second prefaces," which we find in Thucydides (5.26), Polybius (3.1–5, 4.1–2, 9.1–2, etc.), and Livy (6.1, 21.1)[38] — and notwithstanding earlier historical digressions that offer justifications for their wandering narratives (Hdt. 4.30.1, Plb. 38.5–6, Livy 9.17.1–2) — Tacitus' displaced material goes well beyond previous historical conventions. Those earlier works all begin with lengthy methodologies. Moreover, their second prefaces mark significant narrative divisions (e.g. the Peace of Nicias, the outset of the Second Punic War, and the Gallic Sack of Rome). The same cannot be said for Tacitus' *Annals* nor its major digressions (*Ann.* 3.65 and 4.32–33). From an extant perspective, they constitute a major innovation to both digression and preface writing, and thus to the entire genre of historiography (given its central concerns with authority and tradition).[39]

Although no one, so far as I can tell, has made this broader argument, *Ann.* 4.32–33 has received extensive commentary. Scholars have therefore come close to noting this fact. Consider the observations made by Dylan Sailor:

> The remarks of *Ann.* 4.32–3 are important for their content, but also for their position. *Annals* has only a gesture at a preface: a capsule history of monarchy at Rome, told at a breakneck pace; a history of Roman historiography, told as swiftly; eleven words describing the content of the present work; and a pledge that Tacitus will do it all "without anger or zeal" (*sine ira et studio*, 1.1.3). *Histories*, and *Agricola*, had opened with remarks on a

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36 Ovid's exile, under Tiberius' predecessor, constituted a rather remarkable punishment given Augustus' record of *clementia* (e.g. *RG* 3.1; Suet. *Aug.* 51, 54–57; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 1.9–10, 4.34). Augustus' excessive allowances of free speech were even questioned by Tiberius (Suet. *Aug.* 51.3).

37 The parentheses here are partially emphatic. Rhiannon Ash comments that Tacitus may only appear to be the first to do this given how many historical works have been lost (it would be ironic if Cremutius Cordus had been the first). For possible connections, see Sailor 2008, 250–313, especially his concluding thoughts.

38 Cf. Woodman 2018, 172: "Whereas second prefaces tend to advertise 'greater' or 'more important' material than hitherto, T. does exactly the opposite."

39 For the importance of these two themes and their many literary manifestations in historiography, see Marincola 1997, who discusses this digression at pp. 251–253.

scale comparable to those at *Ann.* 4.32–3; for that reason, this section is sometimes called the "second preface." Placing the fullest programmatic remarks in *Annals* immediately before the account of Cremutius' trial asks readers to revise their understanding of Tacitus' work not merely in light of that trial, but with Cremutius' story as an important analogy for Tacitus' career.[40]

It is not my intent to delve into the link between the digression and the account of Cremutius Cordus that follows (which has been done extensively by John Moles and Sailor).[41] Yet this narrative juxtaposition suggests that for Tacitus, at least, the digression constitutes a highly intentional, deeply revolutionary act of immense literary significance. Tacitus, through this narrative move alone, makes himself "a rare dissenter among ancient writers" (*Ann.* 4.33.4: *antiquis scriptoribus rarus obtrectator*). As A.J. Woodman notes:

> This digression is of immense importance because in it Tacitus explains that his own work [...] is now significantly different from earlier historiography [...] we know from Quintilian and Pliny that by Tacitus' time digressions were particularly associated with the genre of historiography. Thus, by using a digression specifically to *deny* that his work contains any of the pleasurable elements of which conventional historiography was thought to consist, Tacitus could hardly have chosen a more ironically appropriate medium in which to emphasize the changed nature of his work.[42]

Similarly, David Levene remarks, "In what is perhaps the most self-consciously programmatic passage in the work he contrasts, surprisingly unfavourably, his own history with those of his predecessors."[43]

Tacitus essentially draws new narrative boundaries for the altered scope of imperial history's nontraditional subject matters. He takes programmatic material that is traditionally placed in an extremely conspicuous position at the outset of a historiographical work and buries it in a digression — material that lays out in remarkable detail the many reversals, antitheses, and ironies that are vital to understanding his inglorious historiographical labor. In so doing, he enjoins us to be on the lookout for notable events, trivial as they might initially appear, in marginal and unexpected places. Moreover, a significant number of these subversive episodes read like digressions. Tacitus may therefore be toying with a novel form of digressive mimesis by staging pseudo-digressions,

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40 Sailor 2008, 275.

41 Moles 1998, 131–180 and Sailor 2008, 250–313. See also Clarke 2002, 93–97.

42 Woodman 1998, 130, 134 (with much of it repeated in Woodman 2018, 172–173).

43 Levene 2009, 226. Cf. Woodman 2018, 172: "The programmatic nature of the digression is self evident: many of the topics with which T. deals are those which might be expected in a historian's preface."

imposter digressions, even miniature narratives masquerading as digressions.[44] This becomes more tangible still when we consider how these brief accounts frequently showcase (a) imposters playing at major historical figures, (b) metatheatrics, and (c) even mistaken identities.[45] Tacitus essentially suggests that there are seemingly insignificant persons or collectives — much like his digressions on historiography — capable of destabilizing the monotony, and even the political supremacy, of Roman imperial rule and its narrative representations.

2 Tacitus' dialogic imagination: Exemplarity, notoriety, and the mutiny of the Usipi

The conceit certainly falls in line with Tacitus' earlier writings. A majority emphasize limitations to literary production (or to the historical acts that enable such outputs) at Rome.[46] It therefore comes as no surprise to find paradoxographical models for what qualifies as noteworthy history.[47] In particular, "the

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44 I base the term pseudo-digression on the idea that these narratives use regular annalistic markers – *eadem aestate*, *eodem anno*, and *sub idem tempus* – that traditionally denote temporal simultaneity of unrelated events, but that in Tacitus actually go further, recasting the traditional annalistic framework (*per* Ginsburg 1981) in order to denote a mode of digressive, and with it dialogic, signposting. Levene 2010, 48, cites Ginsburg when noting that *eo anno* and *eodem anno* differ from *per idem tempus* in that the former "can also be used of brief individual events" and also "leave open the possibility of narrating events overtly out of chronological sequence." It is especially noteworthy that Ginsburg 1981, in framing her analyses of these phrases (and their corresponding episodes), repeatedly uses Tacitus' major digressions at *Ann.* 3.65 and 4.32–33 as a primary support for her arguments (pp. 7, 9, 32, 49, 80–81, 86, 95).

45 Consider, for example, (a) the false Nero (*Hist.* 2.8–9) and the false Agrippa Postumus (*Ann.* 2.39–40; (b) the false Nero contriving for himself a sorrowful appearance in order to win over his wavering soldiers (*is in maestitiam compositus*, *Hist.* 2.9.2); and (c) the Usipi being mistaken for pirates due to their recent plight (*pro praedonibus habiti*, *Agr.* 28.3).

46 The seminal work on this topic remains Sailor 2008 (for Tacitus in general, but especially the *Agricola*, *Histories*, and *Annals*). Within the *Dialogus*, this theme is most apparent in the concluding remarks of Maternus (41.3–4).

47 Woodman 1998, 168–189, reads *Ann.* 15.36–37 as Rome's transformation into a complete state of paradoxography under Nero (i.e. "Nero's Alien Capital"). A useful definition is given by McNamara and Pagán 2022, 6: "Because paradoxography is the reporting of things that are strange but true (that is, reported true, but not necessarily proven true), it challenges the credibility of the author and the credulity of the reader." Also helpful is Diodorus Siculus' digression about Mt. Ida (17.7.5), with its expression ἴδιον δέ τι καὶ παράδοξον ("something that is both

gloomy state of affairs at Rome" (4.32.2: *maestae urbis res*), coupled with its quasi one-man rule under which "few employ good sense when distinguishing virtuous matters from base ones, and useful ones from harmful ones, and many learn from what happens to others" (4.33.2: *pauci prudentia honesta ab deterioribus, utilia ab noxiis discernunt, plures aliorum eventis docentur*), leads Tacitus to contend that "it will prove advantageous for these matters to be investigated and handed down historically" (*haec conquiri tradique in rem fuerit*).[48]

As part of this broader annalistic didacticism lies a need to consider quasi-digressive episodes outside the "great man/noble family" framework of history. Victoria Pagán helps to explain their place in the Tacitean narrative:

> The wonder tends to be digressive, if not exactly in form, then surely in the content, which deviates from the immediate subject matter and invites scepticism. It calls attention to its status as a written account of information received from other sources, which is then packaged in a delineated narrative unit. Nevertheless, it resonates within its immediate context and may even bear upon larger themes of the work as a whole. None of these conclusions, drawn from only four exceptional passages, are new or particularly useful until considered against the ordinary subject matter that constitutes the majority of Tacitus' works.[49]

The agents of such digressive occurrences, having little to no social standing, occasionally find remarkable success in (a) cutting through the "repetitiveness and superfluity of affairs in the way" of the primary historical narrative (4.33.3: *obvia rerum similitudine et satietate*), and (b) offering alternative models for "things perceived that were distinguished for their integrity or noteworthy for

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peculiar and incredible"), borrowed from Mario Baumann's analysis (in this volume). For Tacitus' interest in paradoxography, see the essays in McNamara and Pagán 2022.

48 The first phrase, through phonological but not etymological affinity (*maestae/maiestas*), hints at the recurring prosecutions with which Tacitus defines Julio-Claudian rule. Cf. Woodman 2018, 178: "The adj. suggests death (*maestam* [...] *urbem* at Virg. *Aen*. 11.26 and 147)." Not only are such events found throughout the surrounding narrative (*Ann*. 4.28–36) — in particular the martyrdom account of the historian Cremutius Cordus that immediately follows and shares a close affinity with the digression (4.34–35) — but they also surround Tacitus' earlier digression on the primary purpose of annalistic historiography (3.65), specifically the extensive prosecution and exile of Gaius Silanus (*Ann*. 3.66–69), whose connection with the digression, including certain verbal parallels, is discussed by Woodman 1998, 101–102. For *maiestas* as (ironically) a destabilizing term in Tacitus, see Henderson 1989, 177 (cf. Maltby 1991, 360).

49 Pagán 2022, 253.

their opprobrium" (3.65.1: *sententias* [...] *insignes per honestum aut notabili dedecore*).[50]

For Tacitus tells us in this other digression on historical method (*Ann*. 3.65) that distinguished or noteworthy matters will be discussed at length; that doing so constitutes "a primary duty of history, in order that virtues are not passed over in silence and that there exists a fear of infamy from posterity for depraved words and deeds" (3.65.1: *quod praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne virtutes sileantur utque pravis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit*)."[51] Indeed, with much the same pessimism found at *Ann*. 4.32–33 (and similar to his brief digression on sycophantic Flavian historians at *Hist*. 2.101.1), Tacitus effectively likens the era to a "stained" and "soiled" garment (*Ann*. 3.65.2: *tempora illa adeo infecta et adulatione sordida fuere*), a symbol of both political life and the theater, noting how senior statesmen "cloaked" their servile actions with their brilliance (*quibus claritudo sua obsequiis protegenda erat*).[52]

Three particular episodes feature individuals of actual slave status (the true performers of *inglorius labor* in the Roman world) who fall at the far ends of this exemplarity-notoriety spectrum, in some instances bridging both extremes. They appear in each of Tacitus' historiographical writings (the *Agricola*, the *Histories*, and the *Annals*). The earliest of these pseudo-digressions occurs in the *Agricola* with the mutiny of the Usipi (*Agr*. 28).

> *Eadem aestate cohors Usiporum per Germanias conscripta et in Britanniam transmissa magnum ac memorabile facinus ausa est. occiso centurione ac militibus qui ad tradendam disciplinam inmixti manipulis exemplum et rectores habebantur, tres Liburnicas adactis per vim gubernatoribus ascendere. et uno remig<i imper>ante (suspectis duobus eoque inter-*

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50 I read *sententia* broadly here per *OLD sentio* 2 ("to become or be aware of, sense, discern, recognize") and 5b ("to have experience of, know"). The key work on Tacitean *sententiae* remains Sinclair 1995, who (pp. 55–68) has much to say about Tacitus' first-person digressions in the *Annals* (3.65, 4.32–33, 6.22). He also divides the narratives of the Tiberian hexad into four spheres (pp. 4–5): (1) the imperial court, (2) Tiberius and his inner circle, (3) "the lives of those who are largely excluded from the inner workings of Roman politics, people like the slave Clemens (*Ann*. 2.39–40)," and (4) "the world of the historian himself." Sinclair views Tacitus as tightly regulating how the reader is granted access to these various groups, concluding (p. 5): "The historian thereby draws the conceptual boundaries of the various worlds within Tiberius's principate, giving them cohesion and integrity, while at the same time dramatizing how they interact."

51 For studies concerning the interpretation of this key phrase, see Luce 1991; Woodman and Martin 1996, 451–453; Woodman 1998, 86–103; and Turpin 2008, 361–363.

52 For the use of *sordidus* to refer to garments, see Enn. *Telamo* 138 (per Jocelyn 1969, 129); Mart. 1.103.5; and Cic. *Tusc*. 3.23.56. Likewise the verb *tego* (not compounded) is used for clothing: Cic. *Div* 2.143; *Nat. D*. 2.121 and 2.150.

fectis), nondum vulgato rumore ut miraculum praevehebantur. mox ad aquam atque utensil-ia rapt<um ubi devert>issent, cum plerisque Britannorum sua defensantium proelio congres-si ac saepe victores, aliquando pulsi, eo ad extremum inopiae venere ut infirmissimos suor-um, mox sorte ductos vescerentur. atque ita circumvecti Britanniam; amissis per inscitiam regendi navibus pro praedonibus habiti, primum a Suebis, mox a Frisiis intercepti sunt. ac fuere quos per commercia venumdatos et in nostram usque ripam mutatione ementium ad-ductos indicium tanti casus inlustravit.

In that same summer a cohort of Usipi — after being enlisted from among the German ter-ritories and dispatched into Britain — dared a great and memorable deed. After the slaying of a centurion and soldiers, who as a model for imparting discipline were mixed in with the cohorts and were employed as wardens, they forcefully reduced the helmsmen into submission and commandeered three Liburnian ships. With only one in command of the rowers (since two had been suspected and therefore killed), they were coasting along as a wonder since rumor of their doings had not yet circulated.[53] In due time, whenever they changed course to seize water and supplies, they contended with a great many of the Brit-ons who sought to protect their possessions; often victorious, at other times beaten back, they ultimately came to such destitution that they devoured their weakest men, and sub-sequently those chosen by lot. And thus having circumnavigated Britain, after their ships had been lost through not knowing how to command them, and having been mistaken for pirates, they were captured, first by the Suebi and then by the Frisii. But there were those — sold into slavery through commercial transactions and brought even so far as our shore through the exchange of buying — whom proof of so great an incident made famous.

This central passage, which separates Agricola's campaigns in Roman Britain (*Agr*. 18–27) from his victory over the assembled Caledonian forces at Mons Graupius (29–38), offers Tacitus' readers a glimpse of something seemingly trivial, even entertaining.[54] Yet the passage also calls into question Agricola's singular accomplishment (*Hist*. 1.2.1: *perdomita Britannia*; *Agr*. 10.1: *quia tum primum perdomita est*). It is the Usipi who first circumnavigate Britain by accident (28.3: *atque ita circumvecti Britanniam*), thereby confirming its insular status for Agricola's symbolic act, in which "he orders the prefect of the fleet to circum-navigate Britain" (38.3: *praefecto classis circumvehi Britanniam praecipit*).[55]

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53 The unanchored *ut miraculum* (much like the Usipi aboard their drifting ship) could plausi-bly go with *nondum vulgato rumore* as well (i.e. the Usipi were coasting along and were not yet a source of wonder following their story's circulation, with the reported news being as much a source of marvel as their mysterious "Flying Dutchman" appearances).

54 The passage has been analyzed by Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 245–249; Clarke 2001, 109–112; Ash 2010a; Khellaf 2012; Woodman 2014, 226–232; Sailor 2012, 33; Kraus 2014, 233–235; and Pagán 2022, 251–253.

55 Cf. *Agr*. 10.4: *hanc oram novissimi maris tunc primum Romana classis circumvecta insulam esse Britanniam adfirmavit* ("Then, for the first time, the circumnavigation by the Roman fleet of this shoreline of the most recently discovered sea confirmed that Britain is an island"). The

The highly historiographical first sentence, noting that the Usipi dared "a great and memorable deed" (*magnum ac memorabile facinus*),[56] constitutes what should be the quintessence of Agricola's actions in Britain.[57] Usages of *memor* cognates elsewhere in the work are limited to remembering Agricola, writing historiography, and recalling Agricola's predecessors involved in the conquest of Britain (including their literary accounts).[58] By contrast, the adjective *magnus* occurs in a number of instances involving both Agricola and foreign peoples, suggesting a kind of semantic bridge between Roman hero and Rome's foreign enemies.[59] The word *facinus* is a *hapax legomenon*. However, the verb *facio* and its cognates appear frequently as primary elements in the *Agricola* (i.e. 1.1: *Clarorum virorum facta moresque posteris tradere*), as well as for imperial actions involving Agricola's soldiers or Rome more generally.[60] Thus, although they are ostensibly common Latin words, they carry fairly specific usages in the *Agricola*.

In other historians, variations of the phrase *magnum ac memorabile facinus* signify digressions and narratives about foreign peoples.[61] These include Sallust's excursus on the Philaeni brothers, about whom "it seems not unworthy to commemorate the distinguished and wondrous deed of the two Carthaginians" (*Iug.* 79.1: *non indignum videtur egregium atque mirabile facinus duorum Carthaginiensium memorare*) and Livy's account of Chiomara — "a memorable deed"

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significance of this act (and of these three phrases) is discussed extensively. See Rutledge 2000, 79; Clarke 2001, 100–104; Woodman 2014, 137. On Tacitus' use of "protreptic" geography more broadly, see Sailor 2008, 81–89. Cf. Cass. Dio 66.20.1–2.

56 For the historiographical resonance of the phrase, see Khellaf 2012, 12–20 and Woodman 2014, 227–228.

57 Clarke 2001, 110, notes that "the Usipi, antithetical though their behaviour may be to the civilizing force of Agricola, are also paradoxically reminiscent of some of the qualities associated with him," and that "the Usipi, in a perverse way, are allowed to succeed where Agricola fails." Cf. Ash 2010a, 289–293.

58 *Remembering* Agricola: 1.2, 4.3, 46.3; historiographical *memorializing* (more generally): 1.2, 2.3, 3.3; Agricola's predecessors/*memory* of earlier British history: 10.1, 14.1, 18.3.

59 There are 25 instances of the word in the *Agricola*, so I only note a few examples here. Roman *greatness* (and the general commemoration thereof): 1.1; Agricola's *greatness* (or *great* qualities linked to him): 4.3, 5.3, 18.5, 18.6, 40.4, 42.4, 44.2, 46.1; Agricola's *great* (authentic) victory: 39.1.

60 The *deeds* of great men/Agricola's *actions*: 1.1, 7.3, 9.3, 22.4, 46.3; the *furnishing* of ethnographic proof: 11.2; Roman imperial *acts* (including those of Agricola's soldiers and fleet): 25.1, 29.2, 30.5.

61 The intertexts are discussed in Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 245; Ash 2010a, 280–281; Khellaf 2012, 12–19; and Woodman 2014, 227–228. A few not analyzed here include Tac. *Hist.* 1.44.2, Vell. Pat. 2.86.3, and Luc. 4.496–497.

which "was accomplished by a female captive" (38.24.2: *facinus memorabile a captiva factum est*), the wife of the chieftain of the Tectosagi who famously beheaded a Roman centurion after he "violated her body, which owing to fortune was servile" (38.24.3: *corpori, quod servum fortuna erat, vim fecit*).[62]

Nevertheless, enslaved foreigners slaying Romans, no matter how problematic the latter's military conduct, hardly qualifies as a clear-cut case of exemplarity. The phrase *magnum ac memorabile facinus ausa est* is highly dialogic. Rhiannon Ash emphasizes how *facinus* can refer to both a highly positive "deed" and a notorious "crime."[63] Unsurprisingly, Tacitus leaves open both possibilities, echoing earlier ambivalent historiographical usages.[64] The dialogism continues elsewhere in the digression. While describing how a centurion and soldiers were interspersed with the Usipi "as a model for imparting discipline" (*ad tradendam disciplinam* [...] *exemplum*), Tacitus employs, alongside the very word *exemplum*, the highly loaded verb *trado*. This word constructs a macro frame for the *Agricola*: (a) to denote the biographical and historiographical achievement of its author in the work's opening and closing phrases — "To hand down to later generations the deeds and habits of illustrious men" (1.1: *Clarorum virorum facta moresque posteris tradere*); "Agricola will survive, having been recounted and handed down to posterity" (46.4: *Agricola posteritati narratus et traditus superstes erit*)[65] — and (b) to signify the act of gubernatorial

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62 Ash 2010a, 280 n. 16, noting the parallel at Livy 38.24.2, drew my attention to this passage.

63 Ash 2010a, 280–281, a sentiment echoed by Woodman 2014, 228. Ash 2010a, 280 n. 16 even notes how this problematic could be extended to Sallust's account of the Philaeni (*Iug.* 79), calling it "another episode which runs counter to readers' expectations, as representatives of a society which was the traditional enemy of Rome engage in exemplary and altruistic conduct."

64 For example, Sallust's initial description of the Catilinarian conspiracy as a subject worthy of historical treatment (*Cat.* 4.4): "For I judge this deed to be especially memorable for the novelty of the crime and its danger" (*nam id facinus in primis ego memorabile existumo sceleris atque periculi novitate*); and Catiline's later declaration (20.3): "My mind has dared to set out on the greatest and finest deed" (*animus ausus est maxumum atque pulcherrumum facinus incipere*), in which he emphasizes the similar moral ambiguity of his plan (*vobis eadem quae mihi bona malaque esse*). Sallust's monograph concludes with Catiline facing death amidst the front ranks of his soldiers (60.3–4, 61.1, 61.4), thereby accomplishing the sort of heroic deed of bygone times described in Sallust's earlier digression (7.6: *conspici dum tale facinus faceret*).

65 For the historiographical sense of "handing down" information, essentially a form of "bequeathing" or "transmitting" past events to subsequent generations (per *OLD trado* 4), see *OLD trado* 10. Harrison 2007, 318–319, sees *narratus* and *traditus* as marking Agricola's literary apotheosis from man into book, which we might extend to a possible overdetermined usage of *conscripta* and *transmissa* that inaugurates the Usipi's voyage. Cf. *OLD conscribo* 2 ("to cover with writing, write on"), 3 ("to commit to writing, write down"), 4 ("to compose, write"), and 4c ("to compose a literary work"), as well as *OLD transmitto* 9 ("to hand over, transmit").

succession on both ends of Agricola's command in Britain (*Agr.* 16.3: *Petronius Turpilianus* [...] *Trebellio Maximo provinciam tradidit*; 40.3: *tradiderat interim Agricola successori suo provinciam quietam tutamque*).[66]

However, in the account of the Usipi, *tradendam* imparts the forced *exemplum* of military discipline on the Germanic cohort, leading in turn to the overthrow of the ships' *gubernatores*. The overdetermination of these three terms in Roman ethical, political, and historiographical thought — unanchored though their meanings are in the nautical passage — builds significance:

> Accumulation filters through the semantic features of its words, thereby overdetermining the occurrence of the most widely represented seme and canceling out the semes that appear less frequently. The components of the accumulation become synonyms of one another irrespective of their original meaning in ordinary language.[67]

We are perhaps meant to wonder about an alternate ship of state metaphor through such semantic drift: on the one hand, a rebellious cohort emancipated from imperial (and by extension Domitianic) oppression in an ocean scarcely touched by Rome; on the other hand, an aimless ship adrift without governance, leading to piratic raids, starvation, cannibalism, "ships lost through not knowing how to command (lit. *rule*) them" (28.3: *amissis per inscitiam regendi navibus*), and ultimately the reenslavement of its subjects (previously *conscripta*, now *per commercia venumdatos* [...] *mutatione ementium*). As such, the passage pushes Roman ideas about exemplarity "to the very limits of destitution" (28.2: *ad extremum inopiae* into transgressive action (cannibalism), and beyond the shores of Caledonia (where the conquests of Agricola and all other Romans before him terminate).[68]

This aligns with the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque, which is developed from a variety of ancient literary genres including Menippean satire and the ancient novel.[69]

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66 For this sense, see *OLD trado* 6. Sailor 2008, 84, illustrates a strong connection between Tacitus' use of *trado* across the whole of the work (although he does not discuss its place in the mutiny of the Usipi), and connects this with the Agricolan military (and by extension Tacitean literary) competition with Julius Caesar and Claudius over the conquest of Britain, including the proper authorship of those deeds.

67 Riffaterre 1983, 39.

68 Clarke 2001, 110: "But the Usipi had found in Britain an invigoration of their 'edge of the earth' existence. Their behaviour is the least civilized to find a place in the work." A similar sentiment is expressed by Sailor 2012, 33.

69 Bakhtin 1984a, 101–180, esp. 107–137 (which Bakhtin labels a digression in his own work). Cf. Ash 2010a, 279: "This is indeed a curious tale, a skeletal version of something one might

> A very important characteristic of the menippea is the organic combination within it of the free fantastic, the symbolic, at times even a mystical-religious element with an extreme and (from our point of view) crude *slum naturalism*. The adventures of truth on earth take place on the high road, in brothels, in the dens of thieves, in taverns, marketplaces, prisons, in the erotic orgies of secret cults, and so forth. The idea here fears no slum, is not afraid of any of life's filth.[70]

In this respect, we should be aware that one of the closest extant parallels to the phrase *magnum ac memorabile facinus* comes from the highly carnivalized genre of Roman comedy. In Terence's *Heautontimorumenos*, the slave Syrus tells Clitipho that "there can be neither a great nor memorable deed without danger" (*Haut.* 314: *non fit sine periclo facinus magnum nec memorabile*).[71] Like the comic and seriocomic genres, the Usipi digression "fears no slum, is not afraid of any of life's filth." It features mutiny (power reversals), everyday rumor (*Agr.* 28.1: *vulgato rumore*), "the free fantastic" (*ut miraculum*), enslavements, aimless drifting, piracy, mistaken identities, and even cannibalism unfolding in a seemingly "organic combination." As such, it infuses traditional historiographic ideals with new "mésalliances" of meaning, creating a dialogic framework that becomes the basis for many of Tacitus' pseudo-digressions in the *Histories* and the *Annals*.

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expect to find narrated much more lavishly in a different genre, say, the ancient novel," and Woodman 2014, 227: "this is the stuff of the ancient novel." Ash further noted in comments to me how the formal act of frame-breaking created by introducing a digression into historical narrative often seems to generate a further crossing of generic boundaries. Other genres noted by Bakhtin include ancient comedy, pantomime, Socratic dialogue, and even Atellan farce (*per* Bakhtin 1984b, 471–473), which is ironic given Tiberius' banishment of Atellan performers from Italy at *Ann.* 4.14). See Gabba 1981, 53, for the novel as "a lesser form of history writing" that sought to distance itself from Thucydidean and Polybian themes.

70 Bakhtin 1984a, 115 (emphasis his own). Also of relevance (p. 118): "The menippea is full of sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations: the virtuous hetaera, the true freedom of the wise man and his servile position, the emperor who becomes a slave, moral downfalls and purifications, luxury and poverty, the noble bandit, and so forth. The menippea loves to play with abrupt transitions and shifts, ups and downs, rises and falls, unexpected comings together of distant and disunited things, mésalliances of all sorts."

71 An additional rationale for the allusion may be found in the subsequent lines of the comedy. When the slave Syrus is slow to respond to a question regarding his plans, Clitipho inquires why he is digressing (318: *quas, malum, ambages mihi narrare occipit?*), and Clinia tells him to get to the point (319: *mitte, ad rem redi*), all using traditional signposting terms employed by ancient historians for their digressions. Cf. Plaut. *Pseud.* 542 and Ter. *Eun.* 959 for the phrase *facinus ausa est* (*per* Heubner 1984, 84).

3 Elsewhere than the main narrative: The false Nero and Clemens

In the preface to his *Histories*, Tacitus remarks (1.2.1), "I am setting out upon a work rich in unexpected reversals, violent in its battles, strife-laden with insurrections, savage even in its very peace. Four emperors perished by sword. There were three civil wars, more foreign ones, and great many of them a thorough mix of both" (*Opus adgredior opimum casibus, atrox proeliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace saevom. quattuor principes ferro interempti; trina bella civilia, plura externa ac plerumque permixta*). His opening description continues with a far more extensive catalogue of bleak qualities and comorbidities,[72] prefiguring the pessimistic lists of morose topics in the *Annals* 4 digression (4.32.2 and 4.33.3).[73]

An additional key to reading the carnivalesque episodes scattered across the *opera maiora*, with their seemingly digressive (or pseudo-digressive) qualities, is Tacitus' description of the chaotic state of Rome's global affairs: these events have blended *res externae* and *res internae* into some "thoroughly mixed" novel concoction (*trina bella civilia, plura externa ac plerumque permixta*). It is onto this "literary territory, rich in chance reversals," that Tacitus claims he is now "setting out" (*Opus adgredior opimum casibus*),[74] knowing how *casus* ("chance events," "unexpected outcomes," and "disasters") breed digressive narratives, often with mutinous themes (*discors seditionibus*).[75] He further notes that such circumstances roused the passions of many collectives, inciting further

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72 Damon 2003, 82: "The prevailing colours are dark. The tone set by the opening sentence [...] is maintained by references to violence [...] disorder and disease [...] and destruction." See Damon for the accumulation of terms.

73 Further parallels include historiographical freedoms available to earlier authors (cf. *Hist.* 1.1.1: *dum res populi Romani memorabantur, pari eloquentia ac libertate* and *Ann.* 4.32.1: *qui veteres populi Romani res composuere* [...] *libero egressu memorabant*) versus the diminishing of great literary minds following Actium under one-man rule (cf. *Hist.* 1.1.1: *postquam bellatum apud Actium atque omnem potentiam ad unum conferri pacis interfuit, magna illa ingenia cessere* and *Ann.* 4.33.2: *quam si unus imperitet*). Tacitus likewise iterates the problems with animosity and obsequiousness (*Hist.* 1.1.1–2) versus the ongoing displays of exemplarity (1.3.1).

74 For a detailed analysis of *gradior* verbs in Tacitus, including *adgredior* and its relationship to digressive verbs of motion and their cognates (i.e. *egredior/egressus* and *digredior/digressus*), see Hutchinson 2020, 123–127. Joseph 2012, 13–37, conducts a detailed analysis of this phrase in dialogue with the preface to the *Histories* and the *Ann.* 4.32–33 digression.

75 *OLD casus* 3–5. See also *OLD* 7 ("chance, opportunity"), 8 ("danger, risk, peril"), and 11 ("contingency, eventuality").

disorder. The death of Nero generated an "initial impetus of rejoicing" (*Hist*. 1.4.2: *finis Neronis ut laetus primo gaudentium impetu fuerat*), followed by "movements of emotions" (*motus animorum*) among various Roman classes, and roused newfound excitement (*conciverat*) among the legions and their generals.[76]

The ultimate reason for the Roman military's sentiment was, as Tacitus famously quips (1.4.2), "Because the secret of empire had been revealed — it was possible for the emperor to be made elsewhere than at Rome" (*evolgato imperii arcano, posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri*). Coupled with the fusing together of *res externae* and *res internae*, this statement further suggests an indistinct separation of primary and secondary narratives in the *Histories*, a blurring of the imperial chronicle with tabloid style "*Enquirer*-ies."[77] Poorly delineated "digressions" become all the more likely. Tacitus even takes this a step further with his accounts of imposters masquerading as members of the Roman imperial family. He suggests that emperors, if they can be made elsewhere than Rome, can also be fabricated outside the main historical narrative.

Consider the imposter Nero episode (*Hist*. 2.8–9), wherein Tacitus highlights the instability wrought by one of many false claimants to the principate (2.8).[78]

> *Sub idem tempus Achaia atque Asia falso exterritae, velut Nero adventaret, vario super exitu eius rumore eoque pluribus vivere eum fingentibus credentibusque. ceterorum casus conatusque in contextu operis dicemus: tunc servus e Ponto sive, ut alii tradidere, libertinus ex Italia, citharae et cantus peritus, unde illi super similitudinem oris propior ad fallendum fides, adiunctis desertoribus, quos inopia vagos ingentibus promissis conruperat, mare ingreditur; ac vi tempestatum Cythnum insulam detrusus et militum quosdam ex Oriente commeantium adscivit vel abnuentes interfici iussit, et spoliatis negotiatoribus mancipiorum valentissimum quemque armavit. centurionemque Sisennam dextras, concordiae insignia, Syriaci exercitus nomine ad praetorianos ferentem variis artibus adgressus est, donec Sisenna clam relicta insula trepidus et vim metuens aufugeret. inde late terror: multi ad celebritatem nominis erecti rerum novarum cupidine et odio praesentium. gliscentem in dies famam fors discussit.*

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76 Contrast this with Tacitus' statement at *Ann*. 4.32.2 (*immota quippe aut modice lacessita pax, maestae urbis res, et princeps proferendi imperi incuriosus erat*).

77 The idea of the short digressive episodes having a *National Enquirer* (junk tabloid) feel was suggested by Erich Araujo, a student in my Comparative Ancient Historical Writing class (Spring 2021). I myself find them akin to the bizarre incidents reported on *Good Morning America* amidst the more serious news segments.

78 Ash 2007, 95: "This excursus has a digressionary feel, but as so often, T. illuminates the main narrative by an event which has an indeterminate chronological relationship with the outer frame."

In the same interval Achaia and Asia were mistakenly terrified as though Nero were arriving, since the rumor mill about his death was diverse and therefore many fantasized and believed that he was alive. The happenstances and ventures of others I will recount as they tie into my work; at that time, it was a slave from Pontus, or, as others have recorded, a freedman from Italy. He was experienced in cithara-playing and song, because of which, in addition to the facial resemblance, he had more resemblance to that individual for the false gaining of trust. After deserters joined him, whom as destitute vagrants he beguiled with great promises, he set sail. Having been driven in to the island of Cythnus through the force of storms, he enlisted certain soldiers who were traveling on leave from the East, or if they refused, he ordered them to be killed. And once the merchants had been robbed, he armed each of the strongest slaves. Next, he sought to sway with all sorts of artifices the centurion Sisenna, who, in the name of the Syrian armies, was carrying to the Praetorians the clasped right hands, the emblems of friendship, until Sisenna secretly left the island in haste, and, fearing violence, took flight. Then the terror was widespread: many were excited by a desire for a new regime owing to the celebrity of the name and a hatred for the present state of affairs. And it kept growing daily, the rumor, which a fortuitous affair dispelled.

Tacitus already warned us in his preface to be on the lookout for false Neros (1.2.1): "Even the Parthians were nearly moved to arms by the sham of the false Nero" (*mota prope etiam Parthorum arma falsi Neronis ludibrio*).[79] For Nero had become all the rage among the most disreputable persons (1.4.3): "the sordid plebs accustomed to the circus and the theaters, likewise the basest of slaves, or else those who, after their property was consumed, were nourished by the disgrace of Nero, were gloomy and eager for rumors" (*plebs sordida et circo ac theatris sueta, simul deterrimi servorum, aut qui adesis bonis per dedecus Neronis alebantur, maesti et rumorum avidi*).[80] Tacitus foregrounds the recurrence of

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79 Although this statement refers to another false Nero (Terentius Maximus) who appeared during the reign of Titus (cf. Cass. Dio 66.19.3b–3c), its inclusion at the outset of the *Histories* certainly prompts awareness of similar narratives. Consider also the carnivalesque sense of *falsi Neronis ludibrio*, per *OLD ludibrium* 2 ("an object of derision or reproach, laughing-stock"), 3 ("mockery, derision"), and 4 ("something that mocks by seeming to be other than it is, a pretence, sham, imposture"). For Nero's reign as the epitome of a carnivalized world, consider Bartsch 1994, 1–62 and Woodman 1998, 168–189. For Nero as "the satirical defamation of history," leading Tacitus to deploy "a sceptical rhetoric of *ludibrium*, with which he will engage the reader in appreciating the absurdist illogic of Imperial entropy," see Henderson 1989, 171.

80 Cf. *Ann.* 4.32.2 (*maestae urbis res*), Nero, it seems, never truly meets his "end" (*finis Neronis*, *Hist.* 1.4.2) in Tacitus' *Histories*. The name occurs 48 times in Book 1 (44 times to refer to the emperor himself, twice in adjectival form, and once to refer to Tiberius), and would appear to fade thereafter (19 times in Book 2, 3 times in Book 3) before "rising again" (12 times in Book 4). The essential treatment is Haynes 2003, who writes (p. 34): "Nero's influence is written all over this story, from the public reaction to his death to impersonations of him both by subsequent emperors and by faraway fortune seekers. As Tacitus narrates it, the death of the last Julio-

such events, stressing early in the False Nero account, "The happenstances and enterprises of others I will recount as they tie into my work" (*ceterorum casus conatusque in contextu operis dicemus*).[81] He alerts the reader to a connection between such disruptive episodes involving pretenders — at minimum the story of the other false Nero, Terentius Maximus, that would have featured in the lost books recounting the reign of Titus.[82]

That Tacitus is asking us to consider a wider connection between these episodes is further suggested through his repetition of *topoi*. For example, we find the same word *casus* that previously concluded the mutiny of the Usipi (*Agr.* 28.3: *indicium tanti casus inlustravit*).[83] Here, it refers to coup attempts that Tacitus promises to speak about wherever they happen to "fit together" with his work (*ceterorum casus conatusque in contextu operis dicemus*), suggesting a narrative "conjunction" similar to his major digression in the *Annals* (4.33.3: *nos* [...] *easdem exitii causas coniungimus*).[84] The passage also features a centurion (*centurionemque Sisennam*) incapable of quelling the mutiny and soldiers executed (*militum quosdam* [...] *abnuentes interfici iussit*; cf. *Agr.* 28.1: *occiso centurione ac militibus* [...] *suspectis duobus eoque interfectis*). Additionally, it involves servile individuals being armed (*mancipiorum valentissimum quemque armavit*), possibly led by a slave (*servus e Ponto*);[85] the robbing of traders (*spoliatis negotiatoribus*), like those in the *Agricola* who would have been responsible for trafficking the re-enslaved Usipi back to Roman territories (*Agr.* 28.3: *ac fuere quos per commercia venumdatos et in nostram usque ripam mutatione ementium adductos*); and the emergence of a crew of deserters facing destitution (*adiunctis desertoribus, quos*

Claudian opens the floodgate for all the problems of empire that the shadow of Augustus previously kept in check."

81 Regarding the extensive alliteration, Morgan 1993, 783–784, suggests that Tacitus is engaging in Neronian stylization to create a sense of "mock-epic" in the passage, which certainly fits the episode's carnivalesque sensibilities.

82 Tuplin 1989; Morgan 1993; Haynes 2003; Ash 2007, 96–97; and Hardie 2012, 292–294, have connected various other Tacitean episodes with this one.

83 On the various meanings of *casus*, see n. 75 above. The *peripeteia* theme plays a central role in many of these narrative digressions (note also how a "chance event" brings this particular incident to an abrupt end — *fors discussit*).

84 Cf. *OLD contextus¹* 2 ("(of literary compositions) connected, coherent"), *OLD contexo* 2 ("to connect, link (words); to compose, assemble (speech, writings) by linking together"), and *OLD coniungo* 9 ("to bring together in speaking or writing"), all of which have literary and narrative associations.

85 Slaves turning on their masters is given as one of the many reversals of 68–69 CE in the preface to the *Histories*: *corrupti in dominos servi* (1.2.3).

inopia vagos; cf. *Agr.* 28.2: *eo ad extremum inopiae venere*).[86] Finally, maritime spaces, nautical vessels, and islands provide a backdrop for all three digressive episodes.[87]

In fact, a great many of the pseudo-digressive episodes in Tacitus feature these leitmotifs. In the *Histories,* they might include the naval revolt in Pontus (3.47–48) and the mutiny of the fleet at Misenum (3.57, 3.76–77). In the *Annals*, we might supplement the false Agrippa Postumus episode (2.39–40) with the Brundisian slave insurrection (4.27), the false Drusus narrative (5.10), the Cilician rebellion (12.55), and the minor events of 64 CE that culminate in the shipwreck at Cape Misenum (15.46). Lexically, most accounts begin with annalistic constructions of temporal simultaneity.[88] Topically, they frequently feature acts of daring,[89] and all depict events either at sea, aboard fleets, or else involving coastal raids on shipowners.[90] More significantly, they are almost always committed by slaves, foreigners, or rebellious Roman auxiliaries (*Agr.* 28; *Hist.* 2.8–9, 3.47–48; *Ann.* 2.39–40, 4.27, 12.55). We might reasonably surmise that nearly all of Tacitean episodic digressions involve servile figures or individuals from among the lower social orders.

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[86] Tacitus likely has in mind his "freely wandering Othonian fleet" (*classis Othoniana licenter vaga*), whose pillaging resulted in the death of Agricola's mother near Intimilium (*Agr.* 7.1), as well as others in Gallia Narbonensis and Forum Julii (*Hist.* 2.11.3–12.1, 2.14.1). There are also Sallustian digressive intertexts per the use of *vagus* in both the *Bellum Catilinae* excursus on Rome's founding (*sedibus incertis vagabantur*, *Cat.* 6.1; *multitudo divorsa atque vaga concordia civitas facta erat*, 6.2), and the African ethnography in the *Bellum Iugurthinum* (*vagi, palantes*, *Iug.* 18.2).

[87] Thalassic and insular themes also pervade the account of Clemens: note the phrases *pergere in insulam Planasiam* (*Ann.* 2.39.1); *ausa eius impedivit tarditas onerariae navis* (2.39.2); *vectusque Cosam, Etruriae promunturium* (2.39.2; cf. *Agr.* 28.1: *praevehebantur*); and *iamque Ostiam invectum* (2.40.1). They are also centrally announced in the preface to the Histories: "The sea was full of exiles, the cliffs were stained with persons slain" (1.2.2: *plenum exiliis mare, infecti caedibus scopuli*).

[88] These include *eadem aestate* (*Agr.* 28.1, *Ann.* 4.27.1), *eodem anno* (*Ann.* 2.39.1), *isdem diebus* (*Hist.* 3.76.1), *sub idem tempus* (*Hist.* 2.8.1), *per idem tempus* (*Ann.* 5.10.1, 15.46.1), and *nec multo post* (*Ann.* 12.55.1). See Ginsburg 1981 for classifications.

[89] *Agr.* 28; *Hist.* 3.57; *Ann.* 2.39–40, 12.55.

[90] We only get brief mention of the shore (*decursu in litora*) where the Cilicians dared to attack the shipowners (*navicularios*) at *Ann.* 12.55.1, although the subsequent narrative (which opens with the phrase *sub idem tempus*, 12.56.1) focuses entirely on the nautical games staged by Claudius on the Fucine Lake (12.56–57).

Tacitus often attributes to these events a significant connection with oral dissemination.[91] We can trace the ever-increasing power of rumor across all three episodes discussed in this paper. While it lingers as an unfulfilled eventuality in the wanderings of the Usipi (*Agr.* 28.1: *nondum vulgato rumore ut miraculum*), it becomes a driving force in the story of the false Nero (*Hist.* 2.8.1: *vario super exitu eius rumore*), growing daily (2.8.2: *gliscentem in dies famam*). Tacitus' account of the imposter Agrippa Postumus grants it an even greater agency (*Ann.* 2.39.3–40.1):

> *tum per idoneos et secreti eius socios crebrescit vivere Agrippam, occultis primum sermonibus, ut vetita solent, mox vago rumore apud imperitissimi cuiusque promptas aures aut rursum apud turbidos eoque nova cupientes. atque ipse adire municipia obscuro diei, neque propalam aspici neque diutius isdem locis, sed quia veritas visu et mora, falsa festinatione et incertis valescunt, relinquebat famam aut praeveniebat.*
>   *Vulgabatur interim per Italiam servatum munere deum Agrippam, credebatur Romae.*

> Then, by way of suitable individuals who shared in his secret, it spread in quick succession that Agrippa was alive, at first by means of clandestine conversations, as forbidden matters are wont to do; next, by means of wandering rumor finding the eager ears of every one of the most ignorant of persons, or else treasonous types who thus desired revolution. And Clemens himself was approaching towns around twilight, neither revealing his presence publicly nor lingering long in the same places, but because the truth prevails from appearance and delay, whereas falsehoods fare better under haste and uncertain affairs, he was abandoning his reported renown or forestalling it.
>   Meanwhile, it was rumored throughout Italy that Agrippa had been saved by divine providence, and this was believed at Rome.

Rumor overruns the passage. We find such phrases as (1) *occultis* [...] *sermonibus*, (2) *mox vago rumore* [...] *promptas aures*, (3) *relinquebat famam aut praeveniebat*, and (4) *vulgabatur interim per Italiam* [...] *credebatur Romae*.[92] Moreover, the hearsay that drives these three servile narratives, especially the account of Clemens, originates in the more remote corners of ignominious domains (mutinous conscripts, slaves, deserters): in secrets shared among suitable allies (*per idoneos et secreti eius socios*), in clandestine conversations (*occultis sermonibus*) about forbidden subjects (*vetita*), into the ears of the most credulous and those who desired revolution (*apud imperitissimi cuiusque promptas aures aut rursum*

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91 Besides the three episodes analyzed in this paper, rumor also plays an important role at *Ann.* 5.10.1 (*acri magis quam diuturno rumore* [...] *fama nominis et promptis Graecorum animis ad nova et mira)* and 15.46.1 (*iam Spartacum et vetera mala rumoribus ferente populo, ut est novarum rerum cupiens pavidusque*).

92 Cf. *Agr.* 28.1 (*nondum vulgato rumore ut miraculum*).

apud turbidos eoque nova cupientes), via mysterious appearances in peripheral townships at twilight hours (*municipia obscuro diei*), whence it spreads throughout Italy (*vulgabatur interim per Italiam*) onto the main stage of Roman imperial history.[93]

A further dynamic in these pseudo-digressive accounts, including the story of the imposter Agrippa Postumus (*Ann*. 2.39–40), is the threat of civil war that inaugurates its narratives (*Ann*. 2.39.1): "In the same year the daring of a single slave" (*mancipii unius audacia*), "had it not been promptly remedied, would have overthrown the state with strife and civil wars" (*discordiis armisque civilibus rem publicam perculisset*).[94] A similar phrase occurs in the false Nero episode (*Hist*. 2.8.2): "Then terror spread widely (*inde late terror*): many were roused by a desire for a new regime (*rerum novarum cupidine*) owing to the celebrity of the name (*ad celebritatem nominis*) and a hatred for the present state of affairs (*odio praesentium*)."[95] Yet bridging the two works generates a more nuanced view. A connection to the *Histories* reminds us that the dissolution of the state into civil war — beyond the confines of the digression — is not necessarily a desirable outcome, even if the reader is instead left with the negative list of subject matters found at *Ann*. 4.32.2 and 4.33.3.[96] Perhaps the pseudo-digressions are granted

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93 On *fama* in Tacitus, see Hardie 2012, 273–313, who, in addition to offering a useful summary of previous scholarship (p. 285 n. 44), shows how rumor challenges acts of *interpretatio* by both the actors in these episodes and the readers of Tacitus' histories. In particular, see his analysis of the Clemens episode (pp. 292–294), as well as his understanding of *fama* (related to *infamia* and *adulatio*) being involved in the digressions at *Ann*. 3.65 and 4.32–33 (pp. 302–303). Cf. Bakhtin 1981, 311: "Incorporated into the novel are a multiplicity of 'language' and verbal-ideological belief systems" including the "tendentious, everyday (the languages of rumour, of society chatter, servants' language)"; rather than being "consolidated into fixed persons," they "are incorporated in an impersonal form 'from the author', alternating (while ignoring precise formal boundaries)."

94 Just as it immediately follows the account of the false Nero: "Within the strife-laden state which was wavering between liberty and licentiousness owing to the frequent changes of its rulers, even small matters were being conducted with great movements" (*Hist*. 2.10.1: *In civitate discordi et ob crebras principum mutationes inter libertatem ac licentiam incerta parvae quoque res magnis motibus agebantur*). Cf. *Ann*. 4.32.2 (*illa primo aspectu levia, ex quis magnarum saepe rerum motus oriuntur*).

95 Rhiannon Ash notes that the terror theme forms a ring composition in *Hist*. 2.8 (*Sub idem tempus Achaia atque Asia falso exterritae* [...] *donec Sisenna clam relicta insula trepidus et vim metuens aufugeret. inde late terror*).

96 Consider the opening of the brief Sarmatian episode (*Hist*. 1.79.1): "Since people's minds were turned to civil war, there was little consideration for foreign affairs" (*Conversis ad civile bellum animis externa sine cura habebantur*). It would seem that for Tacitus civil war and emperors like Tiberius (cf. *Ann*. 4.32.2: *princeps proferendi imperi incuriosus erat*) present a rock

the dialogic potential, through the simulacrum of revolution, to contemplate these questions in a narrow historical test space (or time trial). Furthermore, Tacitus often reminds us that the sorts of individuals who missed Nero, or were greedy for his histrionic vision, belonged to the basest of groups at Rome, and were "doomsayers eager for rumors" (*Hist.* 1.4.3: *plebs sordida et circo ac theatris sueta, simul deterrimi servorum, aut qui adesis bonis per dedecus Neronis alebantur, maesti et rumorum avidi*). Tacitus certainly criticizes such groups (a criticism that is often read at face value). Yet what happens when two such groups come into brief conflict?[97] When one such group Tacitus frequently criticizes (e.g. slaves, the plebeian classes, actors) threatens an individual from another group that Tacitus depicts even more negatively (e.g. the senatorial class, the Roman emperor)? Does the irony generated by such carnivalesque contact offer a potentially redemptive or reparative reading?[98]

The episode involving the false Agrippa Postumus provides a notable test case, pitting a slave directly against the Roman emperor. The imposter is granted a significant degree of subjecthood. Unlike the collectively named Usipi (who at best become mistaken for pirates — *pro praedonibus habiti*, *Agr.* 28.3) or the false Nero (whose name itself is a simulacrum that attracts the disillusioned to his cause — *ad celebritatem nominis*, *Hist.* 2.8.2),[99] the false Agrippa Postumus, thanks to the Tacitean word order, is emphasized as being a slave with a name (*Ann.* 2.39.1: *Postumi Agrippae servus, nomine Clemens*).[100] Clemens, in turn

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and a hard place for *res externae* and *imperium Romanum*. Ash 2010b, 145, highlights further complexities: "Through the opening formulation, which accentuates the dangerous neglect of foreign affairs by Romans intent on civil war, Tacitus sets up the expectation that he is about to offer a strong warning about the negligence of Romans who fight each other, rather than policing their borders. Yet what follows is something of a *comedy of errors*" (emphasis mine).

97 One such episode (perhaps qualifying for pseudo-digression status with its opening *sub idem tempus*) is the account of the deadly gladiatorial fan fight that broke out at Pompeii (*Ann.* 14.17). It too features lower status groups (*Pompeianorum plebe*), spectacle (*gladiatorio spectaculo* [...] *spectaculum*), and mutiny (*seditionem*).

98 Here I have in mind Sedgwick 2003, 149–150, who, in response to paranoia as a form of "epistemological practice," proposes camp and its penchant for parody as a reparative counterpart: "the startling, juicy displays of excess erudition, for example; the passionate, often hilarious antiquarianism, the prodigal production of alternative historiographies; the "over" -attachment to fragmentary, marginal, waste or leftover products; the rich, highly interruptive affective variety; the irrepressible fascination with ventriloquistic experimentation; the disorienting juxtapositions of present with past, and popular with high culture."

99 Ash 2007, 99: "The pretender remains nameless, diminishing his status."

100 On this point (but also in relation to my claims elsewhere), consider O'Gorman 2000, 2: "If [...] we conceive of the two [i.e. Tacitus' subject and Tacitus' writing] as not entirely separable, we can approach a position where the formal structures of Tacitus' prose embody a politi-

usurps his former master's nomenclature as the basis for his power grab. Tacitus toys with the threat that such inauguration of a subject poses to Roman imperial power throughout the latter half of the episode (*Ann.* 2.40).

> *iamque Ostiam invectum multitudo ingens, iam in urbe clandestini coetus celebrabant, cum Tiberium anceps cura distrahere, vine militum servum suum coerceret an inanem credulitatem tempore ipso vanescere sineret: modo nihil spernendum, modo non omnia metuenda ambiguus pudoris ac metus reputabat. postremo dat negotium Sallustio Crispo. ille e clientibus duos (quidam milites fuisse tradunt) deligit atque hortatur, simulata conscientia adeant, offerant pecuniam, fidem atque pericula polliceantur. exsequuntur ut iussum erat. dein speculati noctem incustoditam, accepta idonea manu, vinctum clauso ore in Palatium traxere. percunctanti Tiberio, quo modo Agrippa factus esset, respondisse fertur 'quo modo tu Caesar.' ut ederet socios subigi non potuit. nec Tiberius poenam eius palam ausus, in secreta Palatii parte interfici iussit corpusque clam auferri. et quamquam multi e domo principis equitesque ac senatores sustentasse opibus, iuvisse consiliis dicerentur, haud quaesitum.*

Already a huge multitude was mobbing his arrival at Ostia, and secret gatherings were celebrating it at Rome, when Tiberius was torn in two directions by the concern over whether to arrest his slave with his soldiers or permit the empty credulousness to fade in due time. At one moment he kept thinking that nothing must be ignored, at another that not all things needed to be feared, wavering as he was between shame and fear. At last he turned the matter over to Sallustius Crispus. That man selected two of his clients (some record that they were soldiers) and bid that they approach while simulating shared knowledge, offer money, and promise loyalty and daring deeds. They carried it out as was commanded. Then, having waited for a night without a watch, and with an adequate force taken along with them, they dragged him, bound and with his mouth gagged, to the palace. When Tiberius asked him in what way he had become Agrippa, he is said to have replied, "In the way you became Caesar." He could not be compelled to disclose his collaborators. Nor did Tiberius dare for his punishment to be public; he ordered his execution in a secluded part of the palace and his body disposed of discreetly. And although many from the emperor's household as well as knights and senators were said to have provided financial support and assisted him with their counsels, this was not investigated.

Subjecthood remains withheld while Clemens is hauled to the Palatine at an unwatched hour of night "with his mouth gagged." It is taken away the moment Tiberius orders him killed "in a hidden area of the palace" and for "his body to

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cal judgement of the principate. Tacitean style can be seen as the manifestation in narrative of a particular historical understanding." Also relevant is Barthes 1983, 164: "Death is life because it puts an end to the ambiguity of signs, it shifts us from the unnamed to the named. The act yields to its name [...] it is the name which is rigid, it is the name which is the order of the world."

be disposed of secretly."[101] This concealment and muting of the servile body, even after death, reads very much like a Tiberian literary response to the concerns raised in Tacitus' *Histories* which conclude the false Nero episode,[102] where Tacitus tells us that "the head" of the imposter's corpse was "distinguished for its eyes, hair, and the savageness of its countenance" (*Hist.* 2.9.2: *caput, insigne oculis comaque et torvitate voltus*).[103]

Yet once Clemens is brought face-to-face with Tiberius, his servile voice gains its greatest strength. He speaks for himself directly, rather than as a slave under compulsion, in contrast, even, to the cross-interrogation by Tiberius which is placed in *oratio obliqua*.[104] The historian thus imagines a slave usurping the (fittingly oblique) words of the Roman emperor famous for his dissimulation (*quo modo Agrippa factus esset*) and reformulating them into a scathing direct address (*'quo modo tu Caesar'*),[105] thereby attacking the very foundations upon which the authority of the Tiberian principate resides,[106] which is something

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101 Rhiannon Ash notes that spatial language (of openness vs enclosure), employed extensively in the *Ann.* 4.32–33 digression, appears again here: *OLD clam* 1 ("under cover" – etymologically related to *clandestinus*, also in the passage, from *celo/occulo*); *OLD claudo* 5 ("to shut up, confine, enclose") and 6 ("to envelop, surround, cover, conceal"); *OLD palam* 1 ("openly, without concealment"); *OLD secerno* 1b ("to isolate by an intervening space or barrier, cut off"); and *OLD vincio* 1, 2, and 5 ("to fasten with bonds, tie up, bind, fetter").

102 On this idea of Tacitean characters, who historically predate other characters (in this case Tiberius vs. not just the False Nero but every Nero, himself excluded), yet appear in a work that was written at a later date by Tacitus (i.e. the *Annals*, written and published after the *Histories*), I follow Henderson 1989, 167–171 who notes (p. 170): "The *Annals* know they are secondary history, a 're-mix'. They lie this side of the pioneering both of Tacitus' *Histories*, their pre-quel, and of their own first-century primary sources"; and (pp. 167–168): "This historian positions himself as a late-comer, doubly condemned to postlapsarian narration, by the necessary retrospect of history and by the pre-existence of the already written *Histories*, which 'prescribe', foreclose, its teleology — tell it where to go."

103 The slave's body can possess significant power, even without its voice or agency in life. Consider duBois 2003, 4 (on Hdt. 5.35): "The slave passes over the watched roads, unsuspected [...] He conceals a seditious message on his person [...] marked on the body itself rather than borne as a discrete and separate object [...] This story communicates to the listener or reader not only that the original recipient should revolt but also that its bearer is a slave, that his body is taken for granted, that is passes through boundaries without interrogation."

104 Unlike Agricola, who, following his return to Rome, "was made to mingle with the crowd of slaves" in Domitian's palace (*Agr.* 40.3: *turbae servientium inmixtus est*), and was thus reduced to servitude like all others of the senatorial class.

105 As Hardie 2012, 294, notes, the Cassius Dio account (57.16) features an actual dialogue with no indirect discourse.

106 Again, the dialogism, itself imagined and constructed by Tacitus, fits the definition of heteroglossia from Bakhtin 1981, 324: "And all the while these two voices are dialogically

no individual of senatorial rank dares in the *Annals*.[107] Holly Haynes offers a sweeping assessment of its implications:

> The exchange between Clemens and Tiberius therefore signifies on several levels. The nuances are impossible to translate into English, as *quo modo Agrippa factus esset* can mean either "how he had become Agrippa" or "how he had been made Agrippa." The latter suggests that Tiberius's position as "Caesar" is as constructed as his own imposture of Agrippa [...] The false Agrippa Postumus [...] calls attention to the make-believe that everyone knows about, but in the form of a joke that requires an interaction between emperor and criminal. They may be opposites [...] but the subjectivity of each depends upon that of the other.[108]

Haynes's expansive interpretation finds fuller expression when read alongside "the first deed/crime of the new principate, the murder of Agrippa Postumus" (1.6.1: *Primum facinus novi principatus fuit Postumi Agrippae caedes*). In that early narrative, Tiberius is first motivated by fear (1.6.2: *illum metu*), uncertain whether to conceal the act or disclose it to the Senate.[109] Clemens, once resurrected as Agrippa Postumus, reawakens Tiberius' wavering paranoia. This even prompts the reappearance of Sallustius Crispus as fixer, who previously was named as collaborator (1.6.3: *Sallustius Crispus particeps secretorum*), messenger of the execution order (*is ad tribunum miserat codicillos*), and concealer of the act "fearful that the charge would be shifted" (i.e. onto him — *metuens ne reus subderetur*).

In contrast to all of this is the bravery (*audacia*) of Clemens, further distinguished from the cowardice of the emperor (*nec Tiberius* [...] *ausus*).[110] It is underscored by Clemens' refusal, like other martyr figures such as the freedwoman Epicharis during the Pisonian Conspiracy, to reveal coconspirators, even under

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interrelated, they — as it were — know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other. Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized."

107 Neither Cremutius Cordus in the episode linked to the *Annals* 4 digression (4.34–35), nor even Thrasea Paetus in the Neronian books (e.g. 14.48–49, 16.21–35; although his defiant departure from the Senate at 14.12 comes close).

108 Haynes 2003, 10 (in dialogue with Plass 1988, 120–121).

109 For the hermeneutic challenges *Ann.* 1.6 presents, see Woodman 1998, 23–39. Hardie 2012, 294, sees a connection via *fama* to Livia's palace lockdown following Augustus' death: "That *fama* about the shady means by which Tiberius came to power cannot be smuggled out of the palace as easily as the body of Clemens."

110 Cf. also, from earlier in the episode, the phrase *ausa eius impedivit tarditas onerariae navis* (2.39.2), and the Usipi: *facinus ausa est* (*Agr.* 28.1).

torture — one of several exemplary qualities (*Hist*. 1.3.1: *bona exempla*) that Tacitus notes persisted even during Rome's dreadful period of the Four Emperors (*contumax etiam adversus tormenta servorum fides*).[111] Thus, by means of an episode masquerading as a digression; by the powers of expression that are briefly bestowed upon its imposter protagonist;[112] we are given perhaps the sharpest critique of imperial succession in all of Tacitean historiography: a slave calling into question the entire basis of the post-Augustan principate.

4 Conclusion: Digression and the carnivalizing of Roman history

Tacitus' dialogic imagination has no trouble flushing out such ironies. In fact, he seems more than happy to highlight paradoxographical incidents in a pseudo-digressive manner revolving around the regular annalistic record, whose year-end highlights traditionally included outlandish events and prodigies.[113] In some cases, the prodigies even prompt formal digressions, a narratology Tacitus employs at least once in his *Annals*.[114]

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111 Note *Ann*. 15.51.3: "She nevertheless concealed the names of her accomplices" (*nomina tamen coniuratorum reticuit*) and 15.57.2: "With the exemplum being all the more illustrious for a freedwoman protecting unrelated and virtually unknown men under such terrible compulsion, when freeborn men, Roman knights, and senators untouched by torture offered up each one the dearest of his own kin" (*clariore exemplo libertina mulier in tanta necessitate alienos ac prope ignotos protegendo, cum ingenui et viri et equites Romani senatoresque intacti tormentis carissima suorum quisque pignorum proderent*). Cf. 1.7.1 and 3.65.2 for additional parallels. On the relation of these passages, see Turpin 2008, 393–395. See also Pagán 2000, whose analysis of Epicharis (as well as Arminius and Cremutius Cordus) begins with the words of Clemens.
112 A protagonist who may have even borne witness to the rumored (albeit unknown) final words of the emperor Augustus to Agrippa Postumus (*Ann*. 1.5.1: *quippe rumor incesserat* [...] *Augustum* [...] *Planasiam vectum ad visendum Agrippam*); whose status as a slave may have further masked the plotting by his "non-servile mind" (2.39.1: *non servili animo concepit*).
113 McNamara and Pagán 2022, 8: "As paradoxography by definition extends the capacity of any narrative to its furthest limits, so multiple points of view are necessary to meet its demands." For the paradoxographical as a key component of popular history in antiquity, see Gabba 1981, 53–55. For Tacitean end of year episodes including religious matters and digressions ("a miscellaneous assortment"), see Ginsburg 1981, 32; for the Livian annalistic model (including "*prodigia*, natural disasters"), 33.
114 Consider the prodigy heard by Marcus Caedicius warning of the arrival of the Gauls at Livy 5.32.6 (opening with *eodem anno*), which leads into Livy's fairly lengthy Gallo-Etruscan digression (5.33.2–35.3). Tacitus seems to follow a similar formula at *Ann*. 6.20–21 (*sub idem tempus*,

Furthermore, Tacitus' minor digressions place significant emphasis on the theatricality of the Roman principate, a perennial topic in Tacitean studies.[115] This is most evident in the imposter Nero's attempts to inspire *pathos* in his soldiers by "feigning the appearance of sorrow," "calling them by name," and "beseeching" them (*Hist*. 2.9.2: *in maestitiam compositus* [...] *invocans* [...] *orabat*) − actions founded upon a natural resemblance with the theatrically minded emperor himself (2.8.1: *unde illi super similitudinem oris propior ad fallendum fides*) and his accompanying performative accoutrements (*citharae et cantus peritus*).[116] The slave's severed head even resembles a theatrical mask (2.9.2: *caput, insigne oculis comaque et torvitate voltus*).[117] Theatrical leitmotifs also recur in Clemens' preparations to play the part of Agrippa Postumus (*Ann*. 2.39.2): allowing his beard and hair to grow long (*donec crinem barbamque promitteret*), donning a convincing appearance (*nam aetate et forma haud dissimili in dominum erat*), until he is finally unmasked "backstage" by Tiberius. Yet Clemens' unmasking, along with his convincing audition for the role of emperor, is what permits him to reveal to the Tacitean reader that the principate is a wholesale sham (the real unmasking of the episode). Even Tacitus' formal digressions occasionally offer theatrical staging. Such is the case when Tiberius, so tired of performing the *recusatio* game since day one of his accession,[118] exclaims in the originary language of oratory and drama (3.65.3: *Graecis verbis*) as

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6.20.1; *non omiserim praesagium*, 6.20.2), which transitions from the marriage of Caligula at Capri (1) to the prodigy of Galba's rule, (2) to the account of Tiberius' execution of fraudulent astrologers, and then (3) to his first-person excursus on fate, chance, good, and evil (*Ann*. 6.22). O'Gorman 2000, 97–105, connects this digression with *Ann*. 4.32–33 and the subsequent account of Cremutius Cordus (4.34–45).

115 These include Woodman 1993; Bartsch 1994; Champlin 2003; Fulkerson 2006; Santoro L'Hoir 2006; Pomeroy 2006; Galtier 2011; and Ash 2021.

116 Note the additional literary sense of *compositus*: "compose, write; write a history" (*OLD compono* 8). Furthermore, cithara-playing and singing on a "pirate ship" brings us back full circle to Herodotus' Arion digression (1.23–24).

117 Cf. Cic. *De or*. 3.221: "But everything is in the face, and yet also in that everything is dominated by the eyes; wherefore all the better those ancestors of ours who did not even praise Roscius much when he wore a mask. For all action stems from the mind, the countenance is the image of the mind, and the eyes are its indices" (*Sed in ore sunt omnia, in eo autem ipso dominatus est omnis oculorum; quo melius nostri illi senes, qui personatum ne Roscium quidem magno opere laudabant; animi est enim omnis actio et imago animi vultus, indices oculi*).

118 Woodman 1998, 40–69, draws a similar conclusion based on his reading of the Tiberian accession debates. Freudenburg 2014, 111, referring to "the bungled *recusatio* of Tiberius," offers a helpful summary of the inherent political theatricality of the act in light of its senatorial as well as literary audiences.

he departs the senate, *'o homines ad servitutem paratos!'* ("Oh men ready for enslavement!").[119]

Unlike the Roman nobility repeatedly marked for its readiness to rush head-long into servitude[120] — not only in the course of Tacitus' senatorial narratives, but also repeatedly in his first-person digressions (including several not examined in this paper)[121] — it is instead a motley crew of enslaved conscripts, slaves, and false emperors who emerge from the fringes of the empire, travel to Rome (whether via rumor, by corpse, or in person),[122] and actually succeed at confronting, both sideways and head on, the central historiographical issues that Tacitus lays out in his major digressions. In a way, the Tacitean digression might be read as a kind of underworld, or at least a "narrow" (*artus*) entrance in which to contemplate the lower realms of narrative possibility, where Bakhtin locates the carnivalesque: "Still more interesting is the consistent carnivalization of the nether world. The nether world equalizes representatives of all earthly positions in life [...] an emperor in the nether world becomes a slave, a slave an emperor, and so forth."[123] The slave world of antiquity, when clashing with the main stage of Roman history, certainly constitutes the creation of a nether world. Perhaps that world cannot really exist except on a few calendar days (i.e. the Saturnalia), in comic performances, or else during brief narrative interruptions, wherein the historian creates a side stage alongside the main act — a satyr play amidst his tragic historical trilogy. Indeed, such semi-digressive episodes, whose archaic powers once served as a driving force of Roman history,[124] now mostly overshadowed by Tacitus' constrained and inglorious historiography (*Ann*. 4.32.2: *in arto et inglorius labor*), carnivalize — at times even cannibalize — his tragic vision of imperial Rome.

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119 Or the Herodotean language of "minds eager for new and wondrous things" (*Ann*. 5.10.1: *promptis Graecorum animis ad nova et mira*). Cf. Woodman and Martin 1996, 457: "Tib., characteristically sardonic, chooses the language of *adulandi gens prudentissima* (Juv. 3.86)," although their jump to satire prompts other counterexamples (e.g. Hor. *Ep*. 2.1.156–167).

120 E.g. *Ann*. 1.7.1 and 1.81.4.

121 In addition to *Ann*. 3.65 and 4.32–33, these themes also feature in *Hist*. 2.37–38 and 2.101.1. Likewise, when thinking of digressive theatricality (per *Ann*. 3.65.2), we should note that *Hist*. 2.37–38 and *Ann*. 6.22 deal extensively with questions of fate and divine providence. For other possible candidates, see Mendell 1957, 189–198.

122 The false Nero's corpse is eventually conveyed to Rome (*Hist*. 2.9.2: *in Asiam atque inde Romam pervectum est*).

123 Bakhtin 1984a, 133.

124 For the relation between comedy and early Latin historiography, see Wiseman 1994, esp. 1–22; Wiseman 1998; and Leigh 2004.

Tacitus' subversiveness begins in the mutiny of the Usipi, whose simultaneously "great and memorable deed" and "notorious crime" extends beyond Agricola's own command to become a "wonder in everyday conversation," and even a threat to Domitianic power.[125] In fact, out of the minor digression comes an epitomic legacy that vastly outstrips Agricola's achievements; Agricola's one-line conquest pales in comparison to the outsized literary reception bestowed upon the "Usipi" (Cass. Dio 66.20.1–2).[126] The carnivalizing continues in the *Histories*, where the false Nero attempts to dramatize a return to the Julio-Claudian principate *avant la lettre* (the *Annals* are still unwritten, and the pseudo-digression offers us once more a presaging of a historical era both foregone and yet to come). Moreover, the false Nero occupies a strange temporal interstice — following the opening passages of *Histories* 2 that present an anterior future of the Flavian dynasty (while musing with a number of additional temporalities),[127] and preceding the lengthy account of the Othonian and Vitellian war whose primary timespan is what enables that later Flavian victory.

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125 See *Agr*. 39.1, which features strong verbal parallels with key terms in the mutiny digression (as well as the description of the false Nero's head at *Hist*. 2.9.2). Ash 2010a, 290, examining this parallel, comes to a similar conclusion: "More productive perhaps is to view the episode more broadly as one component of Tacitus' pervasive strategic assault on the martial achievements and legacy of Domitian." Cf. Clarke 2001, 109: "The importance of Germany for our understanding of the *Agricola* is a recurrent theme [...] Domitian's own expedition was incomplete (*Ag*. 39)."

126 Air quotes since they are referred to merely as "some soldiers" (στρατιῶται [...] τινες) in the Dio epitome. Also striking, from the point of Tacitean narrative receptions — especially what later epitomators of Dio (and thus, via layered reception, Tacitus' work) considered most noteworthy — are the subjects recounted at Cass. Dio 66. In short succession we find Titus' accession and his immediate refusal to prosecute anyone for *maiestas* charges (with an accompanying noteworthy quote, 66.19.1–2); the banishing of *delatores* (66.19.3); the story of the false Nero, Terentius Maximus (66.19.3b–3c: ὁ Ψευδονέρων [...] ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ Τερέντιος Μάξιμος); the account of Agricola with the mutinous soldiers overshadowing him (66.20); the eruption of Vesuvius, compared to an amphitheater with the line, "if it be reasonable to compare small matters with great ones" (ὡς μικρὰ μεγάλοις εἰκάσαι, ἐοικέναι), and presented as a gigantomachy (66.21–23); the fire at Rome (66.24); and Titus' spectacle games, with multiple naval battle reenactments from the Peloponnesian War (66.25). The paradoxographical, and with it the "digressive," seem to win out.

127 For example, the passage suggests that Galba is still alive (*Hist*. 2.1.1), only to be announced as definitively dead shortly thereafter (2.1.3, although readers of Book 1 will have already experienced his murder firsthand). It also includes Titus investigating Greek antiquities and their ancient histories at length (including, per Ash 2007, 74, a digression on the cult of Paphian Venus), during which time we are told that Otho has received the oaths of allegiance from his army (2.6.1; although already mentioned at 1.36.3).

In a world overturned by civil war, with new blendings of *res externae* and *res internae* (and the blurrings of what constitutes digression in such spaces), the former stage player reenacts a path from slave to emperor, beginning a long succession of false claimants and pseudo-digressive episodes intermixed with the Tacitean parade of heroes, villains, and deaths.[128] Finally, in the *Annals*, the carnival recurs in Clemens' transformation into Agrippa Postumus and his confrontation with Tiberius. There, we see the Tiberian foundations of Tacitus' *Annals* renegotiated in both the secluded spaces of the Palatine and the narrow confines of a digressive masquerade (doubly *in arto*) — spoken openly and retold by a gagged slave (his ungagging is never mentioned and must be inferred) who was the sole eyewitness to those seminal historical events.[129]

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128 Barthes 1983, 162–163.

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Vasileios Liotsakis

Digressions as Meta-Literary Markers and Narrative Milestones in Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander*

Abstract: This paper focuses on two key functions of digressions in Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander*. First, Liotsakis notes that the very few sizable excursuses of the *Anabasis* participate in its narrative arrangement in an energetic fashion, marking pivotal points both in the Macedonian enterprise in Asia and in the development of Alexander's character. He examines the compositional techniques through which Arrian used the few digressions in his work as narrative milestones. Second, Liotsakis elaborates on the intense meta-generic concerns of these central digressions. In particular, he argues that, through a number of self-referential statements, Arrian invites the reader to compare the *Anabasis* with works of several literary genres and thereby to define its own generic physiognomy.

Keywords: Arrian of Nicomedia, *Anabasis of Alexander*, digressions, self-referentiality

> ἔστι μὲν οὖν ὁ ἀνὴρ οὐδενὸς τῶν ἄριστα συνταξαμένων ἱστορίας δεύτερος· ἀπαγγεῖλαι τε γὰρ καὶ μετὰ συντομίας κράτιστος καὶ παρεκτροπαῖς ἀκαίροις οὐδὲ παρενθήκαις τὸ συνεχὲς τῆς ἱστορίας οὐδαμοῦ λυμαινόμενος
>
> (*FGrHist* 156 T7 = Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 92: 72ᵇ40)

> This man comes second to none from among those who composed histories excellently; he was hugely competent to offer a narration in a concise way and without destroying the story's cohesion by means of untimely digressions and parentheses.

In this reference to Arrian's frugal use of digressions, Photius does not clarify which narrative(s) of Arrian, biographical or historical, he has in mind. However, the *Anabasis of Alexander*, as it stands, definitely attests to the truth of Photius' statement. Although Arrian often provides us with further information about a place or a nation visited by Alexander, he typically does so "in a concise way and without destroying the story's cohesion".[1] What is more, and this is my

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1 For a list of the passages in which Arrian offers ethnographic material, see Liotsakis 2019, 70 n. 112.

main point of argument in this paper, Arrian proceeds with extensive digressions very selectively and principally in order to mark a pivotal point in his account and, simultaneously, to instruct us about how he wishes us to read his work in comparison with other literary genres and works.[2] In what follows, I first analyse in detail this twofold functionality in the two great excursuses of Book 1, i.e. the one on the Theban disaster (1.9.1–8) and the so-called Second Preface (1.12.2–5). Second, I argue that these two digressions exemplify the way in which most pivotal digressions of the work function.

1 The digression on the destruction of Thebes

The first sizable digression of the *Anabasis* covers the paragraphs in which Arrian argues that the destruction of Thebes was the gravest misfortune that had struck a Greek city-state up to that time (9.1–8). According to Arrian, the destruction of Thebes supersedes all other similar events due to the size of the destroyed city, the speed with which the Macedonians and their allies annihilated the Theban population and the surprise it caused not only to the victims but also to the perpetrators and the rest of the Greeks. After expressing this thesis, Arrian compares the Theban case with some similar situations of the past. In his view, even the Athenian disaster in Sicily is less significant, given that, although the Athenian casualties were no less grave than those of the Thebans, the calamity took place far away from Athens and many of the fallen were allies and not Athenians. Furthermore, the latter were not deprived of their city, and after the Sicilian failure they managed to endure the war against the Spartans, their allies, and the Persians for many years. Even their defeat at Aigos Potamoi was merely a tactical mistake. Although this event led to Athens' surrender and the destruction of its walls, within a few years the city had regained power and rebuilt its walls. Equally unimportant, always in comparison with the Theban disaster, were the Spartans' failures at both Leuctra and Mantinea, in battles which, although surprising the Spartans, did not strike any significant blow to them. This is also the case with Epaminondas' and the Arcadians' invasion of Sparta. Arrian completes this list of Greek calamities by referring to the destruction of Scione and Melos by the Athenians and the first occupation of Plataea (428 BC) by the Spartans and their allies, which, in his view, should not be taken as having a serious impact on the Plataeans since most of them had

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2 Cf. Leon 2021.

already escaped to Athens before their city was destroyed. The Theban disaster has a special place among all the aforementioned cases because the enterprise was marked by an extraordinary celerity and because it caused the death of a large part of the population in a city which was one of the most significant military powers in Greece at that time. For these reasons, Arrian concludes, obviously adopting the standpoint of his pro-Macedonian sources, the disaster was reasonably considered by the Greeks to be the gods' punishment of the Thebans for the crimes they had perpetrated in the past at the expense of other Greek cities (their attack against Plataea during peace, their leading role in the destruction of the city, and their proposal to the Spartans that the Athenians be put to death at the end of the Peloponnesian War).[3]

Throughout this digression, Arrian invites well-informed and educated readers to realise that he is drawing both thematically and stylistically on Thucydides' *Histories*. His effort to convince the reader that the Theban disaster was incomparable is a practice as old as Thucydides' argumentation in his *Archaeology* that the Peloponnesian War was the greatest of all wars. Furthermore, Thucydides proceeds with similar claims with regard to individual events as well.[4] Also, the delineation of imposing misfortunes as manifestations of the unpredictable nature of war and of the surprise it causes to the belligerents undoubtedly follows another pattern of the Thucydidean account.[5] Arrian helps us apprehend these thematic echoes of the *Histories* through striking verbal loans from Thucydides.[6] All these connections have repeatedly been noticed in modern scholarship, and it has also been rightly noted that Arrian is following not only Thucydides but also a tradition which may have begun with Thucydides but which continues up to the Imperial Age. Brian Bosworth aptly draws a parallel between Arrian's list of calamities less significant than that the Theban one and the list offered by Polybius as a piece of evidence for the unprecedented magnitude of the Greeks' defeat in 146 BC. What is more, Polybius also includes in his list the Sicilian disaster and the Spartans' failures at Leuctra and Mantinea.[7]

The question is why Arrian follows this historiographical tradition and why he does so at this particular point of his account. Furthermore, what could his choice reveal to us about the way we are expected by him to treat the *Anabasis*

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3 See below, n. 11.

4 Thuc. 1.50.2; 3.113.6; 4.12.3; 14.3; 40.1; 5.60.3; 74.1; 6.31.1–2; 7.29.5; 30.3; 44.1; 71.7; 75.7.

5 On the unpredictable nature of the war in Thucydides, see, selectively, Finley 1942, 167, 168 and 297; Stahl 1966; Edmunds 1975, 4; Tsopanakis 1986, 164 and 177; Flory 1988, 19; Romilly 2003, 101 and 113; Desmond, 2006, 361.

6 *HCA* I, 84–89; Sisti/Zambrini I, 329–333.

7 *HCA* I, 84–85.

as part of a specific literary genre? A first answer to these questions could be that Arrian wishes, as so many other literate Greek writers of the Imperial Era did, to make a show of his familiarity with the literary *topoi* of the Classical literature of the fifth and fourth centuries BC. This must have been one of his motives in adopting Herodotus', Thucydides' and Xenophon's style in so many passages in his *Anabasis*.[8] However, what is overlooked by modern scholarship is the Theban digression's contribution to the work's structure. In what follows, I argue that a reading of the digression in light of chapters 1.1–8 may show that its Thucydidean flavour does not merely constitute an effort on Arrian's part to demonstrate his knowledge of the Classical narrative tradition, but acts as a meta-generic instruction to the reader as to which sub-category of historiography the first nine chapters of the *Anabasis*, on the events in Greece before the expedition in Asia, should be treated as part of.

A key observation, in my view, which reveals Arrian's goal in this digression of Thucydidean style, is that the Theban case (1.7–8) is the sole event pertaining to Alexander's interaction with the Greeks that Arrian narrates at such length in the first nine chapters. What is more, the unit of the siege and destruction of the city takes up nine of the first 23 pages (almost 40 %) of the Teubner edition, with the other 60 % pertaining to Alexander's enterprises against the Thracians and the Illyrians (1.1–6). Arrian's emphasis on Thebes in 1.1–9 becomes even more evident if compared with the account of Diodorus of Sicily. In his narrative of the events preceding the expedition in Asia (D.S. 17.2–14), Diodorus too dedicates the greatest part of his account to the Theban case (D.S. 17.8–14). However, in the rest of these chapters (D.S. 17.2–7) he clearly offers more information on the anti-Macedonian activity of cities other than Thebes and on Alexander's effort to confront the wave of underestimation against himself that prevailed in Greece after Philip's death. Diodorus opens his account by transferring the field of action to Asia, where Alexander sends Hecataeus to join Parmenio and to keep watch on Attalus, the potential contender for Alexander's throne (D.S. 17.2.3–6). Diodorus then (D.S. 17.3.3–5) gives a detailed record of the cities which, after Philip's death, started organising their endeavours to rid themselves of Macedonian rule (Aetolians, Ambraciots, Arcadians, Helians and Spartans). We also read about the Athenians' communication with Attalus which aimed to neutralise Alexander (D.S. 17.3.1–2), as well as about Alexander's diplomatic maneuvers and his march into Boeotia (D.S. 17.4.1–6). All these

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8 Arrian and Herodotus: Grundmann 1885; Miltsios 2022a; Taietti 2016; Schunk 2019; Leon 2021. Arrian and Thucydides: Meyer 1877; Arrian and Xenophon: Doulcet 1882; Boehner 1886; Miltsios 2022b. See also Tonnet's (1988) holistic study on the matter.

events took place before Alexander summoned the Greeks in Corinth, where the latter recognised him, as had been the case with Philip one year earlier (337 BC), as the military leader of the Greeks in the war against the Persians (D.S. 17.4.7–9). Diodorus continues his narration of the Athenians' and Attalus' conspiracy against Alexander and Attalus' murder by Hecataeus (D.S. 17.5.1–2), before he transfers his focal point of interest to Asia and, through an analepsis, narrates how Darius came to power (D.S. 17.5.3–6.3). The account also includes Memnon's and the Macedonians' enterprises in Asia and, after a short mention of Alexander's victories in Thrace and Illyria (D.S. 17.7), turns to the Theban case (D.S. 17.8–14).[9]

Conversely, Arrian narrates in detail only the events at Thebes. Let us examine more closely the structure of the first nine chapters of the *Anabasis*. Arrian opens his account with Philip's death and, without recording any anti-Macedonian reaction on the Greeks' part, which we read of in Diodorus, he immediately makes a temporal jump to the council at Corinth of 336 BC (1.1.1–2). He then briefly notes that the Athenians had initially tried to act against Alexander but were soon intimidated by his march into Boeotia and therefore submitted to his rule (1.1.3). All the activities of the Greeks in the period between Philip's death and the council at Corinth are narrated only in 15 lines of text (Teubner edition). From then onwards, Arrian shifts his interest exclusively towards Alexander's presence in Thrace and Illyria (1.1.4–6) and returns to the situation in Greece only to narrate the destruction of Thebes (1.7–9).

Arrian's indifference to the Greeks' rebellions against Alexander at the dawn of his reign should not be attributed to Arrian's lack of knowledge of these events but rather to his unwillingness to narrate them. That he is well informed about the Greeks' anti-Macedonian activities following Philip's death is evident in 1.7.4 and mostly in 1.10, where he delineates the impact of the Theban disaster upon the morale of the rest of the Greeks. As soon as they were informed of the Thebans' end, Arrian writes, the Arcadians sentenced to death those citizens who had convinced them to send to the Thebans military reinforcements. The Helians recalled some pro-Macedonian exiles (1.10.1), while Aetolian ambassadors were sent to Alexander and asked that their city be pardoned for revolting from the Corinthian League at the news of the Theban revolt (1.10.2). Also, the Athenians negotiated with Alexander and persuaded him not to insist on their sending to him certain politicians and that only Charidemus be exiled (1.10.2–6). It is thus evident that Arrian was well aware of the wave of revolts motivated by Philip's death. However, he chooses to mention this issue only on the occasion

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9 Cf. Justin's epitome of Trogus' *Philippic History* Book 10 and 11.3.

of the Theban affair and analeptically, within the framework of his effort to convince the reader that the destruction of Thebes shocked and surprised the Greeks.

In contrast to Diodorus' and Trogus' accounts, in the *Anabasis* the anti-Macedonian activities of the Greeks are confined to Cadmean soil. The Thebans' resistance is presented as the only vigorous manifestation of the Greeks' opposition to Alexander which deserves to be narrated in detail. The reader is thereby led to the conclusion that the anti-Macedonian reactions of the rest of the Greeks were weak and harmless efforts. Nowhere do we read of the Athenians' coordination with Attalus under Demosthenes' guidance. Nor do we read anything about Alexander's concern to secure the Thessalians' loyalty and to intimidate the Greeks by entering Boeotia. Also, throughout the work, Arrian avoids offering detailed accounts of the Macedonians' war against Sparta in the mainland Greece. He may often transfer the focal point of our interest to the Aegean and Agis' cooperation with the Persians in those waters (2.1–2; 2.13.4–6), but he deprives us of the opportunity to read about the culmination of these efforts, which came along with the death of 5,300 Spartans in the battle of Megalopolis shortly before that of Gaugamela.[10]

In the *Anabasis*, the narrative of the history of mainland Greece is markedly orientated towards the dipole Macedonia–Thebes. This compositional choice is explained by Arrian's focus on the unprecedented nature of the Theban disaster in the digression of 1.9. Apart from the less significant cases of Scione, Melos and Plataea, the greatest part of the digression's first segment is dedicated to the Athenian disaster in Sicily and to those of Sparta at Leuctra and Mantinea. In these paragraphs, Arrian interprets Greek history through the scheme of two dipoles, Athens–Sparta and Sparta–Thebes. In both cases, the calamity of the defeated party does not utterly destroy them and therefore does not represent a turning point in Greek history. With regard to the Athenians, Arrian notes that the Spartans failed to exterminate them both in Sicily and at Aigos Potamoi. After their failure in Syracuse, the Athenians endured nine more years of war and, similarly, after their defeat at Aigos Potamoi they regained power relatively soon. In a similar vein, the Spartans did not suffer any decisive blow in the aforementioned battles against the Thebans. By contrast, Alexander manages to utterly destroy Thebes, one of the greatest military powers of Greece.

This antithesis between, on the one hand, the Spartans' failure to permanently exterminate the Athenians and the Thebans' inability to do the same to the Spartans and, on the other, Alexander's success in destroying Thebes, is not

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10 D.S. 17.62–63; Curt. 6.1; Plut. *Ages.* 15.4.

an attempt by Arrian, I believe, to praise Alexander in terms of military virtue.[11] Arrian is much more interested in absolving Alexander of the responsibility for this 'feat' and less in praising him for it. He presents Alexander as not wishing to attack the city and in three cases as trying to offer them one last opportunity to surrender (1.7.7–11). Also, it is claimed that the battle started after Perdiccas' arbitrary initiative and not on Alexander's command (1.8.1–2). The cruelty with which the Thebans were slaughtered is attributed to the Boeotians' resentment towards them (1.8.8), while the decision to burn the city to the ground and enslave its population is also presented as belonging to the allies and not to Alexander (1.9.9–10).[12]

Thus, Arrian's emphasis on the unprecedented character of the Thebans' doom should not be taken as foregrounding the uniqueness of the Macedonians' military competence but rather the pivotal nature of this specific historical moment: it is the first time in Greece that two military superpowers collide and that one manages to utterly destroy the other. The long period of time in which wars between powerful Greek city-states do not bring about the total destruction of one side or the other now belongs to the past. The Greeks now enter a new era, in which all three prestigious Greek city-states (Athens, Sparta and Thebes) are powerless and the Macedonian dominion is ready to expand in the East. In this respect, the digression on the assessment of the Theban disaster in comparison with previous similar cases from the Greek past does not only recapitulate the Theban episode but also the entire unit of 1.1–9, while it also introduces us to the theme of the rest of the work. This digression serves as an epilogue to the Greek history of perpetual wars with no decisive resolution, a part of which is described by the account of 1.1–9, and paves the way for a new phase for the Greeks, which is marked by the total dominion of the Macedonians in Europe and Asia.

Now, one of the historians whose account was in antiquity mostly related to this period of perpetual wars between two powerful city-states in Greek history was Thucydides, who, from a certain point onwards, also served as a literary model for the Greeks of the Imperial Era, certainly including Arrian. So, Arrian invites us to treat the first nine chapters of his *Anabasis* as pertaining to the last phase of unfruitful collisions among the Greeks, which is partly why, I believe,

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11 Although Arrian certainly highlights some of Alexander's military skills in the Theban episode. See Stadter 1980, 90 ff.
12 Brunt 1976, 35 n. 1, 39 n. 3; Stadter 1980, 92–93; *HCA* I, 78–91; Sisti/Zambrini I, 321–333; Liotsakis 2019, 24–25.

he closes this account with a digression flavoured with the style of the historian who was closely associated with this period.

Consequently, the digression on Thebes, by introducing the reader to the *Anabasis*' distinctive thematic and stylistic features, is not aimed at the author's self-fashioning in a way disconnected from the rest of the work. It rather serves to give closure and also has an introductory role both in a meta-literary sense and in terms of content. Most importantly, as will hopefully be demonstrated, these two features recur in the rest of the great excursuses in the work, and, in this respect, the Theban digression exemplifies the reasoning by which Arrian conceived of the way he would shape and incorporate all the pivotal and extensive digressions of the *Anabasis*.

2 The second preface

Perhaps the most celebrated digression in the *Anabasis* is the so-called Second Preface (1.12.2–5).[13] Arrian has just completed his account of Alexander's military and diplomatic activity in Europe and introduces the reader to the main subject matter of his work, i.e. the Macedonians' expedition in Asia. We have reached the point at which Alexander and his army have covered the route from Amphipolis to Troy (1.11.3–12.1). Alexander has crossed the Strymon and the Pangaion Mountain, from where he then crosses the Ebrus and through Sestus arrives at Elaius. There he sacrifices to Protesilaus, the man who was the first, according to the tradition, to land on Asian soil. Through this sacrifice Alexander asks that his visit to Asia be more successful than Protesilaus' (1.11.3–5). This is the first in a series of rituals at Iliadic spots, as Alexander afterwards moves to the Achaeans' port and in the middle of the Hellespont holds further sacrifices and offers lamentation to Poseidon and the Nereids. He then arrives at Troy, where he sacrifices to Athena of the city and dedicates his armour at her temple in exchange for holy armour preserved from the Trojan War. He also sacrifices to Priam seeking his favour. Last, when he enters the city, some of his companions offer him a golden crown and he himself crowns Achilles' tomb, while Hephaestion is said to have done the same for the tomb of Patroclus. Alexander, the story goes, commented that Achilles was a happy man since he

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13 See Breebaart 1960, 23–24; Schepens 1971; Anderson 1980; *HCA* I, 104–107; Stadter 1981; Moles 1985; Marincola 1989; Gray 1990; Sisti/Zambrini I, 346–347; Stewart 1993, 83–84; Ambaglio 1994, 8–9; Zeitlin 2001, 201–202.

and his feats were glorified by Homer and were thereby preserved in people's memory forever (1.11.6–12.1).

At this point, Arrian interrupts his narration and in one and a half pages (Teubner edition) he explains the reasons why he embarked on writing the *Anabasis*. He justifies Alexander for blessing Achilles for the aforementioned reason, claiming that Alexander's deeds were never glorified as they deserved, either in prose or in poetry. For example, Arrian adds, Alexander was never praised by lyric poets as Hieron, Gelon and Theron were, none of whom is worthy to be compared with Alexander. As a result, the Macedonian's feats, as Arrian overstates, were less known than certain insignificant events of the past. One of these deeds which was inferior to Alexander's expedition was the campaign of the ten thousand, which became famous due to Xenophon, although Alexander and his men, contrary to what the ten thousand did, never campaigned under the command of a Persian nor did they cross Asia hunted by the Persian king; it was they who hunted Darius and conquered his empire. So, given that Alexander accomplished unprecedented feats, Arrian decided to offer an account of them which would do justice to their magnitude (1.12.2–5). Arrian concludes this digression with the following well-known words (1.12.4–5):

> ἔνθεν καὶ αὐτὸς ὁρμηθῆναί φημι ἐς τήνδε τὴν ξυγγραφήν, οὐκ ἀπαξιώσας ἐμαυτὸν φανερὰ καταστήσειν ἐς ἀνθρώπους τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργα. ὅστις δὲ ὢν ταῦτα ὑπὲρ ἐμαυτοῦ γιγνώσκω, τὸ μὲν ὄνομα οὐδὲν δέομαι ἀναγράψαι, οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ ἄγνωστον ἐς ἀνθρώπους ἐστίν, οὐδὲ πατρίδα ἥτις μοί ἐστιν οὐδὲ γένος τὸ ἐμόν, οὐδὲ εἰ δή τινα ἀρχὴν ἐν τῇ ἐμαυτοῦ ἦρξα· ἀλλ᾿ ἐκεῖνο ἀναγράφω, ὅτι ἐμοὶ πατρίς τε καὶ γένος καὶ ἀρχαὶ οἵδε οἱ λόγοι εἰσί τε καὶ ἀπὸ νέου ἔτι ἐγένοντο. καὶ ἐπὶ τῷδε οὐκ ἀπαξιῶ ἐμαυτὸν τῶν πρώτων ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῇ Ἑλλάδι, εἴπερ οὖν καὶ Ἀλέξανδρον τῶν ἐν τοῖς ὅπλοις.

> That, I declare, is why I myself have embarked on this history, not judging myself unworthy to make Alexander's deeds known to men. Whoever I may be, this I know in my favor; I need not write my name, for it is not at all unknown among men, nor my country nor my family nor any office I may have held in my own land; this I do set on paper, that country, family, and offices I find and I have found from my youth in these tales. That is why I think myself not unworthy of the masters of Greek speech, just as Alexander was among the masters of warfare. (transl. Brunt 1976)

In these paragraphs, Arrian sketches the demarcation lines between his work and some others from various literary genres (epic, lyric poetry, biography and historiography) both in terms of style and goal setting. To begin with lyric poetry, the phrase ἐν μέλει (1.12.2) no doubt refers to the choral and monodic poetry of Pindar and Bacchylides, whose poems glorified the athletic victories of Hieron, Gelon and Theron. As mentioned above, Arrian says that these men's deeds were praised in lyric poetry, while those of Alexander were not, with the

result that Alexander's feats were less known even than deeds unworthy of mention.

What are these deeds and why are they very minor? Hieron and Gelon are the two well-known brothers and tyrants of Gela and Syracuse. Their *floruit* roughly occurred in the decades between 490 and 460 BC, a period that also witnessed the Persian Wars. Theron was tyrant of Acragas and an ally of Gelon. Two of them, Hieron and Theron, had repeatedly won at the Olympic and Pythian Games and their victories were hymned by Pindar and Bacchylides.[14] This explains Arrian's mention of the lyric poets who sang of the feats of these men. However, the question is, to what feats of Hieron, Gelon, and Theron does Arrian refer?

Arrian does not devalue the athletic victories of those tyrants but rather their military feats. First, Arrian follows here a traditional *topos* of historiographical prefaces, i.e. a comparison between the subject of his own account and preceding military events, a practice that was introduced by Arrian's literary models, Herodotus and Thucydides, and was adopted by others as well, such as Polybius.[15] As Thucydides juxtaposes the reliability of his own account with the unreliability of poets, Arrian similarly juxtaposes the *Anabasis* with lyric poetry.[16] Second, apart from the fact that it would be inappropriate on Arrian's part to underestimate athletic victories, associating Alexander's conquest of Asia with victories in athletic festivals would make no sense. Alexander's fame emerged from his military achievements, which are here juxtaposed not with athletic victories but with other military achievements.

Hieron's, Gelon's and Theron's feats are the battle at Himera against the Carthaginians in 480 BC and the battle at Cyme against the Etruscans in 474 BC. In the first battle, Theron, in concert with Gelon, defeated the Carthaginians outside the walls of Himera and secured the control of the city from his opponent Tyrillus, who had united his forces with the Carthaginians in order to occupy the city. The significance of this victory lay in that Gelon and Theron thereby freed the Greeks of Sicily from the Carthaginian threat for a 70-year period. Although Gelon did not free the whole of Greece from barbaric dominion, he presented this event not as a local achievement but as a PanHellenic triumph over the barbarians. Within the framework of this propagandistic effort, the Syracusans claimed that the battle of Himera occurred on the same day

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14 On Hieron, see Pi. *P.* 1; *P.* 2; *P.* 3; *O.* 1; Bacch. *Ep.* 4; *Ep.* 5. On Theron, see Pi. *O.* 2; *O.* 3.

15 On this practice in Herodotus and Thucydides, see Konstantakos' and Pothou's contributions in this volume.

16 Stadter 1981, 160–161.

as the battle of Salamis. In this way, Gelon associated his achievement with the glorious victories of the Greeks in mainland Greece against the Persians. This claim also offered him a convenient excuse for refusing to send help to the Greeks during the battle of Salamis.

Herodotus offers an extensive account of the battles of Sicily. He clarifies that the alleged temporal coincidence of the battle of Himera with that of Salamis was a Syracusan fabrication. He also reveals that the battle did not constitute a PanHellenic effort of liberation from the Carthaginians but a local rivalry between two tyrants over the control of the city (Hdt. 7.158–162; 7.165–166). It was one of those tyrants who asked for the Carthaginians' support. So, it was the Greeks who allowed the barbarians to interfere in Greek affairs.

In light of all this, I believe that Arrian's criticism of the exaggerations of lyric poets about the Sicilian tyrants refers to Pindar's first Pythian Ode, written for Hieron's victory. In this ode, Pindar falsely presents the victories at Himera and Cyme as PanHellenic acts of liberation from the barbarians. He also connects the battles of Cyme and Himera with the battles of Salamis and Thermopylae. Moreover, the Sicilian victories are misleadingly presented as liberating not merely the Greeks of Sicily but all the Greeks (Pi. *P.* 1.71–81). This practice of connecting Sicilian battles with the Persian Wars was a common practice in Greek literature, as testified by Diodorus of Sicily, who connects the battle of Himera with that of Plataea (D.S. 11.26.7), and Aristotle (*Po.* 1459a25). Arrian's claim that very minor deeds were praised without deserving it plausibly refers to Pindar's presentation of the Sicilian battles as significant contributions to the Greeks' primacy over the barbarians. If my view is correct, it can be concluded that the criterion on which Arrian uses the Sicilian tyrants as Alexander's foils is whether their feats against the barbarians had a Panhellenic or a local character.

The counter-example of the ten thousand is viewed from a similar point of view. The crossing of the Persian Empire by such an imposing Greek army was certainly at that time an unprecedented and thus remarkable military achievement. Nevertheless, in comparison with Alexander's successes, it was a failure in many respects. According to Arrian, it began as a disgraceful allegiance to a Persian usurper of the throne, Cyrus, and ended as a failure after his unexpected death at the battle of Cunaxa. What is more, the military feats of the ten thousand, like those of the Sicilian tyrants, were not dictated by a PanHellenic spirit and did not generate the Greeks' dominance over the barbarians. Similarly to Herodotus' opening chapters, Arrian presents his subject as part of a tradition of conflicts between the West and the East or, to be more precise, between the Greeks and the barbarians. Arrian also presents Alexander's conquest of Asia as

the culmination of all those Greek successes. Subsequently, as it transpires from my analysis so far, the subjects of the two *Anabases* are compared with relation to the degree to which they contributed to the dominion of the Greco-Roman world over the Persians.

Arrian thereby invites the reader to compare his account with its thematic and structural model, Xenophon's *Anabasis*. The *Anabasis of Alexander*, similarly to that of Xenophon, is divided into seven books and presents the events in the form of a march-narrative, which resembles in many respects the narration of the ten thousand's march.[17] At this point, Arrian places more emphasis not on the similarities between the two works but on their differences. With his words "thanks to Xenophon" (1.12.3) he means that the march of the ten thousand was presented by Xenophon as being of greater value than it actually was. In that case, Arrian implies, the historiographer's (Xenophon's) literary artistry supersedes in significance the subject of narration. By contrast, Arrian presents himself as being an avid user of discourse to the same degree to which Alexander was competent in military affairs. The message he conveys through this antithesis between himself and Xenophon is that he will employ his art in order not to exaggerate the value of a historical period but to pay justice to an individual who deserves the labour Arrian will offer as an author. The contrast created by Arrian between, on the one hand, himself and, on the other, the lyric poets and a prose writer echoes the antithesis delineated by Thucydides between himself and the poets and logographers. Thucydides claims that he will endeavour to offer the truth through his account, while the poets embellish the events in order to magnify them and logographers do the same thing in order to make them more appealing to their audiences. Although in Arrian's passage Xenophon, as a prose writer, can be taken to serve as the counterpoint to Thucydides' logographers, he is also presented by Arrian as being motivated by a need representative of Thucydides' poets, i.e. his need to overstate the value of less worthy events. This is the very reason why Arrian also castigates other historians of Alexander.[18]

However, the *Anabasis* is admittedly an encomiastic account, and at this point it is worth noting the subtle but still perceptible — both in terms of content and style — demarcation line which Arrian here draws between his work and

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17 Stadter 1967, 156. See, *contra*, *HCA* I, 8 with further bibliography. As for the title of Arrian's work, we are not in a position to know whether or not it stemmed from Xenophon's influence upon Arrian because we do not know if this title was chosen by Arrian or was added later (see Liotsakis' [2019, 1 n. 1] overview of the bibliography).

18 See, e.g., 3.3.6 and 5.3.2–4.

one further literary genre, epic poetry. Already at 1.11.2 Arrian, in recording that the statue of Orpheus became wet with perspiration, has implied that the Muses responded to Alexander's sacrifices by granting his request that his feats be glorified in literature as they deserved. Furthermore, by adding that up to his own time those feats had not yet been glorified as they deserved (1.12.2–3), Arrian leads the reader to the conclusion that the Muses' promise was not fulfilled, and in this way he presents his own account as the fulfillment of this omen and thus as the product of divine will and inspiration. What is more, by saying that he will act for Alexander as Homer did for Achilles, Arrian promises the reader that he will secure for Alexander an eternal glory.[19]

The parallelism drawn here by Arrian between the *Anabasis* and the *Iliad* has been repeatedly noted by critics. Besides, the Iliadic style of the words with which Arrian expresses his indifference in revealing his personal data (strikingly congruent with Homer's anonymity in both epics) stresses even further Arrian's wish to place himself as a literary persona parallel with the epic model.[20] However, we should not confine ourselves to the conclusion that Arrian, in connecting himself with Homer, refers exclusively to the encomiastic orientation of his account. Modern scholarship has recently unearthed a plethora of Homeric stylistic loans both in the *Anabasis* and the *Indikē*, Homerisms which also decisively colour the logic of the narration and the messages that emerge from it.[21] And given that Homerisms, both thematic and stylistic, constituted a *topos* in Alexander's literary tradition, in which Arrian aspires to be included by writing the *Anabasis*,[22] we may safely reach the following conclusion: by relating himself to Homer and mostly to the *Iliad*, Arrian informs his audience that he will follow, both on thematic and stylistic levels, the traditional practice of "coating" the narrative on Alexander with epic shades.

As is the case with Arrian juxtaposing himself with Xenophon, the parallelism between the *Anabasis* and the already existing literary tradition of Alexander aims to foreground not only the points of accordance but also those of deviation between the two sides. For when he states that Alexander's feats had not been praised as they deserved, Arrian in essence points an accusing finger at the quality of the works on the Macedonian king. For modern scholarship the question has traditionally been what Arrian claims here to intend to improve in the literary tradition he aspires to enter. Some argue that in this Second Preface

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19 For all this, see Liotsakis 2019, 172–185.

20 Liotsakis, 2019, 172–185 with exhaustive bibliography on the matter.

21 Liotsakis 2019, 163–225; Schunk 2019.

22 Liotsakis 2019, 11–13; 2022, 194–197.

Arrian focuses more on the stylistic superiority of his account, as is evident from his words at 1.12.5. Conversely, according to this view, the historical value of his work is foregrounded in the First Preface, in which Arrian introduces the reader to the reasons why he chose to base his account on Ptolemy and Aristobulus and to reject other, in his view unreliable, sources.

In my view, the two prefaces should be read as a whole and help us reach certain conclusions about the following criteria according to which Arrian invites the reader to compare the *Anabasis* with the pre-existing literature on Alexander: (a) Arrian will follow only what he believes to be reliable sources and will generally treat Alexander's literature with a more critical eye than other writers did before him; (b) he will demonstrate a literary artistry worthy of Alexander's feats; (c) this does not entail that he will endeavour to exaggerate the value of Alexander's deeds, but merely to pay justice to what they truly were; (d) his narration will occasionally be flavoured with Homeric shades; (e) he will employ the structural model of a Classical work, Xenophon's march-narrative as used in *Cyrus' Anabasis*; (f) and he will not focus on his own self-promotion as an author, which is why he avoids revealing his identity.

As in the Theban digression, here too we may discern the same two key functions: first, the digression serves as a marker of a pivotal point in the account, i.e. the beginning of the expedition in Asia; second, Arrian opens a dialogue with certain literary genres. In what follows, I will try to show that both features mark most of the extensive digressions in the last four books of the *Anabasis*.

Let us begin with Book 4. When he mentions Alexander's decision to mutilate Bessus, Arrian interrupts his narrative and offers what we nowadays describe as the main digression of the *Anabasis*.[23] He castigates Alexander for his cruelty and inability to control his anger and offers a number of episodes from different periods, all of which demonstrate Alexander's immoderate nature and arrogance. These are the famous episodes of Clitus' death, Callisthenes' opposition to Alexander's wish to impose his *proskynesis* and the conspiracy of the Pages. In my last monograph about Arrian's portrait of Alexander in the *Anabasis* I tried to show that this digression, similarly to the First Preface, has a programmatic function, in that it introduces themes previously absent from the narrative. Alexander's arrogance, his vanity, and his immoderate temperament are issues first touched upon in this digression and which recur from Book 4 onwards until the end of the work.

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23 Brunt 1976, 532–544; Stadter 1980, 73–74; Hammond 1993, 241–242; *HCA* II, 96–97; Sisti/Zambrini II, 414–415; Liotsakis 2019, 18–23; Leon 2021, 27–32.

In this way, Arrian uses a digression as a marker of a pivotal development in Alexander's character and renders this digression point zero in a dynamic portrait of his protagonist. However, what is even more important to note is that Arrian seems to be fully aware of the fact that the narrative technique with which he composes this digression is something which he feels the need to apologise for. As already stated, these episodes did not take place immediately after the mutilation of Bessus, so they are offered in a proleptic fashion. This gathering of episodes with the same theme, in this case Alexander's arrogance, was a popular technique in biographical narratives.[24] Arrian must have been acquainted with this narrative scheme, as before the *Anabasis* he had already composed two biographies about a Dion and Timoleon. Furthermore, the gathering of these very episodes about Clitus, Callisthenes and the conspiracy of the Pages is also found in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* and in Diodorus, which perhaps indicates that Arrian's accumulation of these episodes stemmed in this case from his reading of the literature of Alexander. Arrian seems to recognise the effectiveness of this scheme; however, he also recognises that the disruption of narrative linearity in a historical account is something he should apologise for. In this way, this digression, apart from its central role in the shaping of the overall logic of the account, also serves as a mirror of the frugality with which Arrian admittedly employs the technique of atemporal accumulating episodes.[25]

A similar example is found in the digression about Indian geography at the beginning of Book 5 (5.4.1–6.8). In Books 5 and 6 Arrian narrates Alexander's expedition in what the ancients defined as India (modern Pakistan). For a modern historian a map at the beginning of such an account would suffice to help readers follow Alexander's itinerary in those territories. Arrian did not have the luxury of drawing a map of India, so he used this digressive description of Indian geography as a map, as an introduction to his Indian account, with which he wished to help his readers follow Alexander in an area of the world which was admittedly still unknown even in Arrian's age. So, similarly to the Theban digression, the Second Preface and the excursus about Alexander's arrogance, this one too has a programmatic and introductory function in that it serves as a guide for the reader in Books 5 and 6. And once again, Arrian opens a dialogue with his predecessors. In this case, he wishes to move beyond the fabulous character of previous literature about India and its marvels. He repeatedly criticises fabulous stories of Indian accounts of his age and clarifies that he will only focus on what is necessary for the reader in their effort to understand Alexan-

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24 Cf. Plut. *Alex.* 48–55 and D.S. index 17 κζ–κη, with Liotsakis 2019, 142.
25 See Liotsakis 2019, 125–143.

der's itinerary. He says that in his *Anabasis* there is no room for such marvellous stories and that he will write another work, a detailed treatise about the Indian civilisation and geography as well as Nearchus' voyage in the Indian Ocean. His wish to open a dialogue with the literature on India is also betrayed by the fact that he frequently mentions his sources, Eratosthenes, Megasthenes, Onesicritus, Nearchus and of course Herodotus and Homer in these digressions.

To conclude, in composing the *Anabasis of Alexander*, Arrian was faced with the fact that he was obliged to draw material, both stylistic and thematic, from a diverse stock of literary sources, the genres of which ranged from epic and lyric poetry to prose genres such as biography, military monographs and exotic narratives. Arrian uses the pivotal digressions of his work as meta-literary markers, through which he reveals to us certain distinctive features of his account and thereby invites us to reach specific conclusions about the points of accordance or deviation between the *Anabasis* and this diverse body of literature by which he is inspired.

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Mads Ortving Lindholmer
Digressions and the Fall of the Republic in Cassius Dio

Abstract: This chapter will focus on a string of long digressions on various republican offices in Cassius Dio's narrative of the Early Republic. It argues that Dio's use of digressions on Republican offices is strikingly sophisticated: he uses them to highlight, at an early stage and in a programmatic fashion, key problems of the Republic, such as the inherently destructive character of the tribuneship, the dangers of excessive wealth in the hands of leading politicians and the unworkability of the censorship and the dictatorship in the Late Republic. This contributes to Dio's distinctive rejection of the common historiographical idealisation of the earlier Republic. At the same time, the digressions support Dio's presentation of the Late Republic as fatally beset by structural problems. Thus, in contrast to the parallel sources, it was not mainly ambitious individuals, such as Caesar or Pompey, who destroyed the Republic. Rather, Dio's digressions present the Republic itself as inherently unworkable.

Keywords: Cassius Dio, digressions, tribuneship, Late Republic, dictatorship

1 Introduction

In *Tristram Shandy*, published in multiple volumes between 1759 and 1767, the eminent English novelist, Laurence Sterne wrote:

> Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshine; — they are the life, the soul of reading; — take them out of this book for instance, — you might as well take the book along with them; — one cold eternal winter would reign in every page of it; restore them to the writer; he steps forth like a bridegroom, bids All hail; brings in variety, and forbids the appetite to fail.[1]

This flowery panegyric of digressions probably strikes most modern readers, of novels and ancient historiography alike, as odd and surprising. Indeed, traditionally, scholarship on ancient literature, and historiography in particular, often saw digressions as tiresome and irrelevant, and as a fault to be criticised

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1 Sterne 1980, 52.

in the author.[2] However, Sterne's panegyric of digressions highlights the degree to which this modern predilection among classicists for focused narratives without "unnecessary" or "irrelevant" digressions is a cultural construct that cannot be treated as universally true or objectively valid.[3] Essentially, in the study of Cassius Dio and other ancient authors, we should not reject digressions as trivial or tiresome but explore how they tie into and contribute to the wider narrative aims of the author.

In fact, scholarship has increasingly begun to move beyond a simplistic critical approach to digressions, as the complex role played by these in the broader narrative has been explored especially in Herodotus but also in for example Homer, Thucydides, Sallust, Livy and Ammianus Marcellinus.[4] However, a similar exploration of the role of digressions has not been performed for Cassius Dio's monumental 80-book *Roman History*. Traditionally, Dio was viewed essentially as a copyist, a poor historian whose mass of material overwhelmed him to a degree where he was simply unable to incorporate any political interpretations of his own into the narrative.[5] However, Dio has experienced a remarkable re-evaluation in the last decade with an unprecedented number of publications, and these highlight the complexity of Dio's narrative and his independent and sophisticated political interpretations.[6]

In this connection, some of Dio's digressions have been studied: for example, his non-linear narrative of the Republic has recently been the centre of an excellent study that shows how Dio uses *analepses* and *prolepses* to great effect, and Dio's narrative structure more broadly has been explored in several recent studies.[7] This chapter will focus on a string of long digressions on various republican offices in Dio's narrative of the Early Republic, which have been the object of two relatively recent studies: Gianpaolo Urso (2005) used these digressions to

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2 This is frequently seen in older scholarship on Herodotus due to his often non-linear narrative structure: see e.g. Jacoby 1913.

3 A point also raised by de Jong 2002, 246: "Ancient literary taste does show a greater tolerance towards — indeed an appreciation of — the episodic, ekphrastic, and digressional."

4 Stanley 1993; Wiedemann 1993; de Jong 2002; Morello 2002; den Hengst 2007; Griffiths 2007; Pothou 2009.

5 The most influential work of the twentieth century was Millar 1964 who asserts that "large-scale interpretations are clearly absent" (45) from Dio's work and that "there is nothing to show that he had any specific aim in view save that of composing the work itself" (73). See likewise Schwartz 1899; Lintott 1997.

6 See e.g. Fromentin *et al.* 2016; Lange/Madsen 2016; Burden-Strevens/Lindholmer 2019; Osgood/Baron 2019; Burden-Strevens 2020.

7 Baron 2019. Narrative structure: e.g. Kemezis 2014, 90–149; Lindholmer 2018b; 2019c.

illuminate the institutional development of the Early Republic, and Benedikt Simons (2009) approached them from a strict *Quellenforschung* perspective.[8] However, the role of these digressions as a whole in supporting and communicating Dio's wider interpretations of the Republic has been left underexplored, probably because such interpretations until recently were believed to be absent from Dio's work.[9]

This chapter will argue that Dio's use of digressions on Republican offices is strikingly sophisticated: he uses them to highlight, at an early stage and in a programmatic fashion, key problems of the Republic, such as the inherently destructive character of the tribuneship, the dangers of excessive wealth in the hands of leading politicians and the unworkability of the censorship and the dictatorship in the Late Republic. This contributes to Dio's distinctive rejection of the common historiographical idealisation of the earlier Republic.[10] At the same time, the digressions support Dio's presentation of the Late Republic as inherently unworkable and fatally beset by structural problems.[11] This chapter thus ties into recent scholarship highlighting the sophistication of Dio as a historian and a narrator, as well as recent research emphasising the important role played by digressions in ancient historiography and literature more broadly.

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8 Urso's work is an innovative use of Dio's neglected institutional digressions, which highlights the value of Dio as a source. Simons' monograph, on the other hand, is problematic: it takes an old-fashioned approach to *Quellenforschung* where Dio is afforded very limited agency and is thought to have essentially copied one source at a time. However, recent research has exactly underlined the degree to which Dio reshaped his sources into a coherent narrative in order to communicate a distinctive view of Roman history (see footnote 6). Consequently, it is no surprise that Simons' book has had little influence on scholarship. See also the PhD-thesis of Libourel 1968, 79–82, 90–97, 136–140, who treats several digressions and views them as the result of Dio's own research rather than being copied from a source. He concludes that their function "was to make his history more intelligible to his Greek-speaking readership" (81). However, their wider role in Dio's interpretations is not explored.
9 Some of these digressions have been explored individually: see e.g. Lange 2016, 94–97 (on the triumph); Burden-Strevens 2020, 279–281 (on the dictatorship).
10 Dio's earlier Republic was traditionally seen as an idealised contrast to the Late Republic, in keeping with the historiographical tradition: Fechner 1986, 141–143; Schettino 2006, 66–68; Simons 2009, 304–305; Rees 2011, 40–54; Kemezis 2014, 24, 102–106; Burden-Strevens 2016, 176–177. Hose 1994, 404–405 and Sion-Jenkis 2000, 90–91 briefly countered this view. Lange 2019 and Lindholmer 2019a argue against the view that Dio idealised the earlier Republic. On Dio's earlier Republic more generally, see especially Burden-Strevens/Lindholmer 2019.
11 For this view, see especially the excellent recent book by Burden-Strevens 2020. See also Burden-Strevens 2016; Bertrand/Coudry 2016; Coudry 2016; Lindholmer 2018a; 2018b; 2019a; 2019b; 2019c; Madsen 2020, 67–82. On Dio's Late Republic in general, see recently Osgood/Baron 2019.

Finally, a brief methodological note is necessary before we commence: the digressions on which this chapter focuses are mainly preserved in the epitome of the Byzantine writer Zonaras. Importantly, recent research has underlined that, while Zonaras obviously abridged Dio heavily, he is generally faithful to his source. Thus, although the original digressions may have been more expansive, Zonaras likely gives a good impression of the original and, it is unlikely that any of the digressions are invented or heavily infused with Byzantine interpolations.[12]

2 The tribuneship

In Book 4 of his *Roman History*, that is right after the expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus, Dio includes three institutional digressions, on the quaestorship, the dictatorship and the tribuneship. Let us first turn to the digression on the tribuneship as this is particularly long and rich from an interpretative perspective.[13] Dio writes that the people began to elect tribunes as a defence against the elite and then comments:

> οὗτοι δὴ τοῦ πλήθους οἱ τριβοῦνοι ἢ δήμαρχοι μεγάλων κακῶν αἴτιοι τῇ Ῥώμῃ γεγόνασι. τὸ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἀρχόντων ὄνομα οὐκ ἔσχον εὐθύς, ἰσχὺν δ᾽ ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς ἄλλους ἐκτήσαντο, ἤμυνόν τε δεομένῳ παντί, καὶ πάντα τὸν ἐπιβοησάμενον σφᾶς ἀφῃροῦντο οὐκ ἐκ μόνων ἰδιωτῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν τῶν ἀρχόντων, πλὴν τῶν δικτατόρων.

> Now these tribunes of the people (or *dêmarchoi*) became responsible for great evils that befell Rome. For though they did not immediately secure the title of magistrates, they gained power beyond all others, defending everyone who begged protection and rescuing everyone who called upon them not only from private individuals, but from the very magistrates, except the dictators.[14]

Hereafter, Dio gives a list of all their power, such as the tribunes' veto, and then continues:

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12 See especially Fromentin 2019; Kampianaki 2022, 47–55. See also Simons 2009, 29–32 who argues that Zonaras has three main methods of working, namely omission of Dio's moralising remarks, paraphrasing and summarising or near verbatim reproduction. See also Moscovich 1983; Fromentin 2013, 23–26; Mallan 2014, 760–762.
13 On this, see Urso 2005, 53–77; Simons 2009, 69–78. On the tribuneship in general, see e.g. Thommen 1989.
14 Zonar. 7.15. Translations of Dio and other quoted authors are based on the relevant editions from the Loeb Classical Library, with some changes.

τοῦ χρόνου δὲ προϊόντος καὶ τὴν γερουσίαν ἀθροίζειν καὶ ζημιοῦν τὸν μὴ πειθαρχοῦντα καὶ μαντείᾳ χρῆσθαι καὶ δικάζειν ἐπετράπησαν ἢ ἑαυτοῖς ἐπέτρεψαν. καὶ ὃ γὰρ ποιεῖν αὐτοῖς οὐκ ἐξῆν, κατώρθουν ἐκ τῆς ἀνανταγωνίστου πρὸς πᾶν τὸ πραττόμενον ὑφ' ἑτέρων ἐναντιώσεως. καὶ γὰρ καὶ νόμους εἰσήγαγον ἵν' ὅστις αὐτοῖς ἔργῳ ἢ λόγῳ προσκρούσῃ, κᾶν ἰδιώτης εἴη κᾶν ἄρχων, ἱερός τε ᾖ καὶ τῷ ἄγει ἐνέχηται. [...] ἔδρων οὖν πολλὰ ἄτοπα· καὶ γὰρ καὶ ὑπάτους ἔβαλλον εἰς τὸ δεσμωτήριον καὶ ἐθανάτουν τινὰς μηδὲ λόγου τυγχάνοντας. καὶ οὐδεὶς αὐτοῖς ἐναντιωθῆναι ἐτόλμα· εἰ δὲ μή, καὶ αὐτὸς ἱερὸς ἐγίνετο. [...] Οὕτω μὲν οὖν ἡ τῶν δημάρχων δυναστεία συνέστη.

As time went on, they were allowed, or allowed themselves, to summon the Senate, to punish anybody who disobeyed them, to practise divination, and to hold court. And in the case of anything that was unlawful for them to do, they gained their point by their incontestable opposition to every project undertaken by others. For they introduced laws to the effect that whoever should obstruct them by deed or word, be he private citizen or magistrate, should be 'devoted' and under a curse. [...] Many of their actions were unwarrantable, for they threw even consuls into prison and put men to death without granting them a hearing. Nobody ventured to oppose them; or, in case anyone did, he himself became 'devoted.' [...] In this way, the δυναστεία of the tribunes was organised.[15]

It is striking how negative Dio's evaluation of the tribunes is: this negative perspective is clear from the very beginning as Dio underlines that the tribunes "became responsible for great evils that befell Rome". Hereafter, they are presented as a deeply problematic element that operated outside of constitutional boundaries since they "allowed themselves" wide powers and forced through unlawful measures by destructive opposition. Dio underlines that "many of their actions were unwarrantable", as they for example put people to death without a hearing.[16] Immediately after the quotation, Dio also asserts that the tribunes engaged in "factious quarrelling (ἐστασίαζον)".[17]

Arguably the most striking aspect of Dio's digression on the tribunes is his assertion that this office was essentially δυναστεία: this word in general means "power" or "domination", and in Dio it is fundamentally negative and often used for personal, unofficial and unconstitutional power wielded or desired by powerful and overly ambitious politicians, characteristic especially of Dio's Late

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15 Zonar. 7.15. See also Cass. Dio F. 16.15.

16 Simons 2009, 77 briefly suggests that the negative view of the tribunes fits Dio's negative view of the people in general (e.g. Cass. Dio F. 19.1).

17 Zonar. 7.15. See also Cass. Dio F. 16.15. In this connection, Dio comments that because of the tribunes' internal dissension "most of their power was overthrown". However, this should not lead us to think that the tribunes ceased to be destructive, as Dio's characterisation of the office as δυναστεία and his subsequent narrative (see below) make abundantly clear.

Republic.[18] Consequently, it is striking that Dio connects the tribuneship as a magistracy to δυναστεία, and no other magistracies are connected to this concept in Dio's history. This functions as a highly forceful emphasis on the excessive power of the tribuneship. Dio comments that the δυναστεία of the tribuneship was συνέστη in this way, and Earnest Cary translated the latter sentence as "such was the origin of the power of the tribunes", which could be taken to imply that the δυναστεία of the tribunes only developed later. However, συνίστημι generally means to "combine", "put together" or "organise" and it therefore rather seems that the sentence is describing the fundamental characteristic of the tribuneship. In other words, Dio is connecting the highly negative δυναστεία to the tribuneship as an office rather than to individual tribunes, and this in fact recurs twice later in Dio's narrative.[19]

It is important to note that Dio's digression on the creation of the tribuneship is unique in the source tradition.[20] Firstly, the writers treating the emergence of the tribunes do so in much briefer fashion than Dio, as they generally simply mention the year of the first tribunes and their names. Secondly, and most importantly, these sources are consistently neutral or positive towards the creation of the tribuneship, as exemplified by Livy. He describes how the Senate sent Menenius Agrippa as their spokesman during the secession of the plebs: "Steps were then taken towards harmony (*concordia*), and a compromise (*concessumque*) was effected" for the creation of the tribunes who should "aid the people against the consuls."[21] Livy's narrative is permeated by conciliatory language: *concessus* and *concordia* were achieved, as the formation of the tribunes was a harmonious development where all agreed that the plebeians should have their own magistrates to defend them.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus likewise presents the creation of the tribuneship as a compromise between the patricians and the plebs. Brutus suggested that the tribunes should be sacred and inviolable, which "was approved of by all, and a law was drawn up by him and his colleagues".[22] Dionysius then asserts that the patricians passed a vote confirming the new magistracy and that the plebs asked the Senate permission to furnish the tribunes with assistants, a "concession (συγχώρημα)"[23] that was likewise granted. This is closely mirrored

18 However, δυναστεία was not limited to Dio's Late Republic: Lindholmer 2018a and below. On δυναστεία in Dio, see also Freyburger-Galland 1996; Kemezis 2014, 90–149.

19 Cass. Dio 36.38.3, 45.6.3.

20 As noted by Urso 2005, 53–77.

21 Livy 2.33.1.

22 D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 6.89.3.

23 D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 6.90.3.

in Plutarch: "A reconciliation (διηλλάγησαν) followed, after the people had asked (αἰτησάμενοι) and obtained from the Senate the privilege of electing five men as protectors of those who needed succour, the officers now called tribunes of the people."[24] Plutarch may be using Dionysius as a source here, but it is still significant that all three sources present a narrative characterised by reconciliation and collaboration and which portrays the tribunes as a necessary defence for the plebs.[25] Besides these writers, several other authors treat the creation of the tribuneship more briefly but no negative presentations of the office or its creation are included.[26] Lastly, it is worth noting that Polybius likewise never portrays the tribuneship as overly destructive or connected to δυναστεία but rather depicts the tribunes as a check on the Senate.[27]

This puts Dio's presentation in even sharper relief: while the parallel sources present the tribunes as a beneficial development and a salutary defence for the plebs, Dio views the tribuneship as destructive and connected to δυναστεία. Furthermore, the creation of the tribuneship was traditionally portrayed as a negotiated compromise ratified by the Senate and ensuring harmony, but Dio depicts it as a unilateral move by the plebs, which was not sanctioned by the Senate. Indeed, Dio in the digression underlines that the tribunes "did not immediately secure the title of magistrates". Likewise, whereas the people ask permission to elect assistants in Dionysius, Dio asserts that the tribunes "allowed themselves" a variety of new powers. This unilateral creation of a magistracy without ratification by the Senate may also explain why Dio connects it to δυναστεία: in Dio's eyes, the tribuneship was originally a usurped, extra-constitutional office that the plebs had created illegally.[28] Thus, Dio portrays the creation of the tribuneship highly negatively and consequently broke with a centuries-old tradition that viewed this magistracy and its creation positively. More broadly, this also constitutes a distinctive break with the historiographical tradition about the earlier Republic, seen in Livy and Dionysius, for example, which idealised this period as a contrast to the degraded Late Republic.

Importantly, Dio's highly negative digression on the tribunes is not an isolated attack on this magistracy but ties in with Dio's wider narrative of the Re-

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24 Plut. *Cor.* 7.1.

25 Dionysius as Plutarch's source: Urso 2005, 57.

26 Cic. *Rep.* 2.59; *Dig.* 1.2.2.20; D.S. 11.68.8. See also Cicero's *Pro Cornelio* and Asconius' commentary in Squires 1990, 116.

27 Plb. 6.16.4–5.

28 As pointed out by Simons 2009, 78, who thinks that this presentation is attributable to Dio's source. However, it rather seems to be part of an overarching, critical presentation of the tribunes throughout Dio's Republic.

public. For example, in Book 5, immediately following the digression on the tribunes in Book 4, Dio gives an example of problems caused by the excessive power of the tribunes: Coriolanus would not distribute grain to the people and therefore

> the tribunes, whose office he was especially eager to abolish, brought him to trial before the populace on a charge of aiming at tyranny and exiled him. It availed naught that all the senators cried out and expressed their indignation at the fact that the tribunes dared to pass such sentence upon their order.[29]

Consequently, in anger, Coriolanus went to the Volsci and ultimately led an army towards Rome. Dio's version is reasonably close to the longer narrative in Livy, Dionysius and Plutarch. However, Dio's preceding digression on the tribunes gives his narrative a decidedly different flavour: we are invited to read the exile of Coriolanus as an example of the excessive power of the tribunes which here overpowers the senators and results in a capable general leading an army against Rome. It is worth noting that in Livy, Dionysius and Plutarch, Coriolanus is at length presented as excessively bold and arrogant, and Livy adds that the Senate considered Coriolanus' "proposal too harsh (*atrox*)".[30] The tribunes' reaction is thus at least partly presented as understandable in these sources. Dio, on the other hand, merely notes that "Coriolanus had invariably shown contempt for the people".[31] Consequently, if the fragmentary state of his narrative does not deceive, it appears that Dio consciously chose to downplay Coriolanus' arrogance and thereby his culpability. This further supports the implicit presentation of the tribunes as excessively powerful.

The digression on the tribuneship also exhibits an important interconnectedness with the Late Republic: Dio includes several elements in the digression that appear decidedly late republican, such as his mention of patricians becoming plebeians to be eligible for the tribuneship.[32] Importantly, Dio emphasises that the destructive tribunes of the digression had not yet secured the title of magistrates, and the office itself is connected to δυναστεία, so the digression should not be read only as a late republican *prolepsis*.[33] However, by conjuring up the late republican tribunes in an early digression that presents the tribuneship

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29 Cass. Dio F. 18.5.
30 D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 7.21; Livy 2.35.1; Plut. *Cor.* 18.2–3.
31 Cass. Dio F. 18.5.
32 A noteworthy example of this was Clodius' transfer to plebeian status in 58. For further late republican elements, see Libourel 1968, 95; Urso 2005, 70, 74–77; Simons 2009, 75–76.
33 As argued also by Lindholmer 2018a, 585–586.

as fundamentally destructive, Dio primes the reader to understand the late republican tribunes as part of a wider republican problem.[34]

More specifically, for any reader with a rudimentary knowledge of Roman history, the digression would likely have conjured up the Gracchi brothers who were tribunes and who, in both modern and ancient accounts, were often seen as ushering in a new and far more volatile and violent period in republican history, plagued by internal dissensions.[35] Dio likewise highlights the severe disruption caused by these brothers, as exemplified by his comment on the rivalry between Tiberius Gracchus and his fellow tribune, Marcus Octavius:

> There was no semblance of moderation; but zealously vying (ἀντιφιλονεικοῦντες), as they did, each to prevail over the other rather than to benefit the state, they committed many acts of violence more appropriate in δυναστεία than in democracies (ὥσπερ ἐν δυναστείᾳ τινὶ ἀλλ᾽ οὐ δημοκρατίᾳ).[36]

Strikingly, Dio here connects the tribunes to δυναστεία, which mirrors the digression. Thus, the digression ties into this passage in a sophisticated intertextual relationship, highlighting that this was not an isolated problem connected to a couple of overzealous tribunes. Rather, through the repetition of δυναστεία, Dio is reminding his reader that Gracchus and Octavius are a manifestation of an institutional problem that was almost as old as the Republic itself, namely the inherent δυναστεία of the tribuneship.

An even more complex instance of this interconnection between the digression on the tribuneship and the narrative of the Late Republic comes in Book 36. This book narrates the period after the consulship of Crassus and Pompey in 70 during which they had reversed Sulla's reforms curtailing the power of the tribuneship.[37] Dio comments: "now that the δυναστεία of the tribunes had been restored to its ancient status, [...] a great many factions and cliques were being formed aiming at all the offices (ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἥ τε τῶν δημάρχων δυναστεία ἐς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἐπανεληλύθει [...] συστάσεις καὶ παρακελευσμοὶ παμπληθεῖς ἐφ᾽ ἁπάσαις ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἐγίγνοντο)."[38] Importantly, Dio here again connects the tribuneship to δυναστεία, a forceful and highly unusual choice, and στάσις, which would

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34 *Contra* Simons 2009, 78, who sees the late republican elements of the digression merely as a product of Dio's source.

35 See e.g. App. *B Civ.* 1.2; Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 20.1; Vell. Pat. 3.3.

36 Cass. Dio F. 83.4.

37 Steel 2013, 108–109, 117–120.

38 Cass. Dio 36.38.3. It could be thought that the "restoration" of the tribuneship to its previous status only refers to the period between the Gracchi and Sulla's reforms, but Dio's use of ἀρχαῖον and the parallels between this passage and the digression strongly suggest otherwise.

have evoked the original digression. The digression is further evoked by Dio's use of ἀρχαῖον about the δυναστεία of the tribunes. These factors remind the reader that the late republican tribunes were not problematic merely due to personal immorality, but were rather a manifestation of a wider institutional problem that originated in the Early Republic. Consequently, the passage also infuses the earlier Republic with meaning, as Dio is projecting the problem of destructive tribunes into this period, and he makes this explicit through ἀρχαῖον. This contributes to Dio's consistent rejection of the idealising tradition about the earlier Republic. It is worth noting that the inherent destructiveness of the tribunes is further underlined when Dio, in his narrative of the Triumviral Period, again characterises the power of the tribuneship as δυναστεία: he writes that Octavian wished to become tribune "to secure the δυναστεία that would result from it".[39]

However, the systemic problem of the excessively powerful tribuneship is not an abstract, theoretical issue for Dio. Rather, destructive tribunes play a key role in Dio's narrative of the fall of the Republic: for example, Aulus Gabinius as tribune introduced the *lex Gabinia*, an extraordinary command for Pompey to combat piracy, and Marianne Coudry in an excellent chapter has recently underlined that this was a "serious and irredeemable breach in the system of the traditional magistracies",[40] which played a central role in the fall of the Republic. Two other tribunes, Gaius Manilius and Gaius Trebonius, likewise forced through deeply problematic extraordinary commands, and Christopher Burden-Strevens has highlighted that such commands were key to the decline of Dio's Republic.[41] More widely, much of the violence and unrest of Dio's narrative of the Late Republic are caused by tribunes, such as Clodius and Milo.[42] Furthermore, in Book 37, Dio claims that the tribunes "were eager to overthrow completely the power (ἰσχὺν) and the dignity of the Senate"[43] and in 53 BC the tribunes caused the republican government to break down completely as they prevented magistrates from being chosen.[44]

Thus, Dio presents the tribunes as fundamentally problematic in the Late Republic, causing internal unrest and violence, and authoring extraordinary commands which set a destructive precedent. This picture is recognisable in

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39 Cass. Dio 45.6.3.
40 Coudry 2016, 44–45.
41 Burden-Strevens 2020, 252–275 sets out the problem of continuous office-holding, a problem which has the extraordinary commands at its core.
42 See e.g. Cass. Dio 39.35.5, 39.65.2 with Lindholmer 2019c.
43 Cass. Dio 37.26.2.
44 Cass. Dio 40.45.3.

other sources as well, but the digression on the tribuneship frames it in a distinctive way: the literary technique of the digression allows Dio at the very start of his republican narrative to underline, in his authorial voice, that the tribuneship in itself, rather than its temporary holders, was an inherently destructive and problematic element of the republican constitution. It was δυναστεία. This, in turn, frames the destructive tribunes of the Late Republic as a manifestation of a broader systemic problem that was present throughout the Republic, rather than as immoral individuals. More broadly, this constitutes a unique rejection of the idealisation of the earlier Republic. The presentation of the tribuneship as fundamentally destructive also implicitly presents the republican governmental form as inherently flawed, which left monarchy as the only viable solution. Thus, Dio presents a structural explanation of the fall of the Republic and this contrasts with the parallel sources which invariably present the Republic's fall as caused by immoral and ambitious individuals, such as Caesar and Pompey.[45] The digression on the tribunes plays a central role in communicating and strengthening this wider interpretation.

3 The dictatorship

The digression on the dictatorship is incorporated in Book 4, shortly before the digression on the tribunes, and exhibits many of the same characteristics as the latter.[46] During a war with the Latins, the people exploited the situation to demand a cancellation of debts and refused to fight. Dio comments:

> καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καινήν τινα ἀρχὴν ἐπ᾽ ἀμφοτέροις αὐτοῖς τότε πρῶτον οἱ δυνατοὶ κατεστήσαντο· δικτάτωρ ὁ ταύτης ἠξιωμένος ὠνόμαστο, ἠδύνατο δὲ πάντα ἐξ ἴσου τοῖς βασιλεῦσι. τὴν μὲν γὰρ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπωνυμίαν διὰ τοὺς Ταρκυνίους ἐμίσησαν, τὴν δ᾽ ἐκ τῆς μοναρχίας ὠφέλειαν θέλοντες, ὡς πολὺ ἰσχυούσης ἐς τὰς τῶν πολέμων καὶ τῶν στάσεων περιστάσεις, ἐν ἄλλῳ ταύτην ὀνόματι εἵλοντο. ἦν μὲν οὖν, ὡς εἴρηται, ἡ δικτατορία κατά γε τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῇ βασιλείᾳ ἰσόρροπος [...]. [...] οὔτ᾽ ἐγκαλέσαι τις αὐτῷ οὔτ᾽ ἐναντίον τι διαπράξασθαι ἴσχυεν, οὐδὲ οἱ δήμαρχοι, οὔτε δίκη ἐφέσιμος ἐγίνετο ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ. οὐκ ἐπὶ πλέον δὲ τῶν ἓξ μηνῶν ἢ τῆς δικτατορίας ἀρχὴ παρετείνετο, ἵνα μή τις αὐτῶν ἐν τοσούτῳ κράτει καὶ ἐξουσίᾳ ἀκράτῳ χρονίσας ὑπερφρονήσῃ καὶ πρὸς ἔρωτα μοναρχίας ἐκκυλισθῇ.

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45 Comparison of Dio and the parallel sources: Lindholmer 2019b. Structural explanation: see Introduction.

46 On the digression on the dictatorship, see Urso 2005, 43–53; Simons 2009, 65–69; Burden-Strevens 2020, 279–281. On the dictatorship in general, see e.g. Nicolet 2004.

ὅπερ ἐς ὕστερον καὶ ὁ Καῖσαρ Ἰούλιος ἔπαθεν, ἐπεὶ παρὰ τὰ νενομισμένα τῆς δικτατορίας ἠξίωτο.

Therefore the nobles then for the first time established a new office to have jurisdiction over both classes. Dictator was the name given to the man honoured with this position, and he possessed power equal in all respects to that of the kings. People hated the name of king on account of the Tarquins, but desiring the benefit to be derived from sole leadership, which seemed to exert a potent influence amid conditions of war and revolution, they chose it under another name. Hence the dictatorship was, as has been said, so far as its authority went, equivalent to the kingship, [...]. No one, not even the tribunes, had the power to make any complaint against him or to take any action hostile against him, and no appeal could be taken from him. The office of dictator extended for a period of not more than six months, in order that no such official by lingering on in the midst of so great power and unhampered authority should become haughty and be carried away by a passion for monarchy. This was what happened later to Julius Caesar, when, contrary to lawful precedent, he had been adjudged worthy of the dictatorship.[47]

It is noteworthy that Dio presents the dictatorship as essentially monarchic rule and that he asserts that the Romans desired the benefits of this kind of government. This presentation of the dictatorship ties into several broader interpretative points, such as Dio's strong preference for monarchy over the Republic.[48] For example, at the critical juncture of Caesar's death, he observes that δημοκρατία (his word for the Republic) "has a fair-appearing name [...] but its results are seen not to agree at all with its title. Monarchy, on the contrary, has an unpleasant sound, but is a most practical form of government to live under."[49] The digression, then, allows Dio to underline the benefits of monarchy in his authorial voice early on in his narrative, and this is in fact the first time that this theme is highlighted in Dio's (surviving) history. The fact that Dio portrays monarchy favourably may be seen as unsurprising for a third-century writer, and there was of course no real constitutional alternative in this period. However, it is worth noting that Tacitus, for example, can still present the Roman monarchy negatively, as a contrast to Republican freedom, and the view of Tacitus as a "Republican" has recently received renewed support from Thomas Strunk.[50]

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47 Zonar. 7.13.

48 Simons 2009, 65 also notes Dio's focus on monarchy in the digression, but explains it partly as owing to Dio's source.

49 Cass. Dio 44.2.1. A few works asserted that Dio was in fact a Republican: Ferwer 1878; Berrigan 1968; Fechner 1986. Freyburger-Gallan 1996, 26–27 briefly supports them. However, Dio's preference for monarchy is clear from passages such as this, and has been highlighted in much recent research: e.g. Madsen 2016; Lindholmer 2019a; Madsen 2020; Burden-Strevens 2020.

50 See e.g. Tac. *Ann.* 1.1–2 where he portrays Augustus' rule as a form of slavery. Strunk 2017.

It is important to note, as Christopher Burden-Strevens has recently set out in an excellent study of Dio's speeches and the Republic, that this presentation of the dictatorship deviates from the common source tradition. Livy emphasizes the terror inspired by the dictatorship in the plebs and, while Dionysius likewise views the dictatorship as a form of temporary sole-rule, he likens it not to monarchy but to its degenerate form, namely tyranny.[51] Thus, Livy and especially Dionysius framed the dictatorship rather negatively, whereas Dio emphasised its benefits and the necessity of being able to resort to monarchy temporarily. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Dio is not merely portraying monarchy as beneficial against the background of late Republican internal unrest and civil war. Rather, his presentation suggests that temporary monarchy in the shape of the dictatorship was beneficial, indeed necessary, already in the normally idealised Early Republic, which further supports Dio's rejection of the common idealisation of this period. Given the inherent capacity of the tribuneship for στάσις and δυναστεία, it is arguably not surprising that a (temporary) monarchic element was needed to sometimes counterbalance the deleterious effects of this office. Indeed, Dio makes a point in his digression on the dictatorship of emphasising that "no one, not even the tribunes, had the power to make any complaint against him or to take any action hostile against him". Likewise, in the digression on the tribunes, Dio asserts they had the power to save people "from the very magistrates, except the dictators."[52]

The importance of the monarchic qualities of the dictatorship, highlighted in Dio's digression, is indicated throughout Dio's republican narrative, where he includes several examples of the stabilising effects of the dictatorship: in Book 6, Dio writes of a famine which resulted in στάσις (ἐστασίασαν),[53] and Spurius Maelius, a wealthy equestrian, exploited the famine, ingratiating himself with the populace and aiming to become tyrant. However, Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus was named dictator and Maelius was shortly hereafter dead. Likewise, Dio narrates the well-known story of how Fabius refused to engage Hannibal in battle, and therefore the Romans gave "equal power to his master of horse, so that both held command simultaneously and on an equal footing (τῷ δὲ ἱππάρχῳ τὴν αὐτὴν

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51 D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 5.73–77; Livy 2.18 with Burden-Strevens 2020, 277–281. See also Kalyvas 2007 who highlights the negative view of the dictatorship in the literature of the Late Republic and early Principate. Dio's presentation is instead closest to Cicero's in *De Re Publica* who also presents the dictatorship as a way in which the Romans could achieve the benefits of monarchy on a temporary basis: Cic. *Rep.* 2.56 with Burden-Strevens 2020, 181.

52 Zonar. 7.15.

53 Zonar. 7.20.

οἱ ἐξουσίαν ἔδωκαν, ὥστ᾽ ἀμφοτέρους ἅμα ἀπὸ τῆς ἴσης ἄρχειν)".[54] This resulted in a Roman defeat at the Battle of Geronium. In these two examples, Dio is generally following the historiographical tradition of Polybius, Livy and Dionysius.[55]

However, Dio's digression on the dictatorship, with its emphasis on the benefits of monarchy, sheds a different light on these stories: in Polybius, Livy and Dionysius, Maelius is merely an excessively ambitious individual and Rufus an impetuous youth, while Cincinnatus and Camillus are idealised counter-parts. In Dio, by contrast, the digression serves to frame these dictators as examples of how Rome needed to resort to monarchy occasionally. More specifically, the first story provides an example of how effective the dictatorship could be against στάσις and the threat of tyranny, while the second exemplifies the disastrous consequences when the monarchic character of the dictatorship was undermined, through Rufus' elevation to equality with the dictator. However, Dio also occasionally deviated from the source tradition to emphasise the importance of the dictatorship: in Book 7, Dio writes that Manlius Capitolinus with his followers took possession of the Capitol (that is, an open revolt), which necessitated the election of Camillus as dictator. Hereafter, the dictator swiftly rectified the situation and Capitolinus was sentenced to death.[56] This strongly contrasts with the parallel sources, where no seizure of the Capitol is mentioned and, more importantly, Camillus is never portrayed as dictator.[57] Dio thus arguably broke with the source tradition here in order to emphasise the utility of the dictatorship.

The digression on the dictatorship also ties in with Dio's Late Republic and the transition to monarchy: Christopher Burden-Strevens has recently underlined that the dictatorship became unworkable in the Late Republic, partly due to the reputational damage that this magistracy suffered under Sulla and partly due to the size of the late republican empire.[58] This is highlighted in Catulus' speech on the aforementioned *lex Gabinia*: Catulus suggests that a dictator should be appointed to combat Rome's piracy problem but his suggestion is deliberately non-sensical since the geographical and temporal limits on the dictatorship made the office exceptionally ill-suited for this purpose.[59] This necessitated the extraordinary command proposed by the *lex Gabinia*, which

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54 Cass. Dio F. 57.16.

55 D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 12.1–5; Livy 4.13–15, 22.25–27; Plb. 3.103.3. See, however, Libourel 1968, 140–143 for deviations in Dio's story of Maelius.

56 Cass. Dio F. 26.1; Zonar. 7.23.

57 Livy 6.18–20; Plut. *Cam.* 36 with Libourel 1974, 390–391.

58 Burden-Strevens 2020, 275–300.

59 As argued by Burden-Strevens 2020, 282–286.

was a highly problematic and destructive precedent, as mentioned above. However, the digression on the dictatorship, with its emphasis on the many benefits of this magistracy, plays a key role in bringing out the wider importance of the failure of the dictatorship. The digression highlights that monarchy was beneficial for the functioning of Rome and once the momentary monarchy of the republican dictatorship was unavailable, it was only natural that a "perpetual monarchy" was needed in place of the Republic.

Lastly, the digression on the dictatorship also introduces the problem of prolonged periods of command, which in Dio's eyes corrupted leading politicians and caused them to aim for sole rule. For example, Dio asserts that Caesar limited the terms of propraetors and proconsuls "since it was by ruling the Gauls for many years in succession that he himself had conceived a greater desire for dominion (δυναστείας)".[60] The issue of prolonged commands was a key problem in Dio's Late Republic and it has recently been treated in-depth, so there is no need to explore it in detail here.[61] However, what is worth underlining is that it is not in Dio's Late Republic, as hitherto thought,[62] but in Dio's digression on the dictatorship that we are first presented with an explicit emphasis of this problem:

> The office of dictator extended for a period of not more than six months, in order that no such official by lingering on in the midst of so great power and unhampered authority should become haughty and be carried away by a passion for monarchy. This was what happened later to Julius Caesar.

Thus, the digression on the dictatorship functions as a programmatic presentation of a key problem of Dio's Republic, namely the corrupting influence of continuous commands, and, through the *prolepsis* to Caesar, Dio is already here priming his reader to view this factor as key for Caesar's march on Rome, the ensuing civil wars and, ultimately, the fall of the Republic.

Thus, just like the digression on the tribuneship, the digression on the dictatorship functions on numerous levels: it highlights the superiority of monarchy, and it contributes to rejecting the common idealisation of the earlier Republic. Furthermore, it also allows Dio to alert the reader to key problems, namely the uselessness of the dictatorship in the Late Republic and the corrupting influence of continuous commands. Importantly, just like the inherent destructiveness of

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60 Cass. Dio 43.25.3.

61 Burden-Strevens 2020, 252–275. See also Coudry 2016.

62 Burden-Strevens 2020, 260 asserted that Catulus' speech contains Dio's first treatment of "the problem of prolonged personal power under the Republic".

the tribuneship, these problems did not centre on a few immoral individuals but were rather structural, institutional problems that made the Republic fundamentally unworkable and monarchy necessary in Dio's eyes.

4 The quaestorship

Before the two long digressions on the dictatorship and the tribuneship, Dio also includes a shorter digression on the quaestorship in Book 4.[63] It begins with a noteworthy reason for the creation of the quaestorship:

> τὴν τῶν χρημάτων διοίκησιν ἄλλοις ἀπένειμεν, ἵνα μὴ τούτων ἐγκρατεῖς ὄντες οἱ ὑπατεύοντες μέγα δύνωνται. ὅτε πρῶτον οἱ ταμίαι γίνεσθαι ἤρξαντο· κοιαίστωρας δ᾽ ἐκάλουν αὐτούς

> The management of the funds he [Publicola] assigned to others in order that the men holding the consulship might not possess the great influence that would spring from their having the revenues in their power. Now for the first time treasurers began to be appointed, and they called them quaestors.[64]

Thus, Dio is asserting that the quaestors were created to curtail the power of the consuls. Essentially, Dio indicates that access to large amounts of money for the leading men would be destructive for the state.

Importantly, this is unique in the source tradition.[65] Livy and Dionysius do not treat the formation of the quaestorship, whereas Tacitus, Pomponius and Ulpian mention nothing about curtailing the influence of the consuls.[66] Plutarch is the only source who approximates Dio as he writes that Publicola, when the populace had to contribute money to a war, refused to receive the money himself or allow his friends to do it and therefore created the quaestors.[67] However, Dio's version is fundamentally different: Plutarch is narrating a specific historical episode, whereas Dio emphasises the excessive power that would spring from access to vast wealth as a general issue. That this issue had to be addressed even

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63 See Urso 2005, 37–43; Simons 2009, 40–45. On the quaestorship more generally, see Pina Polo and Díaz Fernández 2019.

64 Zonar. 7.13.

65 On the distinctiveness of Dio's digression see: Urso 2005, 37–43.

66 *Dig.* 1.2.2.22–23; Tac. *Ann.* 11.22.47; Ulp. *Dig.* 1.13 with Urso 2005, 42–43.

67 Plut. *Publ.* 12.2.

in Dio's Early Republic, and not just in the corrupted Late Republic, fits Dio's wider rejection of the common idealisation of this period.

At the same time, it ties into a key problem of the Late Republic, namely the excessive wealth wielded by the leading politicians. For example, in Book 39, Dio narrates at length how Ptolemy, the former king of Egypt, petitioned the Romans to restore him, which the Senate, in conformity with the Sibylline oracle, declined.[68] However, Pompey and Gabinius, who was governor of Syria, restored Ptolemy regardless, and Dio comments that "so much power had δυναστεῖαι and abundant wealth as against the decrees of both the people and the Senate [...] (τοσοῦτον γὰρ αἵ τε δυναστεῖαι καὶ αἱ τῶν χρημάτων περιουσίαι καὶ παρὰ τὰ ψηφίσματα τά τε τοῦ δήμου καὶ τὰ τῆς βουλῆς ἴσχυσαν [...])".[69] Dio here underlines that the δυναστεία of Pompey and Gabinius, in connection with their exceptional wealth, essentially made the constitutional framework of the SPQR powerless. It is also noteworthy that he connects abundant wealth with δυναστεία, which makes sense since the wealth allowed ambitious politicians to sidestep the constitutional strictures and acquire power independently of offices.

The power to be derived from wealth is likewise highlighted by Dio upon Pompey's return from the East in Book 37: Dio asserts that Pompey could have taken power in Rome since "he had enormous power both on sea and on land; he had supplied himself with vast wealth from the captives; he had made numerous potentates and kings his friends; and he had kept practically all the communities which he ruled well-disposed through benefits conferred".[70] Thus, Dio is presenting wealth, along with military power and allies, as one of the three key ingredients to bring down the Republic. Indeed, wealth could be used to acquire military power, as Dio underlines when his Crassus is described as pitying those who "could not support an enrolled legion from their own means".[71] Likewise, wealth was key to securing strong allies and support from the people, as realised by Dio's Caesar who "exhibited both the Ludi Romani and the Megalenses on the most expensive scale and furthermore arranged gladiatorial contests in his father's honour in the most magnificent manner."[72]

Dio thus presents wealth as key to excessive power, to δυναστεία, and the increased wealth of the Late Republic thereby lay at the heart of the instability of this period. It fuelled destructive competition that would eventually bring

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[68] Cass. Dio 39.12–16. On this episode, see recently Lindholmer 2019c, 483–485.

[69] Cass. Dio 39.55.3.

[70] Cass. Dio 37.20.4.

[71] Cass. Dio 40.27.3.

[72] Cass. Dio 37.8.1.

down the Republic, as exemplified by the severe problem of bribery in the Late Republic which I have explored elsewhere.[73] However, the key in this context is that the digression on the quaestorship contains Dio's first emphasis on the problem of excessive wealth in the hands of Rome's leading politicians. Importantly, Dio's Publicola is not worried about specific individuals but the future holders of the consulship in general, and the digression presents excessive wealth as a threat already in the Early Republic. This shows that the destructive role of excessive wealth in Dio's Late Republic is not merely due to immoral individuals but was a structural threat that was as old as the Republic itself. However, there was a key difference between the Early and Late Republic: in the former period, Publicola could create quaestors and thereby curtail the elite's access to excessive wealth, whereas the leading individuals of the Late Republic personally possessed vast wealth, often due to commands and the expansion of the Empire. Consequently, the excessive wealth of individuals was a structural problem in the Late Republic that simply could not be solved, and Dio thus again presents the Republic as beset by systemic faults and as inherently unworkable.

5 The censorship

Dio has thus used the literary technique of the digression extensively in Book 4 in order to set out in programmatic fashion key characteristics and weaknesses of the Republic. Book 5 is focused on the dissensions between the patricians and plebeians, which leads to the formation of consular tribunes at the start of Book 6, although Dio does not devote a digression to these magistrates. Hereafter, Dio notes that two censors were chosen to alleviate the consuls of some of their official duties, and then comments:

> ἐγένοντο τῶν ὑπάτων μείζους, καίτοι μέρος τῆς ἐκείνων λαβόντες ἀρχῆς. ἐξῆν δὲ αὐτοῖς τάς τε προσόδους τὰς κοινὰς ἐκμισθοῦν, καὶ τῶν ὁδῶν καὶ τῶν δημοσίων οἰκοδομημάτων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, καὶ τὰς ἀπογραφὰς τῆς ἑκάστου εὐπορίας διατελεῖν, καὶ τὸν βίον τῶν πολιτῶν ἐπισκοπεῖν τε καὶ ἐξετάζειν, καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἀξίους ἐπαίνου ἐς τὰς φυλὰς καὶ ἐς τὴν ἱππάδα καὶ ἐς τὴν γερουσίαν ἐγγράφειν, καθὼς ἑκάστοις προσήκειν ἐνομίζετο, τοὺς δ᾽ οὐκ εὖ βιοῦντας ἁπανταχόθεν ὁμοίως ἀπαλείφειν· ὃ μεῖζον πάντων ἦν τῶν τοῖς ὑπάτοις καταλειφθέντων. πίστεις δ᾽ ἐνόρκους ἐφ᾽ ἑκάστῳ πεποίηντο ὡς οὔτε πρὸς χάριν οὔτε πρὸς ἔχθραν τι ποιοῦσιν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐξ ὀρθῆς γνώμης τὰ συμφέροντα τῷ κοινῷ καὶ σκοποῦσι καὶ πράττουσι. καὶ τὸν δῆμον ἐπί τε νόμων εἰσφοραῖς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις συνήθροιζον, καὶ τῷ τῶν μειζόνων ἀρχῶν κόσμῳ πλὴν ῥαβδούχων ἐχρῶντο. τοιαύτη ἡ τῶν τιμητῶν ὑπῆρχεν ἀρχή.

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73 Lindholmer 2019c, 483–485.

τῶν μέντοι μὴ ἀπογραψαμένων τὰς οὐσίας ἐν ταῖς ἀπογραφαῖς καὶ ἑαυτούς, τὰς μὲν οὐσίας οἱ τιμηταί, αὐτοὺς δ᾽ ἐκείνους οἱ ὕπατοι ἐπίπρασκον. χρόνῳ μὲν οὖν τινι ταῦθ᾽ οὕτως ἐπράχθη, ὕστερον δὲ τὸν ἅπαξ τῇ βουλῇ καταλεχθέντα διὰ βίου βουλεύειν ἔδοξε, μηδ᾽ ἀπαλείφεσθαι, εἰ μή τις ἀδικήσας καὶ κριθεὶς ἠτίμωτο ἢ κακῶς ζῶν ἠλέγχθη·

> They came to be greater than the consuls, though they had taken over only a part of the authority of the latter. They had the right to let the public revenues, to supervise roads and public buildings, to make complete records of each man's wealth, and to note and investigate the lives of the citizens, enrolling those deserving of praise in the tribes, in the equestrian order, or in the Senate, as seemed to fit the case of each one, and similarly erasing from any class the names of those whose lives were evil; this power was greater than any left to the consuls. They made declarations attested by oath, in regard to every one of their acts, that no such act was prompted by favour or by enmity, but that their deliberations and acts were both the result of their unbiased opinion of what was advantageous for the commonwealth. They convened the people when laws were to be introduced and for other purposes, and employed all the insignia of the greater offices save lictors. Such was the office of the censors. If any persons did not have their property and themselves registered in the census lists, the censors sold the property and the consuls the men. This arrangement held for a time, but later it was determined that a man once enrolled in the Senate should be a senator for life, and that his name should not be erased, unless he had been convicted of some crime and been deprived of his citizenship, or had been shown to be leading an evil life.[74]

Only Livy includes a comparably long digression on the censors and it overlaps with Dio: he also presents the creation of the censorship as a consequence of the consuls being overburdened, he also gives a long list of the censors' various powers and he also underlines their wide powers.[75]

However, Dio includes two noteworthy divergences from Livy: firstly, Dio repeatedly emphasises that the censors were even more powerful than the consuls, and he thereby forcefully underlines their importance. Secondly, Dio notes that "later it was determined that a man once enrolled in the Senate should be a senator for life", which curtailed the censors' ultimate authority over the senatorial list. As Gianpaolo Urso has argued, it seems likely that Dio is here referring to Clodius' *lex Clodia de censoribus* from 58, which Dio indeed mentions in Book 38: "He also forbade the censors to remove anybody from any order or to censure anyone, except as he should be tried and convicted before them both (τοῖς τε τιμηταῖς ἀπηγόρευσε μήτ᾽ ἀπαλείφειν ἔκ τινος τέλους μήτ᾽ ἀτιμάζειν μηδένα, χωρὶς ἢ εἴ τις παρ᾽ ἀμφοτέροις σφίσι κριθεὶς ἀλοίη)."[76] Importantly,

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74 Zonar. 7.19. On this digression, see Urso 2005, 136–155; Simons 2009, 101–108. On the censorship, see e.g. Suolahti 1963.

75 Livy 4.8. See also the brief note in *Dig.* 1.2.2.17.

76 Cass. Dio 38.13.2.

there are several clear verbal parallels with the final part of the digression on the censorship, as Dio uses ἀπαλείφειν, ἀτιμάζειν and κρινεῖν in both.[77] Thus, Dio's digression on the censorship appears to contain a reference to developments in the Late Republic.

It is important to note that the reference to the *lex Clodia* is unique to Dio, which suggests that he deliberately chose to insert it and is not merely following tradition.[78] The late republican reference would have primed the reader to examine how the digression on the censorship tied into Dio's republican narrative in general, and the key significance of the digression arguably lies in its contrast with the Late Republic. Essentially, we can read the digression as a programmatic statement on how the censorship *ought* to function, which contrasts starkly with the actual functioning of this magistracy in the Late Republic: a central problem in Dio's Late Republic, as I have set out elsewhere, was the constant, egoistic political competition, not just of the leading politicians such as Caesar or Pompey, but of the Roman elite in general.[79] In fact, Dio comments that "no man of that day took part in public life from pure motives and free from any desire of personal gain except Cato."[80] Importantly, this problem cannot be solved by the censors expelling senators from the *ordo* since the censorship essentially ceases to work in Dio's Late Republic. For example, in Book 37 the censors disputed with each other regarding the inhabitants beyond the Po River and consequently,

> did not even perform any of their other duties, but resigned their office. And for the same reason their successors, too, did nothing in the following year, inasmuch as the tribunes hindered them in regard to the senatorial list, fearing that they themselves might be expelled from that body.[81]

Dio's long list of censorial duties in his digression underlines how problematic it was that these duties were not undertaken. More importantly, the censors are inhibited from expelling destructive senators, partly due to the tribunes, which is another emphasis on how the tribuneship undermined the proper functioning of the Republic. This problem reappears with the abovementioned *lex Clodia* in Book 38 which likewise undermined the censors' ability to expel senators from

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77 Urso 2005, 153: "mi pare che lasci pochi dubbi: Dione, nell'*excursus*, si riferisce alla *lex Clodia* del 58".

78 See also Urso 2005, 154–155 who examines Dio's source for the passage.

79 See e.g. Lindholmer 2019a; 2019b; 2019c.

80 Cass. Dio 37.57.3.

81 Cass. Dio 37.9.3–4.

the *ordo*, and it is important to note that Clodius is a tribune at this point. Dio thus repeatedly presents the tribunes as undermining the intended functioning of the censors in a period where a censorial purge of the senatorial body was sorely needed.

As mentioned above, Clodius' law was in fact abolished by Scipio in 52, which is also noted by Dio. He comments:

> It looked as though he [Scipio] had done this out of favour to them [the censors], since he had restored to them the authority (ἐξουσίαν) which they formerly had; but it turned out to be the opposite. For in view of the fact that there were many unworthy men both in the equestrian and in the senatorial orders, so long as it had not been permitted them to expel anyone who had been either accused or convicted, no fault was found with them on account of those whose names were not expunged. But when they got back their old power (ἀρχαίαν ἰσχύν) and were allowed to do this on their own authority after examining into the life of each man, they had not the hardihood to come to an open break with many, nor had they, on the other hand, any desire to incur censure for failing to expel men who were unfit to retain their rank, and for this reason no sensible person had any desire for the office any longer (οὔτ' αὖ ἐν μέμψει τινὶ ὡς μὴ διαγράφοντες τοὺς οὐκ ἐπιτηδείους γίγνεσθαι ἤθελον, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐδὲ ἐφίετο ἔτι τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν ἐμφρόνων οὐδὲ εἷς).[82]

This is a highly significant passage: it is placed at the very end of Book 40, the last book before Caesar crosses the Rubicon, and until this point Dio had given the impression that the censorship was not working because of the opposition of destructive tribunes, those wielders of δυναστεία. However, this passage highlights that the censorship in itself had become unworkable: essentially, the senatorial order was in dire need of a thorough censorial purge but the elite was so corrupt and unworthy that the censors' task of expelling unfit senators was highly unattractive. At the same time, since only Cato took part in politics for unselfish reasons according to Dio, it is not surprising that no censors could be found who would willingly incur the wrath of their peers due to mass-expulsions. Dio thus presents a picture where the corruption of the elite in general had rendered the censorship thoroughly unworkable. In other words, the failure of the censorship was not caused by disgraceful, individual censors or overly powerful individuals. Rather, the censorship as an office was fundamentally malfunctioning due to the systemic corruption of the elite.

The digression plays a key role in highlighting the problems surrounding the censors: it provides an idealised contrast to the Late Republic, outlining how the censorship ought to work, how the censors ought to expel unworthy senators and only do what "was advantageous for the commonwealth". The

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82 Cass. Dio 40.57.

censors of the Late Republic, who refused to expel senators in order to avoid repercussions, obviously fall far short of this. The use of a digression to create this contrast with the Late Republic is ingenious: if Dio had included a long series of highly idealised censors in his earlier Republic, it would have undermined his frequent rejection of the idealising tradition surrounding this period. Dio's narrative of the Early and Mid-Republic is of course highly epitomised but it is still noteworthy that Dio only mentions censors on three occasions in the remains of his first 21 books: he includes one clearly idealising story of how Fabricius and Papus expelled Rufinus because "he had in his possession a silver plate of ten pounds' weight";[83] he mentions that soldiers released by Hannibal were disenfranchised by the censors; and he tells the story of the censors Livius and Nero who "deprived each other of their horses and made each other *aerarii*".[84] Thus, as far as we can see from Dio's surviving narrative, he did not have numerous virtuous censors in the earlier Republic as a contrast to the Late Republic. Instead, Dio's timeless digression, explaining how the censorship ought to work, functions as an ideal contrast highlighting the problems of the Late Republic without undermining Dio's rejection of the idealisation of the earlier Republic.

Dio's digression also adds one further, and crucial, element, which heightens the importance of the malfunctioning censorship: uniquely in the source tradition, Dio asserts, twice, that the censors were even more powerful than the consuls. To understand the significance of the repeated comparison with the consuls it is important to remember that the consuls were viewed essentially as having inherited the power of the kings, both in Dio and in the historiographical tradition: for example, Polybius, in his famous tripartite view of the Roman constitution, identifies the consuls as the monarchic element.[85] A similar perspective is evident in Cicero's *De Republica* where he writes that the consulship "was truly regal in general character and in legal sanction (*genere ipso ac iure regiam*)",[86] a viewpoint he repeats in his *De Legibus*.[87] Likewise, there are numerous instances of the consulship being characterised as a royal power in Livy, Dionysius and Valerius Maximus.[88] Dio seems to follow this tradition, as he writes that the Romans chose Brutus, the first consul, as "ruler" (αὐτὸν εἵλοντο

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83 Zonar. 8.6.

84 Cass. Dio F. 57.71. Soldiers disenfranchised: Zonar. 9.2.

85 Plb. 6.11.12, 6.12.9.

86 Cic. *Rep*. 2.56.

87 Cic. *Leg*. 3.8.

88 D.H. *Ant. Rom*. 4.76.1, 4.84.5, 5.1.2, 7.35.5; Livy 2.1.7, 8.32.3; Val. Max. 4.1.1.

ἄρχοντα) after the expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus. One would expect Dio to use ὕπατος (consul) here but instead he uses ἄρχων which was likewise used to describe the rule of the kings.[89] Urso rightly concludes that, in Dio, "il potere dei primi magistrati riprende sostanzialmente in forma collegiale i poteri dei re."[90]

Traditionally, the tribunes were portrayed as the key foil to the consuls' monarchical power, as exemplified in the passage from Livy quoted above: the tribunes should "aid the people against the consuls."[91] Likewise, in Polybius' tripartite governmental view, the tribunes, as representatives of the democratic element of the people, are supposed to balance the monarchic element of the consuls.[92] However, Dio offers a fundamentally different and highly innovative view of the Roman Republic: as we have seen, the tribuneship in Dio is a thoroughly deleterious force, connected to δυναστεία, and could therefore not perform the positive balancing role it has in the parallel sources. In his digression on the quaestorship, Dio had already highlighted the dangers posed by the consuls and the need for other offices to curtail their power, as he, uniquely, asserted that the quaestors were in charge of the treasury to avoid giving the consuls access to excessive wealth. Dio's insistence that the censors were more powerful than even the consuls, which is again unique in the source tradition, may be read along the same lines. In other words, Dio arguably saw the censorship as occupying the role normally ascribed to the tribuneship, namely to act as a counterweight against the consuls' monarchical power. Against this background, the censorship would, if functioning correctly, also have been suitable for countering Caesar, Pompey and other overly ambitious politicians. The censors, not the tribunes, were supposed to be the key bulwark against monarchy.

This adds a whole new layer to the malfunctioning of the censorship in the Late Republic: it did not merely preclude the censors from performing the administrative duties outlined in the digression and from expelling unworthy senators. For Dio, the malfunctioning of the censorship also removed a fundamental barrier to destructively ambitious individuals with an eye for sole power. For example, we see how Rufinus was expelled from the Senate when his wealth was judged to have become excessive. Had the censorship functioned efficiently in Dio's Late Republic, destructive politicians could have been expelled from

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89 We are of course here dependent on Zonaras' epitome, but it is extremely unlikely that the use of ἄρχων instead of the common ὕπατος is due to him, as argued by Urso 2005, 15–16. Use of ἄρχων and derivatives in the regal period: Cass. Dio FF. 5.12 and 6.5; Zonar. 7.3.

90 Urso 2005, 17.

91 Livy 2.33.1. See also D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 6.89–90; Plb. 6.16.4–5.

92 Plb. 6.16.4–5, 6.11.11–13.

the Senate and their power lessened. Furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere, a key problem in Dio's Late Republic was that ambitious politicians, such as Pompey and Caesar, consistently employed unconstitutional tools such as bribery and violence to achieve influence and power.[93] In Dio's eyes, the censorship was the most powerful office in the Republic and the unworkability of this office therefore removed the most powerful constitutional weapon in the arsenal of the defenders of the Republic. It is unsurprising, then, that the opponents of the first triumvirate, who refused to break constitutional restrictions, are consistently impotent in Dio's narrative.[94]

This is not to say that Dio saw the ills of the Republic as caused exclusively by the malfunctioning of the censorship or that this office could have saved the Republic on its own if it had functioned properly. Rather, Dio's emphasis on the importance of the censorship and on its late republican breakdown constitutes yet another element in Dio's structural explanation where the dysfunctionality of various offices (the censorship, the dictatorship and the tribuneship) played a key role in the fall of the Republic. These institutional problems could only be solved with the advent of monarchy: it is instructive that Caesar in 44, when he was *de facto* sole ruler of Rome, also took the title of sole censor for life in Dio's narrative and, after Caesar's assassination cut short his censorial ambitions, Augustus is portrayed as finally purging the Senate as the censors of the 60s and 50s should have done.[95] Essentially, then, Dio presents a narrative where the censorship is simply unworkable in the Late Republic for structural reasons but its powers are then "revived" in their proper form with the advent of monarchy. Indeed, within the logic of Dio's narrative, it was only natural that the Republic would break down and become a monarchy when the most powerful office and key counterweight to the "monarchic" forces in the Republic was removed from the equation.

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93 Lindholmer 2019c, 480–485.
94 As explored in Lindholmer 2019c, 489–495.
95 Cass. Dio 44.5.3, 52.42.1.

6 The triumph

Aside from Dio's digressions on various magistracies, he also includes a long digression on the triumph.[96] It has recently been analysed in-depth by Carsten Lange and I will therefore not explore it at length here.[97] However, it is worth briefly lingering on this digression, since it exhibits several parallels with the digressions on the magistracies and further underlines Dio's sophisticated use of digressions in his republican narrative. It comes in Book 6, just after the digression on the censorship, and consists of a long description of the details of the triumph. Dio then comments: "Such were the triumphs in olden times; but factions and δυναστεῖαι effected many changes in them (τοιαῦτα μὲν ἦσαν πάλαι τὰ νικητήρια· αἱ δὲ στάσεις αἵ τε δυναστεῖαι πλεῖστα ἐνεωτέρισαν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς)."[98] The use of a *prolepsis* to invest the digression with wider importance closely mirrors the other digressions. As pointed out by Lange, the mention of στάσεις and δυναστεῖαι would have conjured up the Late Republic for most readers, and we do indeed see several late republican triumphs deviating from the model set out in the digression.[99] For example, Dio's Pompey "celebrated a triumph, contrary to custom",[100] which probably refers to the fact that Pompey was the first equestrian to celebrate a triumph. Likewise, Gaius Pomptinus' triumph was granted through a secret meeting before dawn, "in spite of the fact that it is not permitted by law for any business to be brought before the people before the first hour".[101]

The digression adds further meaning to these instances of problematic triumphs and disrespect for precedent: by underlining that later changes to the traditional triumph were the result of στάσεις and δυναστεῖαι, the digression highlights that they should not be viewed in isolation as the consequence of overly ambitious individuals. In other words, it was the general corruption of politics that was at fault and Dio's digression thus frames the untraditional triumphs of the Late Republic as manifestations of a broader structural problem. This fits excellently with the other digressions which likewise function as tools for Dio to highlight various structural problems of the Republic.

However, we should not be too quick to assume that the στάσεις, δυναστεῖαι and their changes to the model triumph only happened in the Late Republic. For

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96 On the triumph, see e.g. Itgenshorst 2005; Bastien 2007; Lange 2016b.
97 Lange 2016a.
98 Zonar. 7.21.
99 Lange 2016, 96.
100 Cass. Dio 36.25.3.
101 Cass. Dio 39.65.2. See also Cass. Dio 37.21.1.

example, the tribunes are fundamentally connected to both στάσις and especially δυναστεία in Dio, as shown above, and I have argued elsewhere that δυναστεία was part of Dio's earlier Republic as well.[102] Consequently, στάσεις and δυναστεῖαι could have effected changes in the triumph before the Late Republic as well. In fact, although only ten instances of triumphs occur in Dio's earlier Republic, probably because Zonaras rarely included them, and although these mentions are often very short, two clearly violate the rules set out in Dio's digression.[103] In Book 5, the patricians and the Senate are displeased with the consuls "whom they regarded as favourable to the popular case, and so did not vote a triumph for them, though each had won a war, nor assign to each a day as had been the custom. The populace, however, both held a festival for two days and voted a triumph to the consuls."[104] This completely contravenes the rules set out in Dio's digression on the triumph: "On arriving home he [the conquering general] would assemble the Senate and ask to have the triumph voted him. And if he obtained a vote from the Senate and from the people, his title of imperator was confirmed." Thus, Dio presents it as key to a legitimate triumph that the Senate bestowed this honour, which is violated here.[105]

This violation is repeated in Book 12 (during the year 223): the consuls Furius and Flaminius are called home by the Senate but linger to finish a war that had started well. They incur the Senate's ire "but the populace (τὸ δὲ πλῆθος), in its zeal for Flaminius, opposed the Senate and voted them a triumph. After celebrating this the consuls laid down their office."[106] Importantly, this is in sharp contrast to the parallel sources: Polybius mentions no triumph and Livy only includes a very vague mention of some dissension between Flaminius and the Senate regarding the former's triumph. On the other hand, Plutarch gives a lengthy description:

> When he returned with much spoil, the people (ὁ δῆμος) would not go out to meet him, but because he had not at once listened to his summons, and had disobeyed the letters, treating them with insolent contempt, they came near refusing him his triumph, and after his triumph, they compelled him to renounce the consulship with his colleague, and made him a private citizen. To such a degree did the Romans make everything depend upon the will of the gods, and so intolerant were they of any neglect of omens and ancestral rites,

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102 Lindholmer 2018a.

103 The triumph at Cass. Dio F. 57.81 may also have violated precedent. Zonaras (at 9.15) does not mention this triumph, which exemplifies that many triumphs have likely been excised by the Byzantine epitomator: Lange 2016, 94.

104 Zonar. 7.19. Livy 3.63.8–11 agrees that the triumph was voted by the people.

105 Importance of the Senate in this context: Lange 2016, 98.

106 Zonar. 8.20.

even when attended by the greatest successes, considering it of more importance for the safety of the city that their magistrates should reverence religion than that they should overcome their enemies.[107]

Plutarch thus includes a highly positive account where "the people (ὁ δῆμος)" almost refused Flaminius his triumph, and the Senate is not mentioned. It clearly follows the idealising tradition about the earlier Republic, as the Romans are portrayed as unwavering in their devotion to traditions and religious rules. In Dio's very different account it is exactly the people who are portrayed as supporting Flaminius and granting him his triumph. It is also worth noting that the consuls in Dio stepped down after the triumph, seemingly of their own accord, whereas Plutarch asserts that it was the people who forced them to do so. Dio thus again breaks with the parallel sources by including a unique presentation of Flaminius' triumph.

These two examples tie in with the digression on the triumph: firstly, they suggest that the degeneration of the triumph mentioned in the digression should not be limited strictly to the Late Republic. More importantly, Dio highlighted in the digression that deviations from the traditions of the triumph were a consequence of στάσις and δυναστεία, which frames the two irregular triumphs mentioned above even more negatively and re-emphasises that also the earlier Republic was plagued by στάσις and δυναστεία. This supports Dio's wider rejection of the common idealisation of the earlier Republic. Thus, the digression on the triumph likewise functions on numerous levels and infuses the following narrative with additional meaning: it invites the reader to understand violations of the triumphal rules, throughout the Republic as a whole, as part of a wider structural problem.

7 Conclusion

Thus, Dio uses the literary technique of digressions in a highly sophisticated manner in his early books, often digressing on republican offices in order to communicate and strengthen his interpretation of the Republic. Fundamentally, Dio's digressions contribute to presenting the Republic as structurally flawed: for example, the quaestorship highlights the deleterious effects of vast wealth in the hands of ambitious individuals, a situation that was unavoidable in the Late Republic. However, the structural flaws of the Republic are set out most clearly

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107 Plut. *Marc.* 4.6–7.

in Dio's presentation of several offices as fundamentally dysfunctional: for example, the digression on the tribuneship presents this office as inherently destructive, a manifestation of δυναστεία, thereby constituting a constitutional flaw in the Republic. Likewise, Dio presents the dictatorship in his digression as a necessary form of temporary monarchy, which lays the foundation for understanding why its unworkability in the Late Republic was so fatal. Similarly, the digression on the censorship presents it as the most powerful office in the Republic, and Dio arguably viewed it as a key barrier against monarchy. Its dysfunction in the Late Republic, caused by the rampant corruption of politics, therefore naturally leads the way to sole-rule.

Importantly, this structural interpretation of the Republic is distinctive in ancient historiography: the parallel sources consistently present the earlier Republic as an idealised counterpart to the moral degeneration of the Late Republic.[108] Furthermore, as I have explored elsewhere, the parallel sources for the Late Republic focus firmly on individual events, such as the deaths of Crassus and Julia, and on individuals, especially Pompey and Caesar, in their explanations of the fall of the Republic.[109] Dio, on the other hand, rejects the common idealisation of the earlier Republic. Moreover, he significantly downplays the importance of the deaths of Julia and Crassus, omits the crucial meeting of the triumvirs at Luca in 56 (thereby also downplaying the importance of this alliance), and he even omits the scene of Caesar crossing the Rubicon.[110] In sharp contrast to the parallel sources, we are hereby left without important singular events with which to explain the outbreak of the civil war, which also detracts from the importance of individuals (that is, Caesar and Pompey) as causes for the breakdown. This allows Dio's structural factors to assume the central role in his explanation of the fall of the Republic: through the digressions, Dio highlights fundamental structural flaws, such as the δυναστεία inherent in the tribuneship, which primes the reader to understand problematic tribunes, for example, not as individual cases of immorality but as manifestations of broader structural issues.

Dio thus presents a cohesive narrative with an overarching interpretation of the Republic in which this governmental form was plagued by structural flaws from the outset and therefore fundamentally unworkable. In other words, there was no harmonious republican ideal to which the Romans could return after the

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108 Lindholmer 2019a.

109 App. *B Civ*. 2.9, 2.17, 2.19; Plut. *Caes*. 13.5, *Cat. Min*. 41.1, *Pomp*. 53.5–7; Suet. *Caes*. 30.5; Vell. Pat. 2.44.1, 2.47–48.

110 Deaths of Julia and Crassus: Cass. Dio 40.44.2–3 with Lindholmer 2019b; 2019c, 478–479.

unrest of the Late Republic, and Dio thus presents monarchy as the only option. This allows Dio to present Augustus not as Tacitus' tyrant exploiting civil wars to take power, but as a necessary saviour of Rome. This, in turn, facilitates Dio's presentation of Augustus as the ideal emperor against whom all subsequent rulers are measured.[111]

Lastly, Dio has often been criticised for a poor understanding of the Republic, but his structural explanation suggests otherwise.[112] Modern scholars have naturally looked at wider structural issues in the demise of the Republic, rather than focusing narrowly on Caesar or Pompey, and Dio is thus, in fact, the ancient historian who most closely resembles modern explanations. This suggests that Dio's interpretation of the Republic ought not to be rejected completely out of hand and that modern historians would gain from according it attention in its own right. Digressions may not be the sunshine, life and soul of reading, as Laurence Sterne claimed, but they certainly play a key role for Dio in communicating and strengthening this sophisticated and distinctive interpretation of republican history.

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111 On Dio's Augustus, see, e.g., Giua 1983; Rich 1989; Burden-Strevens 2020, 306–317.

112 Schwartz 1899, 1690–1691; Millar 1964, 47–49; Lintott 1997, 2514–2517.

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Chrysanthos S. Chrysanthou

Digressions in Herodian's
History of the Empire

Abstract: This chapter offers a comprehensive examination of the narratological presence and role of digressions in Herodian's *History of the Roman Empire*. It contends that Herodian's digressions do not simply provide a respite from the primary narrative of a most chaotic period of Roman history. Nor do they merely strengthen Herodian's authority as a historian of wide-ranging interests and learning. Rather, they are integral parts of Herodian's composition and reveal crucial characteristics of his historiographical technique. Herodian's digressions interact meaningfully with the historical narrative and have significant function in the construction of plot, characters, and historical interpretation as well as in the active involvement of the reader in the historiographical process.

Keywords: Herodian, literary technique, anachrony, ethnography/topography, religion, antiquarianism.

Ancient literary theory takes a keen interest in the proper length of digressions,[1] their placement in the narrative, and their relation to the arrangement of material, especially their contribution to the unity or discontinuity of the narration of events.[2] Digressions bring the narrative flow to a standstill.[3] They are often associated with 'variation' in narrative texts (cf. D.H. *Comp.* 19), and they are

1 See Plb. 12.28.10–12; Plut. *Alex.* 35.16; *De Herod. malig.* 855c–d; Aelius Theon, *Prog.* 2.80.27–81.4; Luc. *Hist. conscr.* 28; 56–57. For further references, see Lausberg 2008, § 341.
2 Cf. Plb. 8.11.3–5; 38.5–6; D.H. *Pomp.* 6; Quint. *Inst.* 4.3.1–8; Nünlist 2009, 65 on the *scholia* on Homer and tragedy. See also Plutarch's apologies for the insertions of digressions at several places in the *Lives*, where he openly states that these passages belong to another work: *Lys.* 12.7; *Per.* 6.5; 39.3; *Cor.* 11.6; *Brut.* 25.6; *Tim.* 15.11. On Plutarch's digressions, see Almagor 2013; Roskam/Verdegem 2016. On the importance of coherence in the arrangement of narrative material in historiography, see Plb. 6.2.1; D.S. 5.1.1–4; 16.1.1–3; D.H. *Thuc.* 9; Luc. *Hist. conscr.* 50.
3 Nünlist 2009, 76.

thought to cause relaxation, arrest and renew the interest of the readers, providing pleasure for them.[4] It is also acknowledged in ancient scholarship that digressions, although initially appearing to be tangential and not directly relevant to the immediate subject-matter, can still have a function in the construction of the plot and narrative characters as well as in the larger thematic fabric of a literary work.[5]

By the time Herodian composes his *History of the Roman Empire* around the middle of the third century,[6] the digression was an established feature of

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4 See Plb. 38.6.1; Livy 9.17.1; Quint. *Inst.* 4.3.1–2; 9–10; Aelius Theon, *Prog.* 2.80.27–81.4.

5 See e.g. Plut. *Dion* 21.7–9, who acknowledges that his narrative about Theste is a narrative digression, but also that it is not a useless one (cf. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἄχρηστον ἔχει τὴν παρέκβασιν). Cf. Plut. *Tim.* 15.11; *Dion* 21.9. See also Nünlist 2009, 64: "The modern term 'digression' (lat. *digressio*) uses essentially the same metaphor and has the same implications as the Greek term παρέκβασις: the narrator leaves his intended track and makes a detour, but ancient critics do not *a priori* consider this a defect". Nünlist 2009, 66 aptly stresses that the term παρέκβασις is loosely used in antiquity to denote distancing from the main story but also scenes that are integral to the plot. Cf. the definition of παρέκβασις by the Anonymous Segerianus in his *Ars rhetorica* 61 (Dilts/Kennedy 1997, 21): "One should know that some have supposed that the digression (τὴν παρέκβασιν) is the same thing as the paradiegesis (τῇ παραδιηγήσει), but it differs; for the paradiegesis, as they say, seizes on things beyond the subject, but the digression is an excursus of words *in terms of comparison or imitation* (καθ' ὁμοίωσιν ἢ μίμησιν) of things that have happened". See also D.H. *Pomp.* 6 on the successful integration of material about cities, people, kings, customs, the wondrous and paradoxographical, which find a prominent place in digressions in historical works, into Theopompus' historiography: "And nobody should suppose that this is purely for our entertainment: this is not the case, but the material contained in it is virtually all for our intellectual benefit [...]. Well, for these students he has provided an absolute abundance of material, not divorced from the events narrated, but side by side with them". On this point alongside Polybius' criticism of discursive historiography, see Khellaf 2018, 194–195. It is also worth noticing that the different terms used to refer to digression in antiquity illuminate its definition as something which is "thrown out" or "inserted into" the main storyline: ἐκβολή (= "putting out", e.g. Thuc. 1.97.2), but see προσθήκη ("addition", e.g. Hdt. 4.30.1) or παρενθήκη ("addition", e.g. Hdt. 7.171), or even παρεμβολή ("insertion", e.g. D.H. *Pomp.* 6). Cf. παρέκβασις ("a deviation from", e.g. Plb. 3.2.7; 38.6.1), μετάβασις ("shifting", e.g. Plb. 38.6.1), or verbs such as ἀπορρίπτω ("throw away", e.g. Plb. 8.11.3) or ἀπολείπω ("leave", e.g. 38.5.2), which are used to designate a digression. On this point, see Khellaf 2018, 171–172. On different terms used in antiquity about digression, see Lausberg 2008, § 340.

6 Many critics argue that Herodian's *History* was written during the reign of Philip the Arab or Decius, see e.g. Whittaker 1969, 12–19; Marasco 1998, 2839; Polley 2003, 203–208. See also Kemezis 2014, 300–304 for a detailed discussion of the question. Sidebottom 1997, 271–276 suggests the reign of Gallienus, while Kaldellis 2017, 51–52 proposes the reign of Gordian III. Detailed bibliography on this question is to be found in Davenport/Mallan 2020, 420 n. 1.

historical writing and historical investigation. From Herodotus' *historiē* and Thucydides' 'scientific history' to the historians of the Hellenistic Era and Imperial period, the digression represents a pervasive element in the historiographical tradition. Polybius, in particular, played a crucial role in the establishment of the digression as a defining characteristic of historiography and its reception in the work of later historians.[7]

Herodian, unlike other writers of history,[8] neither labels his narratological discursions as 'digressions' nor indicates in advance that he intends to leave off midway in his narrative and make a detour. In view of this, our decision to describe some passages in Herodian's *History* as digressive will depend on our judgment about their departure from the main plot.[9] Although Herodian claims in the prologue to his *History* that he will narrate events chronologically, treat-

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Translations of texts in this chapter are those of the Loeb editions, slightly adapted at some points. Citations of Herodian's *History* are made according to the text of Lucarini 2005.

7 See Khellaf 2018.

8 See e.g. Thuc. 1.97.2; Xen. *Cyr.* 1.2.15–16; Plb. 3.2.7; Livy 9.17.1; Plut. *Dion* 21.9; *Aem.* 14.11; *Publ.* 15.6; *Sol.* 20.8; *Rom.* 12.3–6; Tac. *Ann.* 4.33.3.

9 There is one instance where Herodian seems to be aware of a marked break into his account, namely in his narrative of the story about the goddess of Pessinus: "Through my research I have discovered why the Romans have an especial veneration for this goddess, and, in view of the lack of knowledge about this among some Greeks, I have decided to record it at this point" (1.11.1); and "that much has to be said about the goddess of Pessinus more extensively, since it will not bring unpleasant knowledge to those who have no precise understanding of Roman things" (1.11.5). In addition, in his account of Severus' punishment of his general Laetus, Herodian explicitly acknowledges his departure from and return to the main narrative: "All this, however, was in the future. At the time, as mentioned above (cf. τότε δ᾽ οὖν, ὡς προείρηται) [...]" (3.7.5). There are also other ways in which the reader can understand the end of a digressive section in Herodian's *History*: firstly, through the use of 'concluding' phrases (e.g. at 6.7.8: "Such was the natural condition of the rivers"; cf. 1.3.5: "With such examples of tyrants in mind"; 1.7.5: "This was the ancestry of Commodus"); secondly, through the explicit connection with the present time. This is especially useful when the digression concerns a past or future story (e.g. 3.2.8; 3.4.3–4; 3.7.5). Thirdly, through repetition of the same material before and after the digressive section, a kind of ring-composition: e.g. 2.9.10–11 (ταύτης δὴ τῆς προφάσεως λαβόμενος ὁ Σεβῆρος εὐμαρῶς αὐτοὺς εἰς ἃ ἐβούλετο ὑπηγάγετο, **προσποιούμενος** οὐχ οὕτω τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀντιποιεῖσθαι, οὐδ᾽ αὐτῷ τὴν ἐξουσίαν μνᾶσθαι, **ὡς θέλειν ἐπεξελθεῖν τοιούτου βασιλέως αἵματι** [...] πιστεύσαντες γοῦν τῷ Σεβήρῳ **προσποιουμένῳ** χαλεπαίνειν καὶ **θέλειν ἐπεξελθεῖν τῷ Περτίνακος φόνῳ** ἐπέδοσαν αὐτούς); Cf. 2.11.3–6 (**δέος** τε μέγα τὰς Ἰταλιώτιδας πόλεις κατελάμβανε **πυνθανομένας τοσούτου ἔφοδον στρατοῦ** [...] ὅθεν τὸν Σεβῆρον προσιόντα **πυνθανόμενοι τότε μετὰ τοσούτου στρατοῦ εἰκότως ἐταράττοντο** τῷ ἀήθει τοῦ πράγματος); 3.1.5–6 (προκαταληψομένην [...] προκαταλαβεῖν); 3.9.3–4 (προσκαθεζόμενος τὰς Ἄτρας ἐπολιόρκει [...] προσκαθεζόμενος ἐπολιόρκει παντὶ σθένει). Cf. 2.9.4–7; 3.2.7–8; 3.7.7–8; 3.10.5–7; 3.14.5–9; 4.9.2–3; 5.3.4–6.

ing each reign in turn (1.1.6), he often brings his main story to a temporary halt and moves away from it by including material that seems to have little relevance to the main storyline. Such *intermezzi* can be lengthy texts, or short asides, occasionally including a statement about methodology, comments on one's character and actions, as well as explanatory or background information about events, habits, places, people, names, and so on. Herodian also deviates from his main plotline to offer backward stories[10] and to insert narrative excursuses on a host of topics, such as ethnography, topography, religion, and antiquarianism.[11]

Modern scholars have not been slow to acknowledge Herodian's sensitivity to proportion both in his use of digressions and in their length.[12] None, however, has examined the narratological presence and role of Herodian's digressions in his *History*. This paper aims to offer a comprehensive examination of the placement, function, and effects of Herodian's digressive passages, particularly with

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10 It is worth noticing that the majority of Herodian's forward references (*prolepsis*) cannot be qualified as 'digressive', for, even though they interrupt the main plot of the history, marking a major dramatic turn in the career of an emperor and enhancing readerly suspense, they still have a direct relevance to Herodian's main story. See e.g. 1.9.6: "It was necessary (ἐχρῆν) that Commodus should escape the plot, while Perennis and his sons should meet a sorry end"; 1.16.1: "It was necessary (ἔδει) to check the madness of Commodus and to free the Roman Empire from tyranny". Cf. 1.14.6; 2.6.14; 2.14.4; 3.1.7; 3.7.1; 3.7.5; 4.12.3; 4.14.2; 5.3.1. A few examples of *prolepsis* that might be found to be 'digressive' concern Herodian's account of the military tactics developed by the barbarians after Severus' defeat of Niger (3.4.8–9), his reference to the subjection of Byzantium and Antioch at 3.6.9, and his advance mention of Laetus' punishment by Severus in his narrative of Severus' battle of Lugdunum (3.7.4–5). All of these *prolepses* adduce extra details that complete and strengthen our knowledge of the events concerned. Similarly, see 7.2.8, where Herodian refers beforehand to the senate's destruction of the picture and honorary dedications of Maximinus, thus alluding to his cruel and tyrannical reign. Generally on Herodian's use of *prolepses*, see Hidber 2007, 203–207.

11 Already in antiquity there have been several attempts at separating digressions into kinds: Plb. 38.6.1: "And this, I think, is why the wisest of ancient writers were in the habit of giving their readers a rest in the way I say, some of them employing mythical and narrative digressions, and others pragmatic digressions (τινὲς μὲν μυθικαῖς καὶ διηγηματικαῖς κεχρημένοι παρεκβάσεσι, τινὲς δὲ καὶ πραγματικαῖς); so that not only do they shift the scene from one part of Greece to another, but include doings abroad". See Khellaf 2018, 185 for the translation of the emphasized text, while he also points out that Polybius here begins "the process of categorizing historiographical digressions into types — mythical, narrative (or descriptive; the meaning of διηγηματικός is uncertain), and factual (based on politics and having a strong didactic function)". Cf. Plut. *De Herod. malig.* 855d: digressions and excursuses in history are devoted to myths (τοῖς μύθοις), tales of early times (ταῖς ἀρχαιολογίαις), and praise or blame (cf. τὸ βλασφημεῖν καὶ ψέγειν ποιούμενος) of characters. Cf. Tryphon, *Peri tropon* 203; Quint. *Inst.* 4.3.12–17.

12 Kemezis 2014, 237.

the aim of illuminating Herodian's compositional design and historical methodology. It contends that Herodian's digressions do not simply provide a respite from the primary narrative of a most chaotic period of Roman history.[13] Nor do they merely display Herodian's erudition and wide-ranging interests. Rather, they are integral parts of the historian's composition. They offer significant insights into his method of characterisation and his way of presenting and interpreting the fragmented and tumultuous post-Marcus history in a unified and orderly form.

1 Historiographical detours

Herodian at times interrupts his main narrative to elucidate or explicate a methodological point to his reader, situate his work within the broader historiographical tradition, and construct his authorial identity as a historian. At the end of the second book of his *History*, before relating Septimius Severus' conflict with Niger, Herodian goes out of his way to offer a self-conscious programmatic passage about his historiographical enterprise:

> (2.15.6) τῆς μὲν οὖν ὁδοιπορίας τοὺς σταθμούς, καὶ τὰ καθ᾽ ἑκάστην πόλιν αὐτῷ λεχθέντα, καὶ σημεῖα θεία προνοίᾳ δόξαντα πολλάκις φανῆναι, χωρία τε ἕκαστα καὶ παρατάξεις, καὶ τὸν τῶν ἑκατέρωθεν πεσόντων ἀριθμὸν στρατιωτῶν ἐν ταῖς μάχαις, ἱστορίας τε πολλοὶ συγγραφεῖς καὶ ποιηταὶ μέτρῳ πλατύτερον συνέταξαν, ὑπόθεσιν ποιούμενοι πάσης τῆς πραγματείας τὸν Σεβήρου βίον. (2.15.7) ἐμοὶ δὲ σκοπὸς ὑπάρχει ἐτῶν ἑβδομήκοντα πράξεις πολλῶν βασιλέων συντάξαντι γράψαι, ἃς αὐτὸς οἶδα. τὰ κορυφαιότατα τοίνυν καὶ συντέλειαν ἔχοντα τῶν κατὰ μέρος πεπραγμένων Σεβήρῳ ἐν τοῖς ἑξῆς διηγήσομαι, οὐδὲν οὔτε πρὸς χάριν εἰς ὕψος ἐξαίρων, ὥσπερ ἐποίησαν οἱ κατ᾽ ἐκεῖνον γράψαντες, οὔτε παραλείπων εἴ τι λόγου καὶ μνήμης ἄξιον. (2.15.6–7)

> (2.15.6) Many historians and poets, who have made the life of Severus the theme of their entire work, have given more detailed treatment to the stages of his march, his speeches at each city, the frequent manifestations that were interpreted as signs of divine providence, the topography of each place, the disposition of the forces and the number of soldiers on either side that fell in battle. (2.15.7) But my purpose is to write a systematic account of the acts done by many emperors within a period of seventy years, acts of which I have personal knowledge. I shall, therefore, in what follows narrate the most significant and dis-

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13 See his avowed programmatic statement in the prologue to his work: "But I believe that future generations too will derive some pleasure (cf. οὐκ ἀτερπῆ τὴν γνῶσιν καὶ τοῖς ὕστερον ἔσεσθαι) from the knowledge of events which are important and compressed within a brief span of time" (1.1.3).

tinguished of Severus' separate actions in chronological order, neither exalting him in order to win favour, as contemporary writers have done, nor omitting anything that merits attention and record.

The particle δέ (cf. 2.15.7: ἐμοὶ δὲ σκοπὸς ὑπάρχει) introduces a contrast between Herodian and other historians and poets.[14] In the historian's view, these authors narrow the focus of their work to Severus alone and thus give a more thorough account of the stages of his march, his speeches, divine signs, the topography of each place, the disposition of the military forces, and the number of casualties on each contending side (2.15.6). Lucian similarly criticizes those historians who pay attention to every single detail of topography and geography (*Hist. conscr.* 19; 57). Herodian thus seems to follow the historiographical standards of his age.[15]

Herodian, unlike those authors, decides not to put the spotlight of his work on Severus alone, but to recount the history of many emperors within a particular period of time. His work, as he declares, will cover a period of seventy years, including the deeds accomplished by many emperors, of which he has personal knowledge (cf. ἃς αὐτὸς οἶδα).[16] Eyewitness testimony, and autopsy more generally, was one of the strongest authority claims in ancient historiography.[17] Herodian's own aim in the *History*, as he proclaims, is to narrate without flattery and bias the most important and distinguished deeds of Severus in a chronological order, drawing attention only to what is worthy of mentioning and remembering (2.15.7). Herodian's focus on what is 'worthy of account' and 'worthy of

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14 We unfortunately are not in a position to know who these authors are. Whittaker 1969, 246–247 n. 2 mentions some possibilities: Marius Maximus, Cassius Dio, Aelius Antipater, Gordian I, and more generally the literary circle around the empress Julia Domna. Cf. Hidber 2006, 90–91. On Herodian's sources in general, see Chrysanthou 2020, 622–625 with further bibliography.

15 See Whittaker 1969, xlv. Kemezis 2014, 227–239 stresses Herodian's conformity to the norms of Antonine historiography. Pitcher 2012, 269–271 stresses Herodian's brief descriptions of places and buildings and stresses their function, within their immediate narrative context, in providing the reader with a framework for understanding the actions narrated.

16 Based on this 'seventy years' statement, scholars have thought that Herodian's work, since as it now stands covers a fifty-eight year period (cf. 1.1.5 where he mentions 'sixty years'), is somehow unfinished or that its originally planned end-point was later than its present one. See Kemezis 2014, 302 with n. 12 for further references. Whittaker 1969, 247 n. 3 argues that the inconsistency is no more than apparent, for the earlier statement at 1.1.5 "simply says the history was to cover a period of sixty years", while here (2.15.7) "Herodian states he has personal experience of seventy years (probably the length of his lifetime up to the date of writing)". Cf. the critical review of this issue in Hidber 2006, 11–13.

17 Schepens 1975a; 1975b; Marincola 1997, 66–86; Hidber 2006, 98–100; Farrington 2015, 40–42. Other explicit or implicit claims of Herodian that he was an eyewitness of the events he narrates occur at 1.2.5; 1.15.4; 3.1.7; 3.8.10; 4.8.2. See Hidber 2004, 206–207; Kemezis 2014, 301.

memory' again reflects a standard claim in ancient historiography.[18] Likewise, his aversion to flattery and his favour of impartiality constitute standard *topoi* of historiographical criticism, which are used by historians to construct an impartial portrait for themselves.[19] As Hidber nicely puts it, "[t]his passage almost apologetically rejects, as it were, the narratees' expectations of a panegyrical account, and again stresses the narrator's commitment to truth and to the demanding standards of contemporary history".[20]

Herodian's methodological statements at the end of book 2 might be seen as a kind of 'second preface' which echoes his prologue to the *History* in many respects, thus pushing to the forefront of his readers' minds some of the most crucial and recurrent ideas of his historiographical programme. First of all, the structural choice of narrating events in a chronological order is an element that Herodian already stressed towards the end of his introductory section: "How all this happened I intend to relate in chronological order, taking each reign in turn" (cf. κατὰ χρόνους καὶ δυναστείας διηγήσομαι) (1.1.6). Secondly, Herodian is insistent upon his personal knowledge and experience concerning the historical events he narrates. Similarly, in the prologue to his work, he openly states that he does not rely on material that is 'unknown' and 'unattested', but that he works with complete accuracy to gather together information about events that are still fresh in the memory of his readers (1.1.3).[21] Later on in his narrative, Herodian emphasises that he has written a history of events that *he saw and heard in his lifetime* (cf. παρὰ πάντα τὸν ἐμαυτοῦ βίον εἶδόν τε καὶ ἤκουσα), drawing attention to his first-hand knowledge of some of these events through his participation in imperial and public service (cf. καὶ πείρα μετέσχον ἐν βασιλικαῖς ἢ δημοσίαις ὑπηρεσίαις γενόμενος) (1.2.5).[22]

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18 See e.g. Thuc. 1.1.1–3; Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.56; D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 1.1.2. Cf. Duff 1999, 26 nn. 39–40; Marincola 2017, xxxii–xxxvii.

19 D.H. *Thuc.* 8; 41; Plut. *Dion* 36.4; *Per.* 13.16; Luc. *Hist. conscr.* 7; 10; 12–13; 39–41; 61; 63. See Fox 2001, 79 with nn. 20–23 and 81 with nn. 32–33. Cf. esp. Avenarius 1956, 49–54; Luce 1989; Marincola 1997, 158–174; 2017, xlii–xlvi.

20 Hidber 2004, 203.

21 On his focus on accuracy, see also Herodian's digressive remark on the veracity of his story of the plot against Maximinus: "Such was the story of the plot, which may have contained some truth, or was possibly manufactured by Maximinus. It is difficult to say with accuracy (ἀκριβὲς δὲ εἰπεῖν), because it remains unproven" (7.1.8).

22 On the meaning of ὑπηρεσίας, used by Herodian to refer to minor offices, see Kemezis 2014, 306–307: "It seems likely that we are meant to think of an office relatively close to the court rather than, say, a municipal magistracy" (307). Kemezis 2014, 307–308 also associates the vagueness of Herodian's information here to the general low profile and elusiveness of his authorial persona. Whittaker 1969, 11 n. 3 thinks that Herodian "underwent imperial service as

In addition, both in 2.15.7 and in the prologue Herodian endorses an unbiased historiography. In the prologue, he criticises other authors who either tried to win themselves an everlasting reputation for their *paideia* by paying attention to vocabulary, style, and the 'fanciful' element (cf. μυθῶδες) of their story (1.1.1);[23] or those who, out of hatred or flattery towards rulers, cities, and individuals, distorted historical truth by giving importance to circumstantial events (1.1.2). Herodian, by contrast, decides to focus on the most distinguished and important deeds of Severus without flattery and bias (2.15.7). Overall, Herodian marks his adherence to the Thucydidean precedent of trustworthy contemporary historiography, which accordingly endorses his authority as a historian.[24]

Herodian underlines his aversion to flattery and his favour of impartiality in other digressive moments in his *History* as well. For example, in his account of the Battle of Lugdunum between Severus and Albinus, he records a serious misfortune of Severus, which, as he stresses, is mentioned by those historians who prioritize truth over flattery (cf. οὐ πρὸς χάριν ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν λέγοντες) (3.7.3). In his depiction of the aftermath of the battle, Herodian also refers to historians who "vary the total number of casualties and prisoners on either side to suit their own purposes" (3.7.6).[25] Strikingly, he avoids giving or reproducing any specific numbers that could be used as indicators of the magnitude of the defeat or victory. This distancing, apart from reflecting a lack of interest in such things (cf. his claim at 2.15.7), functions as a further corroboration of his authority to write his history.

Thus, Herodian's historiographical digression at the end of book 2 is important both in terms of the function it fulfils within its immediate context and as part of Herodian's *History* and narrative design as a whole. It constitutes an explicit programmatic statement about Herodian's practice of describing Severus' actions, and particularly his battles. This statement is especially applicable to his account of Severus' reign in book 3.[26] At the same time, however, it harks

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a minor official; the public service may be no more than local government service". Cf. Müller 1996, 309.

23 On the meaning of μυθῶδες in Herodian and elsewhere, see Hidber 2006, 85–88.

24 On Thucydidean intertextuality in Herodian's prologue, see Stein 1957, 76–90; Whittaker 1969, 2–3 n. 2; Sidebottom 1998, 2776–2780; Kuhn-Chen 2002, 256–260; Hidber 2004, 202; 2006, 77–79, 85–89, 121; Kemezis 2014, 230, 233.

25 See Hidber 2006, 89–91 on these statements on impartiality in Herodian's work.

26 This is not the only instance where Herodian ends a book with an authorial comment that is 'achronical' and distorts narrative order. Normally, Herodian ends his books with a note of recapitulation of the preceding narrative: 1.17.12; 3.15.8; 6.9.8; 7.12.9; 8.8.8. In the latter two cases, one also finds references, by way of 'anticipatory glimpses', to the material background

back to the prologue to Herodian's *History* and closely relates to other digressive methodological comments which define Herodian's historiographical principles and detail his qualifications as a historian.

2 Digressive remarks

Herodian often intrudes upon his historical narrative to give some explanatory, normally parenthetic comments on specific events, people, and subjects. For example, in his account of Severus' dreams of imperial power, the historian makes a general remark on the signs that help to forecast the future: "These prognostications are all believed to be absolutely true later when in actual fact they turn out well" (2.9.3). This remark, which seems not to be directly related to Herodian's story, offers a post-event explanation of Severus' accession.[27] It also coheres nicely with his broader skeptical stance towards omens and divination (cf. 8.3.9),[28] and his primary focus on the level of human explanation, although supernatural causes are sometimes present in the background of his history.[29]

Another example of such a narratorial aside occurs in Herodian's narrative of Maximinus' war against the Germans, and particularly his reference to the Mauretanian spearmen, the Osrhoenian and Armenian archers, and the Parthians whom the emperor was leading with him (7.2.1). Here Herodian departs from his main narrative to note the following: "The most effective troops against

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to the subsequent point of action. The end of book 5, just like the end of book 2, includes a more general and forward-looking note, since Herodian refers to the accession of Severus Alexander whose reign will be the main subject of the following book (5.8.10). Likewise, the beginnings of books of Herodian's *History* often include recapitulating paragraphs concerning the content of the immediately preceding book: 2.1.1; 3.1.1; 4.1.1; 5.1.1; 6.1.1; 7.1.1; 8.1.1. These summaries are important for the division of the *History* into books. They are not intended to offer a full recapitulation of the preceding book, but report only the events or themes that are important and necessary for the understanding of the plot, and thus need to be impressed on the reader's mind. The repeated elements concern the main turning points in the line of action (such as a new accession, reign, or death), which are important to remember in order to understand the present situation and the following action. On this specific technique of Herodian, see also Hidber 2006, 133–136.

27 Supernatural consent is a crucial aspect of Severus' propaganda itself: Rubin 1980, 38–43; Marasco 1998, 2899; Kemezis 2014, 60–61.

28 Herodian is more reluctant than Cassius Dio to give detailed accounts of omens. See Hidber 2006, 88–89.

29 On the role of fortune and the supernatural in the *History,* see Widmer 1967, 57–60; Marasco 1998, 2897–2903; Kuhn-Chen 2002, 309–311.

German tactics seem to be the spearmen and archers who make their surprise, light-armed raids and then retire without difficulty" (7.2.2).[30] This brief comment on military tactics is strikingly given in the present tense (cf. ἐπιτήδειοι δοκοῦσιν), thus referring to a situation that is ongoing. Its point is to provide an explanation of why Maximinus kept and trained these military forces (7.2.2), while, at the same time, serving as an indication of his military aptitude, which Herodian lays a focus on throughout his narrative.

Indeed, there are many other instances where Herodian diverges slightly from its central plot, in order to offer some general commentary that plays an explanatory or clarifying role in the narrative. In his account of Severus' approach to Rome in AD 193, he reports that the senators gathered together in the senate house "on the instructions of the consuls, who normally take over business when there is a crisis over the succession" (2.12.4). In his narrative of the Parthian king's reaction to Niger's call for help — "the Parthian king informed Niger that he would send out an order to his satraps to muster their forces" — Herodian informs his readers that, among the barbarians, "this was the practice whenever a levy was needed, in the absence of a paid, standing army" (3.1.2).

Similarly in his narrative of Plautianus' plot against Severus, Herodian tells us that Saturninus, whom Plautianus made his associate in the crime, asked the prefect to give him a document which included written instructions for the murder (3.11.8). Then Herodian interrupts the flow of his narrative to explain: "It was the practice of tyrants, when they sent someone to carry out an execution without a trial, to put their orders in writing so that the deed should not be executed simply on verbal authority" (3.11.9). Here we may compare Herodian's narrative of the plot of Gordian I against Vitalianus. There the historian mentions that Gordian wanted to deceive Vitalianus by sending him secret dispatches about imperial security (7.6.6–7). Thus Gordian "transferred to his command some centurions and soldiers, to whom he gave a letter sealed in folding tablets". This, as Herodian explains, was "the normal method used by the emperors to send private, secret messages" (7.6.5). A similar example occurs in the account of Commodus' plotting against Laetus, Eclectus, and Marcia. He mentions that Commodus took up a writing tablet, and then explains that this tablet was "one of the kind made out of lime wood cut into thin sheets with two hinged pieces that close together" (1.17.1). In the aforementioned instances of plotting, these extra details underline the importance of the presence of the 'written document', which, as shown in the following narrative, plays a central

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30 Cf. 6.7.8 on the Mauretanians in Herodian's narrative of Severus Alexander's German expedition. See also 1.15.2; 3.3.5; 4.15.1; 7.9.1 for further details on this specific group of people.

role in uncovering the immediate threat (cf. 1.17.4–5; 3.12.2; 7.6.8–9).[31] They also create an effect of retardation that dramatizes events and keeps us in suspense about their outcomes.

Examples of such informative narratorial asides in Herodian's *History* may easily be multiplied. In the narrative of Maximinus' siege of Aquileia, Herodian records the unfamiliarity that some German soldiers felt towards the swift currents of the rivers in Italy, because they thought that the rivers flowed as smoothly as in their own country. Herodian then turns away very briefly from his narrative to say: "It is this slow moving current that causes the rivers [sc. in Germany] to freeze so easily" (8.4.3). Scholarship has already called attention to Herodian's keen interest in the geographical and cultural differences between the center/Rome and the frontier,[32] which Herodian's digressive note on the rivers in Germany also illuminates. Equally important are Herodian's explanatory comments on lands and cities in general. For example, he explains the etymology of Arabia Felix as follows: "For it produces aromatic herbs, which we use for perfumes and incense" (3.9.3). He also remarks on Carthage: "That city is the next after Rome in wealth, population and size, though there is rivalry for the second place between it and Alexandria in Egypt" (7.6.1). These passing details explain (cf. 7.6.1: ἡ γὰρ πόλις ἐκείνη) why Gordian chooses to go to Carthage after his accession in order to be able to "act exactly as if he were in Rome" (7.6.1), as well as why "Carthage was a kind of replica of Rome" (7.6.2).

Herodian is also ready to provide explanatory remarks on names and etymology. Here one might cite his alternative explanations, within another digression, of the name of the place 'Pessinus' (1.11.1–2), or his information about the origin of the name of the region 'Latium': "This is how that part [of Italy] came to get the name of Latium by transposition of the Greek term to the local language" (1.16.1).[33] Finally, similes can have a digressive character in Herodian's work. One might think, in particular, of Caracalla's view of the Alexandrians before their massacre: "After he had gone up and down all the ranks, he judged they were by this time surrounded by arms *like animals trapped in a net*" (4.9.6).[34]

In summary, these brief comments, which would seem to a modern reader somewhat akin to footnotes, are not pointless asides in Herodian's *History*. Rather, they serve to amplify and clarify the historian's statements about events,

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31 See Scott 2018, 448–449, 450–451, 454–455.

32 See Kemezis 2014, 240–252.

33 Cf. 1.12.2; 7.5.8; 8.7.1.

34 Cf. 2.13.5; 6.5.9; 8.4.7. See also the presentation of tyranny like "a sword that is hanging over one's head" at 8.6.8.

characters, locations, or customs, and so indirectly contribute to our better understanding of them.[35] Herodian's digressive remarks can also be seen as a manifestation of his learning and knowledge, which he wishes to share with his reader, whether we presuppose some degree of knowledge on the part of the reader or not. Thus, just like the historiographical detours that were discussed above, they attest and contribute to Herodian's qualifications as a historian.

3 Backstories

Herodian's *History* is filled with several backstories that prompt a diversion from the main narrative and invite readerly pause for thought. The historian's depiction of Marcus' last reflections is a fine example of this. In this episode Herodian lingers upon Marcus' concerns about his son Commodus, who has now reached the age of early adolescence. Several examples of young tyrants from the past reverberate in Marcus' mind, who (according to Herodian) was "a well-read man" (1.3.2–3). These examples include Dionysius the younger, the tyrant of Sicily, who sought to "pay high prices for exquisite, novel pleasures (καινὰς ἡδονάς)" due to his insufficient self-control (1.3.2); Alexander's successors, who displayed insolence and violence towards their subjects (1.3.2); Ptolemy (most likely Ptolemy II Philadelphus), who violated the Greek and Macedonian law and fell in love with his own sister (1.3.3); and, finally, Antigonus I Monophthalmus, who "modelled himself completely on Dionysus, wearing an ivy wreath on his head instead of a royal Macedonian bonnet and carrying an ivy wand instead of a sceptre" (1.3.3).[36] Herodian also has Marcus call to mind paradigms of young tyrants from the recent past, such as Nero, who is said to have murdered his mother and made himself a laughing-stock to the people, and Domitian's cruel activities (1.3.4).

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35 Herodian's details about people, especially secondary characters, might be interpreted in a similar manner. See 1.6.4 on Pompeianus; 1.8.1 on Perennis; and 2.3.4 on Glabrio. Introductory material about primary characters, particularly emperors (e.g. 2.1.4–5 on Pertinax; 2.7.4–5 on Niger; 2.15.1 on Albinus; 6.8.1 on Maximinus; 7.5.5 on Gordian I; 7.10.4 on Maximus and Balbinus), although it interrupts the flow of the narrative, is directly related to the subject of Herodian's history and would not strike readers as digressive. On these sections as well as the brief narratorial summaries of a character's actions, which are normally placed after his death and which look back to what has been narrated, see Hidber 2007, 199–200; Chrysanthou 2022, 29–63, 249–310.

36 Herodian plausibly confuses here Antigonus I Monophthalmus with his son Demetrius Poliorcetes, who imitated Dionysus. See Galimberti 2014, 56–57 with further bibliography.

These images of tyrants (cf. τυραννίδος εἰκόνας) not only cause Marcus' fear and apprehension (1.3.5), as Herodian emphasizes, but also prime the readers of Herodian's text with a further powerful historical perspective which encourages them to reflect more actively through comparison and contrast on several character traits and patterns of Commodus' tyrannical behaviour. Indeed, as the narrative progresses, we can notice that Marcus' worrying exempla will be extremely relevant to Commodus and other (young) emperors in Herodian's work as well.[37] For instance, Commodus, Geta, and Caracalla, like Dionysius, are all susceptible to pleasures (ἡδονάς).[38] Commodus might be linked with Domitian in the way in which Herodian describes his killing (1.17).[39] Commodus and Caracalla, just like Nero, become "laughing-stocks" to other people.[40] Caracalla's assumption of a Macedonian appearance, "including the *kausia* on his head and *crepidae* for shoes" (4.8.2), recalls Antigonus I Monophthalmus.[41] Elagabalus, like Antigonus, is associated with the god Dionysus (5.3.7),[42] while, like Ptolemy, he is ready to violate several sacral laws by taking a Vestal Virgin as a wife and by marrying the statue of Urania with the god Elagabal (5.6.1–5).[43] In addition, Maximinus, like Domitian, is well known for his cruelty (ὠμότης).[44] Furthermore, several rulers, such as Commodus (1.14.9; 2.1.7; 2.2.4), Septimius Severus (3.8.8), Caracalla (4.3.4; 4.11.9), and Maximinus,[45] become just as oppressive and fearsome towards their subjects as Alexander's successors. It becomes clear, therefore, that Marcus' reflections look both back and forward

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37 That Herodian's narrative of Marcus' death is important for our understanding of the subsequent books has been well stressed by scholarship. See Hidber 2006, 154, 195. Cf. Alföldy 1973, 353 [= repr. 1989, 22]; Zimmermann 1999, 29–31, 138–139, 201–202; Hidber 2006, 244 on the connections between Marcus' reflections and future emperors in Herodian's work; Ward 2011, 114, 120 with nn. 207 and 208, 125–131. On Herodian's use of exempla, see Sidebottom 1998, 2804 n. 151.

38 See 1.6.2; 1.12.6; 1.13.7; 1.17.9; 3.13.6.

39 Scholars have already recognized that Herodian's description of Commodus' scheming and Marcia's revelation of it resembles the story about Domitian's murder in Cass. Dio 67.15.3–4. See e.g. Roos 1915, 192–195; Hohl 1932, 1139–1141; Whittaker 1969, 109–110 n. 4, 112 n. 1, 134–135 n. 1; Zimmermann 1999, 140–142. The connection between Commodus and Domitian is also noticed in Cass. Dio 73[72].14.4; SHA *Marc.* 28.10. Cf. Tert. *Apol.* 25.9; SHA *Comm.* 19.2, with Galimberti 2014, 165–166.

40 Commodus (1.14.8); Caracalla (4.8.5); Nero (1.3.4). Cf. Zimmermann 1999, 139, 209; Kuhn-Chen 2002, 299; Hidber 2006, 244 n. 235.

41 See Whittaker 1969, 414 n. 1; Kuhn-Chen 2002, 299–300.

42 See Ward 2011, 135.

43 Kuhn-Chen 2002, 298; Hidber 2006, 244 n. 235.

44 See e.g. 7.1–2; 7.1.4; 7.1.12; 7.6.3.

45 See 7.1.1; 7.5.1; 7.7.2; 7.7.4; 7.8.2.

thematically, sensitizing the readers to a number of crucial themes that recur in the post-Marcus history. The reader is thereby drawn to understand the bad emperors in Herodian's narrative as a continuation of earlier tyrants, exactly as Marcus does in his deathbed scene.

On many other occasions, Herodian departs from his subject matter to provide his readers with background information that is necessary to understand what happens or what follows. Herodian's genealogy of Commodus explains why the Romans accepted him enthusiastically as their emperor because of his noble origins (1.7.4). The digression on the past of Lucilla, Commodus' sister, helps to elucidate why she decided to plot against Commodus (1.8.3–4). In fact, the fear of loosing imperial power or other privileges constitutes a motive that often inflames a woman's antagonism against an emperor in the subsequent narrative. We may think of Marcia and Commodus (1.17) or Maesa and Elagabalus (5.7.1), or even Mamea and her son Severus Alexander (6.1.9–10).[46] Herodian is alert to the dangers lying in powerful *Augustae* who supersede their role and play an important role in imperial power.

Furthermore, the intervening account of Severus' dream of imperial power is important in revealing Severus' highest expectations of becoming emperor (2.9.5–6).[47] The story of the horse and Pertinax also reflects an important aspect of Severan propaganda, namely Severus' (self-)association with Pertinax, which Herodian is keen to revisit in his *History*.[48] The historian enriches this story by providing a direct link with the present time: "Today there is still a huge bronze statue on that spot to commemorate the dream" (2.9.6). This connection with the present is an effective way of bolstering the authority of his historical persona.[49]

A further backstory, which reinforces Severus' connection with Pertinax, is found in Herodian's mention of Pertinax's governorship of the Illyrian troops

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46 On this topic in Herodian's *History*, see Hidber 2006, 185 with n. 182.

47 It is worth noticing that Herodian omits most of the signs and dreams reported by Cassius Dio (75[74].3.1–3). Moreover, he chooses to displace the dream: while in Cass. Dio 75[74].3.1–3 a report of *omina* pointing to Severus' preeminence is placed after Severus' defeat of Julianus and assumption of power, Herodian narrates Severus' omens of empire after his introduction of Severus into the narrative, and more precisely during his account of Severus' aspirations to power. This section follows his narrative of the accession of his opponents Julianus and Niger (2.9.3–6). Herodian's choice thus not only abridges the narrative but also prompts reflection on the similarities and differences between the circumstances of accession of Severus, Niger, and Julianus.

48 Cf. 2.9.8; 2.9.11; 2.10.1; 2.10.4; 2.10.9; 2.13.

49 Cf. Herodian's references to his own and his reader's present at 2.11.8; 3.2.8; 3.4.3; 3.9.3, as well as to an eyewitness (1.15.4; 3.8.10; 4.8.2), together with Hidber 2004, 206–207 and n. 21.

during the reign of Marcus in his narrative of Severus' proclamation as emperor in Pannonia (2.9.9). This brief aside not only explains the way in which Severus manages to win over the Illyrian troops to his side — "He realized that all the troops in Illyricum remembered Pertinax's command (2.9.9) — but is also neatly integrated into his characterization of both Pertinax and Severus. His emphasis on Pertinax's military prowess, bravery, goodwill, integrity, and moderation in his exercise of power stands in conformity with his favourable portrayal of the emperor in the preceding narrative (2.1.4–2.5.9). Similarly, Severus' efficient reading of the soldierly disposition clearly reflects his 'shrewdness of mind', a key characteristic of Severus in Herodian's *History*.[50]

Herodian also interrupts his narrative of Severus' arrival at the Italian frontier to comment on the specific circumstances of the inhabitants of Italy. Specifically, he looks back to the period of the Republic and draws a contrast between that turbulent time of wars and the following peaceful reign of Octavian (2.11.3–4).[51] He also elaborates upon Octavian's acts of relieving the Italians of their military duties, fortifying the Empire with several obstacles, such as rivers, trenches, and mountains, and his use of mercenary troops (2.11.5). This backstory not only explains why the inhabitants of the Italian cities are terrified by Severus' arrival (2.11.3; 2.11.6), but also sets up a sharp contrast between the frontier/Severus and Rome/Julianus with regard to their military spirit and courage.[52] Severus himself in his pre-battle speech in Pannonia focuses on the antithesis between the warlike Pannonian troops and the armies of Italy and Syria who are concerned with luxury and are averse to fighting (2.10.5–8). Severus' rhetoric is also confirmed in the subsequent narrative, since he meets no military resistance on the part of either Julianus or the Roman soldiers (cf. 2.12.2; 2.13; 2.14.1–2). In general, Herodian's Severus turns out to be more shrewd, energetic, and military than his opponents, Julianus, Niger, and Albinus (2.12.1–3.7.8). We will return to this point later in our discussion of ethnographic digressions.

In his narrative of Severus' battle against Niger in Cyzicus, Herodian tries to explain Aemilianus' betrayal of Niger. One allegation that was made about Aemilianus' motives was that he was persuaded by his children, who were kept hostages by Severus (3.2.3). At this point Herodian deviates from his main story-

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50 See 2.9.2; 2.9.13; 2.14.2–4; 3.2.3–5; 3.7.8.

51 Cf. the similar information given at 8.2.4, which explains why a large part of Aquileia's defensive wall had fallen into ruins. The parallelism between Severus' and Maximinus' invasions of Rome is noted and aptly examined by Kemezis 2014, 240–245.

52 Kemezis 2014, 241. Cf. Pitcher 2012, 276: "Nonetheless, the contrastive moral geography that emerges in Herodian's text, where valour is proved at the frontiers and Rome, despite its central importance, carries the risk of slothful idleness, is clear".

line to look back to Commodus' practice of taking the children of his commanders as guarantees of their loyalty. This was a practice that Severus also followed with great foresight (3.2.4–5). This digressive mention of Commodus draws a clear connection between Severus and Commodus, which shines a negative light on Severus and is rather suggestive of his tyrannical character. This connection is also present in Severus' own retrospective reflection on Commodus' history in his speech to the Illyrian troops, where he tries to give Commodus the benefit of the doubt and to forgive his mistakes (2.10.2–3). Later on, the historian explicitly states that Severus did not keep his promises to Niger's generals, who, although they betrayed Niger for the sake of their children, were later put to death together with their children (3.5.6).[53] It was such actions that brought Severus' reputation into disrepute and revealed his underlying character (3.5.6).[54]

Similarly critical of Severus is Herodian's excursus on the past life of Plautianus, who was a praetorian prefect in Severus' reign. Herodian inserts this digressive flashback at the moment he mentions how Severus gave his son the daughter of Plautianus as a wife (3.10.6). He marks the end of this report by repeating the same information, thus signaling his return to his narrative track: "This, then, was the man whose daughter [sc. Severus] linked with his son to make a union of the two families" (3.10.7). The details about Plautianus' humble life-circumstances and his empowerment by Severus, plausibly due to an erotic relationship between the two (3.10.6), contribute not only to Herodian's negative treatment of Plautianus in the remainder of his narrative (3.10–12) but also to that of Severus, who hardly believes Plautianus' plot (cf. 3.12.3; 3.12.10). Indeed, the practice of promoting infamous people to positions of high influence reflects a disturbing feature of the principate in general, and suggests a disparaging connection of Severus with other bad emperors in Herodian's narrative, especially Commodus (1.12.3)[55] and Elagabalus (5.7.6–7).[56]

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53 Cf. Severus' harsh treatment of the friends of Niger (3.4.7) and Albinus (3.8.2), which evokes Commodus' tyrannical acts (1.13.7).
54 On Severus' explicit self-association with Commodus, cf. Cass. Dio 76[75].7.4; 76[75].8.1–2. Hekster 2017, 124–125 interestingly notes Herodian's silence on an important aspect of Severus' self-projection, which is especially recurrent from AD 195, namely his self-presentation as *Divi Commodi Frater*. On Severus' bestowal of divine honours upon Commodus, see Cass. Dio 76[75].7.4–8.4; SHA *Sev*. 11.3–5; 12.8; 19.3; *Comm*. 17.11; Aur. Vict. *Caes*. 20.30.
55 In his account of Commodus' promotion of Cleander, Herodian is keen to include, just as in the case of Plautianus, some analeptic details about Cleander's past (1.12.3).
56 On this theme, see Gualerzi 2005, 11–12 with nn. 16–19; Kemezis 2014, 143–145; Osgood 2016, 184.

We also find numerous examples of Herodian's use of backstories, by way of digression, to illuminate an individual's character or reign, to advance the understanding of the main story, or to clarify it by providing an analogy.[57] In Herodian's narrative of the Battle of Issus (AD 194), for example, the analeptic reference to the earlier battle between Alexander and the Persian king Darius (3.4.3) provides a parallel to the present conflict between Severus and Niger.[58] A touch of dramatic irony is present, which is enhanced by Herodian's digressive remarks on the location at Issus[59] — I discuss topography in detail later in this paper. The description of the place, in particular, as a 'theatre' ascribes a dramatic element to this highpoint of the *History* and focuses attention on the encounter which is about to take place. Herodian explicitly draws the connection between the past and present and refers to the same outcome of the two battles: "This is the site [i.e. Issus] [...] where the people of the northern regions *on that occasion too* (cf. καὶ τότε) defeated the Easterners. Today there is a city called Alexandria [...] which is a triumphal monument to commemorate this battle [...]. Not only did the armies of Severus and Niger, as it turned out, meet on this site but fate repeated itself in the battle" (3.4.3). We already noted above that references to Herodian's present and the reader serve to add to his authority as a historian. More significantly, they enhance the readers' engagement with Herodian's work by making the history more relevant to their own time. The mention of Alexander's battle also introduces an ominous note regarding Niger's fighting, while suggesting a positive association between Severus and Alexander and an uncomplimentary one between Niger and Darius. Interestingly, in Cass. Dio 75[74].6.2ᵃ, it is Niger who appears to show pleasure when people call

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57 Cf. the information about Maesa's past in the imperial court of Severus and her treatment by Macrinus (5.3.2), which explains her anxiety about keeping her imperial status (5.3.11; 5.7.1) and her capacity to resist Elagabalus' machinations against Severus Alexander (5.8.3). See also the brief excursus on Persian history, given through the eyes of the Persian king, which explains his ambition to recover Asia for the Persian Empire and subvert the Roman Empire (6.2.2; cf. the brief excursus on Persian history at 6.2.6–7).

58 Here there is a mistake in Herodian's narrative, since he notes that the Battle of Issus in 333 BC was the last and greatest battle of Darius, where Darius was defeated and captured by Alexander (3.4.3). However, not only was the battle of Gaugamela Darius' last battle, but also Darius was never taken prisoner in it. See Whittaker 1969, 276 n. 1; Roques 1990, 243 n. 25; Müller 1996, 319 ad loc.

59 3.4.2: "The two forces converged on a very broad, long plain at the bay named Issus. Nature might have constructed a course for battle, with the ridge of hills that ran around the bay in the shape of an amphitheatre (ᾧ περίκειται μὲν λόφος εἰς θεάτρου σχῆμα) and the extensive beach that ran down to the sea". On Herodian's false information here, see Kolb 1972, 74–75.

him a new Alexander. Herodian reverses and undermines this connection by drawing a link between Severus' and Alexander's forces.[60]

Also important to Severus' commendable portrayal is Herodian's concluding remark on Severus' victory in the battle of Lugdunum against Albinus. Here, Herodian invites a backward glance in time at Roman history, looking especially at other well-known civil wars (Caesar against Pompey; Octavian against Antony and Pompey's sons; and Sulla against Marius) (3.7.8), which provides the reader with both a historical context and an additional laudatory dimension to Severus' military achievement (cf. 3.7.8: "But this one man [i.e. Severus] destroyed three reigning emperors). Crucially, 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.[61] It is possible that Herodian is engaging intertextually with Cassius Dio here, turning a negative detail about Severus into a highly encomiastic one.[62] This digression also signposts the end of Severus' civil wars.

Other analeptic references in Herodian's narrative may be interpreted in a similar manner. Herodian refers to the consequences of Severus' victory at the Battle of Cyzicus for the cities of the Eastern provinces, which are led (as he says) to civil strife and political struggles out of jealousy and inter-city rivalry (3.2.7). From this specific instance Herodian proceeds to make a backward mention of the mutual jealousy and continual inter-city fighting of the Greek cities, which he says caused the loss of the strength of Greece, and thus its easy submission to the rule of the Macedonians and then to the Romans (3.2.8). Once again Herodian makes explicit the continuity between past and present: "This same disease of jealous envy has been transmitted to the cities that have prospered right up to the present day" (3.2.8).[63] Through his use of analeptic digressions Herodian thus places his history within a wider historical perspective and offers his readers a general lesson that might be applicable to their own present.

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60 See Rubin 1980, 105: "A pro-Severan source, written for Greek readers in the East, may have attempted to show that it was Severus, not Niger, who deserved to be considered a true heir to Alexander's greatness".

61 See Whittaker 1969, 303 n. 3.

62 Cf. 3.15.2–3 on Severus' obituary: "Finally and slowly Severus did die, though really broken with grief, after a life of greater military distinction than any other emperor. No one had ever before been so successful in civil wars against rivals or in foreign wars against the barbarians".

63 On the destructive inter-city rivalry of the Greek cities, see also Plut. *Ages.* 15.2–3; *Flam.* 11.3–7; App. *pr.* 8.

4 Ethnography

Herodian's ethnographic passages extend from brief comments on the national-ity of an individual to more elaborate sections on specific (foreign) groups of people, their habits and generic features.[64] With regard to the first of these, one might consider Herodian's remark upon the reaction of Eclectus, Commodus' chamberlain, when he sees that the emperor's death-warrant includes him among others: "Eclectus grew pale when he saw what was written. As an Egyp-tian he was characteristically given to act upon his impulses and be controlled by his emotions" (1.17.6). In a similar way, Herodian comments on Saturninus' reaction to Plautianus' proposal to take part in the plot against Severus and Caracalla: "When he heard this, the tribune was astounded, but did not lose his head. Like a sensible person (he was a Syrian, and Easterners are fairly sharp-witted), he saw the madness which had taken hold of his commander" (3.11.8).[65]

A lengthier, and rather unfavourable, aside on the Syrians occurs later in Herodian's account of Niger's accession. There Herodian relates that the Syrians are erratic people, fond of holidays and festivals, who love Niger because of his mildness and willingness to support and share their enthusiasm about festivals and shows (2.7.9–10).[66] Herodian's commentary on the Syrians serves to explain why they submit to Niger and also gives a glimpse of Niger's character. In the following narrative Niger appears to be careless about his administrative duties and prone to an idle life of luxury and pleasure in Antioch (2.8.9–10). Niger's idleness and luxurious living are particularly thrown into relief through the contrast with Severus' energy and military prowess, which Herodian's narrative constantly draws attention to.[67]

Indeed, central to Herodian's depiction of Severus, as has been noted earlier, is his capacity to monitor the perceptions of his subjects. This is particularly evident in his dealings with the Pannonians. These people, as Herodian explains,

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[64] On Herodian's interest in ethnography, cf. Whittaker 1969, 15 n. 3; 116 n. 2; Widmer 1967, 35–51, esp. 35: "Spezifisches Interesse für Geographie und Ethnographie fehlt bei Herodian, da Imperium wie fremde Länder ausserhalb für ihn nur als Kulisse zu den Taten der Kaiser die-nen"; Pitcher 2018, 237–238, 243.

[65] Cf. Herodian's close association between Maximinus' barbaric origins and his bloodthirsty temperament (7.1.2).

[66] Cf. Severus' comment at 2.10.7: "It is elegant, witty remarks that the Syrians are good at, particularly the people of Antioch". On the Antiochians' love of Niger, see also 3.1.3; 3.4.1.

[67] On this point, see Bersanetti 1938; Sidebottom 1998, 2808; de Blois 1998, 3417; Marasco 1998, 2850–2852; Hidber 2006, 207–210; Hekster 2017, 121–122; Pitcher 2018, 243, 246.

were "intellectually dull and slow-witted when it comes to crafty words or subtle actions", besides their imposing physiques and bellicose nature (2.9.11). Herodian's excursus on the Pannonians has the effect of explaining their submission to Severus and their proclamation of him as emperor (2.9.11), while also illuminating Severus' duplicitous character (cf. 2.9.2; 2.13).[68] Most significantly, it encourages us to think back to Niger's accession story, for a similar reflection (as we saw above) on the Syrians recurs at that moment in the narrative where Niger, like Severus, tries to win over the inhabitants of his province to his objectives.[69] The narrative parallelism and juxtaposition at this point tacitly reveal key characteristics of the leaders on the two sides, which typify the two men and their reigns and help to illuminate their success and fall. Duplicity will prove so successful a key to Severus' survival, while Niger's penchant for shows and festivals is central to his downfall (cf. 3.4.7).

A similar case is provided by Herodian's commentary on the people of Alexandria in his narrative of Caracalla's deceit of them: "The people of Alexandria are by nature extremely frivolous and easily roused for very trivial reasons" (4.8.7). This ethnographic segment explains the excitement of the Alexandrians about Caracalla's supposed goodwill and their enthusiastic reception of him in the city (4.8.7−8).[70] Accordingly, it reveals Caracalla's treacherous nature and cruelty — both characteristics that he shares with his father.[71] It also creates tragic irony owing to the distance between an omniscient narrator and reader and the in-text characters, here the Alexandrians, who ignore the real dangers that surround them.[72] This enhances the readers' interest and arouses their attention to the sequence of events leading to the Alexandrians' massacre (4.9). Soon thereafter Herodian adds about the Alexandrians that they were naturally

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68 On Severus and the Pannonians, see Kemezis 2014, 241: "Severus is ideally adapted to such people. He can assimilate himself to their toughness, as he will show on the march to Rome, while retaining his essential cunning, which allows him to control them through their simplicity".
69 See Zimmermann 1999, 172; Hekster 2017, 121. Generally, see Zimmermann 1999, 171−173 for a successful schematic presentation of the most important correspondences between the two accession stories.
70 Cf. the enthusiastic welcome of Caracalla in Parthia, which turns out to be destructive for the Parthian people as well. See esp. 4.11.3 where an ethnographical detail is included: "This is their [i.e. the Parthians'] form of dancing on occasions when they have taken quite a lot to drink".
71 See Sidebottom 1998, 2816.
72 On irony in Herodian's *History*, especially the speeches, see Sidebottom 1998, 2778, 2805, 2817, 2818, 2819, who stresses that "their commonly ironic tone [...] also lets them function as devices which help to create the fiction of the reader's mastery over the text. The reader of Herodian's text is frequently privileged over the audiences and the speakers in frame" (2817).

prone to lampoons and jokes that could be offensive (4.9.2). Such lampoons directed against Caracalla, although the Alexandrians considered them as "light-hearted comedy", fomented Caracalla's hostility against them (4.9.3). The Alexandrians' inclination towards belittling witticisms is juxtaposed with Caracalla's violence and hot temper (4.9.3).

It is worth noticing that the rest of Herodian's digressive remarks on ethnography are found in his descriptions of battles. To a certain extent this practice is expected. It provides the readers with necessary information about the people with whom an emperor is dealing or against whom he is fighting, thus advancing their understanding of the specific circumstances of fighting, or even the absence of it. With regard to the latter, it is important to mention that, despite Marcus' fear lest the barbarians "would despise Commodus for his youth and attack him" (1.3.5),[73] and despite Commodus' own similar statement in his pre-battle speech about the danger of the barbarians' growing confidence (1.5.8),[74] Commodus abandons responsibility in the North (1.6.7–8). He and his commanders rather persuade the barbarians to become their allies by large subsidies (1.6.8). Herodian interrupts his narrative at this point to enlarge on the barbarians' love for money: "Since barbarians are naturally avaricious, they provide for their necessities of life by completely fearless, foraging raids or else by bargaining for peace at a high price" (1.6.9). Herodian underscores Commodus' practice of giving the barbarians a lavish sum of money in order to purchase his piece of mind (1.6.9). As Whittaker rightly notices, this is "one of H[erodian]'s stereotypes for unsuccessful emperors".[75] One might compare, for example, Macrinus (4.15.8–9) or Severus Alexander (6.7.9). In the case of Severus Alexander, Herodian includes another ethnographic excursus on the barbarians: "This was the most effective bargaining counter with the Germans, who were avaricious and always ready to trade peace with the Romans in exchange for gold. That was why Alexander attempted to buy terms from them rather than risk the danger of war" (6.7.9). The connection between Commodus, Severus Alexander, or even Macrinus becomes especially discernible in their pre-battle speeches in which all three emperors include reflections on the barbarians

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73 Herodian adds the explanatory note that "barbarians are apt to be easily roused even for quite haphazard reasons" (1.3.5).
74 1.5.8: "If the barbarians are checked at the beginning of a new reign, they will not now gain confidence from contempt of immaturity, and later they will be cautious, frightened by their previous experiences." Cf. Pompeianus' advice to Commodus: "We shall put new heart into the barbarians, who will accuse us not of longing to return home, but of retreating in panic" (1.6.5).
75 Whittaker 1969, 36. Cf. Mattern 1999, 121, 179–180. More generally, on the emperors' treatment of barbarians, see Marasco 1998, 2881–2888.

(1.5.8; 4.14.7; 6.3.7). However, in all of these instances, the military reality turns out to be much more difficult and complex for the emperors, and their encouraging harangues come to seem relevant only at the rhetorical level.[76]

If we turn to Herodian's battle narratives themselves, we can see that digressive passages about ethnography are intended to illuminate a specific style of fighting of foreign nations and explicate the progress of a battle. A detailed digression on Britain — I discuss topography in the next section — and the barbarians occurs in Herodian's account of Severus' British expedition (3.14.6–8). Here Herodian is explicit about the reason for his digression: "These, then, were the conditions for which Severus prepared the armaments likely to suit the Roman army and damage or frustrate a barbarian attack" (3.14.8).[77] The greater length of the digression at this point also creates an effect of retardation, which both relieves anxiety as well as increases suspense about the development of the battle.

A similar effect is produced by the information Herodian offers about barbarians in Macrinus' battle against the Parthians, particularly concerning their riding of camels and their weakness in close-quarter fighting (4.15.3).[78] These details reveal the opposing fighting strategies of the clashing forces and sensitize the reader to the challenges and problems to which the Romans and the Easterners are respectively exposed. Accordingly, it enhances the polarity between them and makes their clash particularly arresting and suspenseful. One might compare Herodian's ethnographical commentary in his account of Severus Alexander's war against the Parthians. Alexander divides his army into three columns in order to catch his enemy unexpected on multiple fronts, and

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76 On this disjunction in Herodian's *History*, see Kemezis 2014, 255 with n. 77. On the connection between Commodus and Caracalla in their speeches, see Kemezis 2014, 254–255.

77 Pitcher 2012, 271 comments on this digression: "It would be difficult to claim, however, that the intricacy of detail here is all strictly relevant to the action". Hekster 2017, 126, on the other hand, suggests that the details about Britain serve to illuminate the foreignness of the area in which Severus was to die. Hekster also stresses the paradox that, while Severus could overcome the strangeness of the most distant area, he was not able to prevent Caracalla's schemes after his death. A detailed description of Britain and its inhabitants also occurs in Cass. Dio 77[76].12.1–5.

78 On this point, see another digression of Herodian at 3.4.8–9, which is placed after Severus' defeat of Niger and the desertion of many fugitive soldiers to the barbarians. Herodian attributes "the later development of the barbarians' skill in close-fighting against the Romans" to the fact that Niger's soldiers taught the barbarians new tactics. He then compares the new skills and methods of fighting which the barbarians acquired with their tactical knowledge up to that time. This digression, placed after the end of a serious event, may have a relaxing effect as well.

thus cause them to be split and become weaker and more disorderly in battle. Herodian then explains (cf. 6.5.3: οὐ γὰρ δή) Alexander's tactic by inserting some ethnographic information about the barbarians' military habits, which are contrary to those of the Romans (6.5.3–4). This kind of information not only advances our understanding of the identity of the barbarians, but also makes the conditions of the enemies, and Alexander's subsequent planning and expectations, more intelligible for the readers. As Herodian emphasizes, "Alexander believed he had devised a sound plan of campaign" (6.5.4). The following narrative, however, clearly shows that Alexander failed to carry out this plan, being unable to live up to the expectations that were generated by his exhortative pre-battle scheme.

5 Topography

In a programmatic passage which has already been mentioned in this discussion, Herodian juxtaposes his work with that of other historians and poets who devoted their entire works to the life of Severus and thus spent much more time than he did on the stages of his march, his speeches, the divine signs, the line of battle, the casualties, and the topography of each place. Herodian's own proclaimed aim in the *History*, however, is to focus on a number of emperors and give an unbiased account of the most important and distinguished deeds of Severus in a chronological order, drawing attention only to what is worthy of mentioning and remembering (2.15.7).

As regards topography, Herodian's statement invites two wider questions: to what extent and for what purposes does Herodian insert in his narrative descriptions of lands and places? And what kind of topographical information proves to be 'worthy of record' and 'worthy of remembering'?

The first digression of a topographic type occurs in Herodian's description of Laurentum, "a cooler spot, shaded by huge laurel groves", the place where on the advice of his doctors Commodus retired in order to protect himself from the plague (1.12.2). Herodian also adduces details about the measures taken by the inhabitants of the city in order to face the plague (1.12.2). Pitcher rightly notes that by including in his description of Laurentum "some of the traditional characteristics of the *locus amoenus* (the cool and pleasant shade, the 'redolent fragrance of the laurels'), Herodian pursues his strategy [...] of presenting the idyllic landscape of Italy as the site of sensuous withdrawal from political and

military realities", thus stressing all the more sharply Commodus' detachment from his responsibilities as emperor.[79]

Herodian's digressive description of the Alps has a similar characterizing force: "The Alps are a very high range of mountains, far bigger than anything in our part of the world, and act as a barricade for the protection of Italy; this is another of the advantages which nature has given to Italy, an impregnable barrier cast up in their land as a fortification and running from the northern to the southern coast" (2.11.8). The description of the line of the Alps as "the territorial boundary of Italy"[80] enhances and brings Julianus' cowardice more sharply into relief. Despite the fact that his advisers encouraged him to capture the Alpine passes, and so take advantage of and protect this physical barricade of Italy, Julianus does not dare to advance from the city (2.11.8–9). Another description of the Alps occurs in the last book of the *History*. There Herodian relates Maximinus' march against Italy. Herodian presents once again the Alpine passes as "a kind of natural fortification for Italy", and goes to some length to describe their heights and nearly intraversable terrain (8.1.5–6). Herodian emphasizes that Maximinus passes the Alps successfully (8.1.6–2.1). The interconnection between the two digressions on the Alps is instrumental in drawing a sharp contrast between Maximinus' warlike nature and Julianus' lack of courage.[81]

The same goes for the brief information Herodian gives about the Taurus Mountains: "The Taurus range lies between Cappadocia and Cilicia, dividing the northern from the eastern peoples" (3.1.4). The emphasis here on the Taurus Mountains as the territorial boundary of the North and the East evokes his description of the Alps earlier, encouraging an internal juxtaposition between Niger and Julianus. Unlike Julianus who does not dare to capture the Alps, Niger "issued orders that the passes and heights of the Taurus Mountains should be barricaded with strong walls and fortifications" (3.1.4).

Niger differs significantly from Julianus in his forethought and desire for action in advance. Here, the historian says, "Niger also sent an army in advance to capture Byzantium (cf. προύπεμψέ τε καὶ στρατιὰν προκαταληψομένην τὸ Βυζάντιον)" (3.1.5). This proactivity may be contrasted with Julianus' rejection of his councillors' advice "to march his troops out and capture the Alpine passes beforehand" (cf. καὶ τὰ στενὰ τῶν Ἄλπεων προκαταλαβεῖν) (2.11.8). Herodian then inserts a digression on Byzantium, focusing especially on the city's wealth

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79 Pitcher 2012, 277–278. The citation is from p. 278.

80 Whittaker 1969, 220 n. 2.

81 See Pitcher 2012, 274. See also Severus in his war against Albinus: "He also sent a force of soldiers to take control of the Alpine passes and guard the routes into Italy" (2.6.10).

and its geographical location that allowed benefits from land and sea (3.1.5). Herodian is much more brief than Cassius Dio in his topographical excursus on Byzantium (75[74].10–12), offering only those details that are essential for understanding Niger's desire to move against the city (3.1.6).[82] The historian enlarges on the fortification of Byzantium (3.1.6) and suggests a direct link with the present day: "Even today, when one sees the remaining ruins of the wall, one has to admire both the skill of the first builders and the †power† of those who later destroyed it" (3.1.7). This last point marks an implicit 'advance notice' of Severus' later success (cf. 3.6.9).[83]

On many occasions in Herodian's work, digressive material about topography, just like ethnography, helps to clarify the specific circumstances of fighting and to offer the reader opportunities for cross-comparison and reflection. In his account of Severus' siege of Hatra, for example, Herodian departs briefly from his main narrative and mentions: "This city, located on top of a lofty mountain, was surrounded by a high, strong wall manned by many bowmen" (3.9.4). The description is highly reminiscent of that of Byzantium earlier (3.1.5–6).[84] The recurrence has the effect of knitting together Severus' civil and foreign wars and presents a comprehensive picture of the formidable challenges which Severus' forces face.[85]

A rather interesting topographical digression occurs in Herodian's description of the river Rhine and the river Danube, particularly concerning their geography and their state during summer and winter (6.7.6–7). Herodian is explicit about the end of this digression: "Such was the natural condition of the rivers" (6.7.8). Although the material that the historian offers does not seem to be useful for a better understanding of Alexander's military tactics or the progress of his expedition,[86] it still exposes the reader to the specific circumstances that

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82 Pitcher 2012, 270–271. On the same digression in the two authors, see Kolb 1972, 76.

83 See Pitcher 2012, 271. On Dio's exciting description of the walls, see Cass. Dio 75[74].10.3–6; 75[74].14.4–6.

84 3.9.4 (Hatra): ἦν δὲ πόλις ἐπ' ἄκρας ὑψηλοτάτης ὄρους, τείχει μεγίστῳ καὶ γενναίῳ περιβεβλημένη, πλήθει τε ἀνδρῶν τοξοτῶν ἀκμάζουσα ~ 3.1.5–6 (Byzantium): πόλιν τῶν ἐπὶ Θράκης μεγίστην τότε καὶ εὐδαίμονα, πλήθει τε ἀνδρῶν καὶ χρημάτων ἀκμάζουσαν [...] περιτετείχιστό τε γενναίῳ τε καὶ μεγίστῳ ἡ πόλις τείχει.

85 On topographical details revealing the challenges faced by armies, see also 3.3.1–2; 3.3.6; 6.5.6; 7.1.7; 7.2.5.

86 Whittaker 1970, 128–129 n. 1 also finds Herodian's material about the rivers here "not obviously relevant to the history — winter on the Danube?". See also Pitcher 2012, 271: "The material about the river's behaviour in winter is thus an elaboration unwarranted by the dictates of the immediate plot", though he persuasively argues that "the alien harshness of these great rivers, when seen from the perspective of Rome and its environs, is an important element in the

spell trouble for Alexander. Whittaker and others have argued that "the inclusion of this material was not to give information to an ignorant audience but to please a sophisticated public".[87] I agree with this view, but I want to add that, here as elsewhere, Herodian's more extensive digressive passages, particularly those that interrupt the narrative of major events of history, such as battles, are introduced to create an effect of retardation as well, which can relax the readers or alternatively increase their interest in what follows.

Similar things can be said about Herodian's use of topographical discursions in the narrative of Maximinus' campaigns. More specifically, Herodian relates Maximinus' invasion of the German territory and his burning of the villages (7.2.3). There Herodian distances from his main narrative to insert a comment on the German houses, which serves to explain the quick spreading of the fire (7.2.3–4).[88] More remarkable is Herodian's inclusion of an elaborate digression about Aquileia in his narrative of Maximinus' siege of the city, particularly about the location of the city, its import and export activities, population, and defensive wall (8.2.3–4). Here we may remember Herodian's earlier digression on Byzantium. The details given are effective in presenting Aquileia as an important city that stands as a considerable obstacle to Maximinus' march on Rome (cf. 8.2.3; 8.4.8). In the remainder of the narrative, it is clearly shown that due to good generalship Aquileia was able to maintain sufficiency of provisions and withstand Maximinus' siege efficiently (cf. 8.5.3; 8.6.3–4).

6 Religion and antiquarianism

In our earlier discussion of Herodian's digressive remarks, it was observed that Herodian has a special interest in drawing attention to and offering details about customs and tradition. Here we shall try to see how Herodian matches religious and antiquarian digressions to the overall aims of his historical writing.

Herodian invites the readers to distance themselves from the main story with a brief digression on the Capitoline Games, directly before relating the revelation of Perennis' plot against Commodus: "The Romans celebrate a sacred festival in honour of Capitoline Jupiter. On this occasion there are all kinds of artistic shows and athletic contests, as is normal in an imperial city which cele-

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ideological opposition between the manly ardours of the frontier and the unwarlike seductions of Italy" (276).

87 Whittaker 1970, 129 n. 1. Cf. Roques 1990, 270 n. 63; Müller 1996, 333 ad loc.

88 Cf. 7.12.6 on a similar observation about buildings and their quick burning in Rome.

brates" (1.9.2). He also includes an excursus on the festival of the Hilaria before narrating Maternus' plot against Commodus (1.10.5), as well as on the Saturnalia before describing Commodus' killing by Marcia, Laetus and Eclectus (1.16.1–2). It is worth noticing that, after his narrative of Maternus' plot against Commodus, Herodian again decides to digress on the goddess Cybele (1.11.1–5). This is the only digression whose beginning and end are marked by the historian, who also plainly states the reasons for its insertion: "Through my research I have discovered why the Romans have an especial veneration for this goddess, and, in view of the lack of knowledge about this among some Greeks, I have decided to record it" (1.11.1).[89] In addition, at the end of the digression, he says: "That much has to be said about the goddess of Pessinus more extensively, since it will not bring unpleasant knowledge to those who have no precise understanding of Roman things" (1.11.5). Herodian's emphasis here coheres with his programmatic statement in the prologue about the pleasurable knowledge derived from his work (1.1.3).

What is remarkable in the last digression on the goddess Cybele is Herodian's clear declaration of his purpose of including it, namely to provide knowledge, and in particular pleasurable knowledge, to his audience (specifically Greeks) who have no precise awareness of Roman antiquities.[90] The character and function of this digression might be applicable to his other digressions about Roman entities, especially those on festivals, cults, and religion.[91] It should be added, nevertheless, that in all of the instances discussed so far, the very employment of a religious/antiquarian digression, besides revealing Herodian's interest in learning and transmission of knowledge, marks a major turning point in the career of Commodus. Since digressions come immediately before a significant event (an

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89 The word 'research' (ἱστορία), with the Herodotean sense here, strengthens Herodian's authorial identity as historian, for it "creates the impression of an 'objective' narrative": Hidber 2004, 205 with n. 16.

90 Whittaker 1969, xxix–xxx comments on Herodian's intended readership: "But it is almost impossible to imagine that most of the institutions so described were unfamiliar to any but the most illiterate". In his view, such material serves the purpose of "embellishing the narrative for the entertainment of a sophisticated public" (xxxi). Rowan 2007, 167, on the other hand, notes that "considering the very local nature of religion perhaps those festivals and processions which took place in Rome may not have been widely known or understood in other parts of the empire". On Herodian's actual readership including people of different cultural and social backgrounds, Greeks and non-Greeks, see Zimmermann 1999, 304; Hidber 2006, 17–19; Kemezis 2014, 28–29, 266–269.

91 See also Galimberti 2014, 117. We may include in this category of 'informatory digressions' Herodian's extensive excursus on the Roman practice of apotheosis (4.2.1–11). See also Rowan 2007, 170.

assassination or an assassination attempt), they cause an effect of 'retardation', which increases suspense, and essentially provide a much fuller contextualization of the event itself.[92]

The same principle holds for Herodian's description of the Temple of Peace (1.14.2–3) and the statue of Pallas (1.14.4), which are inserted into his account of the omens foreboding Commodus' overthrow (1.14). Once again a digression on religion "occur[s] when the authority of the emperor is undermined".[93] Here it is important to notice the choice of the digressive material: the Temple of Peace constitutes a symbol of power and public wealth (1.14.2–3), and his burning brings a social reversal. As the historian writes, "that night many rich were reduced to penury by the fire" (1.14.3). On the other hand, the myth about the transfer of Palladium from Troy to Italy evokes Aeneas, the progenitor of the Romans (1.14.4; cf. 1.11.3). Both the Temple of Peace and Aeneas create a pointed contrast with Commodus' subsequent megalomania and his disgrace of Roman ancestry and the office of emperor (cf. 1.14.8–9; 1.5.7). Herodian is explicit about the fact that "some people predicted that the destruction of the Temple of Peace was a portent of war. And, as it turned out, subsequent events confirmed this prophecy" (1.14.6). Hence, the historian's religious discursions turn out to play a significant narratological role: they function as (structural) markers of an important historical moment in Herodian's work, helping the transition to the narrative of Commodus' destruction.[94]

Both Palladium and Aeneas appear elsewhere in Herodian's narrative and reflect similar concerns. For example, in his account of Elagabalus' impious deeds, Herodian refers to Elagabalus' attempt to find a wife for his god Elagabal: "He [i.e. Elagabalus] transferred the statue of Pallas, which is revered by the Romans but kept hidden out of sight, to his own quarters. This statue was

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92 See also 8.8.3: "The soldiers' hidden attitude became suddenly clear during the celebrations of the Capitoline games", though here there is no digression. Herodian next narrates the murder of Maximus and Balbinus (8.8.3–6). Rowan 2007, 168 interestingly observes: "Herodian makes several digressions on religious topics. These digressions deserve close examination since not only do they highlight Herodian's conception of 'Roman' religion, but they also occur when the authority and power of the emperor are directly threatened". Rowan 2007, 169 also notes: "The placement of Herodian's digressions on religion perhaps indicates a conscious or unconscious association of religion with a challenge to social norms or the status quo".
93 Rowan 2007, 169.
94 Cf. Herodian's account of Commodus' degrading behaviour during the Saturnalia: "In the middle of this general festivity Commodus planned to make his public appearance before the Roman people, not from the palace, as was usual, but from the gladiators' barracks, dressed in armour instead of the purple-bordered toga of the emperors, and escorted in procession by the rest of the gladiators" (1.16.2).

never moved since it came from Troy (apart from when the temple caught fire)" (5.6.3). Just as before with Commodus — the reference to the fire harks back to the earlier narrative of Commodus' reign (1.14.4) — so here the transfer of the statue might ominously be linked with Elagabalus' transgressions and his following exposition of the Roman principate to danger and degradation. This ominous impression is further fostered by Herodian's reference to Elagabalus' abandonment of the sacred marriage of Pallas and his preference for the statue of Urania (5.6.4). At this point Herodian inserts a digression on the statue of Urania, which "is worshipped widely among the Carthaginians and other people in Libya" (5.6.4): "Tradition says that Dido the Phoenician set up the statue at the time, presumably when she founded the ancient city of Carthage, after cutting up the hide. The name used by Libyans for the goddess is Urania, by the Phoenicians Astroarche; they would also have it that she is the moon goddess" (5.6.4).

This digression is of great significance for different reasons. Firstly, Pallas as a warlike goddess is contrasted with Aphrodite Urania. In addition, Dido and Carthage are brought to the fore, suggesting a striking contrast to Aeneas and Rome, and accordingly between East and West. The fact that love and pleasure (associated with Aphrodite) as well as Dido and oriental cult prevail over arms and wars (associated with Pallas) as well as Aeneas and Roman tradition, activates an ideological polarity between Roman and barbarian that dominates Elagabalus' reign throughout Herodian's narrative.[95] Finally, Herodian's account of Elagabalus presents a story of the shattering victory of the barbarian and the East over the Roman. This is precisely the point that the two digressions mirror and become connected with one another. Closely relevant to this is Herodian's inclusion of an exceptionally extensive description of the cult of the Emesene God Elagabal at the point where he introduces the boy-emperor Elagabalus (5.3.4–5). Talking about the sacred Black Stone of Elagabal, Herodian makes explicit that "there was no actual man-made statue of the god, the sort Greeks and Romans put up; but there was an enormous stone [...] conical in shape and black" (5.3.5).

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95 On this theme in Herodian's depiction of Elagabalus, see Kemezis 2014, 239–252.

7 Conclusion

To conclude, the following points may be emphasized. Herodian's digressions are not always elaborate and extensive, but they often include a brief comment or observation on a specific character, event, or subject. Herodian's distancing from the main story also typically provides information about his historiographical programme and method, the past history of Greece and Rome, tradition, topography, ethnography, religion, and antiquarianism. All of these themes essentially attest to a range of topics in which Herodian has especial interest and of which he has (or at least projects that he has) knowledge. This shows the kind of multifarious interest and knowledge that Herodian wants to share with his readers — whether we assume that at least some of them are erudite and informed or not.

Rather than trying to extract information about the historical background of Herodian or his reader from the study of digressions,[96] my discussion has focused on the specific narrative presence and workings of digressive passages in Herodian's *History*. I have argued throughout that they do not simply play an ornamental or subservient role. Rather, they are an essential element of Herodian's historiography, and they have a significant function in his construction of plot, characters, and historical interpretation. It has been noticed that Herodian's digressive comments or sections amplify the statements made by Herodian or the characters, and they are closely relevant to the thematic concerns of the history. Herodian, following Lucian's historiographical model, is discrete in his use of digressions, and "touches on them lightly for the sake of expediency and clarity (τοῦ χρησίμου καὶ σαφοῦς ἕνεκα)" (*Hist. conscr.* 57).

Indeed, digressive material interacts in different ways with the historical narrative. It mirrors or contrasts themes of the plot, provides background information that enhances the reader's understanding of how the main story progresses, and it clarifies things by offering analogy or different temporal, cultural, historical, or even spatial perspectives. Even if digressions do not (at least explicitly) affect the central action of the story, they provide details which are necessary to understand it. They shed further light on the character of an individual or a nation, and on the relationship between the two. Here we may remember the

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96 See e.g. Burrows 1956, 8–9, 17, 27, 38–39; Whittaker 1969, xxviii–xxxi, 383 n. 1; Alföldy 1971 [= repr. 1989, 240–272]; Zimmermann 1999, 304–305, 311–316; Galimberti 2014, 119; Hidber 2006, 1–19; Rowan 2007 on religious digressions. Kemezis 2014, 233, 265–266 argues that Herodian's explanations of Roman customs and religious traditions serve to prevent his readers from identifying themselves as a single and unified cultural community.

excursuses on the Syrians and the Pannonians and their correlation with the characters of Niger and Severus respectively. More than once, it has been stressed that Herodian's narrative excursions are carefully positioned before important historical moments (such as assassinations, assassination attempts, and battles), in order to mark the route taken by the narrative and to give a larger meaning and importance to the momentum. On occasions, such as in the examples of religious digressions, they appear to be neatly integrated into the historical action, providing a much fuller contextualization of it.

Scholarship on Herodian has been especially acute on the way in which Herodian writes in patterns, drawing intratextual comparisons and connections even across a space of several books.[97] Digressions, as I have argued throughout, provide an important avenue for Herodian's practice of marking parallelisms between different characters and events. These interconnections, in turn, enrich the characterization through comparison and contrast. They also tacitly reveal compelling behavioural patterns and forward key themes in the agenda of Herodian's historiography, such as the image of young tyrants, the role of women in expressing imperial power, the relationship between leader and led, and so on. At the same time, they are instrumental in constructing a sense of unity throughout Herodian's work.

Finally, in the course of our analysis it has been shown that digressions make a contribution to Herodian's (self-)characterization. Herodian emerges as an author of wide-ranging interests and learning who deploys digressive material to build his authority as a historian. Moreover, the very deployment of this material reveals some formal characteristics of his historiographical technique — such as (cross-)comparison and connections, repetition, parallel examples, foreshadows, analepses, descriptions, eyewitness testimonies, and references to the present — which not only illustrate his historiographical credentials, but are also effective in drawing the readers into an active process of historical investigation, as well as in influencing their responses. It has further been observed that most of the digressions are being to some extent connected with the readers' own day, either by conveying information that is relevant and applicable in their own lives, or by drawing a direct link between then and now.

The reading of Herodian's *History* is frequently delayed by the insertion of digressive material, and this delay can give the readers respite from the primary narrative, especially when digressive segments are positioned within or after the narrative's highlight (such as a war or death), or enhance their suspense

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97 See Fuchs 1895; 1896; Sidebottom 1998, 2815–2817; Zimmermann 1999, 7, 64, 144, 151, 171, 255, 259–261; Scott 2018; Chrysanthou 2022.

about the unfolding of the story. Digressions can also edify readers as well as maximize their pleasure through endowing *poikilia* to the narrative[98] — we may recall, in particular, Herodian's remark on the lack of knowledge about the goddess Cybele among some Greeks and the pleasant knowledge that this extensive digression brings to the reader (1.11.1; 1.11.5). Further, they can make the readers think more profoundly by opening their eyes to wider, seemingly unrelated contexts, and sensitising them or training them to be sensitive to exploratory parallels and associations between different heroes, customs, and periods. It is interesting to observe how Herodian's reader is drawn to detect important intratextual connections between two or more apparently unrelated digressions in the *History*.

This comparative mode of reading is a useful means of gaining a nuanced appreciation of Herodian's history and a crucial condition for the active involvement of Herodian's reader in the historiographical process. The various interconnections, repeated themes and patterns that progressively emerge across successive reigns, all add meaning to Herodian's narrative. They creatively play with different levels of his readers' assumptions and expectations, often involving (as we saw) a certain tragic irony. The readers, for example, expect that, after a religious or antiquarian digression, a social and imperial upheaval will follow. This patterning keeps them in suspense and enhances their pleasure through confirming, thwarting, or even controverting their expectations, while inviting them to approach Herodian's narrative of a most fragmented period of Roman history as a unified whole. What prompts a discursion and fragmentation in Herodian's narrative can still pointedly contribute to cohesion and unity. This is not simply a historiographical point, but an important historical one too.

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98 Herodian reflects on the content of his history itself as being characterized by *poikilia*. See 1.1.5: "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)". On the close association between the notion of *poikilia* and readerly suspense, surprise, pleasure, and attentiveness, see Nünlist 2009, 31, 139, 198–202. On the notion of *variatio* and pleasure in reading, see esp. Cic. *Fam.* 5.12.4–5.

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Michael Hanaghan

Ammianus' Digressions and their Narrative Impact

Abstract: Ammianus' *Res Gestae* contains some thirty-two digressions. These vary considerably in length and content. This chapter examines the narrative impact of four of these digressions, namely Julian's Thracian campaign (22.8.1–48), the Persian pearls (23.6.85–88), the tragedian Phrynichus (28.1.2–5), and the bissextile day (26.1.7–14). These digressions suggest alternate histories, foreshadow plot developments, engage in metaliterary reflections on the narrative, and develop coded polemics, all the while providing powerful symbols for understanding the motivations and challenges of the leaders of the Roman empire in the fourth century. Each digression is directly connected to the main text, situated within a network of digressions, as they reflect the history and historical vantage point of Ammianus' age, and provide ample scope for metaphorical, allusive, narratological, and political implications.

Keywords: Ammianus Marcellinus, Late Antiquity, Historiography, Emperor Julian, Persia

1 Introduction

Ammianus' *Res Gestae* abounds with digressions, some thirty-two in total, ranging from the very small, an exceedingly brief digression on atoms, to the vast description of the Persian empire or the city of Rome.[1] The language that Ammianus uses to introduce his digressions and then return to the main narrative provides an indication of the aims of each digression, how Ammianus understood the relationship between his digressions and the narrative, and the principles that shaped their composition. These introductory remarks vary considerably, but key topoi recur. Ammianus often cites the timeliness (*tempestivum*, *tempus adest*) of embarking on a specific digression or the suitability (*convenit*)

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1 Amm. Marc. 26.1.2; 23.6.1–84; 14.6.3–25. The exact number depends on the definition of what constitutes a digression, for discussion of which see below.

of doing so.[2] Typically the digressions' function is labelled as either explanatory or descriptive.[3] Their length is short, as Ammianus hastens to return to the main narrative, unless the importance of the subject matter demands a longer treatment. This importance is rarely intrinsic to the subject matter at hand, but relative to the main narrative. Digressions may begin at the main narrative, but by the time they end, Ammianus may have found himself some way removed (*evectus longius*) requiring him to retrace his steps to pick up where he left off.[4] Rather than separate, wholly contained entities, Ammianus' digressions may be better understood as asides, akin to dramatic soliloquies, in which Ammianus provides information to the reader to help them understand the primary narrative, directly, by for example, detailing the geography of Gaul or Persia, or indirectly, by suggesting narrative lines that the text will follow.[5] The same scene may have both effects; Ammianus' description of Gaul both informs the reader as to what Gaul was like during the period of Ammianus' narrative and indicates through its sustained focus on Gaul that this part of the Roman empire will be important for the narrative that follows (and indeed much of the action of book sixteen takes place in Gaul).[6]

This chapter examines the impact that Ammianus' asides have on his main narrative, focusing on four case studies: Julian's Thracian campaign (22.8.1–48), the Persian pearls (23.6.85–88), the tragedian Phrynichus (28.1.2–5), and the bissextile day (26.1.7–14) to reflect the breadth and depth of Ammianus' use of digressions to inform his narrative. These digressions suggest alternate histories, foreshadow plot developments, engage in metaliterary reflections on the narrative, and develop coded polemics, all the while providing powerful symbols for understanding the motivations and challenges of the leaders of the Roman empire in the fourth century. Each digression is directly connected to the main text, situated within a network of digressions, as they reflect the history and historical vantage point of Ammianus' age, and provide ample scope for metaphorical, allusive, narratological, and political implications.

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2 Amm. Marc. 14.8.1: *opportunum*; 15.9.2: *tempestivum*; 17.4.2: *tempestivum*; 17.7.9: *adesse tempus existimo*; 21.10.3: *conveniet*; 22.8.1: *adpositum est, ut existimo, tempus*; 22.14.7: *conveniet*; 27.4.1: *convenit*.

3 14.4.3: *expediam*; 14.6.3: *perstringam*; 15.9.2: *ostendere*; 19.4.2: *explicabo*; 20.11.26: *expositio* [...] *ostendet*; 21.10.3: *ostendi*; 22.8.1: *monstrare*; 22.14.7: *expediri*; 23.4.1: *monstrare*; 23.6.1: *monstrare*.

4 Amm. Marc. 22.16.24. Emmett 1983, 44 shows that Ammianus' conception of length cannot be equated with his conception of completeness, and so his reference to his lengthy departure in this excursion does not contradict his use of *strictim* i.e. 'summarily' to introduce the digression.

5 Amm. Marc. 15.9.2–12.6.

6 Sundwall 1996, 626.

Traditional approaches to these scenes underscored their supposed lack of importance, factual inaccuracies, and failure to have much bearing on Ammianus' main narrative history.[7] In 1970 Alexander Demandt recognised the narrative impact of the eclipse digression in book 23, noting the prophetic relevancy of the eclipse occurring immediately prior Julian's rise to the position of sole Augustus, despite the fact that no visible eclipse actually occurred at this point in history.[8] His study prompted renewed interest in Ammianus' digressions,[9] including in Sabbah's 1978 monograph *L'Methode d'Ammien* and Barnes' 1998 monograph *Ammianus and the Representation of Historical Reality*.[10] Barnes identified thirty-two 'formal digressions' using the litmus test that such digressions must have either introductory or transitory remarks.[11] Oddly, Barnes' references to Ammianus' text routinely excludes these framing remarks from the text of the digression proper (which is all the more curious, given Barnes' definition effectively prioritises Ammianus' framing of the digressions). For Barnes, their presence in Ammianus' text was unprecedented for a Roman historian, no other author writing in Latin came close to the "number, scale or variety of those [digressions] offered by Ammianus, nor [to] displaying his range of erudition" through his digressions.

Barnes' focus however remained Ammianus' representation of history rather than his narrative. Thus, for Barnes the eclipse digression was mere 'imaginative fiction'; Ammianus had been led astray from the historian's true purpose by an unforgiveable literary dalliance.[12] Such an approach devalues Ammianus' narrative (rather than the history it purports) and inevitably ends up judging Ammianus' work by modern historiographical standards.

Perhaps if the eclipse scene was the only digression to impact the narrative, or reveal Ammianus' literary proclivities, Barnes' diminishing of their narrative

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7 E.g. Rolfe 1936, vii. For a discussion of the traditional approach to Ammianus' digressions see Den Hengst 2010, 236.

8 Demandt 1970, 492 ff. For the absence of a visible eclipse at this point in history see Hanaghan 2018, 127–130. Cf. a similar chronological distortion for narrative purposes in Ammianus' account of the great tsunami at Amm. Marc. 26.10.15–19 for which see Kelly 2012, 142.

9 Emmett 1972. See also Emmett 1981, 15–33 and Emmett 1983, 42–53.

10 Sabbah 1978, 595–596 includes Ammianus' digressions in a long list of textual features which suggest meaning and [...] retrouvent une utilité et même une nécessité fonctionnelle : celle de documents très élaborés, d'autant plus efficaces qu'ils sont plus stylisés. "find a usefulness and even a functional necessity: that of very elaborate documents, all the more effective as they are more stylized." Barnes 1998, 32–42 listed formal excursus as a key component of Ammianus' 'narrative blocks'.

11 Barnes 1998, 222–224.

12 Barnes 1998, 106, for which see Den Boeft *et al.* 1987, 22–51, and Hanaghan 2018, 127–130.

contribution might have gained more traction. Instead, literary approaches to Ammianus' digressions have come to dominate scholarly debate. Vergin's monograph length study of Ammianus' geographical digressions, for example, emphatically linked the literary and narrative importance of the digressions to Ammianus' conception of historiography.[13] For Vergin this demanded a reconsideration of the limitations of the language of digression, which implicitly — to some extent at least — works against the consideration of digressions as bound to the main narrative in contextually meaningful ways.[14]

Not all of Vergin's interpretations however met with scholarly acceptance of the supposed narrative significance of some of Ammianus' digressions. For example, Vergin argued that Ammianus' depiction of the Rhine's violence reflects the nature of the barbarians who live by its shore.[15] Given that the link between topography and ethnography is well established in historiography, such a claim was likely to convince the interpretative community of its merits. Vergin, however, also argued that the description of the Rhine flowing into Lake Constance was a metaphor for the barbarian threat to the Roman empire, embodied by the static lake. Den Hengst, in his review of Vergin's monograph, considered both interpretations, accepting the former, and rejecting the latter.[16] For Den Hengst, the latter claim was 'completely arbitrary'.[17] In critiquing Vergin's interpretations of the symbolic and narrative importance of the Rhine and Lake Constance, Den Hengst implied a standard by which interpretations of narrative importance of Ammianus' digressions might be judged, namely they needed to make meaningful connections between the digression in question and generic precedents or uncover and interpret significant intratextual or intertextual allusions. This standard is reflected in Den Hengst's analysis of Ammianus' 'scientific' digressions which allowed for their ability to embellish and structure the narrative and in the work of other scholars;[18] Kelly's influential *Ammianus: the Allusive Historian* for example convincingly showed Sallustian allusions energised Ammianus' moral critics in his second Rome digression, and so clearly established the literary significance of the moralising function of the digression.[19] Similarly, Ross' *Ammianus' Julian. Narrative and genre in the Res Gestae* explored the complexities of Ammianus' narrative techniques and

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13 Vergin 2013, 12–18.
14 Vergin 2013, 18.
15 Vergin 2013, 75–76.
16 Den Hengst 2013.
17 Den Hengst 2013.
18 Den Hengst 2010, 236 ff.
19 Kelly 2008, 206–208.

their relation to the historiographical tradition, including in his digressions.[20] In addition to these monograph length literary studies, various article length studies have examined the narrative impact of individual digressions and demonstrated the limits of historicising Ammianus' claims.[21]

Not all scholars are as accepting as Vergin or even Den Hengst of the narrative potential of Ammianus' digressions. Feraco, in both his detailed, monograph length study of Ammianus' Persian digression and his monography survey of several of Ammianus' geographic and ethnographic digressions accepted that since digressions are well established in the historiographical tradition, they deserved to be read within a wider context, even if their connection to the main narrative remained relatively weak.[22] This approach has garnered some support,[23] but in recognising the narrative capacity of Ammianus' digressions, Feraco lit upon the major hermeneutic challenge of interpreting Ammianus' digressions. Each reader can (and must) determine for themselves to what extent a digression responds to the main narrative. Any determination about the narrative resonance of any of Ammianus' digressions is necessarily an act of interpretation, an attempt to make meaning from the text which is not explicit. The reward for navigating these interpretative dangers is a far richer understanding of the text, certainly a far richer understanding of Ammianus' digressions, and his skill as an author.

2 Julian's imaginary Thracian campaign

In book twenty-two, shortly after Julian becomes sole emperor, Ammianus provides a description of the coast of Thrace, the Hellespont, and the Black Sea. Drijvers analysed this digression in detail, showing that Ammianus' geographical claims are routinely wrong and demonstrating that Ammianus' sources almost certainly included Dionysius' poem.[24] At the end of his analysis, Drijvers called for primary consideration of the digression as "a piece of literature."[25] This section takes up Drijver's call, extending his analysis of the point of the

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20 Ross 2016, 184–195.
21 E.g. Sundwall 1996, 619–641; Drijvers 1998, 268–278; Kelly 2012, 141 ff.; Burgersdijk 2016, 111–132; Hanaghan 2017, 445–457.
22 Feraco 2004; 2011.
23 Merrils 2013, 624.
24 Drijvers 1998, 268–278.
25 Drijvers 1998, 278.

digression beyond Ammianus "[intention] to honour Julian and to demonstrate that his influence went beyond the frontiers of the Empire."[26]

Ammianus introduces the digression by claiming his description is derived from reading and autopsy (Amm. Marc. 22.8.1):

> *Adpositum est, ut existimo, tempus ad has partes nos occasione magni principis devolutos super Thraciarum extimis situque Pontici sinus visa vel lecta quaedam perspicua fide monstrare.*

> The time is at hand, I think, now that the occasion of a great prince has taken us there, for me to give a clear and honest account about the remote places of Thrace and the expanse of the Pontic Sea, partly from what I have seen and partly from what I have read.

These claims are historiographical tropes;[27] the former gestures at Ammianus' use of sources in the account, but the latter is also worthy of real consideration. For Drijvers Ammianus' claim to autopsy is "merely an agreeable fiction", the logic being that if Ammianus had actually seen the area himself, then his description would not have included factual errors.[28] The difference between autoptic and panoptic claims is here important; Ammianus may well have glimpsed the region in his travels, at the very least Mount Athos in Macedonia.[29] Accurate knowledge of an entire region is hardly evidence for an absence of personal knowledge of parts of the area. The claim to autopsy is a clear reminder to the reader that Ammianus had travelled widely.[30]

The description of the journey from the Aegean to the Pontus Euxinus is littered with literary references, especially to epic.[31] The island of Tenedos is mentioned, where the Greeks hid while waiting for their men secreted in the wooden horse to unlock the gates of Troy,[32] alongside Lemnos and Thasos, despite being dwarfed by their size.[33] Explicit references follow to (Amm. Marc. 22.8.3): "*Ilium*

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26 Drijvers 1998, 271.

27 See Marincola 1997, 63 ff.

28 Drijvers 1998, 275. For analysis of Ammianus' claims to autopsy see especially Kelly 2008, 87–103. See also Kulikowski 2008, 57–60.

29 Sundwall 1996, 623–624 argues that Ammianus' autoptic claims relied in part on his extensive travel during his service as *protector domesticus* in the Roman army, noting that Ammianus "journeyed from Babylonia to Mauretania, Gaul to Kurdistan, and spent time in Egypt, the Black Sea region, Thrace, Cologne, Ctesiphon, Antioch, Laconia, Rome, and perhaps Constantinople."

30 Kelly 2008, 36.

31 Amm. Marc. 22.8.2 ff.

32 Virg. *Aen*. 2.21. Tenedos is approx. 38 km^2 while Lemnos is 476 km^2 and Thasos 380 km^2. For analysis of the references to Troy at Amm. Marc. 22.8.2 ff., see Feraco 2011, 170–171.

33 Amm. Marc. 22.8.2.

heroicis casibus claram" "Ilium, famous for heroic disasters" and the city of Aenos "*qua diris auspiciis coepta moxque relicta ad Ausoniam veterem ductu numinum properavit Aeneas.*" "a city which Aeneas began under unfavourable auspices, but presently abandoned it and hastened on to ancient Ausonia under the guidance of the gods." Ammianus progresses to where the Aegean narrows (Amm. Marc. 22.8.4) "*per Achillis Aiacisque sepulchra*" "alongside the tombs of Achilles and Ajax." In addition to these references to epic, explicit allusions to the events of history and myth abound, including various Persian defeats.[34] This extended and detailed allusive tapestry of events, which draws so widely on events recalled by history and literature, amounts to an overt display of erudition. The catalogue of places and references make an accumulative impression on the reader, as to exactly how much Ammianus has in fact read, but the same could be said of almost any long, literary catalogue.[35]

Consideration of an earlier scene in the main narrative provides a compelling reason for Ammianus' inclusion of this digression.[36] Prior to the inclusion of the digression, Ammianus notes that Julian repaired all the fortresses in Thrace and reinforced the troops along the Danubian frontier.[37] Some advisers made a suggestion (Amm. Marc. 22.7.8):

> *Quae cum ita divideret nihil segnius agi permittens, suadentibus proximis, ut adgrederetur propinquos Gothos saepe fallaces et perfidos, hostes quaerere se meliores aiebat: illis enim sufficere mercatores Galatas, per quos ubique sine condicionis discrimine venundantur.*

> When he [Julian] was arranging these affairs in this way, allowing no laziness in getting it done, his close advisers urged him to attack the neighbouring Goths, who were often deceitful and treacherous; but he said that he was looking for better enemies; that for the Goths the Galatian traders were enough, by whom they were offered for sale everywhere without distinction of rank.[38]

This detail casts the Euxine Sea digression and its literary references in a different light. Ammianus effectively advertises this region as a compelling counter scenario for where Julian could have invaded instead of Persia. His various claims to factual knowledge about the geography of the area together press the

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34 Amm. Marc. 22.8.4 ff.

35 On the role of Ammianus' digressions in displaying his *paideia* see Sánchez Vendramini 2016, 36–37.

36 Den Boeft *et al.* 2009, 77 note the similarity of Ammianus' inclusion of interesting details in both excursus but otherwise do not link their interpretation of the two excursus.

37 Amm. Marc. 22.7.1–7.

38 For the network of slave trading that Julian refers to with this remark see Paolella 2020, 47.

claim that Julian would have known the topography in some detail prior to this campaign — unlike in Persia, where the alien topography and conditions repeatedly provide stumbling blocks.[39] The litany of epic and historiographical references present Thrace, the Hellespont, and the Black Sea, as the site of epic narratives and pivotal historical victories, the kind of place suited to the 'great emperor' that Ammianus sees in Julian, his epic hero.[40] Shortly after the aside, Julian travels to Antioch, winters there, and then prepares to invade Persia.[41] The suggestion of his advisers, and the prospect of conquest around the Euxine Sea dissipates as one of many alternative paths that history failed to take.

This interpretation, that the Thracian digression in book twenty-two dangles the prospect that Julian might have invaded there instead of Persia, is confirmed by the position of the second Thrace digression in book twenty-seven.[42] In that book the digression appears immediately prior to Valens' successful campaign against the Goths on the other side of the Danube, the very enemies in the same region that Julian's advisers suggested to him in book twenty-two.[43] If only Julian had listened to his advisers, then Valens' successes against the Goths could have been his, instead of his disastrous Persian campaign.

Clearly this digression has a major narrative implication in its creation of a counter-scenario — what could have been — if only Julian had listened to the sound advice of his confidants. The detailed catalogue of literary and historical events promoted Thrace and the Euxine Sea as a region that is conducive to the making of history and its celebration in literature. The contrast with Persia is acute. In the Persian digression Ammianus provides an account of how the Persian empire began, and then expanded, before suffering numerous defeats when it overextended.[44] Persia's contests with Rome receives a brief mention, without specific details, that acknowledges that Rome and Persia were often equally matched, with each side enjoying moments of ascendency over the other.[45] This equilibrium is more cautionary than might at first appear given that Ammianus' claim is underpinned by the fact that no Roman army ever conquered Persia, and even those that won considerable gains, such as Septimius

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39 E.g. Amm. Marc. 24.1.11; 24.2.5; 24.8.7.
40 For Ammianus' reference to his Julianic books as akin to panegyric Amm. Marc. 16.1.1. For his conception of Julian as a 'great emperor' see e.g. Amm. Marc. 22.8.1: *magnus princeps*.
41 Amm. Marc. 22.9.2; 22.12.
42 Amm. Marc. 27.4.2–14.
43 Amm. Marc. 27.5.1–10.
44 Amm. Marc. 23.6.7–8.
45 Amm. Marc. 23.6.9.

Severus or Galerius, ultimately failed to hold them, as the geopolitical situation returned to its equilibrium.

3 Persian pearls and Julian's quest for wealth (Amm. Marc. 23.6.85–88)

The longest digression in the extant books of Ammianus' *Res Gestae* occurs in book twenty-three where Ammianus describes Persia over the course of some three thousand, six hundred and eighty-four words. The length of this digression is certainly warranted; Persia has already featured substantially in the narrative, and continues to do in the remaining Julianic books and those that follow. At the end of the Persian digression, Ammianus describes the Persians' appearance, including their use of jewellery (Amm. Marc. 23.6.84): *armillis uti monilibusque aureis et gemmis, praecipue margaritis quibus abundant, adsuefacti post Lydiam victam et Croesum.* "To the use of golden armlets and neck-chains, gems, and especially pearls, of which they possess a great number, they first became accustomed after Lydia was defeated and Croesus." The Persian use of jewellery is symbolic of their wealth, especially their pearls, which Ammianus notes are in abundance.

Ammianus explicitly links this practice to their military conquests in Lydia against king Croesus. The link between pearls and conquest first appears in a brief anecdote in book twenty-two (Amm. Marc. 22.4.8):

> *notum est enim sub Maximiano Caesare vallo regis Persarum direpto gregarium quendam sacculum Parthicum, in quo erant margaritae, repertum proiectis imperitia gemmis abisse pellis nitore solo contentum.*

> For it is known that under Galerius, when a fortification of the Persian king was ransacked, a common soldier found a Parthian purse with pearls in it, in ignorance of the valuable gems threw them away, and went off happy with just the shine of the leather.

The anecdote appears in Ammianus' account of the actions Julian took to reform the military, correcting their weak and greedy inclinations.[46] The actions of Galerius' soldier reflect his ignorance of wealth and subsequent lack of greed, a mere sixty years or so prior to Julian's reign. In both instances the Persian pearls are indicative of their wealth.

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46 Rohrbacher 2006, 122 speculates that this anecdote may have had an oral source.

At the end of the Persian digression, a second, much shorter, digression on pearls immediately follows (Amm. Marc. 23.6.85):

> *Restat ut super ortu lapidis huius pauca succinctius explicentur. apud Indos et Persas margaritae reperiuntur in testis marinis robustis et candidis permixtione roris anni tempore praestituto conceptae.*

> It remains for a few points to be explained about the origin of this gem. Among the Indians and the Persians pearls are found in strong, white sea-shells, which are conceived at a definite time of the year by being covered with ocean spray.

Ammianus specifically notes the pearls' abundance, and their great value, at least relative to the pearls found off the coast of Britain. At this point in the narrative Persian pearls stand metonymically (and synecdochally) for Persian wealth. An account of how pearls are formed follows, including how they are gathered (Amm. Marc. 23.6.87): *capturas autem difficiles et periculosas et amplitudines pretiorum illa efficit ratio*. "Their taking is difficult and dangerous, and their price is high." Given the close link in Ammianus' text between Persian wealth and its pearls, the description of how pearls are captured (*capturas*) reflects on how Persia (and all its wealth) may be taken.[47] Like the pearls, Persia is hidden away, in dangerous parts, that are too difficult to access, but the risks of going after Persia, like the risks run by a pearl fisherman, must be weighed against the vast reward, the ample wealth that such a conquest would entail, including from its many pearls.

At no point in the narrative does Ammianus outline Julian's purpose for invading Persia, but he does come close a couple of times. In Julian's necrologue Ammianus blames Constantine for inflaming the Persian situation, which is a clever albeit probably ineffective way of redirecting the blame placed on Julian.[48] A small anecdote in book twenty-three indicates that Julian was cognisant of Persia's wealth. His horse, Babylonius, is shot by a missile (Amm. Marc. 23.3.6):

> [...] *dum dolorum inpatiens volvitur, auro lapillisque ornamenta distincta conspersit. quo ostento laetior exclamavit plaudentibus proximis Babylona humi procidisse ornamentis omnibus spoliatam.*

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47 Devilliers 2002, 61 "les difficultés de leur [i.e. les perles] capture [...] préfigureraient les dangers de la campagne entreprise par Julien." "The difficulty of their capture [that is, the pearls] prefigures the dangers of the campaign embarked upon by Julian."
48 Amm. Marc. 25.4.23.

> While it rolled around in intolerable plain, it dispersed its ornaments, decorated with god and gems. At which sign Julian shouted aloud quite happily to bystanders' applause that Babylon had fallen to the ground stripped of all its ornaments.[49]

The participle *spoliatam* suggest the *spolia* of a successful military campaign, which in turn implies that Julian anticipated that a successful invasion of Persia would bring great wealth to the Roman Empire, including presumably an abundance of pearls.

Ammianus' description of pearls both within and outside the pearl digression is a powerful narrative symbol, embodying the lure of wealth that is often a motivator for conquest. The failure of Julian to resist this temptation forms a direct contrast to the actions of Maximian's soldier, whose ignorance regarding the value of pearls, standing symbolically for the wealth of Persia, leads him to be happy with the more austere comfort of the Persian's leather purse. Like the Thracian digression, Ammianus' pearls provide a griping, hypothetical counterscenario, one in which Julian's invasion of Persia is not motivated by his desire for riches, a desire that ultimately leads him to make rash and ill-conceived decisions dooming the plight of his army and culminating in his death.

The significance of pearls in Ammianus' account likely ran deeper. Unfortunately, Ammianus' account of the beginning of Constantine's war against Persia is not extant, but an intriguing comment in his necrologue for Julian provides a fleeting indication as to how the war began (Amm. Marc. 25.4.23):

> *Et quoniam eum obtrectatores novos bellorum tumultus ad perniciem rei communis insimulant concitasse, sciant docente veritate perspicue, non Iulianum sed Constantinum ardores Parthicos succendisse, cum Metrodori mendaciis avidius adquiescit, ut dudum rettulimus plene.*

> And since his [Julian's] critics allege that he stirred the panic of wars afresh to the endangerment of society, let them know clearly with the truth instructing them, that it was not Julian but Constantine who started the Persian fires, when he most greedily accepted the lies of Metrodorus, which we have previously relayed in full.

Pearls are not mentioned, but in a tenth century chronicle ascribed to Symeon, repeated verbatim in the eleventh century history of Cedrenus, Metrodorus' role is sketched out in some detail.[50] As Warmington relates, the famous philosopher Metrodorus journeyed to India, and during his travels he acquired 'precious stones and many pearls' (Sym. *Chron.* 88.4.4: λίθους τιμίους καὶ μαργαρίτας

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49 For the symbolism of the horse in the fourth century and its relation to victory (or defeat), see Moreau 2016, 335–360. For Jovian's reign and its representation see Drijvers 2018, 234–256.
50 Wahlgren 2006, 107.

πολλοὺς) from the king of India as a gift for Constantine but, on his return to the Roman Empire, alleged that the precious cargo had been stolen by the Persians.[51] Constantine, incensed at the news, wrote to the Persian king Sapor demanding the he release the gems, but Sapor demurred. This story places pearls at the very beginning of the Romano-Persian war of the early to mid-fourth century.

It is extremely improbable that Symeon had direct access to Ammianus' history (including the lost books) and so was simply paraphrasing Ammianus' remarks in the lost book that details the beginning of the Persian war. Ammianus' use of *avidius* to qualify Constantine's acceptance of Metrodorus' claims is however broadly consistent with the lure of wealth being Constantine's primary motivator in his account of how the war with Persia started, and given the emblematic role that pearls play in Ammianus' history, it would hardly be surprising if Ammianus' account aligned more or less with Symeon's. Indirect access through intermediary sources is more probable. As Treadgold shows, Ammianus' lost books were summarised in Greek by Eustathius of Epiphania at the beginning of the sixth century, which was used by John Malalas in the mid to late sixth century, and again by John of Antioch in the seventh century;[52] however, this specific story of Metrodorus and the Persian pearls is not found in any extant source between Ammianus and Symeon. Since the episode is not found in Zonaras, it remains most likely, as Treadgold argues, that Symeon and Cedrenus drew this story from an earlier user of Ammianus' history, the compiler of the *Excerpta Salmasiana II* that Constantine gifted some pearls to the barbarians in the Danube.[53] It also remains possible of course, as Warmington speculates, that Eunapius' history included the episode, but its absence in Zosimus' account is a major (albeit not insurmountable) impediment to that argument, given Zosimus' generally critical attitude towards Constantine, one would expect that Zosimus would have included a story that reflected poorly on Constantine, even if the specifics of his redaction remain largely beyond scholarly appreciation since Eunapius' history survives only as fragments.[54] In any case, the possible presence (or absence) of the anecdote in Eunapius' history has no direct bearing on whether Symeon's story could well be a fair reflection of Ammianus' account of the role pearls played in the beginning of the Persian war. A further brief anecdote

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51 Cf. Ced. 1.295.A. Warmington 1981, 464–465.

52 Treadgold 2019, 530–533.

53 Roberto 2005, 440 lists this fragment as being by John of Antioch, while Mariev 2008, 592 claims that it is spurious. For a detailed discussion of the methodological issues see Van Nuffelen 2012, 438–440.

54 Warmington 1981, 467–468.

in John Malalas' *Chronicon* for the year 329 provides a tantalising detail that offers some circumstantial support for the possibility that Ammianus linked the instigation of the Persian war to Constantine's desire for pearls and precious gems. In that entry John Malalas describes how Constantine attended a race with a diadem fashioned with pearls and precious stones, something which no Roman emperor before him had ever worn (*Chron.* 13.9).[55] Given that John Malalas had access to Ammianus' account, this story offers some support for the possibility that Ammianus alleged Constantine's desire for pearls and precious stones led him to trust in Metrodorus' lies and so start the war with Persia.

4 The bissextile day: Sacerdotal corruption (Amm. Marc. 26.1.7–14)

Towards the beginning of book twenty-six Ammianus explains Valentinian I's actions after hearing that the army had selected him to be the next emperor following the death of Jovian.[56] Arriving after receiving the army's summons, Valentinian refused to appear as it was a leap day, as such a day was considered inauspicious. An account of what a leap day is follows in what is one of Ammianus' more scientifically accurate digressions. Ammianus segues from the scientific discussion of the leap day to a brief history of pre-Augustan Rome (Amm. Marc. 26.1.12–13):

> *haec nondum extentis fusius regnis diu ignoravere Romani, perque saecula multa obscuris difficultatibus inplicati, tunc magis errorum profunda caligine fluctuabant cum in sacerdotes potestatem transtulissent interkalandi, qui licenter gratificantes publicanorum vel litigantium commodis ad arbitrium suum subtrahebant tempora vel augebant. hocque ex coepto emerserunt alia plurima, quae fallebant, quorum meminisse nunc supervacuum puto. quibus abolitis Octavianus Augustus Graecos secutus hanc inconstantiam correcta turbatione conposuit, spatiis duodecim mensium et sex horarum magna deliberatione collectis [...].*

> The Romans were long ignorant of all this, since their realm was not yet widely extended, and for many centuries they were involved in obscure difficulties; and they wandered in still deeper darkness of error when they gave over the power of intercalation to the priests, who lawlessly served the advantage of tax-collectors or of parties in litigation by arbitrarily subtracting or adding days. From this beginning many other errors arose, which I think

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55 Cf. *Epitome de Caesaribus* 41.14 which mentions the diadem but does not provide the details of its decoration.

56 Amm. Marc. 26.1.7.

it superfluous to mention here. These were done away with by Octavian Augustus who, following the Greeks, corrected the confusion and brought order into this inconsistency by adopting after great deliberation the arrangement of twelve months and six hours.

Commentators have identified Ammianus' likely sources, including works by Plutarch that are no longer extant.[57] Of the works that are extant (and which are themselves also probably derived from Plutarch) several features in Ammianus' account stand out. While Augustus did make a minor change to the calendar, most credit the major reforms to the Roman calendar to Julius Caesar, not Augustus. This is unlikely to be a case of mistaken identity, or conflation, especially given Ammianus' apparent reticence to name Julius Caesar in the other extant works of his history.[58] More likely, the shift in credit from Caesar to Augustus enables Ammianus to draw a clear chronological line between the great confusion and corruption of Republican Rome, and the clarity and order of Augustus' principate and the imperial age that followed.[59]

Scholars have long noted the complexities of some of Ammianus' implied criticisms. Barnes coined the term 'progressive insinuation' for how Ammianus asserts one point of view, and then provides the reader with evidence that undermines that initial assertion.[60] For example, Barnes cites Ammianus' portrayal of the actions of the bishop of Bezabde, who comes across as having collaborated with the Persians, despite Ammianus' ostensible denial of that rumour, while Kulikowski showed how book 31 counters the views of two influential contemporary Eastern sophists, Libanius and Themistius.[61] Importantly, for our purposes, Den Hengst recognised how Ammianus' Egyptian digression "was diametrically opposed to the Christian representation of Egypt" and thus showed how what might appear as a relatively simple and innocuous factual description was in fact bound up in the religious and political zeitgeist of Ammianus' age.[62] Uncovering these 'implied', 'coded' or 'hidden' polemics requires the reader of be aware of how the politics of Ammianus' age resonate throughout his work,

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57 Amm. Marc. 26.1.8–11. Den Boeft *et al.* 2008, 33–34 lists Ammianus' likely sources.
58 Amm. Marc. 15.11.1 names Julius Caesar (using the epithet *dictator*) as one his sources for the digression on Gaul, for discussion of which see Sundwall 1996, 626.
59 This is in keeping with his view of Roman history at Amm. Marc. 14.6.4, for this connection see Den Boeft *et al.* 2008, 32.
60 Barnes 1998, 87–88. See Sabbah 1978, 414.
61 Kulikowski 2012, 91–93.
62 Den Hengst 2010, 258. Barnes 1993, 166, notes Ammianus' critical attitude towards Christianity "[...] a deep and insidious bias can be detected in Ammianus when he writes about Christianity. Ammianus does indeed make favourable remarks [...] but in virtually every case the favourable comment has the literary function of emphasising a criticism in the immediate context."

even as he remained (largely) very careful to avoid the kind of direct criticism that might alienate his readers or unleash contemporary political consequences.

With Ammianus' use of hidden polemics in mind, it is worth considering how Ammianus' criticism of sacerdotal corruption resonates in the broader context of his history, especially given Ammianus uses the word *sacerdos* (and for that matter *antistes*) to refer to both Christian and non-Christian priests.[63] This allows for the implication that Ammianus' criticism of Republican *sacerdotes* engaging in corrupt calendar fixing (*interkalendi*) reflects on the increasing role of ecclesiastical figures manipulating the Roman calendar when Ammianus was composing his history, in particular by increasing the number of religious holidays to mark saints' lives.[64] The phrase *ad arbitrium suum* speaks directly to the priests' overreach, especially given Ammianus only uses this phrase elsewhere for ill-conceived imperial decisions.[65] If the lesson of Republican Rome is remembered, involving priests in the formation of the calendar will lead to the chaos, confusion and discord of Republican Rome.

This interpretation cannot be proven, but it does provide a more compelling reason for Ammianus' inclusion of this digression. Ammianus' portrayal of Valens (and Valentinian I) includes a plethora of scenes that speak to his superstitions and stupidity, culminating in Ammianus' description of his death following a prophecy that he at first ignores and then ultimately becomes increasingly concerned with, as his death unfolds as predicted.[66] Valens decides not to appear on the leap day (Amm. Marc. 26.1.7):

> *Qui cum venisset accitus, inplendique negotii praesagiis, ut opinari dabatur, vel somniorum adsiduitate, nec videri die secundo nec prodire in medium voluit, bissextum vitans Februarii mensis tunc illucescens, quod aliquotiens rei Romanae fuisse dignorat infaustum.*

> After he had arrived, once summoned, owing to predictions of the business that needed to be completed, as was widely understood, or by frequent dreams, he did not want to be seen on the next day or come out into the open, avoiding the bissextile day of the month of February which appeared then, because he had discovered that it sometimes had been unlucky for the Roman state.

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63 E.g Liberius whom Amm. Marc. 15.7.6–9 refers to as both *sacerdos* and *antistes*. Cf. Amm. Marc. 29.5.15 *Christiani ritus antistites*.

64 Cf. Amm. Marc. 28.4.24 where he criticises Roman nobles who refuse to go out in public until they have consulted an astrological calendar. At Amm. Marc. 28.6.27 Ammianus specifically links the celebration of a Christian festal day to the failure of guards to perform their duties as they spent the entire evening in Church.

65 Amm. Marc. 16.10.14.

66 Amm. Marc. 31.14.8–9, discussed in detail by Hanaghan 2019, 242 ff.

Ammianus could have presented Valens' actions in a much more sympathetic light. Fixing the source of his concern would have made them more convincing, instead Valens' decision to remain out of sight is based on unspecified *praesagia* which might indicate genuine future knowledge, but here suggests a more general anxiety, as Valens is overwhelmed by the task at hand. Ammianus' use of the phrase *die secundo* (rather than an alternative, such as *die proximo*) may be read as simply indicating the next day, but the adjective *secundus*, especially when applied to conditions, may also mean 'favourable.'[67] That second meaning is consistent with the view that the first day of an emperor's reign was auspicious. Ammianus further weakens the legitimacy of Valens' decision to avoid an appearance, including the temporal adverb *aliquotiens* to diminish his belief that the bissextile day was unlucky.

5 Phrynichus' tragedy, a metaliterary reflection (Amm. Marc. 28.1.2–5)

At the beginning of book twenty-eight, Ammianus offers a metaliterary reflection on the challenge confronting him in the final books of the *Res Gestae*; the tale is necessarily bloody (*textu cruento*), as the Romans are repeatedly beaten, culminating in their decisive loss to the Goths at the battle of Adrianople.[68] The best that Ammianus can do is to be brief (*carptim, succincte*) selecting only those events that are worthy of recollection.[69] The reflection segues into a digression about the tragedian Phrynichus whose play about the fall of Miletus upset his audience (Amm. Marc. 28.1.4):

> [...] *paulisperque iucunde auditus, cum cothurnatius stilus procederet lacrimosus, indignatione damnatus est populi arbitrati non consolandi gratia sed probrose monendi, quae pertulerat amabilis civitas, nullis auctorum adminiculis fulta, hos quoque dolores scaenicis adnumerasse fabulis insolenter.*

> At first he was heard with pleasure, but as the sad story went on in too tragic a style, the people became angry and punished him, thinking that consolation was not his object but blame and reproach, when he had the bad taste to include among stage-plays a portrayal even of those sufferings which a well-beloved city had undergone, without receiving any support from its founders.

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67 LSJ. s.v. B. 3.
68 Amm. Marc. 28.1.2.
69 Amm. Marc. 28.1.2.

Badian impugned Ammianus' description of Phrynichus as "a rhetorical excursus that, within his narrative, seems to have little point," but others have been more attentive to the implied comparison between Ammianus and Phrynichus, which they have interpreted in a variety of ways, either as justifying Ammianus' fear lest he end up like Phrynichus, or proof of his courage in carrying on anyway.[70] The metaliterary force of this digression and its framing has eluded comment.

The framing acts as a defence for Ammianus' condensing of decades of history into the final four books (*carptim, succincte*) as he covers the last thirteen years or so (from ca 365–378) in four books (29–31) compared to the eight years of Julian's rise and reign covered in ten books (16–25).[71] It also protects Ammianus from charges of omission, with the pre-emptive defence that what was omitted was not worth remembering. More importantly, the digression bears on Ammianus' purpose (at least, implied purpose) in writing the final books (which may well have been an extension, if the original history ended at book 25), not to express disapproval (*monendi probrose*) but offer some sense of consolation (*consolandi*).[72] This points directly at Ammianus' nostalgic tone over these final books, as he mourns for the Rome that was, invariably remembering, like Tacitus, an ambiguously defined better time.[73] Lastly, Ammianus' criticism of Phrynichus is bound up with his conception of genre. Phrynichus' mistake was partly down to his decision to include such a tragic play among the presumably more frivolous plays of the theatre. Here Ammianus points tellingly at the triumphant arc of historiography, which in the Classical tradition, invariably recorded how the past led to the triumphant present. In these remarks Ammianus offers a compelling reason for his generic loneliness.[74] At the end of his history the Roman Empire has suffered one of its most horrific defeats in battle, including the death of thousands of irreplaceable veteran soldiers. One need not look forward to the fifth century to see that Ammianus was going to struggle to write a triumphant, secular (that is non ecclesiastical) history of his times.

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70 Badian 1996, 55. Fornara 1992, 424 considers the scene a mere topos. Matthews 1989, 209 denied any implied analogy between Ammianus and Phrynichus, interpreting the excursus "as a general illustration of the courage of a writer who dared to tell the truth." More positive interpretations may be found in Den Boeft 2007, 304–305, C. Kelly 2007, 286, and Den Boeft *et al.* 2011, 4–10.

71 Hanaghan 2019, 240–245.

72 For the structural break between books 25 and 26 see Sabbah 1978, viii–ix; Barnes 1981, 39–42; and more recently Kulikowski 2012, 88.

73 Momigliano 2012, 421.

74 Momigliano 1974, 1393–1407.

6 Conclusion

In his highly influential study of Late Antique literary aesthetics, Michael Roberts espoused the "detail of the compositional unit," sometimes at the expense of the whole, as a defining feature of Late Antique literary aesthetics.[75] In an article length study involving Ammianus, Roberts noted the late Roman historian's capacity to produce "a series of brilliantly eye-catching but discrete visual impressions, which in part by their very brilliance deter the reader from trying to piece together the individual scenes into a coherently ordered whole."[76] Roberts firmly had Ammianus' description of Constantius II's *adventus* in mind, but the capacity for intricate details to mask the broader relevancy of a description is present to various extents in each of Ammianus' digressions, all of which can be read and interpreted as isolated units, unconnected to the text that proceeds or that which follows. Indeed, in at least one translator's case, Ammianus' digressions were even redacted, presumably lest their glittering details distract the reader from the main narrative.[77] This approach fundamentally ignores Ammianus' presentation of the digressions, which are never framed as mere distractions, but timely, important additions to the main narrative, directly connected in a series of complex ways, some explicit, others implicit. Reading Ammianus' digressions as bound up with his narrative thus provides a far richer reading experience, a great appreciation of Ammianus' purpose in including the digressions, and a crucial insight into his conception of the aims of historiography, to educate and engage the reader, rather than simply fill them with a linear narrative history of what happened.

This chapter has demonstrated how the narrative impact of four of Ammianus' digressions may be assessed, ranging from one of his smaller digressions, his description of Persian pearls, to one of the longer digressions, his description of Thrace and the Euxine Sea. In all cases what may appear as minor scenes of limited, even esoteric detail offer tantalising depth to Ammianus' narrative, from providing a compelling counter scenario where Julian invades Thrace instead of Persia and reaps the benefits of a successful campaign rather than suffer disastrous defeat, to enriching Ammianus' characterisation of Valens, as a superstitious, hesitant ruler, ill-equipped for the business at hand.

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75 Roberts 1989, 84.

76 Roberts 1988, 183.

77 Wallace-Hadrill and Hamilton 1986, for discussion of which see Den Hengst 2010, 237.

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