1 Introduction

The term ‘theory’ is used in a number of different senses. In a fairly weak sense, theory involves not just the statement of known facts but some generalisation over those facts. In a somewhat stronger sense ‘theory’ is used of the systematic statement of generalisations over a large and in some way complete body of facts. The second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of ‘theory’, sense 5, begins, “In the abstract (without article): Systematic conception or statement of the principles of something; abstract knowledge, or the formulation of it:…”.

A systematic treatment of the facts of ancient Greek prosody was achieved by the second century AD, when Herodian² produced a large work entitled Περὶ καθολικῆς προσῳδίας “On prosody in general”. Before Herodian, Heraclides of Miletus had composed a work entitled Περὶ καθολικῆς προσῳδίας, and therefore presumably also a systematic treatment of the field, in the late first or early second century AD. But we have too scant remains of this work to have

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¹ I am very grateful to Eleanor Dickey and Stephanie Roussou for helpful comments and corrections.
² See Matthaios in this volume.
a clear idea of its scope or structure (see the fifteen fragments assigned to the work by Cohn [1884a] 37–44).

Neither Herodian’s Περὶ καθολικῆς προσῳδίας nor his other treatises survive complete, with the exception of the Περὶ μονήρους λέξεως “On exceptional words”,3 but we have two epitomes of the Περὶ καθολικῆς προσῳδίας. One of these is attributed to Arcadius in some manuscripts and to Theodosius of Alexandria in others; we shall refer to it under the name [Arcadius]. The other is ascribed to Johannes Philoponus of Alexandria and may be an abbreviated version of an epitome Philoponus produced. We also have a body of Homeric scholia deriving from Herodian’s Περὶ Ἰλιακῆς προσῳδίας “On the prosody of the Iliad” and Περὶ Ὀδυσσειακῆς προσῳδίας “On the prosody of the Odyssey”4; and numerous citations of Herodian in later authors, and other passages whose content can be attributed to Herodian with more or less certainty.5

Herodian was dependent on Alexandrian discussions of prosody beginning in the early second century AD (see below), and his Alexandrian predecessors are explicitly mentioned in some of our surviving sources. Aristarchus, in particular, is very frequently mentioned in the Homeric scholia deriving from Herodian.6 But we have much fuller information on Herodian’s works relating to prosody than we have for those of any of his predecessors. For this reason, the following discussion will focus on the concepts and categories Herodian used in formulating the regularities of ancient Greek prosody, and in stating exceptions to these regularities, but will attempt to show which concepts and categories are known to have been used already in early Alexandrian discussions.

2 Branches of Prosody

Nineteen of the twenty books of Herodian’s Περὶ καθολικῆς προσῳδίας were devoted to accentuation, while the twentieth book was devoted to vowel quantities and breathings.7 For Herodian accentuation, vowel quantities, and

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3 See Pagani in this volume, §5.2, 6.1.1.
4 Cf. Matthaios in this volume, §4.1, and Dickey in this volume, §7.2.
5 For an introduction to Herodian’s works and to scholarship on Herodian, see Dyck [1993a]; Dickey [2014].
6 See Montana in this volume.
7 See [Arc.] 4. 22–23, the entry for book 20 in the table of contents preserved in all the manuscripts of [Arcadius]. Information on vocalic quantities and breathings, corresponding to this part of the original work, is found only in one manuscript (Par. gr. 2102) of [Arcadius], with no corresponding part in Philoponus’ epitome. This part of Par. gr. 2102 is likely to have been interpolated to repair the loss of the information on vocalic quantities and breathings; the compiler may have been Jacob Diassorinus, in whose hand the manuscript is written (see