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Demetrios of Scepsis and His Troikos Diakosmos: Ancient and Modern Readings of a Lost Contribution to Ancient Scholarship, Hellenic Studies Series 85, Harvard University Press, 2021.

BEING A SEVERAN AUTHOR: CLAUDIUS AELIANUS AND AUTHORIAL SELF-REPRESENTATION IN MISCELLANEOUS COMPILATIONS

Abstract

The paper focuses on the peculiar status authors of miscellaneous compilations from Roman imperial times have. On the one hand, they seem to be mere collectors of pieces of knowledge written down by former scholars. On the other, however, they also highlight their own creative approach in the compilation process. This attitude becomes visible in the way they present their collections to their intended readers, most of the time in the introductory or conclusive remarks they provide. Our analysis will deal with these paratextual frameworks and compare the images the compilers used to describe their activities, so that our study will demonstrate how they understood their contributions and how they wanted them to be appreciated by their readers.

Keywords: Roman imperial times, Pliny the Elder, Aulus Gellius, Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus, Athenaeus, Claudius Aelianus, ancient miscellanies, collecting and compiling as literary practices

1. Introduction

At the turn of the 2nd and 3rd century CE, works of compilation, such as the *Attic Nights* by Gellius, had become a fashionable trend. In most cases, such books took the form of voluminous assemblages of large amounts of anecdotes and stories that their authors collected during their extensive readings. Gellius, for instance, alludes explicitly to this procedure at the very beginning of his work:

usi autem sumus ordine rerum fortuito, quem antea in excerpendo feceramus. Nam proinde ut librum quemque in manus ceperam seu Graecum seu Latinum vel quid memoratu dignum audieram, ita quae

libitum erat, cuius generis cumque erant, indistincte atque promisce annotabam eaque mihi ad subsidium memoriae quasi quoddam litterarum penus recondebam, ut quando usus venisset aut rei aut verbi, cuius me repens forte oblivio tenuisset, et libri ex quibus ea sumpseram non adessent, facile inde nobis inventu atque depromptu foret.

*But I kept to the random arrangement of my material (ordine rerum fortuito) that I adopted while excerpting my notes. For whenever I had a Greek or Latin book in hand, or whenever I heard anything worth remembering, I made notes of whatever please me, no matter of what kind it was, regardless of any classification or ordering and I stored them as subsidies for my memory – a sort of literary storehouse –, so that when the need arose of a word or a subject, which I happened accidentally to have forgotten, and in case the books from which I had extracted the information were not at hand, it would still be easy for me to find and produce it. (Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Praef. § 2)¹*

He is, however, neither the first nor the only scholar, who composed such kind of works. Gellius himself alludes to an ongoing tradition in a subsequent passage from his *Preface*, in which he mentions an impressive list of about thirty works of the same type as his.² Such a tradition of miscellaneous writings is also confirmed by other writers, who give similar lists. For instance, already in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, which antedates Gellius' *Attic Nights* by almost a century, we find such a list:

inscriptionis apud Graecos mira felicitas: κηρίον inscripsere, quod volebant intellegi favum, alii κέρας Ἀμαλθείας, quod copiae cornu (ut vel lactis gallinaei sperare possis in volumine haustum), iam ἴα, Μοῦσαι, πανδέκται, ἐγχειρίδια, λειμών, πίναξ, σχεδίων – inscriptiones, propter quas vadimonium deseri possit. at cum intraveris, di deaeque, quam nihil in medio invenies! nostri graviore Antiquitatum, Exemplorum Artiumque, facetissimi Lucubrationum, puto quia bibaculus erat et vocabatur.

*Among the Greeks there is a marvellous creativity with regard to their works' title: One they entitled Κηρίον (Kērion), meaning Honeycomb; others are called Κέρας Ἀμαλθείας (Keras Amaltheias), what means Horn of Plenty (so that you may even hope to get hen's milk from the volume); further you find Violets, Muses, Holdalls, Handbooks, Meadows, Tablets, and Improvisations, titles for which one might to give up one's bail. But when you open them, good heavens, how little you will find inside! Our authors, being more serious, entitle them Antiquities, Examples and Artistries, and the most polished ones, Lamplights, I suppose because the author was not only by name a tippler. (Pliny, *NH*, Praef. § 24-25)*

Also after Gellius, and when turning to the Greek speaking part of the Roman Empire, we find evidence that points towards such a tradition. We may mention here Clement of Alexandria, although the relevant passage does not stand at the beginning of his *Stromateis*, but comes from Book 6:

έν μὲν οὖν τῷ λειμῶνι τὰ ἄνθη ποικίλως ἀνθοῦντα κἀν τῷ παραδείσῳ ἡ τῶν ἀκροδρύων φυτεία οὐ κατὰ εἶδος ἕκαστον κεχώρισται τῶν ἀλλογενῶν (ἧ καὶ Λειμῶνάς τινας καὶ Ἑλικῶνας καὶ Κηρία καὶ Πέπλους συναγωγὰς φιλομαθεῖς ποικίλως ἐξανθισάμενοι συνεγράψαντο)· τοῖς δ' ὡς ἔτυχεν ἐπὶ μνήμην ἔλθοῦσι καὶ μῆτε τῇ τάξει μῆτε τῇ φράσει διακεκαθαμένοι, διεσπαρμένοι δὲ ἐπίτηδες ἀναμίξ, ἡ τῶν Στρωματέων ἡμῖν ὑποτύπωσις λειμῶνος δίκην πεποικίλται.

Neither the flowers with their colourful blossoms in a meadow nor the plantations of fruit trees in a garden are separated, each according to its species, from those of other kinds (hence some writers compose their learned collections as Meadows, Helicons, Honeycombs, and Robes, having picked the most various selections). Likewise, the outline of our Stromateis presents the diversity of a meadow, as its topics came to my mind as they pleased, and were arranged neither according to order nor to any thoughts about the expression, but were on purpose spread in confusion. (Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis 6.2.1) [Stählin/Früchtel 1960]

Unfortunately not all of the quoted works came down to us. Among the ancient works that are usual defined as miscellanies, we have preserved only four extant texts: Gellius' *Attic Nights*, Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*, and Aelianus' two works, *De Natura Animalium* and *Varia Historia*. To these we may add Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistai* and fragments from at least two more such collections, namely Favorinus' *Παντοδαπή ἱστορία* (*Pantodapē historia: Miscellaneous Story*) and the *Cesti* by Julius Africanus.³

In our paper, we aim to focus on this group of authors and to analyse how they saw their own role as authors and how they described their literary activity. In this study, we shall give particular attention to Claudius Aelianus from Praeneste in Italy.⁴ This choice is justified by the fact that we encounter in one of his work, the concept of *ποικιλία* (*poikilia: manifold variety*), which was used by modern scholars to define this kind of works.⁵ But our analysis will not be confined to this author. We shall take a broader approach and combine two lines of investigation: on the one hand, we shall compare the miscellaneous compilations among themselves by focusing in particular on the variation in their titles and by discussing the explanatory remarks, which most of the authors provided at the beginning

(or at the end) of their works and which give some insights into the author's perception of his own activity.⁶ On the other hand, however, we shall have to weigh these images against Pliny's *Preface* to his *Natural History*.⁷ This step becomes necessary, because Pliny has often been considered as a precursor of this tradition,⁸ although his text is not usually included in the category of miscellaneous compilations. Nonetheless, despite the substantial differences in scope, method and historical context, the *Natural History* can provide a common point of reference to all of the works we shall discuss and create a certain background, from which to start.

2. Pliny the Elder

The main difference between Pliny's *Natural History* and our group of miscellaneous compilations comes from a famous passage in his own *Preface*. Pliny uses the Greek expression "ἡ ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία" (*hē egkyklios paideia*: *allround education*) to define one kind of education. This statement makes him a precursor of the modern concept of encyclopaedism.⁹ In Pliny's time the expression has, however, a slightly different meaning than in our modern usage, referring to a general knowledge that one should acquire after an elementary instruction and before going into any specialization.¹⁰ Moreover, Pliny seems to adapt the expression to his own purposes, as he emphasises the completeness of the set of knowledge that he defines as ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία (*egkyklios paideia*),¹¹ setting aside the notion of unity or circularity, which is often focused on by other ancient authors, when using the expression ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία (*egkyklios paideia*).¹²

This shift, from unity to completeness, is of great relevance for our study, as it introduces two important notions that underlie Pliny's work and distinguish it from miscellaneous compilations. On the one hand, this feature highlights Pliny's intention to be exhaustive, on the other it also allows him to focus on how challenging it is to order all the information he gathered. Pliny refers indeed several times to the demanding task of ordering his material,¹³ giving, in doing so, the impression that this was a necessary counterpart to his claim of completeness, even if, throughout the preserved work, the internal order of exposition often changes.¹⁴ Moreover, ordering the available knowledge is also a feature of Pliny's work that links it to its specific historical context. The necessity to order or structure the amount of knowledge that had accumulated within the

Roman Empire was felt in Pliny's time with particular intension and this for two reasons. On the one hand, the expansion of the Roman Empire tremendously increased the amount of knowledge available and brought about the need of inventories for this new mass of data. On the other hand, Pliny witnessed the ascension of Vespasian to the imperial throne, after the troubled years of Nero's reign. In his efforts to legitimize the Flavian dynasty, the new Emperor also reshaped many aspects of Roman life, seeking a more ordered and hence more controllable vision of the Empire.¹⁵ This imperial initiative brought the importance of classification, catalogisation and ordering of one's field of expertise to the fore and provides a historical context for Pliny's undertaking. However, this historical timeframe constitutes the third aspect of Pliny's undertaking that distinguishes his work from those of the group of authors, in whom we are interested here. They are dated, either under the Antonine or under the Severan dynasty, almost a century after Pliny.¹⁶

However, and despite the differences we just highlighted, two passages from Pliny's *Preface* are of particular importance for our investigation, as they bring his undertaking closer to the works of compilation we are investigating. In both, he alludes to the way he sees his own undertaking and to the role he wants to play as an author. In the first, he uses the topos of modesty, claiming that he has not much talent.¹⁷ But, at the same time, he also mentions that he will develop his narration in a straightforward way, without digressions and additional information. This suggests the idea of a strong intervention from the author, who is able to outline the material gathered according to a clear plan that he has in mind, even though he does not clearly explain this plan in the passage:

meae quidem temeritati accessit hoc quoque, quod levioris operae hos tibi dedicavi libellos. nam nec ingenii sunt capaces, quod alioqui in nobis perquam mediocre erat, neque admittunt excessus aut orationes sermonesve aut casus mirabiles vel eventus varios, iucunda dictu aut legitibus blanda sterili materia: rerum natura, hoc est vita, narratur, et haec sordidissima sui parte ac plurimarum rerum aut rusticis vocabulis aut externis, immo barbaris etiam, cum honoris praefatione ponendis.

My own boldness has indeed reached the point that I dedicate to you the present books as a lighter work. For they do not exhibit much talent, of which in any case I possess only very little, nor does their topic allow of digressions, nor of speeches or dialogues, nor marvellous accidents or unusual events, matters interesting to relate or entertaining to read when considering such barren material. Our works narrates the nature of things,

which means life itself and this through its filthiest parts, using for the great majority of them either rustic or foreign terms, or even barbarian words, for the use of which one has to apologise. (Pliny, NH, Praef. § 12-13)

In the second, challenging somehow his previous claim of modesty, he mentions his extensive readings and how he believes to be able to contribute, through his work, to the improvement of knowledge by updating his sources. Nonetheless, he also alludes to the selection he had to make in his numerous notes in order to create the book he presents, emphasising in doing so a form of incompleteness of the undertaking and the subjectivity of his choice:

(...) viginti milia rerum dignarum cura – quoniam, ut ait Domitius Piso, thesauros oportet esse, non libros – lectione voluminum circiter duorum milium, quorum pauca admodum studiosi attingunt propter secretum materiae, ex exquisitis auctoribus centum inclusimus triginta six voluminibus, adiectis rebus plurimis, quas aut ignoraverant priores aut postea invenerat vita. nec dubitamus multa esse quae et nos praeterierint; homines enim sumus et occupati officiis subsicivisque temporibus ista curamus, id est nocturnis, ne quis vestrum putet his cessatum horis.

We collected, in 36 volumes, 20'000 facts of interest – so that, as Domitius Piso says, storehouses instead of books would be more appropriate –, that were taken from the readings of about 2000 volumes, very few of which were thoroughly studied due to obscurity of their contents, and from the exploration of one hundred authors, adding a great number of other facts that were either ignored by our predecessors or have been discovered since then. Nor do we doubt that there are many topics that have escaped our attention; for we are human beings, and, while engaged with our duties, we took care of this in our spare time, which means at night, so that none of your company may think that I am inactive in these hours. (Pliny, NH, Praef. § 17)

However, as this feature of his work is due to his human condition rather than to any lack of perseverance, he adds another dimension to the notion of completeness that he champions. It is the idea that human achievements, however accomplished they may be, should always be seen as a process that can and will be improved, when further knowledge is gained. We find this conviction once again, when Pliny compares his own state of mind about his work with the custom of ancient sculptors and painters to give their masterpiece a provisory title.¹⁸ As we shall

see, this comparison not only reintroduced the notion of modesty Pliny developed previously. It will also allow us to see the difference between Pliny's understanding of his contribution and the conception the authors of miscellanies have about their achievements. We may, therefore, come back to it at several places in our paper.

3. Aulus Gellius

The difference between Pliny and the group of authors we are interested in appears already in Gellius, even if he takes up many of the themes of Pliny's *Preface*.¹⁹ The most obvious parallelism is the claim of modesty, which Gellius most explicitly expressed, as did Pliny, when explaining the choice of the title of his work, pretending to have not aimed at being as witty as his precursors.²⁰ The parallelism to Pliny is particularly visible as Gellius' statement is immediately followed by the list of other miscellaneous works with fancier titles than his *Attic Nights*. This recalls Pliny's list we mentioned above. However, interestingly for us, Gellius does not merely reproduce Pliny's strategy,²¹ but modifies its structure. Indeed, Gellius explains the choice of his title before giving the list, whereas Pliny concluded his list by referring to his choice about the title. Moreover, the image the two authors convey through their choices about the title is also very different. Gellius recalls, through the title of his work, the long winter nights that he spent in Attica during his stay in Greece, which most probably took place during his youth:

sed quoniam longinquis per hiemem noctibus in agro, sicuti dixi, terrae Atticae commentationes hasce ludere ac facere exorsi sumus, idcirco eas inscripsimus Noctium esse Atticarum, nihil imitati festivitates inscriptionum quas plerique alii utriusque linguae scriptores in id genus libris fecerunt.

And since, as I have said, I began to assemble and to play with these notes during the long winter nights which I spent in the countryside of Attica, I entitled them Attic Nights, making no attempt to imitate the wittiness of their titles' formulation, which many other writers of both languages have displayed for works of this kind. (Gellius, Attic Nights, Praef. § 4)²²

This description suggests a particularly favourable place, and a special moment of leisure, which both allowed him to start the collecting of his material. It also suggests some sort of nostalgia, as he focuses on the

beginning of the undertaking, which seems far away in the time of his education.²³

When switching to Pliny's text, the situation is different. Pliny does not explain the choice of the wording of his title, but starts his *Preface* by calling his work *Libri Naturalis Historiae* (*Books of Natural History*) defining later its subject as dealing with nature in so far that it comprises and defines all things (*rerum natura, hoc est vita, narratur: our work narrates the nature of things, which means life itself*).²⁴ Moreover, he calls his topic a barren one (*sterilis materia: barren material*), which implies that there was some commitment of his to treat this subject. It, therefore, suggests the seriousness and gravity not only of the subject, but also of the scholar, who was willing to engage with this difficult topic. This is in sharp contrast with the playful memories of Gellius (*ludere: playing with*) and underlines Pliny's claim to aim to be useful, through his research, for the reader.²⁵ This attitude of Pliny also justifies the absence of any digression or other pleasant addition, to which we alluded above, even if, according to Pliny, this would have been more interesting to relate and more entertaining to read (*iucunda dictu aut legentibus blanda: matters interesting to relate or entertaining to read*). His work is, therefore, presented as a useful service the author provided to his reader by preferring a difficult topic over pleasure and popularity.²⁶

Finally, also when Pliny compares his choice of the title with the one made by sculptors and painters, we see the difference between his undertaking and Gellius' motivations. With this comparison, Pliny insists on the provisory state of his research, which could easily be amplified and improved over time. Indeed sculptors and painters usually sign their works with formulas such as "Apelles or Polyclitus has been working on it" (*Apelles faciebat aut Polyclitus*) instead of formulas such as "he produced it" (*ille fecit*)²⁷, whereas Pliny calls his works *Naturalis Historia*. In doing so, he refers to the Greek term of *ἱστορία* (*historia*), which means "inquiry" and goes back to Herodotus.²⁸ In this sense, Pliny's work is an inquiry into the realm of nature, which he did the best he could, according to his human condition and remaining well-aware of the tentativeness of his results. When taking this aspect into consideration, we understand how different Pliny's way of conceiving his activities is when compared with that of Gellius. On the one hand, we can follow Gellius' amusement during his *Attic Nights*,²⁹ whereas on the other we witness Pliny's tiresome inquiry into all forms of life.

However, the most important difference between Gellius and Pliny is the fact that they have completely opposed views about the concept of order. As we have seen, Pliny very much insists on the necessity to give the material that he collected a meaningful order.³⁰ In opposition to that, Gellius is among the first authors, whose works we have preserved in its entirety, who claims that he did not give his collection a clear order. He states this at the very beginning of his *Preface*, by calling his arrangement a fortuitous order (*ordine rerum fortuito*),³¹ but he also repeats it a few lines later:

facta igitur est in his quoque commentariis eadem rerum disparilitas quae fuit in illis annotationibus pristinis, quas breviter et indigeste et incondite ex eruditionibus lectionibusque variis feceramus.

Therefore the same disparity is displayed in these comments as the one found in those early notes, which I had made hastily, with neither order nor clear plan, from various investigations or readings. (Gellius, Attic Nights, Praef. § 3)

This characteristic of Gellius' work is actually the distinctive feature of all the miscellaneous compilations that we mentioned and distinguishes them radically from Pliny's point of view.³² We shall, therefore, come back several time to this principle of avoiding order and see how other authors justify this practice. As far as Gellius is concerned, he nonetheless takes an intermediary position on this question. Despite the repeated claim that his book was showing the random order of the discovery of memorable anecdotes during his readings, he gives, as Pliny, a table of content at the end of the *Preface* and justifies this step by inviting his readers, with a similar phrasing to the one used by Pliny, to browse through rather than read his work.³³ With such an ending of his *Preface*, Gellius does not only show that he thought, at some point, about the overall structure of his work. He also seems to have intended to place his work into a same tradition than the one to which Pliny belonged, despite all the differences we highlighted.³⁴

4. Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus and Athenaeus

If we move on, we may treat together three contemporaries of Claudius Aelianus, who took part in the same literary framework. As mentioned

previously, Clement of Alexandria also composed, with his *Stromateis*, a work that can be seen as a miscellaneous compilation. We have already seen that he gives a list of works of predecessor similar to that of Pliny and Gellius and therefore counts himself as contributing to this tradition. Also, the choice to entitle his work *Stromateis* is a clear indication that he sees his work as an assemblage of several pieces of knowledge that are given in a non-straightforward or not easily graspable arrangement.³⁵ The image the title suggests is indeed that of a patchwork of initially independent pieces of fabric that the author gathered first, before sewing them together into one piece of cloth. In this representation, there is no fixed or privileged order and the assembling could have taken a completely different form, if the author has decided to do so, or at least we do not learn from Clement what would have been the ordering principle of his *Stromateis*, and the passage quoted above clearly shows that this was not his primary goal.

Nonetheless, if we consider the very beginning of his work, we learn some more details about how Clement saw his undertaking.³⁶ He also alludes to his education in younger years, as did Gellius in giving his work the title *Attic Nights*, and mentions that the book grows out of personal notes that he accumulated over time. However, he rather speaks of notes he took when listening to his teachers than of excerpts from his various readings in libraries, so that we may single out here a difference between Gellius and Clement in this respect.³⁷

Finally Clement also gives us some indications, why he choose this form of literature to convey the knowledge he accumulated to his audience and here we discover an further important singularity of Clement. He justifies his choice for this form of exposition with the intension to hide the true message of his work so that it may be available only to a selected audience:

σιωπῶ γὰρ ὅτι οἱ Στρωματεῖς τῇ πολυμαθίᾳ σωματοποιούμενοι κρύπτειν ἐντέχνως τὰ τῆς γνώσεως βούλονται σπέρματα. καθάπερ οὖν ὁ τῆς ἄγρας ἐρωτικὸς ζητήσας, ἐρευνήσας, ἀνιχνεύσας, κυνοδρομήσας αἰρεῖ τὸ θηρίον, οὕτω καὶ τάληθές γλυκύτητι φαίνεται ζητηθέν καὶ πόνῳ πορισθέν. τί δὴ ποτ' οὖν ᾧδε διατετάχθαι φίλον ἔδοξεν εἶναι τοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν; ὅτι μέγας ὁ κίνδυνος τὸν ἀπόρρητον ὡς ἀληθῶς τῆς ὄντως φιλοσοφίας λόγον ἐξορχήσασθαι <τού>τοις, <οἱ> ἀφειδῶς πάντα μὲν ἀντιλέγειν ἐθέλουσιν οὐκ ἐν δίκῃ, πάντα δὲ ὀνόματα καὶ ῥήματα ἀπορρίπτουσιν οὐδαμῶς κοσμίως, αὐτούς τε ἀπατώντες καὶ τοὺς ἐχομένους αὐτῶν γοητεύοντες. «Εβραῖοι μὲν γὰρ σημεῖα αἰτοῦσιν,» ἢ φησιν ὁ ἀπόστολος, «Ἕλληνες δὲ σοφίαν ζητοῦσι.»

*I indeed refrain from mentioning that the Stromateis, although embodying thorough learning, aim to conceal with much art the seeds of knowledge. Similarly to when someone fond of hunting captures a prey after seeking, tracking, and hunting it down with dogs, truth, when sought and acquired with toil, appears with the taste of sweetness. Why, then, did it once seem appropriate to be fond of the present order of these notes? Because there is great danger in divulging the truly secret message of the genuine philosophy to those, who wish, at variance with justice, to contradict every statement without mercy, who reject, without any decency, each name and word, and who deceive themselves and bewitch those who adhere to them. "The Hebrews seek signs", as the apostle says, "the Greeks seek wisdom"³⁸. (Clement, *Stromateis* 1.2.20.4-21.3) [Stählin/Früchtel 1960]*

This is a completely new aspect that Clement introduced.³⁹ For instance, even if Pliny and Gellius may have had specific person in mind as their addressees,⁴⁰ they did not want to hide their knowledge or their expertise to others. They conceived their works rather as a way to display it, even beyond the intended addressees.

This idea of a more hidden form of knowledge that may be available only to a few addressees, or at least a work that addresses several audiences at several levels, is also something that can be assumed for the fragmentarily preserved *Cesti* from Julius Africanus. His work has, as we learn from one of the few fragments, in which Africanus speaks about his purposes, magical or medicinal lore as its overarching thematic subject. In this passage, which is an extract from the prologue to his book 7, he explicitly defines one part of the material he gathered as "secret knowledge":

κατὰ λόγον ἢ νόμον ἢ εἰμαρμένην ἢ τύχην αἰ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐκβάσεις, ἐπιγοναὶ καὶ φθοραὶ, ἀλλοιώσεις καὶ ἰάματα· ὧν ἕκαστον καλὸν εἰδέναι συναγαγόντας ἐκ πάντων ὠφέλειαν ποικίλην καρπουμένην θεραπείαν παθῶν ἢ ἱστορίαν ἀπόρρητον ἢ λόγου κάλλος· ἅπερ ἔν τε τοῖς φθάνουσι καὶ τοῖς ἐπομένοις, ὧς γε οἶμαι, κατὰ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ μέτριον κατώρθωται.

*It is according to reason or law or fate or chance that affairs turn out as they do, both production and decay, mutation and healing. It is good to know each one of them, thereby gathering from them all a harvest of various kinds of benefit: treatment of maladies, secret knowledge, or beauty in speech. These, at least in my estimation, have been accomplished to the best of my modest ability in what precedes and follows.⁴¹ (Julius Africanus, *Cesti*, fr. 12, Prologue [Wallraff])*

Taken for itself, this statement may be a rather weak evidence for the point we want to make here, but our reading may be strengthened, when we add considerations about his choice of the title. Indeed, the term Africanus chooses for his work is very special. The word (κεστός/kestos) occurs first in the Homeric poems, again in a very special context. In the *Iliad*, it defines a richly embroidered and sophisticatedly manufactured belt worn by Aphrodite.⁴² It is a powerful garment that represents the goddess' overwhelming charms that even the goddess Hera needs to possess to seduce Zeus. Africanus knows this passage, as he alludes to it in his work.⁴³ Moreover, we know from another fragment that he intensively dealt with the Homeric poems and also claimed expertise in this field.⁴⁴ Therefore, it is highly probable that he chose this word for his title on purpose. He may have wanted to highlight the power of the information that he is transmitting, as suggested in the few lines quoted above. But the word may also be applied to the author and his undertaking. In this case, it would also suggest the idea of the author as being a crafted individual who has the knowledge, and the mental capacities, to select the most effective pieces of knowledge and to assemble them, with an impressive dexterity, in an extremely sophisticated way, as a splendid piece of art, for the benefit of an enchanted audience. This image of the author would also include the idea of the special power coming from the craftsmanship that created the work. Furthermore, because of the divine realm, to which the word alludes, there is also the idea of something beyond human knowledge, that may not be available to all, but only to a few chosen ones, who see further or are more initiated into a given field of knowledge. In this respect too, the author and his special achievement are highlighted. Both of these aspects can be seen as a strong contrast to the claim of modesty uttered by Pliny and Gellius, even though both were able, as we saw, to highlight their special commitment, so that their achievement as authors do not get forgotten by the readers. The contrast is based on the difference between the image of an empowered author, who is able to create through his witty craftsmanship a work of art that is similar in power and beauty to Aphrodite's garment, and the one of a committed scholar, who invest all his resources to achieve a modest contribution that may easily be overrun by later scholars, but that allows a direct insight into and a true understanding of the richness and power of nature, that becomes, at least in Pliny almost a divinity.⁴⁵

Finally, when turning to Athenaeus, we are fully back in the Greco-Roman tradition⁴⁶ and its emphasis on the intellectual activities of the

upper classes of the Roman Empire. It is for instance interesting to note that Athenaeus is the only author in our group, who evokes, in his work and its title, the social context, to which such miscellaneous works belong, rather than its output (the object of craftsmanship) or the authors' commitment (their intensive readings, their special access to sources and their leisure). Athenaeus' work is entitled the *Deipnosophistai*, which means the "intellectuals at dinner". The image alluded to in the title and developed in the book is the one of a moment in time (the dinning party) during which learned conversations take place.⁴⁷ It is, therefore, not the moment when the knowledge is acquired (like the *Attic Nights* by Gellius) but the one, in which the learnedness that was accumulated can be displayed. Indeed there was a long tradition to accompany dinning parties with extensive discussions and all sorts of entertainments where one could enjoy and display literary skills.⁴⁸ However, by superposing through the setting that he imagines for his work, two layers, the one of the actual dinning party that he describes and where food is displayed in various forms and prepared with different degrees of sophistication, and the one of the discussions that happen during this party and where pieces of knowledge and utterances taken from literary works are displayed by the participants of the party, Athenaeus also draws attention to the process through which works of compilation go, before being released as readable output.⁴⁹ However, he does not focus on the gathering of material, as did Pliny, Gellius and Clement for instance, but on the many preparatory stages the material went through and its arrangement in the finalised work. Indeed when comparing a work of compilation with a dinning party, Athenaeus suggests that the piece of knowledge (the quotation or textual sequences that are selected and displayed) are no longer in the form in which they were initially found, but have been transformed in order to fit the context (as the food is cooked or treated, so that it is no longer raw material). Moreover, even if the conversation may take unexpected turns when lead by association of ideas (as the dinning guests may be surprised by unexpected dishes), there is a general outline of the events that is not arbitrary. A meal starts with the arriving of the guests, proceed to all kind of starters and then to main courses, and finishes with deserts and drinks before the company dissolves and guests go home.⁵⁰ Therefore, when compared with Gellius, for instance, Athenaeus insists on other aspects of the miscellanies. Gellius states that the order was fortuitous, reflecting the way he found the interesting pieces of knowledge in the works that he read, whereas Athenaeus seems to indicate that, although the whole

may look very colourful, diversified and bestrewed with many unexpected developments, there is an overall plan that the author masters as the cook masters the sequence of the different dishes.⁵¹

Therefore Athenaeus draws on another set of images to represent himself as author, when we compare his work with other miscellanies. First, he does not speak of himself as the scholar who has assembled to quotations. In the frame story, which is given instead of a prologue, he depicts himself as one of the guests at the dining party and pretends to rely on his memory, so that he can give a faithful summary of the event he assisted.⁵² Therefore in Athenaeus, the focus is not on the books he read or the notes he took while attending a course or while reading, but on his abilities to remember them when appropriate, even though it is impossible to think of the *Deipnosophistai* as not having been composed in the same way as the other miscellanies, namely by the assembling of notes previously taken when reading a large amount of books found in one or several libraries. Nonetheless, by focusing on his faculty of remembering, Athenaeus not only put himself within his narration as one of the intellectuals at dinner (*deipnosophistai*) seeing himself as an equal to others who have the same faculties and who compete with each other at given occasions (the dining parties). This image also allows him to set himself apart from other authors of miscellanies. By insisting on the faculty of reproducing by memory what he has learned in a given context, he creates the self-representation of the gifted performer,⁵³ which is different from the one given by Gellius (who relies on notes taken while studying in his youth), as well as the one by Clement (who sees himself as sewing information, he took previously in form of notes, together in one narrative), or the one by Africanus (who highlights the craftsmanship of the composer and the empowering force of the output) and finally also the one created by Pliny (the investigator admiring the diversity he discovered).

5. Claudius Aelianus

If we turn now finally to Aelianus, we encounter a still different way of defining a work of compilation. At first, as announced, we may look at the passage where Aelianus justifies the deliberate avoidance of order for the exposition of his material. At a closer look, we see that the passage can be divided into two parts, as Aelianus actually gives two reasons for his choice:

ἐγὼ δὲ πρῶτον μὲν τὸ ἐμὸν ἴδιον οὐκ εἶμι τῆς ἄλλου κρίσεώς τε καὶ βουλήσεως δοῦλος, οὐδέ φημι δεῖν ἔπειθαι ἐτέρῳ, ὅποι μ' ἂν ἀπάγη· δεύτερον δὲ τῷ ποικίλῳ τῆς ἀναγνώσεως τὸ ἐφοικὸν θηρῶν καὶ τὴν ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων βδελλυμίαν ἀποδιδράσκων, οἶονεὶ λειμῶνά τινα ἢ στέφανον ὠραῖον ἐκ τῆς πολυχροίας, ὡς ἀνθεσφόρων τῶν ζώων τῶν πολλῶν, ᾗθηθην δεῖν τήνδε ὑφᾶναί τε καὶ διαπλέξαι τὴν συγγραφήν.

First, as far as I am concerned, I am not the slave of another's judgement or intention, and I claim not to have to follow another's lead, wherever he may drive me. Secondly, while aiming, thanks to the variety of my readings, to be attractive and to avoid the distaste that arises from the identical, I thought that I should weave and braid the strands of this composition as a field of flowers or a garland which receives its beauty from its multiple colours, assuming that the many animals would furnish the flowers. (Aelianus, NA, Epilogue)

The second reason is more often adduced, when dealing with Aelianus' works or with miscellanies in general, as Aelianus compares his activity with the picking of flowers or the braiding of a garland. He claims that he wanted to provide as much variety as possible in order to avoid the horror that may raise from monotony. In order to do so, he decided to create a work that would imitate the colourfulness of a meadow or the craftsmanship of someone having interlaced several strands to create a beautiful garland. Taken for itself, this statement develops Gellius' idea that the composition of his work reproduces the order of discovery of the noteworthy anecdotes during the course of his readings.⁵⁴ However, there are two major differences between Gellius and Aelianus: first the reasons, which made them opt for this procedure, are very different and secondly their attitude towards it also differs. As we see here, Aelianus is afraid to create boredom when sticking to an order of exposition that would be expected – and therefore predictable – for a book on animals.⁵⁵ Gellius, on the contrary, is eager, on the one hand, not to overload his readers with too much information,⁵⁶ but, on the other, also acknowledges that he did not give much thoughts to the order of exposition. He simply kept to the one that was created almost spontaneously during his readings. Moreover, these readings were not directed toward any specific subject, as in Aelianus, but just reflect his own manifold interests. A few paragraphs later, Gellius even adds that he did not mean to produce a very indepth research, but presents the first results of his own reading.⁵⁷ He justifies his behaviour by the desire to create pleasure and to motivate his reader in pursuing readings and acquiring knowledge.

Aelianus, on the contrary, – and here we have to come back to the first reason mentioned above – claims that he has acquired during his research a true expertise in one specific topic, namely the understanding of the characteristics and behaviours of animals, which is clearly stated in the title too (Περὶ ζώων ιδιότητος / *Peri zōōn idiotētos*).⁵⁸ This superiority allows him to justify, from another angle, his choice of exposing his material in his own way.

In summary then, his justification for his voluntary refraining from organising his material is also based on the particularly deep knowledge he acquired during his readings. Because of this special knowledge, he takes the right to be more independent from previous scholars and exposes the material freely. However, he does not arrange it at random, but decides to expose his material, in the most interesting way for his reader, namely by avoiding monotony, as seen. Therefore, because of his superior knowledge, so he claims, he can be more creative in the arrangement of his material and play with it, as someone may do while braiding garlands with flowers that are as diverse and colourful as blooming meadows. From this image we see the difference with regard to Gellius: whereas in Gellius the arrangement of the material happened almost by chance, and the author pretend that he did not give much thoughts to it, Aelianus affirms that he willingly decided to create a great variety to avoid monotony and tedium, and was allowed to do so by his in-depth expertise.

Aelianus' claim is, moreover, also in sharp contrast with the statement of modesty that we found in Gellius, as well as in Pliny. This difference has its importance, as it is clearly visible from the very beginning of Aelianus' work, and is repeatedly alluded to, in the prologue as well as in the epilogue.⁵⁹ Indeed we find this statement already in the first words of Aelianus' prologue. He starts by defining his topic (investigating the sound behaviours of dumb animals), and underlies that it is a very special and demanding topic, which calls for a special mindset to be investigated:

καὶ εἰδέναί γε μὴ ῥαθύμως τὰ προσόντα αὐτῶν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ, καὶ ὅπως ἔσπουδάσθῃ οὐ μείον τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ζῶων, εἴη ἂν τινος πεπαιδευμένης φρενὸς καὶ μαθούσης πολλᾶ.

And to know accurately for each individual its appropriate characteristics and how, no less than humans, other animal are eager to learn, is the task of an educated and much learned mind. (Aelianus, NA, Prologue)

He comes back to this idea in the epilogue and claims the required skills more explicitly for himself, as a natural precondition:

καὶ δὴ λέλεκται μοι, ὡς οἶόν τε ἦν εἰπεῖν, μὴ παραλείποντι ἄπερ ἔγνω μὴδὲ βλακεύοντι, ὡς ἀλόγου τε καὶ ἀφώνου ἀγέλης ὑπεριδόντι καὶ ἀτιμάσαντι, ἀλλὰ κἀνταῦθα ἔρω με σοφίας ὁ σύνοικός τε καὶ ὁ συμφυῆς ἐξέκαυσεν.

I treated the topic to my best ability, neither omitting nor neglecting anything from what I learned, as if I despised and dishonoured the herd of animals void of reason and of speech, but also in these matters, I am burning with an inherent and innate love for wisdom. (Aelianus, NA, Epilogue)

This feeling of being able to go beyond a commonly shared knowledge can also be seen in Aelianus' treatment of the image of sculptors and painters that he uses, perhaps in answer to Pliny. We have indeed seen that Pliny associates himself with sculptors and painters, underlining, with the choice of his title, as they did with their way of signing their works, the provisory status of his work. Human knowledge or achievements can always be improved, was Pliny's basic message. Aelianus, on the contrary, sees his achievement in opposition to two groups: the sculptors and painters as well as the hunters. He reproaches both groups that they only collect different animals, either dead in the case of hunters, or immobilised in works of arts, without going into the study of their behaviours. So he clearly claims that he went further in his research as others, and that his work provides more in-depth information.

Furthermore, he ends this development by acknowledging that this thorough investigation took the shape of a personal quest, leading him to further insight into the motivations of human beings too. This introduces a further difference between Aelianus and, at least, Pliny and Gellius. Such a statement indicates a shift with regard to the addressee.

Gellius and Pliny dedicate both their books to a third person: Pliny addresses the future emperor Titus, whereas Gellius addresses his children. Both aim, therefore, through their book to facilitate the learning process of a third person, whereas Aelianus claims that he also did the research for his own sake, as well as for his intended readers.⁶⁰

Secondly, as far as the relation to other fellow-scholars is concerned, there are also some noteworthy differences when comparing Aelianus to other compilers. For instance Gellius and Pliny certainly also drew some differences between their own works and those of other fellow-scholars, highlighting in doing so their own achievements. Pliny for instance

emphasises his sincerity in acknowledging and faithfully indicating the sources he used, whereas he criticises others for taking material from others without acknowledging it.⁶¹ Also his commitment to deal with a difficult matter rather than with pleasant stuff goes in this direction and highlights his proficiency and willingness to be helpful rather than to gain fame and profit.⁶² But he is also aware of the intermediate status of his achievement and of the fact that, as he improved the state of knowledge reached by his predecessors, he will be superseded by others. We do not find this in Aelianus, who phrases his achievement by highlighting the personal and definitive insights he gained by recognising that animals are better than humans.

Gellius, on his part, claims that he has only gathered first thoughts that may be deepened by the readers, if they are interested. Moreover, he clearly states that he put his work below that of others:

Atticas Noctes inscripsimus, tantum ceteris omnibus in ipsius quoque inscriptionis laude cedentes, quantum cessimus in cura et elegancia scriptionis.

We assigned it the title Attic Nights, yielding as much to all others, even in the praise of this very title, as we do in the care applied to, and the elegance of our writing. (Gellius, Attic Nights, Praef. § 10)

But the most striking opposition is the one between Aelianus and Athenaeus. Indeed, when we proceed in analysing the images Aelianus develops in his introducing and closing remarks, we encounter another idea that is developed by Aelianus. Whereas Athenaeus depicted himself as one of the *deipnosophistai* taking part in the social events of his time, Aelianus' claim, on the contrary, to have decided, on his own initiative, to retreat from a public and courtly life to devote himself to his study:

οὐκ ἀγνοῶ δὲ ὅτι ἄρα καὶ τῶν ἐς χρήματα ὀρώντων ὀξὺ καὶ τεθηγμένων ἐς τιμὰς τε καὶ δυνάμεις τινὲς καὶ πᾶν τὸ φιλόδοξον δι' αἰτίας ἔξουσιν, εἰ τὴν ἑμαυτοῦ σχολὴν κατεθέμην ἐς ταῦτα, ἐξὸν καὶ ὠφρῶσθαι καὶ ἐν ταῖς αὐλαῖς ἐξετάζεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ μέγα προήκειν πλοῦτου. ἐγὼ δὲ ὑπὲρ τε ἀλωπέκων καὶ σαυρῶν καὶ κανθάρων καὶ ὄφρων καὶ λεόντων (...) περιέρχομαι.

I do not ignore that among those who keep a sharp look on money and strive for honours and influence, and all the enamoured with reputation will blame me for devoting my leisure to these studies, when it would have been possible to take a supercilious attitude, to be received at court and

*to earn a considerable amount of wealth. But on my side, I keep company with foxes, lizards, beetles, snakes and lions (...)*⁶³ (Aelianus, NA, Epilogue)

In Aelianus wording, this move is motivated by his preferring the company of more knowledgeable men than his contemporaries:

ἀλλὰ οὐ μοι φίλον σὺν τοῖσδε τοῖς πλουσίοις ἀριθμεῖσθαι καὶ πρὸς ἐκείνους ἐξετάζεσθαι, εἰ δὲ ὣν καὶ ποιηταὶ σοφοὶ καὶ ἄνδρες φύσεως ἀπόρρητα ἰδεῖν τε ἅμα καὶ κατασκέπασθαι δεινοὶ καὶ συγγραφεῖς τῆς πείρας ἐς τὸ μήκιστον προελθόντες ἑαυτοὺς ἠξίωσαν, τούτων τοὶ καὶ ἑμαυτὸν ἀμωσγέπως ἔνα πειρῶμαι ἀριθμεῖν καὶ ἐθέλω, δῆλον ὡς ἀμείνων ἑμαυτῷ σύμβουλός εἰμι τῆς ἐξ ἐκείνων κρίσεως. βουλοίμην γὰρ ἂν μάθημα ἐν γούν πεπαιδευμένον περιγενέσθαι μοι ἢ τὰ ἀδόξενα τῶν πάντων πλουσίων χρήματα τε ἅμα καὶ κτήματα (Aelianus, NA, Epilogue)

But I have no aspiration to be counted among these rich men, nor to compete with them. But, if I attempt and wish, in one way or the other, to be one of those, among whom also the wise poets, the men witty in envisioning and inspecting the secrets of nature, and the writers who achieved the greatest of challenges, judge themselves worthy to be, it is obvious that I can take better advices from myself than from the judgment of these men. For I prefer to earn for myself one single piece of knowledge rather than the much-praised money of the very rich and their possessions. (Aelianus, NA, Epilogue)

This statement should be weighed against another witness provided by Philostratus, another contemporary of Aelianus. He mentions Claudius Aelianus in his *Lives of the Sophists* and comments on Aelianus' decision to withdraw from society. He gives, however, a very different reason for Aelianus' choice, namely Aelianus' conviction that he had not enough talent to be a sophist, although he was awarded this prestigious title, and decided to dedicated himself to writing rather than to declamations:

(...) προσηρθεὶς σοφιστῆς ὑπὸ τῶν χαριζομένων τὰ τοιαῦτα οὐκ ἐπίστευσεν, οὐδὲ ἐκολάκευσε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γνώμην, οὐδὲ ἐπήρθη ὑπὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος οὕτω μεγάλου ὄντος, ἀλλ' ἑαυτὸν εὖ διασκεψάμενος ὡς μελέτη οὐκ ἐπιτήδειον τῷ συγγράφειν ἐπέθετο καὶ ἐθαυμάσθη ἐκ τούτου.

(...) *although he was declared a sophist by those who bestow such honours, he did not trust them, neither did he flatter his own judgment nor did he cherish this title immoderately, despite its prestige; but after having checked out that his talent was not made for declamation, he applied himself to*

prose writing and won admiration in this field. (Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 2.31)

There is, of course, a substantial difference between claiming superiority because one is convinced to have reached a deeper insight through knowledgeable readings, and acknowledging a flaw in one's talent. Nonetheless, the distance that Aelianus wants to make between himself and other scholars, is once again allude to by Philostratus, however from a different angle, when he claims that Aelianus was proud of not having travelled beyond the borders of ancient Italy. Most of the sophists of his time, including Philostratus himself, travelled a lot, either for their education or for their work as sophists. Actually also Gellius alludes to this practice when evoking in his *Attic Nights* his stay in Greece during his education. Aelianus, on the contrary, takes a completely opposite stance and it proud to have avoided such long travels. In the light of this, even with the hesitation about the motivation of Aelianus' choice (flaw in his talent or deeper insight) that it introduces, Philostratus' text also bears witness to Aelianus' voluntary retreat from an expected behaviour of a sophist and underlines his preference for bookish study.

However, this behaviour also stands in opposition with other statements of some of our compilers. As we have seen, Gellius – and for instance also Clement – alludes to studies that he did in previous times, during his own education, in Athens or when attending lectures. Pliny says that he could only dedicate the nights to studies, as his days were filled with other commitments and duties. But, Aelianus, on the contrary, claims that he took the time, while being a sophist, to retreat and study. In order to understand this shift, we may have to come back to the political context, in which each of these authors worked, to which we alluded with Pliny at the beginning of our paper. We may indeed have to take into account the political climate, in which Aelianus lived, so that, in doing so, we may define an ultimate difference between Aelianus and the other compilers of miscellanies.

Aelianus lived under Elagabalus, who was the successor of Caracalla. We are now under the Severan dynasty and Elagabalus, as well as Caracalla, two members of the Severan dynasty, have a rather bad reputation. We have some tiny hints from Philostratus that Aelianus must have been very critical against Elagabalus, as he may have written a text against him, however only after the emperor's death.⁶⁴ This attitude would then be in sharp contrasts with Pliny's convictions, who was a friend of Titus

and dedicated his work to the future emperor. We have also seen that Pliny's work is in some respect an attempt to justify and to glorify Rome's achievement to have extended its influence to the entire world. Aelianus, on the contrary, represents himself as someone avoiding the courtly life, judging it empty and vain, having certainly lost Pliny's enthusiasm for the Empire and its leading figures.

6. Conclusion

We have seen in this paper a wide range of images that the authors use to speak of their works and to acknowledge their understanding of taking part in one shared literary activity.

Gellius depicted himself as an interested and playful intellectual, who skims through the available books and tries to transmit to his addressees the pieces of knowledge that he found there as well as his enthusiasm and eagerness to discover new field of studies.

Clement is the ingenious weaver of a kaleidoscopic tapestry of all sorts of pieces of knowledge. He chooses this form for a very special purpose, namely to be able to hide the paths to true knowledge, so that he creates, on the one hand, pleasure to some humans, when they finally find it. On the other hand, he wants also to put off those, who are not worth of such wisdom, still allowing them to be delighted by the variety of the pieces of knowledge displayed.

Africanus sees his work as a skilfully assembled piece of art that bears witness to the craftsmanship of its creator. As such an object, it has a strong impact on the readers, who stand in awe before it. But it contains also knowledge that values the author's special status in the transmission of knowledge and empowers the addressees.

Athenaeus draws the image of an ideal performer, who can rely on his memory to reproduce, at any given moment, the large erudition that he possesses. He is not fouled by the many turns a conversation may take, but remains master of the game as a cook securely orchestrates the steps of a dinner, despite the variety of the food and the expectations of the guests.

Finally, Aelianus wants himself to be seen as a true intellectual, who sacrificed all material advantages for his studies. This is, however, not only an immense effort of renouncement or an associal and unappropriated behaviour, but, in the long run, a rewarding choice, as the author gains, in doing so, deeper knowledge than anyone else. This allows him to

free himself from all kinds of authorities and to reach ultimately a form of superiority that gives him the authority to function as judge over his own species.

All of them should, however, be set apart from Pliny and his striving for order, although many of the images used by Pliny to describe the intellectual activity, in which he takes part, are reused and reworked by the later compilers. We have seen, for instance, the claim of modesty that is expanded, by each author differently, with all sorts of additions that underlay the commitment and engagement of each author. The lingering on the explanation of the choice for the title and the placing of the work in a larger tradition is another such feature we singled out. But, we are well aware of the fact that the aspects we presented in our paper remain provisory results that should be completed by further investigations. For instance, the presented analysis should be enlarged so that we may observe how the differences in the self-representations that we individualised while focusing on the introductory and conclusion remarks, influence the shape, the outline or the content of each work.

NOTES

- ¹ In this paper, the texts come from the Loeb Classical Collection if not specified otherwise, whereas the translations are mine although those provided by the Loeb Classical Collection were of great help.
- ² Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Praef. § 6-9. He may, moreover, also have been influenced by the work of his contemporary and friend Favorinus, who wrote a Παντοδαπή ιστορία (Pantodapē historia: *Miscellaneous Story*). On this, see Holford-Strevens 2003, 115-118 and Clay 2012, 970.
- ³ Favorinus' work is unfortunately too fragmentarily preserved to be treated in our paper. Only 37 very disparate sequences have been preserved and none of them give any evidence about how Favorinus thought about his book. See Amato 2010, 258-531 for a thorough analysis of the few remaining fragments. For a more comprehensive list of miscellanies, see Whitmarsh 2007, 43-45.
- ⁴ Souda. s.v. Ailianos (α 178). For a summary of what we know, see Wilson 1997, 2-6 and Kindstrand 1998, 2954-2996.
- ⁵ Most recently, Hindermann 2016, 71-98, and for the concept of *poikilia* in particular, Grand-Clément 2015, 406-421.
- ⁶ We are well-aware of the literary *topoi* addressed in such introductory remarks and shall treat them as self-representations the authors want to create of themselves, not as factual evidence about the authors' lives. Therefore we shall analyse how much weight the authors give to each of these *topoi* and to what extent they developed or altered them.
- ⁷ See Köves-Zulauf 1973, 134-184 and more recently Fögen 2009, 205-215 for a thorough analysis of Pliny's *Preface*.
- ⁸ Almagor 2012, 2404-2405 and König/Woolf 2013b, 1-20.
- ⁹ Pliny, *NH*, Praef. § 14-15. See Naas 2002, 15-40 and especially Doody 2009, 1-21, who emphasises the influence of modern understandings of the notion of encyclopaedia on our reading of Pliny. Further also Folwer 1997, 3-30 and König/Woolf 2013a, 23-63.
- ¹⁰ Fowler 1997, 14-17, Naas 2002, 18-21 and Doody 2009, 11. For ancient examples: Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 1.10.1 and Vitruvius *Arch.* 1.1.12. For further ancient evidence and a comprehensive treatment of the question, Fuchs 1962, 365-398.
- ¹¹ See for instance Pliny, *NH*, Praef. § 14: qui unus omnia ea tractaverit (... *one who treated all this alone...*) or the very end of his work (*NH* 37.77 (201): etenim peractis omnibus naturae operibus discrimen quoddam rerum ipsarum atque terrarum facere conveniet: *having now worked through all of nature's creations, it would be appropriate to establish some classification of the things themselves and their locations*). Naas 2002, 171-172.
- ¹² Naas 2002, 22. She emphasises the idea that with the treasures (thesaurus oportet esse, non libros: *storehouses instead of books would be more*

- appropriate* Pliny, *NH*, Praef. § 17) Pliny pursues the idea of an inventory (with an image of drawers) rather than a complete structure of knowledge (a tree) with its branches. This is also highlighted by Bounia 2004, 173-220 who associates the desire for completeness with the notion of collecting.
- 13 See Naas 2002, 195-199 for the references.
- 14 Naas 2002, 195-208 and Bounia 2004, 208-210. König/Woolf 2013b, 14-16, on the contrary, underlay the difficulty modern readers may have to understand Pliny's principles.
- 15 Naas, 2002, 70-77 and 416. See also Bounia 2004, 200-204 for further evidence about how Pliny's work aims to legitimize the new Flavian dynasty. In Beagon 2005, 6-11 there is, moreover, a short summary on the personal links between Pliny, Titus and Vespasian.
- 16 For a more diachronic approach, see König/Whitmarsh 2007, 3-39 and Witmarsh 2007, 29-51.
- 17 See for instance Fögen 2009, 214-215 on this topos.
- 18 Pliny *NH*, Praef. § 26-27 and Naas 2002, 54-57 for more details about Pliny's usage of this image.
- 19 See Minarini 2000, 539-543 and now also Howley 2018, 112-156 for the complex and often playful ways, with which Gellius deals with Pliny's monumental work.
- 20 Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Praef. § 4-5.
- 21 See Fögen 2009, 208-208 who describes Gellius' claim and Pliny's statement as a similar strategy.
- 22 See also Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Praef. §10.
- 23 See also Gellius *Attic Nights* 1.2.1-2 and Vardi 1993, 298-301. Holford-Strevens 2003, 19-21 dates the publication of the *Attic Nights* after 178 CE. This would mean that the event recalled in the *Preface* happened at least 30 years previously, when Gellius was completing his education.
- 24 Naas 2002, 61-67. See also Bounia 2004, 176-177 for the interpretation of this phrase.
- 25 Fögen 2009, 206-209 and Beason 2013, 84-107.
- 26 Pliny *NH*, Praef. § 16 and Naas 2002, 84-86 for further references throughout the *Natural History*.
- 27 This difference between the two formulas is rooted in the Latin use of tenses: the imperfect focuses on the duration of an activity whereas the Latin praetertium expresses a fully accomplished action. Naas 2002, 55.
- 28 Naas 2002, 57, Naas 2013, 145-166 and Hdt 1.1.
- 29 See also Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Praef. § 11-12 for other statements where pleasure is emphasised.
- 30 Bounia 2004, 209-210.
- 31 Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Praef. § 2 (above n. 1).
- 32 König/Woolf 2013a, 52-58.

33 Sconocchia 1978, 314 and more recently Doody 2009, 4.
 34 See for instance again Minarini 2000, 536-553, who also includes Gellius’
 use of vocabulary in her analyses of the author’s answer to predecessors.
 35 Ferguson 1991, 10-11. For further passages from Clement about this, see
 Bevegni 2014, 317-331.
 36 Clement, *Stromateis* 1.1.11.1-2.
 37 On this in particular, see Le Boulluec 2006, 95-108.
 38 The last sentence of the passage is a quotation from 1 *Corinthian* 1.22.
 39 Robert 1981, 211-222.
 40 Pliny dedicates his work to the future emperor Titus, whereas Gellius has
 his children in mind.
 41 Here we follow, for the text as well as for the translation, the recent edition
 by Wallraff et al. 2012.
 42 *Il.* 14.211-217.
 43 *Fr.* 12.17, lines 38-42 [Wallraff].
 44 That is *fr.* 10 [Wallraff]: a papyrus, on which an extract from book 11 of
 the *Odyssey* has been preserved. It is, however, a much-modified version
 of the Homeric text, as it has been completed by a magical incantation. As
 the preserved fragment is the end of Africanus’ book 18, we also have some
 closing remarks from Africanus about his expertise in the field of Homeric
 scholarship and about the place where his work has been stored and can
 be accessed by potential readers. See further Hammerstädt 2009, 53-69 and
 Middleton 2014, 139-162.
 45 Beagson 1992, 26-36 and Nass 2002, 62-67.
 46 It is not sure whether Africanus comes from a Christian or a Greco-Roman
 background. See Adler 2009, 1-52.
 47 Trapp 2007, 470-471 and Johnson 2010, 127-129.
 48 This is a tradition that goes back to Plato, and his famous *Banquet* where
 Socrates is staged during such a dinning party. See for instance Lukinovich
 1990, 263-266 and Trapp 2000, 353-363.
 49 See Romeri 2000, 256 -271 and Jacob 2004a, 167- 174 for the idea of
 mixing the two levels (dishes and speeches), and Jacob 2000, 85-110 and
 Jacob 2004b, 142-150, for the transformation the material underwent.
 50 For an overview of the structure, see Maisonneuve 2007, 387-412, and for a
 discussion on Athenaeus’ usage of the structural devices for the composition
 of his work, see Wilkins 2000, 23-37.
 51 Jacob 2004b, 150-158.
 52 Jacob 2004b, 150-155 and, for the importance of memory in Antiquity and
 its interaction with texts, Too 2000 111-123.
 53 The description of Athenaeus’ usage of quotations as performance, comes
 from Jacob 2004a, 158-174.

- 54 See above the quoted passages: Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Praef. § 2 et 3 (p. 98 and p. 105).
- 55 We may mention here that it has been highlighted for Pliny that he wanted to follow in his work an Aristotelian principle of organising natural history (see Bounia 2004, 209). It is on the contrary striking that Aelianus, who recalls in his title one of Aristotle's work (Περὶ τὰ ζῷα ἱστορίαι (Peri ta zōa historiai) / Περὶ ζῶων ἰδιότητος (Peri zōōn idiotētos)), does openly speak against a systematic way of exposition that would discuss the animals per species, an arrangement that could recall, indirectly this Aristotelian principle.
- 56 Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Praef. § 11-12.
- 57 Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Praef. § 13.
- 58 With regard to the title Aelianus' second work, the *Varia Historia*, would be closer to Gellius' approach and even more so to Favorinus' lost work (Παντοδαπή ἱστορία/Pantodapē historia: *Miscellaneous Story*). But no introductory remarks seem to be preserved for this work, which make it difficult to assess Aelianus' plans or aims for this second book. It remains, however, to be noted that the work as preserved, starts with an anecdote on the octopus, one of the animals, which is since very early associated with the ποικιλία (*poikilia*: *manifold variety*). See Pindar fr. 43 [Maehler] and Theognis, 213-218 [West] and for instance Hawhee 2004, 53-57.
- 59 For a recent study on Aelianus' voice within the whole text, see Smith 2014.
- 60 But all three are aware of the importance of their individual research, as all call their work a kind of storehouse (*tesaurus*, *pendus*, κείμελιον/*keimēlion*), which proves the thoroughness of their investigations and the faithfulness of their commitments.
- 61 Pliny, *NH*, Praef. § 21-23.
- 62 Pliny, *NH*, Praef. § 16.
- 63 Aelianus gives a long list of other animals that would be to long be reproduced here. There seem, however, not to be any meaningful order in the enumeration, although it can be divided into three groups. The first reproduced above contains five animals mentioned without further details. In a second group, we have the leopard, the stork, the nightingale and the elephant that are all mentioned with one (positive) characteristic of their behaviours. The third group is composed by fishes, cranes and serpents, which seem even more heterogeneous, but for each we have again one complement (the shapes of the fishes, the migration of the cranes and the species of serpents).
- 64 This is the work entitled *Indictment of Gynnis*. See Smith 2014, 274-279 for the most recent analysis of the few fragments.

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