

Marcus Aurelius: Family, Dynasty, Power

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Abstract

This thesis is a prosopographical examination of the policy of Marcus Aurelius regarding his family. The prosopographical method avoids schematic biography, and allows the inclusion of individuals who would otherwise only appear in a periphery sense. I aim to demonstrate that a new perspective on Marcus as an emperor can be gained through an examination of the individuals connected to the imperial nexus, most notably his six sons-in-law. The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 places Marcus in the context of his scheming family and the succession arrangements of Hadrian, who intended Lucius Verus to be his ultimate successor. Chapter 2, through detailed examination of Marcus' sons-in-law, establishes that Marcus admitted Lucius to the imperial power from necessity, and how he sought to build his own nexus by moving power away from Lucius and his many connections. Chapter 3 analyses how the rebellion of Avidius Cassius in 175 showed Marcus the potential weakness of his arrangements. The manner in which Marcus responded to the crisis reveals his determination to ensure the succession of Commodus. Marcus accomplished this by completing the construction of a powerful family nexus, which was centred on his sons-in-law. He should be seen not only as a philosopher but as a canny, dynastic, and ruthless emperor. This is established by the position of Marcus in Hadrian's succession arrangements, an examination of Marcus' sons-in-law and the manner in which they were selected, and the response of Marcus to the rebellion of Avidius Cassius.

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Marcus Aurelius: Family, Dynasty, Power

Introduction

The three emperors preceding Marcus Aurelius – Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius – lacked sons of their own. In order to settle the question of succession, they looked to their own extended families. Propinquity to the emperor was manipulated as required. At a young age Marcus was the beneficiary of such dynastic manoeuvrings when, along with Lucius, he was adopted by Antoninus Pius. It was an experience of which he made good use. Hadrian intended Lucius to be his eventual heir, but his design was suborned by Antoninus, who favoured Marcus, his wife's nephew.¹ Hadrian's succession policy and the scheming of Antoninus placed Marcus in a difficult position upon his own accession in 161 CE.² Marcus made Lucius his co-emperor not to fulfil the original desire of Hadrian, but because Lucius' powerful family connections had to be conciliated. In this thesis it is argued that Marcus went to great lengths throughout his reign to ensure that his family – and not the connections of Lucius – would retain the imperial power. He accomplished this by carefully selecting the men whom his daughters married, and was able to construct slowly a nexus of connected families. After Marcus' death in 180, his designs found their completion in the smooth accession of his son Commodus. In time the reign of Commodus became a byword for scandal and conspiracy: but upon his accession Commodus was supported by a powerful nexus of his father's *amici*, many of whom were connected to him by marriage.³

¹ T. D. Barnes, 'Hadrian and Lucius Verus', *JRS* 57 (1967), 65-79. Barnes is convincing on Hadrian's intention for Lucius to be his ultimate successor, despite the objections of Birley (1987), 240-1. Discussed in full in Chapter One.

² All dates are CE unless otherwise noted.

³ The smooth transition from the reign of Marcus to the reign of Commodus can be seen in the *fasti* of 176-83. The *consules ordinarii* of these years were nearly all family connections or *amici* of the dynasty, individuals whom Marcus had selected for his daughters or promoted. The *fasti*: G. Alföldy, *Konsulat und Senatorenstand unter den Antoninen* (Bonn, 1977), 190-1 (cf. however 192, n. 215, on Cn. Julius Verus); P. M. M. Leunissen, *Konsuln und Konsulare in der Zeit von Commodus bis Severus Alexander* (Amsterdam, 1989), 129. Apart from Commodus himself and his brothers-in-law and father-in-law, discussed in Chapter Two, the *consules ordinarii* of 176-83 include Marcus' cousin Vitrasius Pollio, Fronto's son-in-law Aufidius Victorinus, and Quintilius Condianus, son of one of the two Quintilii brothers who had been consuls together in 151. See also Pomponius Vitrasius Pollio, *CIL* 6.41145; Flavius Aper, *PIR*² F 209;

It is necessary to remark briefly on terminology. The term ‘nexus’ is used frequently in this thesis. It is preferred to ‘faction’ (or *factio*) because it avoids inherent partisanship. Partisanship was certainly a feature of imperial politics under the Antonines, but it was not always a defining one. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one of the meanings provided for ‘nexus’ is ‘a connected group or series; a network’.⁴ Edward Champlin used the term ‘cousinhood’ to describe just such a group of connected *gentes* in the ambit of the imperial power in 193, and it is in this context in which the term ‘nexus’ is employed in this thesis.⁵ Each of Marcus’ sons-in-law was part of a *gens* that would, after an imperial marriage, have a direct interest and stake in the imperial power, and hence become part of the imperial nexus.

This thesis examines the process of the construction of this nexus from a prosopographical perspective. The importance Marcus placed on its construction and composition is traced through prosopographical analyses of his various sons-in-law (and sole daughter-in-law), and the reasons Marcus selected them. The prosopographical method allows for the proper inclusion of individuals who otherwise only appear as periphery figures in the various literary sources.⁶ Prosopography must naturally be employed with care; it cannot reveal definitively the inner workings of an emperor’s mind. Nevertheless, it remains true that the emperor was the sum of his deeds.⁷ In this case, there is sufficient prosopographical evidence that Marcus employed a consistent dynastic policy through the marriages of his daughters, and that this policy was aimed at strengthening his own grip on the imperial power at the expense of Lucius’ connections. Since

Cornelius Scipio Salvidienus Orfitus, PIR² C 1448; Velius Rufus Julianus, Halfmann (1979), no. 189; Martius Verus, PIR² M 348; Q. Bruttius Praesens, PIR² B 165; Quintilius Condianus PIR² Q 22; Tineius Rufus, Degraasi (1952), 50; Aufidius Victorinus, PIR² A 1393. Discussed in full in Chapter Two.

⁴ OED 10 (Oxford, 1989), 382-3.

⁵ E. Champlin, ‘Notes on the Heirs of Commodus’, *AJP* 100 (1979), 306.

⁶ The method is rendered feasible by several invaluable prosopographical studies of the period, *viz.*: Alföldy (1977); Leunissen (1989); W. Eck, *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian* (Munich, 1970). The many volumes of the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani* (PIR) now well into the second edition, continue to be essential. Likewise essential for any study of the Antonines are the biographies of the emperors by A. R. Birley and the many articles of R. Syme: A. R. Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*² (London, 1987); A. R. Birley, *Septimius Severus: the African Emperor*² (London, 1988); A. R. Birley, *Hadrian: the Restless Emperor* (London, 1997); R. Syme, *Roman Papers* 1-7, eds. E. Badian and A. R. Birley, (Oxford, 1975-91).

⁷ F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*² (London, 1992), 6.

the chronology of his daughters' marriages spans the entire reign of Marcus, the circumstances of each marriage are crucial. Each marriage reflects both immediate concerns and long-term policies. Thus, in order to place the dynastic policies of Marcus in the proper political context it is also necessary to examine the ramifications of the succession crisis in the final years of Hadrian's reign, and the rebellion of Avidius Cassius in 175.

The three chapters follow a generally chronological structure. Chapter One examines the succession plans of Hadrian and places Marcus in his proper context as the beneficiary of the dynastic scheming of his aunt's husband, Antoninus.⁸ After he succeeded Hadrian, Antoninus deliberately undermined the plans of Hadrian to ensure that Marcus, not Lucius, would succeed. This did not produce visible civil conflict, but rather a rivalry between the nexus of Marcus, centred on the Annii Veri, and the nexus of Lucius, centred on the Ceionii. The policy of Hadrian, and its failure due to the machinations of Antoninus, had ramifications more than two decades later upon the joint accession of Marcus and Lucius.

Chapter Two demonstrates how Marcus raised Lucius to the imperial power through dynastic necessity. The nexus of Lucius was large and well-connected, and could not be ignored. Lucius was quickly tied to Marcus by marriage to Lucilla in a further attempt at conciliation. The other sons-in-law of Marcus are examined in turn to demonstrate that Marcus was intent throughout his reign on creating a nexus centred on his own family, and thereby building a sphere of influence among the oligarchy that was independent of the connections of Lucius.⁹ On every occasion that Marcus selected a husband for one of his daughters (and a wife for Commodus), the goal he had in mind was to enhance the grip of his own family on the imperial power. This is established through a prosopographical examination of each of the sons-in-law of Marcus, their

⁸ Barnes (1967), 65-79.

⁹ One of the men selected by Marcus, M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus (PIR² P 474), was the nephew of Lucius through his sister Ceionia Fabia, the one-time betrothed of Marcus. The marriage to a daughter of Marcus possibly represents co-optation of a close male relation of Lucius, crucial to Marcus' dynastic plans. But the situation may be more complex, and is discussed in Chapter Two.

own family connections, and the timing and circumstances of the marriage which brought them into the imperial nexus.

Chapter Three examines the delicate position in which Marcus found himself in 175 upon the rebellion of Avidius Cassius. The rebellion was a serious threat to Marcus, and it is possible to argue that, at least in part, it represents the last attempt of the discontented connections of Lucius to regain power. Despite its failure, the rebellion forced Marcus to accelerate and consolidate his dynastic plans. The relative positions of Avidius Cassius and Claudius Pompeianus are examined, as is the literary evidence in which the importance of the rebellion has been largely underplayed. The immediate response of Marcus to the rebellion and his subsequent policies reveal his overwhelming concern with the retention and protection of the imperial power on behalf of his family, and add valuable context to some of his decisions in the final years of his life.

This thesis aims to show that Marcus should be seen as a canny and dynastic emperor, alert to threats to his and his family's power and to the opportunity to co-opt men of prominent provincial families into the imperial nexus. This is established by examination of: i) his position in the problem of Hadrian's succession; ii) his choices for sons-in-law; and iii) his response to the rebellion of Avidius Cassius. Throughout his reign, Marcus made progress toward building a powerful new nexus, unencumbered by connections to Lucius. He is revealed as a shrewd and ruthless politician.

Chapter 1:

Marcus, Lucius, and Hadrian

Introduction

No investigation of the reign and acts of Marcus can escape the problem of Hadrian's succession policy. For Marcus to be seen in his correct context as an emperor, and for his decisions to be understood, it is essential to understand the role played by Hadrian and his succession policy. Thus, in order to place Marcus in his proper context as a ruler – Roman, political, and familial – this chapter is divided into four sections. First, objections to the thesis that Lucius was Hadrian's heir will be dealt with, followed by investigations of the two succession policies of Hadrian in 136 and 138. Finally, the accession of Marcus in 161 will be examined. The objective is to place the accession of Marcus in the proper context so that his policies and decisions as emperor may be seen to be guided by imperial and dynastic motives.

1. Problems

Hadrian's changeable and ruthless character dictates caution in any analysis.¹⁰ His reign began and ended with the deaths of senators.¹¹ On his accession, four consulars were killed. Two of them had apparently long been his enemies, though they were favoured marshals under Trajan. All four were apparently engaged in a conspiracy against the new emperor. Conclusive evidence for this is lacking.¹² Quite apart from his obvious qualities and achievements as emperor, it seems

¹⁰ *Hadr.* 14.11; *Epit. De Caes.* 14.6; Dio 69.3.1-3, 69.23.2-3.

¹¹ Dio 69.23.2.

¹² *Hadr.* 7.1-4; Dio 69.2.5-6. The two Trajanic generals were Cornelius Palma (PIR² C 1412) and Publilius Celsus (PIR² P 782). Both were *bis consules*. The others were Avidius Nigrinus, *cos.* 110 (PIR² A 1408), and Lusius Quietus (PIR² L 439). The passage cited from the *vita* includes a reference to Hadrian's autobiography (7.2) where he denied

Hadrian never repaired wholly his relationship with the senate. The atmosphere of suspicion and whispered accusation in which his reign had begun returned in force at its end. There must have been many senators whose existing fears and suspicions were confirmed by his last years when he suppressed his brother-in-law, the thrice-consul Servianus, and his grand-nephew Pedanius Fuscus.¹³ These events must be given due consideration in an analysis of Hadrian's ultimate intentions for his succession policy: and Hadrian had good cause to know how delicate a succession could be.¹⁴ The loss in this context of Hadrian's autobiography is regrettable, though it was no doubt intended to ameliorate his deeds for posterity. Hadrian, as an emperor, must remain the sum of his deeds.¹⁵

Professor Barnes advances an eloquent argument that Lucius Verus, not Marcus Aurelius, was Hadrian's ultimate choice as heir.¹⁶ The laying out of the details of the first settlement in

any wrongdoing himself, claiming the senate had acted against his will in putting these men to death (*invito Hadriano, ut ipse in vita sua dicit, occisi sunt*). The truth will never be known. Suffice to say that the alleged conspirators were killed in different places after being allowed to return home. See also Birley (1997), 87-9; R. Syme, 'Hadrian and the Senate', *Athenaeum* 62 (1984), 31-60 = *RP* 4 (Oxford, 1988), 295-324. Birley gives some credence to the attempt on Hadrian's life by Avidius Nigrinus and Lusius Quietus, and correctly points out the similarities in the accounts of the *HA* and Dio. Syme, whilst not wholly believing Hadrian's denial, ascribes the responsibility of the executions to the overzealousness of Acilius Attianus, then praetorian prefect. Syme also makes the salient point that the death of Nigrinus alienated a powerful group of Italian families: crucial for the interpretation here offered of Hadrian's motives in 136 and 138, discussed in full below.

¹³ Pedanius Fuscus, *PIR*² P 198; L. Julius Ursus Servianus, *PIR*² J 631. Cf. *Hadr.* 15.8, 23.3-9; Dio 69.17.1ff. See also E. Champlin, 'Hadrian's Heir', *ZPE* 21 (1976), 79-89; Syme (1984), 31-60. For Hadrian's problematic relations with the senate, despite his achievements as emperor and his apparent attitude of moderation to that body, see most importantly *Hadr.* 7.2 and Dio 69.23ff. The intriguing *multi alii* mentioned by the biographer may well be an exaggeration, but it is also symptomatic of a larger pattern in the biography. Many unfavourable statements can be found and a hostile thread detected; cf. *Hadr.* 7.3-6, 4.8-10 on the rumours on the legality of Hadrian's adoption. There are other examples of his unpopularity cited by the biographer: 9.1-5, 11.7, 13.10, 14.11, 15.2-10, 16.7, 20.3, 23.1-9, 24.4, 25.8-9. The conclusion of the *vita* is also lukewarm at best (27.1-2): Pius is praised, but the senate wished to annul Hadrian's *acta*, and again undefined *multi* disparage Hadrian.

¹⁴ Dio 69.1.1-4; *Hadr.* 4.8-10. Hadrian's own doubtful adoption and accession gave him ample reason to seek stability. There are sundry modern studies that attempt to disentangle Hadrian's intentions and examine possible alternatives; see most prominently R. Syme, 'Ummidius Quadratus: Capax Imperii', *HSCP* 83 (1979), 287-310 = *RP* 3 (Oxford, 1984) 1158-78; E. Champlin (1976), 79-89; H.-G. Pflaum, 'Le Règlement Successoral d'Hadrien', *HAC* 1963 (Bonn, 1964), 95-122.

¹⁵ Millar (1992), 6. His conception of the emperor is followed here and also by Birley (1997), xiv. For Hadrian's lost autobiography, see most prominently *Hadr.* 1.1, 3.2, 3.4, 7.2, 16.1. See also R. Syme, 'Fictional History, Old and New: Hadrian', *RP* 6 (Oxford, 1991), 160f.; R. Syme, 'Hadrian's Autobiography: Servianus and Sura' *HAC* 1986/89 (1991), 191f. = *RP* 6 (Oxford, 1991), 400f. Syme (1991), 191-2, regards the anecdote of Servianus informing Trajan of Hadrian's debts and hampering his journey (*Hadr.* 2.6) as possibly extracted from Hadrian's autobiography, and that it 'discloses the malevolence of Hadrian, not that of his brother-in-law – and thereby the condition of Hadrian's mind towards the end.'

¹⁶ Barnes (1967), 65-79.

particular does much to clarify the issue.¹⁷ In the course of his argument Barnes also partially rehabilitates the *vita Veri*. Though it is still fraught with fictional elements, Barnes nevertheless demonstrates that it contains verifiable information that does not come from any of the other *vitae*.¹⁸ The *vita Veri* may stand on its own merits, few enough though they may be. It is probably the product of a more sober earlier work chronicling the life of Verus.¹⁹ Barnes' argument for Hadrian's preference for Lucius as his successor is persuasive. However, at the last Barnes optimistically assigns a philosophical motive to Marcus' decision to share the imperial power with Lucius.²⁰

In several areas, Barnes' argument for Hadrian's preference for Lucius may be expanded. The succession arrangements of Hadrian had consequences that lasted well into the reign of Marcus: this seems inescapable. As is argued in the second chapter of this thesis, Marcus had little choice upon his accession but to concede to Lucius the position Hadrian had intended. Whatever Marcus' own preferences may have been, politics forced his hand. The newly acceded emperor had to be cautious.²¹ Marcus eventually struck out on his own, forming a new core of loyal men, most of whom had no connections to Hadrian or Lucius.

However, to establish that Hadrian's choice was indeed Lucius, it is necessary to examine some objections to this theory. A statement from the *vita Marci* will form a familiar starting point: according to the biographer, Hadrian initially intended to make Marcus his heir directly but was prevented from doing so by Marcus' youth (*nam et Hadrianus hunc eundem successorum paraverat, nisi ei aetas puerilis obstitisset, Marc. 16.6*). The biographer is correct to cite the youth of Marcus as a

¹⁷ Barnes (1967), 74-7.

¹⁸ Barnes (1967), 65-74. Such verifiable information includes the account of Lucius' activities in the east (6.7-7.10), accurate physical descriptions of Lucius (10.6), and Lucius' place of burial in Hadrian's tomb (11.1).

¹⁹ R. Syme, 'Ignotus, the Good Biographer', in *Emperors and Biography* (Oxford, 1971), 32-3.

²⁰ Barnes (1967), 79. According to Barnes, Marcus 'knew the truth about the dynastic compact of 138, and his philosophy would not allow him to delay and longer the fulfilment of Hadrian's wishes.' Marcus may well have known the intentions of Hadrian, but this does not mean that his sharing of the imperial power was motivated by this knowledge – in the first case, his relationship with Hadrian was not warm, despite the favour shown to him as a youth. Cf. Birley (1997), 295ff.; Birley (1987), 31, 240-1.

²¹ Drawing examples from the Antonines themselves is not difficult. A glance at the *fasti* will confirm the delicacy of Hadrian's position in 118; the beneficiaries were his friends and allies. See Syme (1984), 34-9; Birley (1997), 77ff. For Hadrian's army commanders, see Eck (1970), 184ff.

difficulty. In terms of recent precedent, Marcus was young indeed – when Hadrian died, Marcus was only seventeen. Nerva had been sixty upon his accession, Trajan forty-four, and Hadrian forty-one. The validity of the biographer's statement here disguises somewhat the inadequacy of his following remarks.²² The problem is the explicit statement that Hadrian wished Marcus to be his heir. This sentiment of the biography, which is oft present in modern scholarship, should be refuted.²³ In order to do so, due measure must be taken of the importance of the betrothal of Marcus to Ceionia Fabia and the adoption by Hadrian, after his illness, of L. Ceionius Commodus, one of the *consules ordinarii* of 136. This man was thereafter styled L. Aelius Caesar and served his second consulship as *ordinarius* the following year.²⁴

These three important events – betrothal, illness, and adoption – occurred through the course of 136. As the arrangement stood after the adoption of Aelius, '*Prima facie* therefore the line of succession is Ceionius (Aelius Caesar), followed by his son, with Marcus in third place only.'²⁵ The new Caesar was not directed to adopt Marcus; thus, L. Aelius Caesar's own son, the latterly homonymous L. Ceionius Commodus, would naturally be placed ahead of Aelius' daughter's future husband in the order of succession.²⁶ In 136, then, the intent of Hadrian is clear – the support of the Annii Veri was sought for the succession of the Ceionii. The stratagem to secure

²² *Marv.* 16.7. Namely, that Hadrian had intended Marcus to be the son-in-law of Pius, when Hadrian had in fact intended him to be betrothed to Ceionia Fabia, daughter of Aelius Caesar. Cf. *Marv.* 4.5, 6.2. In terms of youthful emperors, Caligula and Nero were not encouraging examples. The youth of Marcus or Lucius may have been a caution to Hadrian.

²³ Cf. Birley (1997), 295: it is 'difficult to avoid the conclusion that Hadrian's real choice all along was the young Marcus'. This sentiment is likewise present in Syme (1979), 302; Pflaum (1964), 110ff. Where this notion comes from in the *HA* would be most interesting; doubtless it was in the interests of Marcus and Antoninus to promote this idea. The place of Aelius Caesar as 'stop-gap', or 'placeholder', is not in question: merely for whom he would serve this purpose.

²⁴ Henceforth Aelius Caesar. He was also granted the tribunician power and proconsular imperium. As Dessau remarks: '*ad exemplum Tiberii et Germanici.*' *ILS* 319 = *CIL* 3.4366. Clearly his time in Pannonia was intended to show the new heir to the legions to prepare him for the imperial power. Cf. also *RIC* 2, 470f., for issues of coins depicting Hadrian and Aelius.

²⁵ Barnes (1967), 75.

²⁶ Barnes (1967), 75, nn. 45-6. Barnes cites the case of Faustus Cornelius Sulla Felix, who was married to a daughter of Claudius but had thereby no claim to the succession. He was, however, put to death some years later by Nero. See also J. Vanderleest, 'Hadrian, Lucius Verus and the Arco di Portogallo', *Phoenix* 49 (1995), 319-30. Vanderleest argues that a relief depicts the young Lucius Verus in a prominent position on the occasion of a *laudatio memoriae* of Aelius Caesar. If this took place soon after the death of Aelius it could admittedly be before the adoption of Antoninus, but still it demonstrates two things concerning the first settlement: that Hadrian, at least for a time, considered young Lucius the next heir after Aelius, and that Lucius' position was publicly known.

the Annii Veri was marriage, in the persons of the young Marcus Annii Verus and Ceionia Fabia.

There remains a question regarding the legal details of the adoption of Aelius Caesar. Some debate has centred on the question of whether, with his father adopted into the imperial household, the young L. Ceionius Commodus (the future emperor Lucius Verus) was also adopted, and therefore was indeed second after his father in the order of succession.²⁷ It is enough to note that the later arrangement, that of Lucius' potential marriage to Faustina the Younger, should surely settle the matter of Hadrian's intent in Lucius' favour. Faustina was the daughter of T. Aurelius Fulvus, who was Hadrian's final choice as heir and became the emperor Antoninus Pius, and, crucially, who himself adopted, at the direction of Hadrian, both Marcus and Lucius.²⁸ Thus the arrangement of the earlier adoption of L. Aelius Caesar, whatever the precise details, should be considered in the light of Hadrian's eventual arrangement, in which he betrothed Lucius to Faustina. If the earlier adoption of Aelius Caesar did not require a marriage to favour Lucius and the Ceionii, this is because it was plainly a much simpler arrangement whereby Lucius, as the son of the Caesar, would in due course be made Caesar by his father.²⁹

Barnes, then, is surely correct when he states, apropos of the latter settlement and the adoption of Antoninus, that 'Lucius had the better of the proposed dynastic matches.'³⁰ Birley's response is not sufficient to refute this definitively: 'But Ceionia Fabia and Faustina were both the daughter of a Caesar, and Fabia of the first one chosen.'³¹ Yet the eventual arrangement clearly places Lucius in a superior position. Hadrian still selected an aristocrat for the 'caretaker' position, if such it were; by early 138 this role was filled by Antoninus instead of the deceased

²⁷ Barnes (1967), 75, nn. 54-6.

²⁸ *Hadr.* 24.1, not without confusion: Lucius is misleadingly labelled Annii Verus. Cf. Dio 69.21.1.

²⁹ Barnes (1967), 75-6. A salient fact to note here would be that Antoninus Pius had no living sons in 138. Lucius would be a son of the Caesar either way, and soon the son of an emperor – as would Marcus.

³⁰ Barnes (1967), 77.

³¹ Birley (1987), 240. He seems correct to disregard Barnes' inclusion of a relief from Ephesus, which rests on a question of chronology. But perhaps Vanderleest (1995), 330 has strengthened by proxy the argument for a date of 138.

Aelius Caesar. The arrangement keeps Lucius, as the son and future son-in-law of the emperor, in second place on the succession. Marcus is still in third. If the Ceionii could not furnish a suitable candidate after the death of Aelius, then their connections, the Annii Veri (like Hadrian of Spanish origin and probably his distant kin), could act as placeholders for a generation.³² When he made the final arrangement in 138, Hadrian was old, and dying. He betrothed Lucius to Faustina to ensure Lucius' succession.

In summation, had Hadrian's first settlement stood unaltered, Lucius would have been the son of the emperor. Indeed, he was for a short time the son of the Caesar. Had Hadrian's second settlement stood unaltered, Lucius would have been husband to the emperor's daughter and Marcus would be brother-in-law to the future emperor. If Lucius' match with Faustina were not considered superior at the time, then it is difficult to find the motive of Antoninus for breaking it.³³ Break it he did, and switched the betrothal of Marcus from Ceionia Fabia to his own daughter Faustina, who was of course also Marcus' cousin.³⁴ Lucius was thus left unattached. The motivation of this act should only be sought in family politics. It elevates the Annii Veri and excludes the Ceionii from direct succession. Indeed, it removes the Ceionii from precisely the position where Hadrian had twice attempted to place Lucius. This is by no means the only indication that Antoninus clearly preferred the son of his wife's brother to Lucius.³⁵ In the final

³² There were among the Ceionii perhaps no other suitable candidates – Aelius Caesar had a brother, but he was probably dead by 136. His half brother Civica Barbarus was far too young, and in turn Civica Barbarus' half brother, who had shared the fasces with Aelius in 136, did not bring the benefit of existing connections with the Annii Veri, crucial to Hadrian's succession plan. For these connections, see R. Syme 'Vettuleni and Ceionii: Antonine Relatives', *Athenaeum* 35 (1957), 306-15 = *RP* 1 (Oxford, 1975), 325-32.

³³ The biographer cites the motive as the youth of Verus; see *Verus* 2.3, *Marv.* 6.2. Verus and Faustina must have been around the same age since she married Marcus in 145. Cf. also the corrigendum in Barnes (1967), 79. Barnes is correct to maintain that even if the betrothal of Faustina and Lucius did not occur, it certainly was Hadrian's intention.

³⁴ *Ant. Pius* 10.2; *Verus* 2.4; *Marv.* 6.1f.; *Ael.* 6.9.

³⁵ *Marv.* 6.3f.; *Verus* 3.4f. See especially the intriguing statement that Lucius showed loyalty, not love, to Antoninus (*cui, quantum videtur, fidem exhibuit, non amorem*). The verb used, *exhibere*, makes Lucius seem rather cold: the usual translations are 'producing', 'providing', or 'showing', in this case *fides* but not *amor*. Cf. e.g. *Hadr.* 7.12, 17.2, 19.3, 19.8, 19.12; *Ant. Pius* 10.2, where a *donatio* to the soldiers is made to commemorate the wedding of Marcus and Faustina. Marcus was some eight years older than Lucius, but the favours shown to Marcus by Antoninus cannot be attributed solely to this. Marcus was consul in 140 at the age of eighteen, one year after serving as quaestor. He was also given the title of Caesar at this time, and was consul for the second time in 145 and received the tribunician power and proconsular imperium in December 147. Faustina was also named Augusta in this year. Marcus was consul for the third time in 161. By contrast, Lucius was quaestor only in 153 and consul the following year in 154.

measure, it is true that Ceionia Fabia, to whom Marcus was originally betrothed, was the daughter of the first-chosen Caesar. What is not clear, however, is what importance should be attached to this fact. Perhaps more relevant at the time was the fact that Ceionia Fabia was the daughter of a dead Caesar. Faustina was the daughter of the second-chosen, but living, Caesar, and she would soon enough be the daughter of a reigning emperor.

2. The choice of Aelius

Reasons must be sought for Hadrian's selection of L. Aelius Caesar as his heir. That he was the preferred choice of the emperor is clear; Hadrian's decision to choose an heir who turned out to predecease him need not be mired in conspiracy theories.³⁶ A more difficult incident to untangle is the effect of the crisis of late 136 which followed Hadrian's illness and his adoption of Aelius.³⁷ Hadrian ordered the deaths of his brother-in-law, L. Julius Ursus Servianus, and his grand-nephew, Pedanius Fuscus, and this undoubtedly served to bring back to the senate unpleasant memories.³⁸ It placed the question of succession on a knife-edge. The events are unclear at best – but Hadrian's ruthlessness is obvious.

L. Ceionius Commodus, selected by Hadrian in 136 as his heir, rises suddenly into prominence. The emperor by this choice had displaced his own relatives in the persons of his brother-in-law, L. Julius Ursus Servianus, and this triple-consular's grandson, Pedanius Fuscus, who was

Lucius had to wait until he was twenty-two and twenty-three for these offices: and crucially he was given neither the tribunician power nor the title of Caesar by Antoninus, but rather received them as the gift of Marcus in 161. See Birley (1987), 103f.

³⁶ As Barnes (1967), 76-7, points out. The notion that Hadrian adopted Aelius expecting him to die is at odds with Hadrian's later adoption of Antoninus; the motivation for his succession arrangements was patently stability, and this would not be served by adopting an heir he expected to outlive. The diagnosis of Aelius' ailment and his prognosis could not have been accurate in any event. Even if Hadrian was aware of Aelius' condition when he adopted him it does nothing to prove that he expected Aelius to die before him. Hadrian himself was unwell at the time.

³⁷ Preferring the more coherent chronology in Dio 69.17.1f. See Champlin (1976), 80-2.

³⁸ Dio 69.2.4f., 69.23.2; *Hadr.* 25.8.

Hadrian's own grand-nephew.³⁹ Servianus had, according to Dio, previously been considered Hadrian's heir, and Servianus' grandson Pedanius Fuscus was in 136 in an excellent position to be *capax imperii*.⁴⁰ Fuscus was the grandson of Hadrian's sister and the son of that Pedanius Fuscus who was consul with Hadrian in 118 and was married to Hadrian's niece.⁴¹

Hadrian deserting his friends was apparently not unprecedented, and Servianus had, moreover, apparently done him an ill turn in the past, attempting to ruin his good standing with Trajan.⁴² Perhaps this past, combined with Servianus' presumptuous behaviour when Hadrian was lying ill, and the behaviour of young Pedanius Fuscus, had turned the emperor against his sister's husband.⁴³ Servianus and Fuscus were not the only ones to suffer at this time from the disfavour of the ailing emperor.⁴⁴ Hadrian's character seems to have taken a turn for the worse, though his capricious and sometimes cruel nature had not been forgotten by the senate and was not only a feature of his old age. For Servianus' part, as a triple-consular, the selection of the unheralded L. Ceionius Commodus could well have seemed an affront. His age does not seem to have precluded ambition; if it were not for himself then it would be for his grandson. There need be no conspiracy as such: but a faction advocating the succession of Pedanius Fuscus, with the dignified and glorious triple-consular at its head, is not too much to suppose. Conspiring for the

³⁹ Pedanius Fuscus, PIR² P 198, and L. Julius Ursus Servianus, PIR² J 631. The chronology of 136 is a vexing problem. It is not clear in what sequence Hadrian adopted Ceionius and removed Servianus and Pedanius Fuscus. *Hadr.* 23.8f. implies that Hadrian first had his kinsmen removed and only then settled on Ceionius, but the whole passage is problematic, *viz.* the doubtful motivation attributed to Hadrian at 23.10, the *forma* of Ceionius. The chronology in Dio (69.17.1f.) is more credible, and it is possible to reconcile the two sources; see Champlin (1976), 80-2. He argues that *Hadr.* 15.8, 23.8, and 25.8 derive from a source hostile to Hadrian, and postulates Marius Maximus, and that 23.2-3 is possibly derived from the autobiography of Hadrian.

⁴⁰ Dio 69.17.2-3. This explicit statement that Servianus was considered Hadrian's heir is omitted by the biographer; it is however perhaps implied in the account of Hadrian's respect for Servianus (8.11), and the fact that Hadrian did first consider Servianus whilst on his sickbed (23.2). Servianus and Fuscus would indeed have been a logical choice for Hadrian, and would be factors in any decision concerning the succession – in the end, it was calamitous for them that they were an obstacle to be removed. See Champlin (1976), 79ff.

⁴¹ On the consul of 118, see below. For the existing connections of the Pedanii and Hadrian, see R. Syme, 'The Ummidii', *Historia* 17 (1968), 72-105 = *RP* 2 (Oxford, 1979) 659-93.

⁴² *Hadr.* 2.6.

⁴³ The behaviour of Fuscus: *Hadr.* 23.3; Dio 69.17.1f. In the *HA*, the implication is that Fuscus and Servianus were killed before Hadrian selected Ceionius to be his heir. In Dio, they are killed after showing discontent at Hadrian's choice. Cf. Champlin (1976), 80-2.

⁴⁴ *Hadr.* 15.1ff., 23.3-8, 25.8. The names listed in section 15 are of particular interest: Ummidius Quadratus, Catilius Severus and Marcius Turbo. Ummidius had been suffect consul in 118, the opening year of Hadrian's reign, and was besides probably connected to the powerful M. Annius Verus, *cos. ord.* III 126. See Syme (1979), 304-8.

empire or not, the fates of Servianus and Fuscus were sealed once Hadrian excluded this option by the adoption of Aelius.

Whatever bitterness Servianus felt at the choice of Ceionius Commodus may have been amplified by his recent political eclipse by Marcus Annius Verus, another triple-consul and grandfather of Marcus Aurelius. In a superb article, Champlin has shown that the inscription of an enigmatic poem refers mischievously to the rivalry between Annius Verus and Servianus, both of whom attained a third consulship under Hadrian.⁴⁵ But there was an interval of more than thirty years between Servianus' second consulship in 102, under Trajan, and his third in 134. M. Annius Verus, in contrast, achieved his second in 121 and his third in 126.⁴⁶ The extent and tone of the rivalry – whether it was the friendly rivalry of two long-lived patriarchs or something more spiteful – is not made explicit by the poem, but, certainly in Rome at the time, the two men would have stood head and shoulders above their peers in prestige and connections.⁴⁷ The short intervals between the consulships of Annius Verus indicate the esteem in which he was held by Hadrian, and during these years his influence in Rome must have been unparalleled.⁴⁸ The possibility of some kinship with Hadrian is an ever-present, and Hadrian certainly showered favours on the young M. Annius Verus, grandson of the eminent triple-consular.⁴⁹ But Servianus' third consulship came in 134, showing clearly enough that whatever favour Annius Verus enjoyed, Servianus too at least until 134 stood high in the measure of Hadrian.

⁴⁵ E. Champlin, 'The Glass Ball Game', *ZPE* 60 (1985), 159-63. On Servianus, cf. *PIR*² J 631; M. Annius Verus, *PIR*² A 695.

⁴⁶ On Annius Verus and Servianus, see most prominently Champlin (1985), 159ff. See also Birley (1987), 243f.; Birley (1997), 104, 195f.; R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), 791f.

⁴⁷ The inscription can be dated to between 126, when Annius Verus gained his third consulship, and 134, when Servianus eventually gained his third. It is tempting to follow the interpretation of Champlin (1985), 162-3, that the inscription can be dated to 126, and was possibly written by Servianus himself as a somewhat bitter joke between two old rivals.

⁴⁸ He was *praefectus urbi* from 117-24, and was the most powerful man in Rome whilst Hadrian was away. See Champlin (1985), 162.

⁴⁹ Dio 69.21.2 mentions the kinship as a reason for Hadrian's favour of Marcus. Champlin (1985), 162, takes the kinship of Hadrian with both Pedanius Fuscus and Marcus as a given, but cf. Syme (1958), 792; R. Syme 'Review of *A. Degrazi*, *I fasti consolari dell'Impero Romano dal 30 avanti Cristo al 613 dopo Cristo*', *JRS* 43 (1953), 155-6 = *RP* 1 (Oxford, 1979), 244-5; Birley (1987), 243.

Whatever did occur, it was a calamity for both Servianus and his grandson, and their prestige and former favour did not save them. Young Pedanius' father had been consul with Hadrian in 118, a difficult and delicate time for the new emperor who had come to the imperial power with the blood of consulars on his hands. He had attempted to disavow any connection to the incidents with less than absolute success.⁵⁰ Pedanius' consulship so early in the reign of Hadrian indicates the trust reposed in him by the emperor. Hadrian could afford no risky appointments in 118. His accession had been somewhat dubious, and the early consuls of his reign show clearly that he took no risks in their selection.⁵¹ The favour he showed to Pedanius was naturally enough based on extant connections: the Pedanii had close links to Hadrian in addition to Pedanius' marriage to Hadrian's niece. They came from Barcino in *Tarraconensis*.⁵² The new emperor relied greatly on his Spanish links for support, but in the end he countered ruthlessly the perceived threat to his dynastic design.

Yet, whence did Hadrian pluck Aelius Caesar to raise him up? The reason given in the *HA* – that his beauty appealed to Hadrian – is roundly and rightly dismissed by Birley as inadequate; in this piece of palace gossip the hand of Marius Maximus may be suspected.⁵³ Likewise to be dismissed, or at least doubted, is the attribution of the adoption to a lingering sense of guilt concerning the death of a friend and colleague eighteen years before. In 118 the well-connected Avidius Nigrinus had been one of the four consulars executed. Hadrian's level of responsibility is uncertain but the odium of the episode clung to him nonetheless. Avidius Nigrinus in his time had been Aelius' stepfather: he had married Aelius' mother Plautia after the death of her first husband, Aelius' father, L. Ceionius Commodus, *cos. ord.* 106. Aelius eventually married his step-

⁵⁰ *Hadr.* 27.1ff; Dio 69.2.6, 69.23.2. See also Syme (1984), 31-2.

⁵¹ Syme (1984), 34ff. The *consules ordinarii* of the first four years were: in 118, Hadrian II and Pedanius Fuscus; 119, Hadrian III and Dasumius Rusticus; 120, Catilius Severus II and Aurelius Fulvus (Antoninus Pius); 121, M. Annius Verus II and Arrius Augur.

⁵² Syme, (1979), 299.

⁵³ *Hadr.* 23.10; *Ael.* 5.1. See also Birley (1987), 42-3; Birley (1997), 289-90. Birley sees the adoption as a sign that Marcus was the intended heir, since Aelius would not long survive Hadrian. Birley thus passes over Lucius as too young, since he was only five in 136, whereas Marcus was fifteen. Again, however, this assumes a reckless ploy on the part of Hadrian in choosing an heir whom he did not expect to live for long.

sister, Avidia, who was Avidius' daughter by a previous marriage.⁵⁴ Considering these connections, which certainly indicate close ties between these families of Italian origin, Syme argues for Hadrian's guilt as a motivation:

In one aspect Hadrian's choice of Ceionius for the succession is remorse and reparation for an error committed two decades previously: Avidius was one of the four consulars then put to death on a charge of treason (Hadr. 7.2). Hadrian in his autobiography, composed in this late season, presented various items of apologia: one of them was his intention to make Avidius Nigrinus his successor (Hadr. 7.1). Not plausible – but evidence of a close friendship.⁵⁵

This theory is attractive but flawed. Hadrian desired stability, not reparation. If Hadrian had indeed intended to make reparation for the death of Avidius Nigrinus through the adoption of Aelius, Nigrinus' stepson, then he sought such reparation in the blood of his kin. If the hypothesis is followed, then in order to absolve himself of the guilt of a death nearly twenty years ago – any involvement in which he himself had denied – Hadrian had his sister's husband and his own grand-nephew killed.

It is necessary to elaborate. The biographer records at *Hadr.* 7.2 the explicit denial in Hadrian's autobiography of his guilt in the deaths of the four consulars: *invito Hadriano, ut ipse in vita sua dicit, occisi sunt*. Since Hadrian himself denied involvement – and he had, throughout his reign, a strong motivation to distance himself from questions regarding his adoption and the deaths of the four consulars – it is unclear why he would admit any guilt or remorse toward the end of his life, especially when to show it he had to suppress his own kin. Clearly there are larger issues involved – as Syme indeed recognises.

⁵⁴ Syme (1957), 310ff.

⁵⁵ Syme (1979), 303, n. 70. The Avidii are from Faventia, the Ceionii from Bononia and the Vettuleni are Sabine. For the detail, see Syme (1957), 306ff.

Hadrian, anyway, had given the children and connections of Avidia and Plautia their due. Aelius Caesar does not seem to have suffered overmuch from his stepfather's ignominious death; he was consul *ordinarius* for the first time in 136 alongside Sex. Vettulenus Civica Pompeianus. Another step-son of his mother Plautia, Vettulenus was the son of Sex. Vettulenus Civica Cerialis, who had shared the consulship with Aelius' father in 106.⁵⁶ Perhaps Hadrian felt reparation had been made, but the striking fact remains: in 136, the *consules ordinarii* were step-brothers; one the son of Plautia by her first marriage, one her step-son by her third. Hadrian clearly could not afford to deny the consulship to members of this family group. His adoption of Aelius suggests that the group remained somewhat cohesive in the way of Roman factions, probably possessing some influence in the senate. What can be ascertained from the decision of Hadrian to adopt L. Aelius Caesar, then, is not belated remorse, but rather that Hadrian, seeking a stable succession, was pandering to an influential group at Rome. The decision was unpopular, but not for its own sake: it frustrated the designs of another powerful group, one deriving from Hadrian's own family connections. Hadrian stood by his decision, and ruthlessly took steps to ensure it would stand. As for his friend: Hadrian had been close to Avidius, but something had gone wrong in 118. It is not impossible that there was remorse in Hadrian's later life, but it is not necessary to argue for it. The remarks of Syme may be drawn upon again: 'Groups are discerned in proximity to the power, not all easy to define and delimit.'⁵⁷

If any of the sources are close to the truth about the final two years of the reign of Hadrian, then his changeable nature cannot be passed over – yet when questions of empire are concerned it should not be considered satisfactory. On this note, the final factor may be iterated. If guilt is to be ruled out as a motive for the adoption of Aelius Caesar, and if Hadrian had alienated the Ceionii by his complicity in the death of Avidius, then he had alienated a powerful and well-

⁵⁶ Syme (1957), 306ff.; stemma 331; revised in Birley (1987), stemma 238 and discussion 247f. Plautia married Civica Cerialis after the death of Avidius Nigrinus – she was thus mother and step-mother of both the *consules ordinarii* of 136.

⁵⁷ Syme (1979), 304.

connected family.⁵⁸ Perhaps a ruthless pragmatism – ruthless in that it would cost the lives of his brother-in-law and grand-nephew – guided Hadrian's choice. If a stable succession can be supposed to be his objective, then a reconciliation of sorts with the powerful and extended family of the Ceionii is a plausible motive. Aristocratic factions in the senate had to be appeased, and Hadrian had good reason to know personally how delicate the position of a new emperor could be. It is possible, then, that not a feeling of personal guilt, but rather a practical grasp of the political realities of his last years was behind his favour of the Ceionii. As Syme recognises, once Hadrian had made the choice of Ceionius, he attempted to strengthen the position of his heir by acquiring the allegiance of the powerful Spanish family, the Annii Veri, who had within their own nexus connections to other powerful families, including the descendants of Plautia.⁵⁹ But Syme's consideration here of Hadrian's move to gain the support of the Annii Veri is causally too distant from his discussion of Hadrian's motivations for the choice of Aelius: a desire on the part of Hadrian for stability guides both of these decisions. Questions of guilt need not be entered into. Thus, finally, Birley is correct when he supposes that the answer should rather be sought in the background and connections of Aelius, perhaps not in exclusion from, but certainly in preferment to, the other motives outlined above.

L. Ceionius Commodus, the future Aelius Caesar, was the son and grandson of consuls. More illustrious details are readily furnished by the connections between the Italian Ceionii and the Spanish Annii Veri. This Spanish family had risen quickly in the two preceding generations and was already much favoured by Hadrian.⁶⁰ There are two extant marriages between these families. Links between the two are thus present: mere ciphers in the evidence, but no doubt of crucial importance. The matriarch Plautia, who stands at the nexus of so many tortuous connections, had married, in order, L. Ceionius Commodus, *cos. ord.* 106, from which marriage came the L.

⁵⁸ Syme (1957), 306ff.

⁵⁹ Syme (1979), 303. For the existing connections between the Annii Veri and the descendants of Plautia, see Birley (1987), 238, 247f.

⁶⁰ As exemplified by the triple consul Annius Verus and the favour Hadrian showed to the young Marcus. PIR² A 695.

Ceionius Commodus adopted by Hadrian; then C. Avidius Nigrinus, *cos.* 110 and executed in 118; and finally Sex. Vettulenus Civica Cerialis, *cos. ord.* 106, from which marriage came the much younger half-brother of Aelius, M. Vettulenus Civica Barbarus, *cos. ord.* 157. Plautia's brother was L. Fundanius Lamia Plautius Aelianus, *cos. ord.* 116, whose son Fundanius Plautius Lamia Silvanus married Aurelia Fadilla, and whose daughter Fundania married M. Annii Libo, *cos. ord.* 128.⁶¹ Aurelia Fadilla, probably dead by 134, was a daughter of Antoninus and an elder sister of the younger Faustina eventually betrothed to Marcus, and M. Annii Libo was the son of the triple-consul M. Annii Verus and thus was the brother of the elder Faustina, the wife of Antoninus, and was the uncle of Marcus. In summation, then, L. Aelius Caesar, the new heir, had two cousins, the children of his mother's brother.⁶² These cousins were married, respectively, to a daughter of Antoninus (who was herself thus a grand-daughter of Annii Verus), and a son of Annii Verus, whose sister was the wife of Antoninus, and who was thus the uncle of Marcus. Both families were undeniably prominent, and Hadrian, seeking stability and for that reason a renewal of ties with the Ceionii, used the existing connections between the families to buttress his plans for a stable succession.

What these links demonstrate, then – apart from the myriad interwoven connections of the future Ceionian-Annian dynasty – is that Hadrian wished to reinforce connections that already existed between the Italian Ceionii and the Spanish Annii Veri, to whom he himself may have been connected through the Dasumii or Matidia.⁶³ It does not indicate definitely, however, a preference for young Marcus: the Annii Veri are sought as *support* for the Ceionii. Indeed, Marcus was an important part of this plan: if the tie between the Ceionii and the Annii Veri had weakened due to the death of Aurelia Fadilla, it would be made strong again by the marriage of

⁶¹ Syme (1957), 306ff.

⁶² Syme (1957), 306ff.

⁶³ This connection is more doubtful, but has long been postulated to explain the eminence of Annii Verus. Birley (1987), 243f., who cites Syme (1958), 791f.

Marcus, favoured scion of the Annii Veri, to Ceionia Fabia, the daughter of Aelius Caesar.⁶⁴ The selection of Aelius could then not have been entirely unexpected, though the *HA* relates that Hadrian's rule was becoming increasingly unpopular and the adoption was not well regarded among some aristocratic circles.⁶⁵ Birley claims that the strengthening of the ties between the Ceionii and Annii Veri meant that Marcus was always part of the dynastic plan of Hadrian. The issue, however, is that if this were so – if the object of Hadrian's selection of Aelius was ultimately to ensure the succession of Marcus – then the actual choice of Aelius is curious at best. Birley's argument that Marcus was the ultimate choice of Hadrian can only stand if nonsensical motives for the choice of Aelius – *forma* – are permitted: motives that Birley's own method rightly refuses to consider. If Marcus were the sole intended beneficiary, Hadrian would surely be much better served in 136 by the adoption of Antoninus, or, if Hadrian himself expected to live long enough, the fifteen year-old Marcus.

Hadrian did eventually choose Antoninus: but not first. He preferred to place the Ceionii directly into the dynastic succession over the Annii Veri – probably he felt he could not afford to risk alienating the Ceionii. Perhaps he genuinely felt the empire would be better off with Aelius. Certainly the fact that he sent Aelius to Pannonia in 137 indicates Hadrian was planning ahead; it was essential that the Caesar be seen by the armies. To rebut proleptically a possible objection: the issue of the ill-health of Aelius cannot be raised with any real force; the choice here is between accepting the *HA*, which seems to imply that Hadrian did not know of the severity of Aelius' illness when he selected him, or supposing an oblique conspiracy on the part of Hadrian to choose an heir that would not outlive him.⁶⁶ This latter argument is plainly to be discarded,

⁶⁴ *Marv.* 4.5. This implies that the betrothal of Marcus and Ceionia Fabia preceded Hadrian's adoption of Aelius Caesar: Marcus' birthday was in April, and Hadrian's illness and the subsequent crisis were later in the year. Again, a case cannot be made for Hadrian preferring Marcus from this; it is just as easily invoked to support the theory that the Annii Veri were to support Hadrian's choice of Aelius. But cf. Birley (1987), 40-1, 45.

⁶⁵ *Hadr.* 23.11: *invitis omnibus*, but cf. Syme (1979), 302.

⁶⁶ Cf. Pflaum, (1964), 104.

and the sentiments attributed to Hadrian, as he came to realise the nature of the wall upon which he leaned, are credible.⁶⁷

The fact remains, then, that the adoption of Aelius and the betrothal of Marcus to Ceionia Fabia, while certainly a mark of favour toward the Annii Veri, show still greater favour toward the Ceionii. If the question of Hadrian's motivations is impossible to answer definitively, then at least Hadrian's intention by this settlement need not be second-guessed: it was to promote the interests of L. Aelius Caesar and the Ceionii. The Annii Veri were intended to be co-opted in Hadrian's plans; brought directly into the dynastic nexus by the match of Fabia and Marcus, but as subordinate partners and supporters of the preferred heirs. The reason for his preferment of the Ceionii could well be that Hadrian thought that this family and their extended connections and influence in the senate, if appeased, would provide stability. It needed to be appeased due to events twenty years past; Hadrian was tainted with the death of Avidius Nigrinus, second husband of Plautia, co-consul with the elder L. Ceionius Commodus in 106, and stepfather and father-in-law to that man's son, the L. Ceionius Commodus who became L. Aelius Caesar. Furthermore – an added advantage to Hadrian's planning – the Ceionii already had substantial links with the Spanish Annii Veri, whom Hadrian was already inclined to favour, perhaps for familial reasons. The final prominence of the Ceionii may have more to do with the death of Avidius Nigrinus than has been previously supposed, but it was pragmatism, not guilt, that in the end decided the first choice of Hadrian, and it fell upon L. Ceionius Commodus (afterward Aelius Caesar) because of the prominence of his family and connections.

In summation, the Ceionii could not be ignored in 136, nor could they be discounted in the event of the early death of Aelius. Hence the attempted co-option of the Annii Veri, already connected to the Ceionii. It was probably with no great animosity that Hadrian turned to them.

⁶⁷ Barnes (1967), 77, nn. 69-71. Barnes rightly discards the *vita Aelii*. The idea gains little support from the ancient sources. The theory that Hadrian selected Aelius in order to have a short-lived heir requires belief that Hadrian was willing to gamble the stability of the empire on the health of one man.

Their support would be ensured through the induction into the imperial family of the favoured M. Annii Verus, grandson of the triple-consul. Though the motives are shrouded, the ultimate intention of the settlement of 136 was as it appears: for L. Aelius Caesar to succeed followed eventually by his young son Lucius. The ill-health of Aelius was perhaps known, but the prognosis could not have been precise. The alternative argument, that Hadrian, knowing himself in declining health, expected Aelius to die before him or soon after him to clear the succession, is a *non sequitur*; he need not have chosen Aelius at all had he not wished him to succeed. Given his own ill-health, if Hadrian intended first to allow Aelius to gain some military experience and exposure to the legions by having him spend a year in Pannonia, and then to have him die early, he wilfully gambled nothing less than civil war. He had already killed his brother-in-law and young grand-nephew to clear the way for Aelius, shortly before or after the adoption. Whether his animosity toward Servianus and Pedanius was for personal or political reasons, or if these factors were intertwined, is impossible to judge. Whatever provoked their suppression, plainly Hadrian felt them unsuited in some manner to providing the desired stability: their connections, it is true, were powerful among the Italo-Spanish families, but the Ceionii represented powerful Italian interests that Hadrian needed to appease. Personal animosity toward Servianus and Fuscus cannot be discounted from Hadrian's possible motivations for removing them. At any rate, it appears that the Italian connections of the Ceionii were more important for Hadrian to maintain in his ultimate arrangements, and co-opting the Spanish Annii Veri would ensure also a powerful Spanish presence in the final settlement. Finally, Antoninus himself, the eventual choice of the dying emperor, was some ten years younger than Hadrian: if Marcus were indeed the ultimate object of Hadrian's dynastic scheming, Antoninus would have been far better suited to the role of caretaker for Marcus, as he was a son-in-law of the powerful Annii Verus. But Antoninus was not chosen first.

3. The choice of Antoninus, and Antoninus' succession policy

After the death of Aelius on the first day of 138, the clarity of the earlier settlement was lost. It was replaced by a more complex arrangement. Hadrian adopted in February a new heir, the sedate consular T. Aurelius Fulvus Boionius Arrius Antoninus. Antoninus was in turn compelled to adopt both young Lucius Ceionius Commodus, son of the deceased Aelius Caesar, and his own wife's nephew, the young and favoured M. Annius Verus. Hadrian also arranged the betrothal of young Lucius to Antoninus' daughter Faustina.

The eventual choice of Antoninus as heir requires clarification, as does the stipulation to adopt Marcus alongside Lucius. All the factors examined thus far support the notion that Lucius was eventually intended to take the imperial power. If, as is argued, Hadrian's intention was indeed for Lucius eventually to succeed him and for Antoninus merely to act as caretaker, then the adoption of Antoninus himself, together with the stipulation of the adoption of Marcus is curious. The answers may be sought, as best they can be, in the details of the settlement.

When Hadrian eventually did settle upon Antoninus in February 138, he ensured the betrothal of Lucius, not Marcus, to the younger Faustina, daughter of the new heir.⁶⁸ Hadrian twice had the opportunity to make explicit his desire for Marcus ultimately to succeed him, but twice he had attempted to arrange matters so that Lucius would emerge as the heir. First, Lucius was to be the son of the future emperor when his father was heir, and then son as well as son-in-law of the future emperor when Antoninus was heir. Marcus fared no better than prospective son-in-law when Aelius Caesar was heir, then son to Antoninus and future brother-in-law to Lucius. That Marcus eventually became both son-in-law and son of Antoninus by his uncle's act – not Hadrian's – should be emphasised. It was the same position – both son and son-in-law – from

⁶⁸ Cf. the corrigendum to Barnes (1967), 79. He is right to point out that it changes little.

which Lucius would have claimed the imperial power had the final design of Hadrian not been altered by Antoninus.

It is possible that Hadrian hoped that Marcus' advantage in terms of age would count for less when Antoninus died, and that by this time the marriage of Lucius to Faustina would ensure the prominence of the Ceionii. What is known of Marcus' character at a young age supports this: although he stood at the core of a powerful nexus of family connections, his already-known dedication to philosophy and his conduct would reassure Hadrian that Marcus would not grow into a man who would grasp at power, but rather he may have seemed a valuable and prestigious prospect as a supporter of the emperor.⁶⁹

On the surface, Hadrian's evaluation of Marcus' character was shown to be eventually correct. He had perhaps reckoned without the influence of Antoninus and the slow-burning conviction of Marcus that he had a duty to rule.⁷⁰ However, the fact that Antoninus merely showed Lucius less favour (instead of having him more decisively removed to ease Marcus' path to power), demonstrates that, in the final measure, Hadrian had chosen well in the placid consular. Again, however, the role of family and connections should not be passed over lightly as factors in Hadrian's choice. If Hadrian had favoured Marcus on this basis, then the survival of Lucius was a function, at least in part, of Lucius' own excellent connections. To divide the consulars and generals of the era into two broad factions, the one espousing Marcus and the Annii Veri, and the other Lucius and the Ceionii, is not the objective, but it is true that both of emperors had large and well-connected families and, accordingly, it is not too much to suppose that some political rivalry existed, particularly in view of Antoninus' distortion of Hadrian's settlement. Certainly in terms of Hadrian's choice of Aelius there is good circumstantial evidence for the

⁶⁹ Marcus' dedication to philosophy and his moral character recur often in the *HA*. For his character as a youth, see esp. *Marc.* 1.1, 2.1, 2.6-3.5, 4.10; Birley (1987), 49f., 116f. Yet, we see that philosophy, while it perhaps made the imperial power less overtly desirable to Marcus, only strengthened his sense of duty, see e.g. *Med.* 2.2.1, 6.12.

⁷⁰ Birley (1987), 116, describes it thus: 'His natural inclinations were not to public life, but his training for twenty-three years and his Stoic philosophy made the path of duty plain'. This is undeniably true of Marcus, but it does not follow that he made Lucius his co-ruler to fulfil the wishes of Hadrian.

manoeuvring of rival family groups, it is not too much to suppose something similar during the reign of Antoninus and the accession of Marcus and Lucius.

Such a rivalry need not have been of the extent to split the ruling class of the empire in two, nor should it be considered as such. Instead it perhaps simmered quietly during the peaceful reign of Antoninus. Marcus and Lucius need not be considered the prime movers in any rivalry: both of them as young men had been driven into prominence by their respective families and connections, jostling and manoeuvring for advantage. The final support for this theory comes in the *fasti* of the latter part of the sixth decade. The rise in the late 150s and early 160s of many close relatives of Lucius to the consulship – and all of them obtained the ordinary consulship – suggests that a powerful block from the *gens Ceionia* existed.⁷¹ Their logical focal point would be Lucius, the young choice of Hadrian, now second choice behind Marcus, but still an adopted son of the emperor. The fact that Antoninus did not deny these men prominence, when he so obviously had attempted to decrease Lucius' imperial prospects, shows that careful consideration was warranted when dealing with a group that possessed influence and power in the senate. Nonetheless, Antoninus deftly manoeuvred Marcus into a position to succeed, against the wishes of Hadrian: Marcus' betrothal to Ceionia Fabia was broken, and he was instead married to Antoninus' own daughter, hitherto promised to Lucius. Lucius was left unmarried: sign enough of intentions of Antoninus to ensure the succession of Marcus despite the powerful and numerous Ceionii.

⁷¹ Lucius was consul *ordinarius* in 154, his cousin Ceionius Silvanus in 156 (PIR² C 610), his uncle Vettulenus in 157 (PIR² C 602, in error), his brother-in-law and cousin Plautius Quintillus in 159 (PIR² P 473), Lucius again in 161, his cousin Plautius Aquilinus in 162 (PIR² P 460), and his brother-in-law Servilius Pudens in 166 (PIR¹ S 424). Discussed in full in Chapter 2, stemma set out in Appendix 1.

4. The accession of Marcus

Finally, it is important to investigate the role of the Annii Veri. If Lucius were the chosen heir of Hadrian, as is argued, reasons must be sought as to why Hadrian so favoured the young M. Annius Verus. It would be Antoninus who ultimately promoted Marcus to a position of primacy, but it was Hadrian who first placed Marcus in the immediate orbit of the imperial power. If Hadrian's ultimate motivation for the favour he showed to Marcus was to gain the support of the Annii Veri for his own plans for the succession, then he must have had his reasons for attempting to garner the support of this family. The question of the succession did not become acute until Hadrian was in his sixties; older than he was when Marcus was conspicuously favoured with admission into the Salii.⁷² The influence of the Annii Veri leads directly to the favoured position of Marcus, and thus contributes much to this family eventually reaching the imperial power, less than one hundred years after gaining its first senator. The same method should be employed again to search for the reason behind Marcus' favoured status under Hadrian – the investigation of the background and connections of Marcus and his aunt's husband, Antoninus. This time, however, it is not necessary first to set aside spurious assertions by the sources, as in the case of Aelius. Dio asserts that Hadrian favoured Marcus because of his kin, or kinship; a reason that rings true.⁷³

The triple-consul Annius Verus is mentioned above; his last two consulships were in 121 and 126 and he was also *praefectus urbi*.⁷⁴ His first consulship had been as *suffectus* in 97. He had been raised to patrician status by Vespasian, presumably as the family's reward for the service to Vespasian of his father, likewise named Annius Verus. The origin of the family is attested as Ucubi in Baetica.⁷⁵ The reason for the extraordinary influence of this triple-consul is not fully

⁷² In 128 – importantly, two years after Marcus' grandfather had gained his third consulship. Hadrian was away from Rome for three years after 128, leaving M. Annius Verus in a powerful position.

⁷³ Dio 69.21.2, 71.35.2; Barnes (1967), 78-9.

⁷⁴ PIR² A 695.

⁷⁵ Not without its implications, which have been explored. Champlin (1985), 162; cf. Syme (1958), 792; Syme (1953), 155-6; Birley (1987), 243f.

clear, but the best explanation is that there existed familial ties between the Annii Veri and Hadrian. Additionally, there was the wealth and the excellent matrimonial ties constructed by Annius Verus for his children. Annius Verus was, in the memorable phrase of Champlin, a veritable ‘patriarchal spider’ at the midst of a vast web of connections.⁷⁶ No doubt the impressive nature of his connections was due at least in part to his great age, but such relative accidents of longevity, while no doubt essential to accumulate vast influence through prestige and connections in the higher circles of Rome, are not sufficient solely to explain the degree of favour he enjoyed from Hadrian. The existing ties to the Ceionii could be raised again, but not with real vigour. Dio was probably correct in his estimation of the importance of this family. When added to the fact that they probably possessed an existing connection to Hadrian, the Annii Veri may have seemed the logical place the aging emperor would look for support.

In the end, perhaps the best that can be done is to discount the other prominent men. Hadrian desired stability, and he desired Lucius eventually to succeed him. The sober character of Antoninus was a recommendation, as were his connections to a powerful Spanish family probably also connected to Hadrian himself. Antoninus had no living sons of his own; he could freely adopt those of Hadrian’s choice and would feel no conflict. This fact perhaps placed him above the militarily experienced (unusual for a noble) Ummidius Quadratus, who may have been of a less placid temperament.⁷⁷ As for other men, guidance to the direction of Hadrian’s thought can perhaps be taken from the beginning of his reign. When the emperor was not secure in his power, refuge was sought in the appointment of trusted men of common interest or family.⁷⁸ The crisis of 136 had created an air of hostility toward the emperor in the senate, and Hadrian attempted a stable succession by pandering to the Italian Ceionii and including the Spanish Annii Veri.

⁷⁶ Champlin (1985), 162.

⁷⁷ Syme (1979), 309. Certainly his military service marks him out as unusual among the *nobiles* of the time; it could only have been undertaken by choice. He had too a living son. He fell into disfavour with Hadrian, but he was also connected to the Annian nexus, as was Catilius Severus.

⁷⁸ As in Hadrian’s first years as emperor. See above.

Conclusions

There are naturally great difficulties in dealing with the succession policy of Hadrian. It is clear that when an analysis of Hadrian's intention is attempted, the difficult task of gauging Hadrian's true character intervenes, a task quite beyond the biographer of the *HA* and the epitomes of Dio. But the basic course of events seems clear. After the adoption of Aelius Hadrian had his sister's grandson, Pedanius Fuscus, killed, along with Servianus, his triple-consular brother-in-law and the young man's grandfather. He eventually lost his first choice as heir to sickness, and settled instead on T. Aurelius Fulvus Boionius Arrius Antoninus, whom in turn he compelled to adopt the young L. Ceionius Commodus, and the nephew of Aurelius' wife, M. Annii Verus. Lucius took a superior position in both settlements, yet the support of the Annii Veri was sought on each occasion, more prominently in the final settlement. Hadrian desired stability, and the hostility of the senate was a menace. Against this, the reign of Hadrian had actually succeeded in bringing peace and forging closer links between Italy and the outlying provinces; Hadrian too had not forgotten the importance of the army. Old and dying, sick of life, he entrusted the empire to the steady hand of Antoninus Pius, a man of sober character but no great achievement, who was in turn tied to the Annii Veri and whom Hadrian caused to adopt Lucius, the scion of the noble Ceionii. Marcus was included in the settlement and eventually, with the connivance of his aunt's husband Antoninus, superseded his adopted brother and crafted his own power away from Hadrian's connections and intentions. But the Ceionii did not forget, and the next generation looked to Lucius, not the young Aurelian Caesar, and in the end the policies of Hadrian dictated events in 161 upon the death of Antoninus.

Finally, the points established are these: i) that Hadrian's ultimate intention was for Lucius and the Ceionii to succeed him; ii) that Hadrian's motives for this were a desire for stability; iii) that Marcus and the Annii Veri were intended by Hadrian to be subordinate partners in this arrangement, supporting but not supplanting the Ceionii; and iv) that this intention of Hadrian,

which was suborned by Antoninus, shapes the accession of Marcus in 161. Hadrian's intentions in this matter continued to influence events more than two decades after his death. The composition of the oligarchy was a decisive factor in both 138 and 161. In 138, Hadrian attempted to co-opt the Spanish Annii Veri to his plans for the eventual succession of Lucius and the Italian Ceionii. His intentions were undone first by Antoninus Pius and subsequently by Marcus himself in 161 who, though nominally giving Lucius a share of power, built his own nexus away from Hadrian's base. Hadrian had intended Lucius to be the the inheritor of his *amici* and political influence. Hadrian's intention for Lucius to succeed was eventually fulfilled in truncated fashion by Marcus – but not before Marcus had first secured his own status and prominence.

Chapter 2:

The Sons-in-Law of Marcus: Family, Dynasty, Power.

Introduction

This chapter examines the men selected by Marcus to be his sons-in-law. All of the marriages took place during or shortly after Marcus' reign. It is reasonable to argue that Marcus contracted their marriages even if he may not have lived to see them all. In every case, the utility behind the marriage is sought out. The chronology of the marriage spans the entire reign of Marcus, but there exists a persistent policy. The men Marcus chose for his daughters, apart from their individual or familial merits, represent a selection of prominent men across the political and military spheres of the Roman upper classes. More importantly, Marcus' selections demonstrate over time a distinct shift away from the family of his co-ruler and adoptive brother Lucius. At the same time, Marcus' policy was not only designed to exclude the connections of Lucius. His selection of Africans such as Petronius Mamertinus and Antistius Burrus, and men from the Asian territories such as Claudius Pompeianus and Claudius Severus, demonstrate that Marcus, astute and aware, understood the benefits of promoting men from provinces that were becoming increasingly important: indeed, Africa and Asia, in the persons of Septimius Severus and Clodius Albinus, would provide both pretender and emperor after the deaths of Commodus and Pertinax. Above all, Marcus wished to create his own nexus and ensure the survival of the dynasty, and this was achieved in two connected ways: the slow and steady exclusion of the connections of Lucius after 169 (except for Peducaeus), and the promotion of powerful provincials unencumbered by ties to any previous imperial nexus. Any man inducted into the imperial family by marriage acquired a personal stake in the imperial power and entry for his family into the ruling nexus.

The men who became the sons-in-law of Marcus form an imposing list. They are examined in the following sequence:

1. Imperator Caesar Lucius Aurelius Verus Augustus (cos. III 167), married to Lucilla.
2. Ti. Claudius Pompeianus (*cos. II ord.* 173), married to Lucilla (after the death of Verus).
3. Cn. Claudius Severus (*cos. II ord.* 173), married to Faustina.
4. M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus (*cos. ord.* 177), married to Fadilla.
5. M. Petronius Sura Mamertinus (*cos. ord.* 182), married to Cornificia.
6. L. Antistius Burrus (*cos. ord.* 181), married to Vibia Sabina.
7. Bruttia Crispina, daughter of Q. Bruttius Praesens, married to Commodus.

1. Imperator Caesar Lucius Aurelius Verus Augustus (cos. III 167), married to Lucilla.

I. Summary

In March of 161, at the moment of Marcus' accession, his adoptive brother Lucius, formerly Lucius Ceionius Commodus and latterly Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus, presented a potential problem. Lucius' betrothal to the younger Faustina, the daughter of Antoninus, had been made under the direction of Hadrian and broken by Antoninus.⁷⁹ Faustina was instead betrothed to Marcus.⁸⁰ Lucius himself served as consul *ordinarius* in 154 and for the second time in 161, together with Marcus. However, Lucius' personal prestige was still inferior to that of his older adoptive brother.⁸¹ There was no question of who would be the senior partner: certainly

⁷⁹ *Verus* 2.3-4; *Ael.* 6.9; *Marc.* 6.2f.

⁸⁰ *Marc.* 6.6.

⁸¹ Discussed in Chapter 1.

the biographer harboured no doubts.⁸² Marcus, however, insisted on the same imperial rights and titles for Lucius, and the biographer writes that he refused to take up power unless these were granted.⁸³

II. *Co-option upon accession and family connections*⁸⁴

The importance of this assertion by the biographer deserves emphasis. It is not necessary to consider that the action of Marcus was motivated by a genuine *horror imperii*, or a desire to fulfil the wishes of Hadrian which Antoninus had ignored.⁸⁵ A strong prosopographical argument can be mounted that Marcus had little choice other than to accept Lucius as his partner: at the time of Antoninus' death Lucius was at the centre of an array of influential relatives, perhaps comparable to the collection of relatives that had exerted pressure on Hadrian to show favour to the young Marcus.⁸⁶ The influence and power of the Ceionii, which no doubt played a role in Hadrian's selection of Aelius Caesar, derived from a large network of family and allies.⁸⁷ The prominence of Lucius' family had not declined in the intervening years: the rise of several close relatives of Lucius to the ordinary consulship in the last years of the reign of Antoninus is conspicuous. Antoninus – no doubt in consultation with Marcus – desired to avoid possible friction between Marcus and Lucius when the power passed to the former, and this was achieved

⁸² *Ant. Pius* 12.4f.; *Marc.* 7.3f.; *Verus* 4.2-3.

⁸³ *Marc.* 7.5f. According to the biographer Marcus was compelled by the senate to take power, and after doing so named his adoptive brother Lucius as co-ruler: *post excessum divi Pii a senatu coactus regimen publicum capere fratrem sibi participem in imperio designavit*. Birley (1987), 116, notes that a show of reluctance to assume power was not unusual. However, such reluctance on the part of Marcus is only present indirectly in the participle *coactus*, and even less so at *Verus* 3.8, where the verb *detulisset* is used of the senate. However, cf. *Marc.* 5.4: upon his adoption by Hadrian in 138, the biographer records that Marcus recounted the evils of the imperial power to his *domestici*.

⁸⁴ This section naturally owes a great debt to Syme's article, 'Vettuleni and Ceionii: Antonine Relatives', *Athenaeum* 35 (1957), 306-15 = *RP* 1 (Oxford, 1975), 325-332; and to the stemmata and associated notes set out in Appendix 3 by Birley (1987), 232-48.

⁸⁵ Cf. Birley (1987), 116; Barnes (1967), 79.

⁸⁶ Dio 69.21.2. See also Barnes (1967), 78-9.

⁸⁷ Discussed in Chapter 1, above.

by conceding to the powerful family interests which Lucius represented. Antoninus' preferment of Marcus had perhaps produced a clear rivalry between the family interests embodied in Marcus and Lucius, but the promotion to the ordinary consulship of a powerful group of Lucius' connections indicates that, in the last years of Antoninus' reign, conciliation was his preferred course. The alternative could not be risked. Likewise, conciliation and co-option were the goals of Marcus when he succeeded his adoptive father.

The nexus of consuls connected to Lucius begins with his sisters, and may be extended from there. One sister of Lucius, Ceionia Plautia, was married to Q. Servilius Pudens who was consul *ordinarius* in 166.⁸⁸ His other sister Ceionia Fabia, whose betrothal to Marcus had been broken by the machinations of Antoninus, was married to Plautius Quintillus, consul *ordinarius* for 159.⁸⁹ Their son, M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus, was consul in 177 and married Marcus' daughter Fadilla. Plautius Quintillus' brother Plautius Aquilinus was consul *ordinarius* in 162.⁹⁰ The mother of these two *consules ordinarii* was Avidia Plautia. In turn, she is a daughter of Avidius Nigrinus and the elder Plautia.⁹¹ Nigrinus was Plautia's second husband, she was his second wife.

The elder Plautia is also the fulcrum upon which turns the existing connection between the Annii Veri and the Ceionii. Her father was L. Aelius Lamia Plautius Aelianus and her brother was L. Fundanius Lamia Plautius Aelianus, *cos. ord.* 116. Her brother has two known children. A son, Fundanius Plautius Lamia Silvanus, married Aurelia Fadilla. A daughter, Fundania, married M. Annii Libo, *cos. ord.* 128.⁹² Aurelia Fadilla, probably dead by 134, was a daughter of Antoninus Pius and the elder Faustina, and thus Marcus' sister-in-law. M. Annii Libo was the son of the triple-consul M. Annii Verus, and was Marcus' paternal uncle.

⁸⁸ Ceionia Plautia, PIR² C 614, Q. Servilius Pudens, PIR¹ S 424, see esp. CIL 8.5354.

⁸⁹ Ceionia Fabia, PIR² C 612, Plautius Quintillus, PIR² P 473. Their son M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus was perhaps adopted by M. Peducaeus Stloga, *cos. ord.* 141, and before 177 became a son-in-law of Marcus. PIR² P 474; discussed in detail below.

⁹⁰ PIR² P 460.

⁹¹ Plautia, PIR² P 484; Avidia Plautia, PIR² A 1408. The husband of Avidia Plautia was possibly L. Epidius Titius Aquilinus, *cos. ord.* 125. Syme (1957), 312.

⁹² L. Aelius Lamia Plautius Aelianus, PIR² A 205; L. Fundanius Plautius, PIR² A 204; Aurelia Fadilla, PIR² A 1653; M. Annii Libo, PIR² A 667.

Remarkably, Plautia was also the grandmother of Lucius through the son of her first marriage to L. Ceionius Commodus, consul *ordinarius* in 106. Their son was Hadrian's short-lived heir, L. Ceionius Commodus, who became L. Aelius Caesar in 136. Nigrinus' daughter by his first marriage, Avidia, was the wife of Aelius Caesar. Aelius Caesar thus married his step-sister, the daughter of his mother's second husband by a previous marriage.

To return to the Plautii brothers: in addition to their connection by marriage to Lucius there are two other connections. Avidia Plautia, their mother, and Avidia, Lucius' mother, share the same father in Avidius Nigrinus. Furthermore, Avidia Plautia shares a mother with Lucius' father Aelius Caesar. In summation, both the Plautii brothers and Lucius and his sisters share, through different marriages, two grandparents: Plautia and Avidius Nigrinus. The maternal grandparents of the Plautii are the maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother of Lucius.

Plautia, after the untimely death of Nigrinus in 118, married her third husband, Sex. Vettulenus Civica Cerialis. Vettulenus had been consul *ordinarius* for 106, the same year as her first husband Commodus. In turn, a son of Vettulenus by a previous marriage had been consul in 136 with her son from her first marriage, Lucius' father Aelius Caesar.⁹³ Vettulenus was the third husband of Plautia, she his second wife. It was their union which produced Lucius' uncle M. Vettulenus Civica Barbarus. Thus Lucius' father L. Aelius Caesar, the heir of Hadrian, had a much younger uterine brother. This uncle of Lucius, M. Vettulenus Civica Barbarus, was consul *ordinarius* in 157. Lucius' cousin Ceionius Silvanus, the son of his father's brother, was consul *ordinarius* in 156. The connections between these four Italian families – the Ceionii from Bononia, the Avidii from Faventia, the Vettuleni of Sabine extraction, and the Plautii – thus go back two generations before Lucius, and were maintained and strengthened in the interim. At the time of his accession, the family of Lucius formed the centre of a powerful nexus of Italian families.

⁹³ Syme (1957), 310.

The list of consulships is impressive. Lucius was consul *ordinarius* in 154, 161 and 167. His cousin was *ordinarius* in 156, his uncle in 157, his brother-in-law and cousin in 159, his sister's brother-in-law and cousin in 162, and another brother-in-law in 166.⁹⁴ In this case the sheer attrition of numbers is instructive: Lucius and his connections provided almost half the ordinary consuls from the period 154-61, filling six out of the sixteen ordinary consulships available. It is clear that despite his reluctance to advance Lucius, Antoninus had little choice but to continue to promote Lucius' connections. Furthermore, Marcus in 161, as a newly acceded emperor, was in a more delicate position than his adoptive father had been. He required the support of the oligarchy as well as the praetorians to retain a firm hold on the imperial power.⁹⁵ Lucius, though given an equal share of power, was clearly subservient in authority: witness Marcus accepting the title of *pontifex maximus*, the name of Antoninus, and imposing his own former *cognomen* on Lucius.⁹⁶ The decision of Marcus to promote Lucius to co-emperor was not a decision to rectify a perceived wrong: rather, it was a decision taken in order to consolidate his newly-obtained imperial power

III. *Imperial marriage and context*

Having conciliated Lucius, Marcus had to solidify his position. Lucius was thirty-one in 161, and unmarried. For a Roman of his class, and an emperor's son, this is almost certainly the result of

⁹⁴ Ceionius Silvanus in 156 (PIR² C 610), Vettulenus in 157 (PIR² C 602, in error), his brother-in-law and cousin Plautius Quintillus in 159 (PIR² P 473), his cousin Plautius Aquilinus in 162 (PIR² P 460), and his brother-in-law Servilius Pudens in 166 (PIR¹ S 424). Stemma set out in Appendix 1.

⁹⁵ *Marv.* 7.9; *Verus* 4.3. Cf. H. Hohl, ed., *Scriptores Historiae Augustae I* (Leipzig, 1927), 76; D. Magie, ed., *Scriptores Historiae Augustae I* (Cambridge, Mass., 1921), 214-5. The *vita Marci* records that both Marcus and Lucius spoke to the praetorian guard and promised them the customary donatives, but the corresponding passage in the *vita Veri* is problematic: the *Codex Palatinus* reads *iam primum enim Marcus pro ambobus ad milites est locutus*, and this reading is retained by Hohl without comment in the Teubner edition. D. Magie in the Loeb redacts '*Marcus*', thus giving the role of addressing the soldiers to Lucius. This is a significant redaction: it would be worth knowing which of the co-emperors addressed the praetorians at the moment of accession, and when precisely this occurred. The *Codex Palatinus* is to be preferred in the absence of other evidence, and it is more likely that Marcus would address the soldiers himself upon his accession, retaining his superior position relative to Lucius.

⁹⁶ *Marv.* 7.5-7; *Verus* 3.5, 4.2; Brennan, *Power structure under Marcus Aurelius* (Thesis, Australian National University, 1966), 149.

conscious policy. The betrothal and eventual marriage of Lucius and Lucilla would ensure his co-option.⁹⁷ It is reasonable to suppose that some of the impetus behind the betrothal came either directly or indirectly from Lucius' powerful and well-connected family. An impressive group of relatives potentially had a vested interest in seeing the fortunes of Lucius prosper: in other words, in Lucius' continued promotion as co-emperor of Marcus. Lucius stood at the point of intersection of three families in particular, linked by the children and marriages of his paternal grandmother Plautia.

The date of the marriage in 164 is important. The betrothal had been in 161, and the marriage took place virtually as soon as Lucilla was old enough: she was fourteen in 164.⁹⁸ Lucius was then in the East, in at least nominal command of the forces in the Parthian War.⁹⁹ The reasons why Lucius was chosen for this role by Marcus are uncertain; those advanced by the biographer form a rational, if incomplete, summary (*Ver.* 5.8-9):¹⁰⁰

et haec quidem post Parthicum bellum, ad quod eum misisse dicitur Marcus, ne uel in urbe ante oculos omnium peccaret, uel ut parsimoniam peregrinatoine addisceret, uel ut timore bellico emendatior rediret, uel ut se imperatorem esse cognosceret.

And indeed these thing were done after the Parthian war, to which Marcus is said to have sent him, either that he might not sin in the city and before the eyes of all, or that he might learn thrift by travel, or that he might return improved by the fear of war, or so that he might realise that he was to be an emperor.

⁹⁷ Herodian 1.8.3. Herodian's remarks on the purpose of the marriage are perspicacious.

⁹⁸ *Marv.* 7.7; *Verus* 7.7; Birley (1987), 118; W. Ameling, 'Die Kinder des Marc Aurel und die Bildnistypen der Faustina Minor', *ZPE* 90 (1992), 149ff. All *HA* translations are from Magie's Loeb, but have been altered where the English was anachronistic.

⁹⁹ The men who were sent with Lucius provided the military expertise: they included praetorian prefect Furius Victorinus, (*ILS* 9002), and the experienced M. Pontius Laelianus, *PIR*² P 806. There was also M. Annianus Libo, *cos.* 161 (*PIR*² A 668), Marcus' cousin on his father's side in whose death Lucius was rumoured to be involved, see *Verus* 9.2.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Marv.* 8.9, 14.

These reasons might be more concisely and cynically summarised: for Marcus, sending Lucius east would at least temporarily remove a problem, and allow Marcus to consolidate his position at Rome. Marcus surely always intended to claim his share of the glory from Rome, invoking the same logic as Augustus – or Octavianus, as he was in 29 B.C.E.¹⁰¹ The acclamations of victory were indeed shared by Marcus and Lucius, but the gossip of debauched and sedentary living was Lucius' alone to bear.¹⁰²

If there is truth in the story of Lucius' attachment to a Syrian mistress, then perhaps Marcus felt that it was best to complete the marriage as soon as possible.¹⁰³ Certainly the character of Lucius in the ancient sources is that of the easy-going, pleasure-loving prince, keeping well to the rear in Antioch whilst his generals did the fighting.¹⁰⁴ It is possible that the extent of the biographer's gossip is apocryphal, or at least that such gossip was not especially relevant in the timing of Lucius' marriage to Lucilla. It is conceivable that Marcus made two concessions to Lucius in the early years of his reign: the decision in 161 to grant Lucius co-rulership, and the betrothal of Lucius to Lucilla. Together, these represent an attempt by Marcus to induct Lucius more fully into the imperial fold. A marriage would mean that Lucius' children would be Marcus' grandchildren, and the tie would be by blood as well as adoption. Following this logic, the fact that the marriage took place as soon as possible, with Lucilla being sent east in 164, should be seen as no more than the culmination of a policy embarked upon in 161.¹⁰⁵ It is, then, perhaps not a reaction to gossip concerning the conduct of Lucius in Antioch. More serious perhaps was the death of M. Annius Libo, *cos. suff.* 161, Marcus' cousin on his father's side.¹⁰⁶ He had been sent to Syria without much military experience, probably as an observer on behalf of Marcus,

¹⁰¹ R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939), 308-10, esp. 308 n. 2. See also *Marv.* 9.5, where the biographer reports that Marcus returned to Rome as a reaction to rumours that he wished to claim the glory of the eastern campaigns for himself – an interesting statement when compared to 8.14, which explicitly gives Marcus credit for conducting the war from Rome.

¹⁰² *Verus* 7.1-10.

¹⁰³ Birley (1987), 131.

¹⁰⁴ *Verus* 7.1-2, Dio 71.2.2.

¹⁰⁵ Birley (1987), 131.

¹⁰⁶ M. Annius Libo, *PIR*² A 668.

and had quarrelled with Lucius before dying suspiciously.¹⁰⁷ The biographer adds that his death caused rumours of dissent between the emperors, rumours to which Marcus did not apparently subscribe.¹⁰⁸ But the incident as a whole was surely troubling, particularly when added to reports of Lucius' lifestyle, and emphasised the need for Marcus to maintain a measure of influence and control over his younger co-ruler. In the end, the very fact that Lucius was in the East conducting a war – if only in name, and despite the unedifying gossip – would make the completion of the marriage even more vital.

IV. *Conclusion*

The marriage of Lucilla and Lucius represents a concession. It was the logical choice for Marcus to make after his accession. Lucius, in 164, became a son-in-law as well as adoptive sibling to Marcus, a situation not without its peculiarities: Lucius had of course originally been betrothed to Faustina, the mother of Lucilla. Lucius may not have seemed dangerous but could not be ignored or shunted aside despite the efforts of Antoninus. The decisions of Marcus in 161 indicate caution. Lucius was not without prominent family connexions, and these the new emperor could not afford to antagonise.

2. **Tiberius Claudius Pompeianus (*cos.* II *ord.* 173), married to Lucilla (after the death of Lucius).**

I. *Summary*

¹⁰⁷ Birley (1987), 130; *Verus* 9.2.

¹⁰⁸ *Verus* 9.2: *visum est nonnullis, non tamen Marco, quod eius fraude putaretur occisus.*

Tiberius Claudius Pompeianus married Lucilla in 169 after the death of Lucius earlier in that year.¹⁰⁹ The son of an *eques* from Antioch in Syria, Pompeianus rose to prominence by virtue of his military acumen.¹¹⁰ Marcus Aurelius had inherited an empire largely at peace, but the need for men with military experience became clear all too soon. Pompeianus' status during his three-year term as governor of Pannonia Inferior had been praetorian, and his family was not consular. He served as suffect consul in 167.¹¹¹ The consulship was presumably a reward for his military achievements.¹¹² Pompeianus, who combined military talent with a humble background, was for Marcus an excellent choice for Lucilla's second husband.¹¹³ After the death of his co-ruler Lucius, Marcus seized the opportunity and quickly married his daughter to the prominent general Pompeianus, bringing him into the imperial nexus.¹¹⁴ The constant wars had shown Marcus the value of military experience, and little time was wasted in forming the tie by marriage. A place as consul *ordinarius* was granted in 173 alongside a fellow son-in-law of Marcus, Cn. Claudius Severus.¹¹⁵

II. *Career and imperial marriage*

The course of Pompeianus' career demonstrates succinctly the policy of Marcus when it came to selecting husbands for his daughters. Utility was the guiding factor. When confronted in 169

¹⁰⁹ *Marc.* 20.6-7; Birley (1987), 161-2, 247. According to the biographer, Lucilla was not permitted to observe the full mourning period, an indication of both the importance of Pompeianus and the situation in northern Italy.

¹¹⁰ PIR² C 973.

¹¹¹ Thus, Alföldy (1977), 184-5. Alföldy notes *CIL* 16.123, where Pompeianus is attested as governor of Lower Pannonia and states that this should serve as a *terminus post quem* for his consulship, and not as evidence that Lower Pannonia could also be governed by a consular at this time. Alföldy places Pompeianus rather as suffect consul in the second half of 167, as does Pflaum (1961), 32f.

¹¹² The turbulent years in which Pompeianus governed Lower Pannonia meant that the appointment was by no means trivial. The governor of Upper Pannonia at this time was the important M. Iallius Bassus (PIR² J 4), previously governor of Lower Pannonia, who had also accompanied Lucius in the Parthian Wars. The promotion from Lower to Upper Pannonia was not rare in this period: Pompeianus' appointment indicates that by 164 his military skill had taken him far, and the suffect consulship is the logical result. See R. Syme, 'Governors of Pannonia Inferior', *Historia* 14 (1965), 354ff.

¹¹³ Pflaum (1961), 31f; Birley (1987), 161-2.

¹¹⁴ Not entirely without fatal consequences for both families: Pompeianus' nephew was executed for his part in the conspiracy of 182, but no blame was attached to Pompeianus. Dio 71.4.1f.; Herodian. 1.8.4f.

¹¹⁵ Alföldy (1977), 187; Birley (1987), 175-6. Birley notes also that Pompeianus was probably unable to be in Rome for his second consulship.

with yet another military crisis, the ascetic philosopher-emperor adopted the most Roman of solutions. His co-emperor and brother Lucius had perished, and not without attendant rumours.¹¹⁶ Lucilla could not be allowed to remain unattached, and Pompeianus was a proven commander. There were further benefits. Being a *novus homo*, Pompeianus would owe his advancement entirely to Marcus. His family had not been prominent before him, and was not entangled by political or familial ties to the nexus of Lucius. A successful general could yet prove dangerous if not co-opted into the dynasty.¹¹⁷ The equestrian origins of Pompeianus counted less than his military ability, although sneers at such lowly origins had by no means entirely disappeared.¹¹⁸

III. *The importance of Pompeianus*

The importance of the induction of Pompeianus to the imperial dynasty must be emphasised. The marriage of Pompeianus to Lucilla reveals the perspective of Marcus. In the two marriages of Lucilla, he sought utility above all else. Lucilla and her mother were apparently opposed to the marriage: Pompeianus was some two decades older than his new bride, and certainly from less noble stock than Lucius. Perhaps these factors formed the basis for the objections of the two women, as the biographer reports.¹¹⁹ Marcus, to judge by his treatment of the senate, certainly respected the conventions and expectations of the patricians.¹²⁰ It is instructive to note that

¹¹⁶ *Marc.* 15.5, 22.8; *Ver.* 9.2, 9.7-11.4; Dio 70.3.1; Birley (1987), 158. Cf. *Med.* 1.17.4. Intimation of Marcus' involvement in the death of Lucius may be safely discarded, as indeed the biographer asserts. The time to remove Lucius had long passed: it would have been during the early or middle years of the reign of Antoninus, before the family connections of Lucius again rose to prominence. Marcus and Antoninus had shown themselves to be lacking, in the final measure, the streak of callousness possessed in such abundance by Hadrian. However, it is certainly possible that Marcus felt somewhat burdened by his younger co-emperor.

¹¹⁷ Pflaum (1961), 31f.

¹¹⁸ *Marc.* 20.6. Pertinax, the future emperor and a protégé of Pompeianus, was also the object of aristocratic hauteur. See Dio 71.22.1.

¹¹⁹ *Marc.* 20.7.

¹²⁰ Marcus' relations with the senate were generally portrayed as exemplary by the biographer. See *Marc.* 10.1-12.

although two of Marcus' sons-in-law were noble patricians of the highest class, the three *novi homines* were at some point made patricians by decree.¹²¹

Further, the two husbands of Lucilla are enough to refute the remarks of Herodian on Marcus' selections of his sons-in-law (1.2.1):¹²²

τάς τε θυγατέρας ἐν ὥρᾳ γενομένας ἐξέδοτο ἀνδράσι τῆς συγκλήτου βουλῆς τοῖς ἀρίστοις, οὐ τοὺς γένους μακραῖς διαδοχαῖς εὐπατρίδας οὐδὲ τοὺς πλούτου περιβολαῖς λαμπροῦς, κοσμίους δὲ τὸν τρόπον καὶ σώφρονας τὸν βίον γαμβροὺς αὐτῷ γενέσθαι θέλων· ταῦτα γὰρ μόνα ψυχῆς ἴδια καὶ ἀναφαίρε τα ἡγεῖτο κτήματα.

When his daughters came of age, Marcus married them to leading senators, choosing as his sons-in-law not patricians of ancient lineage, nor men noted for their accumulation of wealth but those of orderly habits and sober lives. These indestructible, spiritual characteristics were the only things he considered real possessions.

The selection of Lucius is almost enough to refute this statement, and the context of the marriage of Lucilla and Pompeianus is sufficient to expose the inadequacy of Herodian.¹²³ Sober and orderly Pompeianus may well have been, but his selection as an imperial son-in-law is based upon the requirements of Marcus in 169. Likewise, the other sons-in-law of Marcus were selected with a firm emphasis on the protection and extension of the imperial nexus, and, after the death of Lucius, a move away from the older Hadrianic nexus. Pompeianus is the clearest representative of this policy, both because his marriage to Lucilla took place soon after the death of Lucius and because he is strikingly devoid of connections to the leading patrician families of Rome.

¹²¹ Pflaum (1961), 36-8. *CIL* 6.1979 lists Antistius Adventus Burrus and Petronius Sura Septimianus among the *Salii*, and is dated to 179. Though the precise identification of this member of the Antistii is uncertain (PIR² A 757-8 may both refer to the *gener* of Marcus), it is clear that by 179 members of the Petronii and the Antistii had gained patrician status. On Septimianus, the brother of Petronius Mamertinus, see PIR² P 312. Discussed in full below.

¹²² Translation from Whittaker's Loeb edition.

¹²³ G. Alföldy, 'Herodian über den Tod Mark Aurels', *Latomus* 32 (1973), 345-53.

The Herodian ‘merit’, therefore, of Pompeianus was purely thus: i) he was militarily able, and in 169 Marcus had great need of such men; and ii) his marriage to Lucilla would prevent him fomenting ambitions of his own. His relatively low birth would perhaps mitigate such ambitions, but Marcus made certain. He was faced with a growing crisis on the northern frontiers.¹²⁴ Pompeianus’ military experience both proved his value and provided the potential danger; the motivation for the marriage was that this danger be reversed, and the ability utilised to the benefit of the dynasty. Marcus’ selection of Pompeianus was predicated far less on an abstract concept of ‘merit’ than it was on dynastic necessity. The foresight of Marcus in this case is underlined by the actions of a general he did not manage to appease thus, the aristocratic Syrian C. Avidius Cassius.¹²⁵ The other sons-in-law of Marcus lend credence to the argument. The ‘merit’ or ‘indestructible, spiritual characteristics’ are revealed as factors that would enhance imperial power, and promote the nexus of power that existed around the imperial family and from there extended its tendrils outward. The move away from the domination of the old Hadrianic nexus was a conscious policy. But history showed that the emperor could not rule without the consensus of the ruling class – or at least the dominant faction therein. Marcus knew well history and its patterns.¹²⁶

3. Cn. Claudius Severus (*cos. II ord. 173*), married to Faustina.

I. *Summary*

The fellow consul *ordinarius* of Pompeianus in 173 was Cn. Claudius Severus, who married Marcus’ daughter Annia Aurelia Galeria Faustina.¹²⁷ His father was Cn. Claudius Severus, consul

¹²⁴ Birley (1987), 249-55.

¹²⁵ R. Syme, ‘Avidius Cassius: His Rank, Age, and Quality’, *HAC* 1984/1985 (Bonn, 1987), 207-22 = *RP V* (Oxford, 1988), 689-701.

¹²⁶ *Med.* 7.1, 8.5, 8.31-2.

¹²⁷ Faustina was long thought to be Marcus’ eldest daughter – e.g. Pflaum (1961), 29f. – but it has been shown that Herodian (1.8.3) was correct in naming Lucilla the eldest living daughter. Faustina is the second elder daughter

in 146, a philosopher whose lectures Marcus attended.¹²⁸ Marcus writes in his *Meditations* that he learnt from the elder Severus the ‘love of family, love of truth, love of justice; to have come by his help to understand Thrasea, Helvidius, Cato, Dio, Brutus’.¹²⁹ Herodian possibly had Claudius Severus the younger in mind when he wrote optimistically of the manner in which Marcus selected his sons-in-law: Severus’ father was a philosopher, and Severus himself was inclined to intellectual pursuits.¹³⁰ A careful examination of Claudius Severus’ background and family, however, reveals that his imperial marriage forms one strand of the web Marcus constructed around the imperial power. The Claudii Severi, although already prominent, owed the final and most spectacular part of their rise to Marcus. The adoption of a son of Severus’ first marriage by Ummidius Quadratus, the nephew of Marcus, should also be examined in this context. As always for Marcus, politics was at least as important as sentiment. The goal was to ensure the safety of his own dynasty and build his own nexus, away from those of Hadrian and the Ceionii.

II. Background

The Claudii Severi were of Greek extraction from Pompeiopolis in Paphlagonia.¹³¹ Claudius Severus’ grandfather (*cos. suff.* c. 112) was probably the first governor of Arabia, and held the post for at least nine years under Trajan.¹³² His father, *cos. ord.* 146, possessed the additional *cognomen* Arabianus; he was possibly born during his own father’s term in Arabia.¹³³ Claudius Severus

living, and the third in order of birth. See Ameling (1992), 149ff.; Birley (1987), 247. On Claudius Severus, see PIR² C 1024.

¹²⁸ *Mar.* 3.3.

¹²⁹ *Med.* 1.14.

¹³⁰ Herodian, 1.2.2. On the intellectual pursuits of Claudius Severus, see Galen, *On Prognosis* 2.24-7, 5.17; V. Nutton, ed., *On Prognosis* (Berlin, 1979), 166-7.

¹³¹ H. Halfmann, *Die Senatoren aus dem ostlichen Teil des Imperium Romanum bis zum Ende des 2. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Göttingen, 1979), nos. 39, 72, 101. Related to the Julii Severi of Ancyra, discussed below.

¹³² The post included command of a legion. He served first as praetorian governor and served his consulship in absence c. 112, staying on in Arabia as a consular. R. Syme, ‘Consulates in Absence’, *JRS* 48 (1958), 4-6 = *RP* 1 (Oxford, 1975), 383-7; G.W. Bowersock, ‘The Annexation and Initial Garrison of Arabia’, *ZPE* 5 (1970), 40f.; G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 81-5, 160-1. Bowersock sees Severus’ role as facilitating preparations for Trajan’s planned campaigns. See also PIR² C 1023; *CIL* 3.14176.

¹³³ PIR² C 1024.

himself had been married previously, and a son of this marriage was adopted by M. Ummidius Quadratus.¹³⁴ This Ummidius Quadratus, the son of Marcus' sister Cornificia, was *consul ordinarius* with Lucius in 167: close to the year in which Severus was *consul suffectus*. The exact year remains uncertain.¹³⁵ Ummidius' father, Marcus' brother-in-law, had been *cos. suff.* in 146, the same year Severus' father was *ordinarius*. By a trick of nomenclature this Ummidius is recorded by his wife's name.¹³⁶

Claudius Severus himself was probably thirty-two by the time he gained his first consulship – the proper age for a favoured noble and the son of consul *ordinarius*.¹³⁷ The eventual imperial marriage (likely before 167: a son was perhaps born in this year) and the standing of his father with Marcus and Antoninus support the notion that he stood high in the imperial favour.¹³⁸ His father too possibly reached the consulship *suo anno*. If the *cognomen* Arabianus signifies that Severus' father was born during Severus' grandfather's tenure as governor of Arabia, then he was born between 107 and 115. The year of his consulship in 146 has led to the supposition that he was born in 113.¹³⁹ Perhaps then Severus was born c. 133. This would place his father's age at marriage at around twenty, and place the age of Severus when he gained his first consulship in

¹³⁴ Syme (1968), 103. *SEG* 13.505, cited here by Syme, was once thought to refer to an elder Quadratus and Catilius Severus (cf. *IBM* 3.539).

¹³⁵ Syme (1979), 291-2; *PIR*² C 1024. Full discussion of the date of Claudius Severus' first consulship in Appendix 2.

¹³⁶ Argued by Syme (1968), 98-9. But Marcus' brother-in-law may also have been his cousin. It is possible that a paternal aunt of Marcus had married C. Ummidius Quadratus Sertorius Severus, *cos.* 118. In this case, the name 'Annianus' under which the consul of 146 is known could refer to his wife or mother. On either argument, his status as *suffectus* in 146 (as Marcus' brother-in-law one would expect him to achieve the more exalted post of consul *ordinarius*) is attributed by Syme to the carefulness of Antoninus in securing the prominence of Marcus. The marriage took place c. 138, and it may have saved the Ummidii Quadrati from the fates of Servianus and Pedanius Fuscus, who had likewise fallen out of favour with Hadrian: Syme regards the marriage as possibly representing the removal of the Ummidii from the circle of the Pedanii, and into alliance with new dynasty. The connection here between the Sertorii and the Pedanii should be iterated: if the first marriage between the Ummidii and the Annii Veri is placed a generation earlier, it is easier to see how Ummidius Quadratus could have fallen afoul of Hadrian when the emperor suppressed his grand-nephew, Pedanius Fuscus. Annianus' son, M. Ummidius Quadratus, would be young for a consul in 167 – around twenty-eight – but he was the nephew of the emperor.

¹³⁷ The proper age, but perhaps this requirement was not always rigidly observed; the differing views can be witnessed in summation in the remarks of G. Burton, 'The Inheritance of the Consulate in the Antonine Period: A Problem Revisited', *Phoenix* 49 (1995), 233; J. Hahn and M. M. Leunissen, 'Statistical Method and the Inheritance of the Consulate under the Early Roman Empire', *Phoenix* 44 (1990), 66.

¹³⁸ Pflaum (1961), 30, argued on the basis of their son's consulship in 200. This son married Annia Faustina, the daughter of Marcus' niece Ummidia Cornificia Faustina, who was of course the sister of M. Ummidius Quadratus, and potentially the maternal aunt of 'Quadratus Severus'.

¹³⁹ Pflaum (1961), 29. He prefers a date of c. 113, derived by counting back from Arabianus' consulship in 146, on the basis that Arabianus would gain his consulship *suo anno*. The argument is attractive, but not conclusive.

his early thirties.¹⁴⁰ For his second consulship, Severus served as *ordinarius* in 173 with the general Ti. Claudius Pompeianus. Importantly, he preceded Lucilla's second husband on the *fasti*.¹⁴¹ The philosopher-consul's son, whose family hailed from Paphlagonia, was granted higher status than Marcus' chief general: perhaps breeding mattered to Marcus after all.

III. *Imperial marriage and adoption of a son by Ummidius*

The marriage of Claudius Severus to Annia Faustina and the adoption of Severus' natural son by Ummidius Quadratus should be considered together. Before proceeding, it is necessary to reconstruct a chronology for the marriage and adoption. The precise date of the adoption of Claudius Severus' natural son is not known, but that the marriage of Severus and Annia Faustina took place before 167 is probable.¹⁴² An adoption in 167 or shortly before is credible. Adoptions among aristocrats were mainly of young adults, not children.¹⁴³ Chronologically this would fit with Severus having married for the first time in his early twenties (c. 153), as was customary.¹⁴⁴ The son of such a match could then be old enough for adoption by c. 165. However, it is extremely unlikely that a Roman would surrender his only heir without at least the prospect of replacement. In this case, the prospect for Severus was of a future heir of superior breeding.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Pflaum (1961), 29-30. Again, the consulships are invoked to provide dates of birth, but this time with less certainty. See also R. Syme, 'Marriage Ages for Roman Senators', *Historia* 36 (1987), 327, 330f. = *RP* 6 (Oxford, 1991), 241, 244f. Though Syme is examining the Late Republic and the Augustan Principate, his remarks remain equally applicable to the second century. The usual age for marriage among aristocratic families was in the early twenties for men, and between fourteen and fifteen for women, and this average was lower during the Antonine period. See A. A. Lelis, W. A. Percy, B. C. Verstraete, *The Age of Marriage in Ancient Rome* (New York, 2003), 63-5.

¹⁴¹ Pflaum (1961), 30; Ameling (1992), 149ff. Pflaum's reasoning – that Faustina felt slighted because she was elder than Lucilla but was not titled Augusta – is of course no longer tenable as Lucilla was in fact the elder daughter. Marcus' preference for Severus in 173 is still intriguing; perhaps now more so: the husband of the second daughter is favoured with the first place on the *fasti*, and the favoured marshal and husband of the Augusta is relegated to second.

¹⁴² Pflaum (1961), 30. On the basis of their son's consulship in 200.

¹⁴³ B. Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* (Oxford, 2003), 205, 233-4.

¹⁴⁴ Syme (1987), 327, 330f.

¹⁴⁵ Pflaum (1961), 31; cf. *Sev.* 13.7, where a certain 'Claudius Arabianus' is listed among the nobles killed by Septimius Severus. Pflaum regards this individual as the son of a younger son of Claudius Arabianus, because the direct line of Claudius Severus was favoured by the Severans, and indeed furnished an empress (Dio 79.4.5). However, the possibility that this Arabianus is the son of another child of Claudius Severus' previous marriage should not be discounted.

On the most conservative estimate, Annia Faustina would be in her twelfth year in 165. By Roman standards, this was almost old enough for marriage, and dynastic opportunism had hastened the matrimony of princesses before: particularly true in the Antonine dynasty.¹⁴⁶ A previous wife of Severus had then departed by c. 165, and certainly by 167. Either an early death or an expedient divorce may be supposed.¹⁴⁷ A common feature of adoption among aristocratic families is of particular relevance at this point: the Roman elite preferred, where feasible, to adopt between already related families.¹⁴⁸ In this case, there are interesting implications. It is possible Ummidius Quadratus was adopting the son of his sister, an otherwise unrecorded Ummidia.¹⁴⁹

Thus, the imperial marriage of Severus and the adoption of his biological son by Ummidius Quadratus are linked. They demonstrate the astute manner in which familial links were managed to concentrate the influence of the imperial family. Undoubtedly Marcus chose his sons-in-law carefully: any emperor that did not would be foolish.¹⁵⁰ But the situation is more complex. In addition to selecting Claudius Severus as a husband for Annia Faustina, Marcus also facilitated the adoption of the son of Claudius Severus by M. Ummidius Quadratus, the son of his sister Cornificia. This adoption is significant: as is any adoption in the imperial family. Together, the

¹⁴⁶ A. A. Lelis et al. (2003), 64-5.

¹⁴⁷ For a statistical study, see B. D. Shaw, 'Seasons of Death: Aspects of Mortality in Imperial Rome', *JRS* 86 (1996), 100-38. In the Antonine context, the plague brought back from the East by the returning soldiers could be named as a suspect. The severity of the plague remains uncertain, see esp. R. J. Littman and M. L. Littman, 'Galen and the Antonine Plague', *AJP* 94 (1973), 252-55. If Severus' wife were indeed an Ummidia, then a death is more likely than a divorce.

¹⁴⁸ Among aristocratic families adoption was a device to procure heirs. Furthermore, the adoption of a nephew by a maternal uncle was not rare. See M. Corbier, 'Divorce and Adoption as Familial Strategies', in Rawson, ed., *Marriage, Divorce and Children in Ancient Rome* (Canberra, 1991), 66-77.

¹⁴⁹ Syme (1968), 102-5; Pflaum (1961), 30f. Syme proposes an unrecorded Ummidia for the first wife of Severus on the basis that adoption by relations was common and practised. See also Champlin (1979), 293f. Champlin suggests Acilius Glabrio, *cos. ord.* 152, for the husband of Marcus' niece Ummidia Cornificia Faustina. Maybe so: the point here is that although her husband is unknown, Ummidia Cornificia's daughter married Claudius Severus' son by Faustina. Both parties share at least the same great-grandfather in the triple consul M. Annius Verus. The marriage of Claudius Severus' son to Ummidia's daughter rules out the temptation to complete the puzzle by supposing Severus' first marriage was to Ummidia Cornificia herself: the degree of consanguinity of his son's marriage would be too great. However, even lacking confirmation of the identity of Claudius Severus' first wife and Ummidia Cornificia's husband, the association between the Claudii Severi family and the Ummidii is continued. Only the depth of the association remains in question.

¹⁵⁰ That Marcus chose his sons-in-law carefully is surely not in question. The issue lies in his motivations: argued here to be utility. Cf. the more scathing assessment of Syme (1987), 220-1.

marriage of Annia Faustina and Claudius Severus, and the adoption of Claudius Severus' son by Ummidius, furnish an excellent example of the sometimes tortuous links between families involved in the imperial nexus.

In summation: before 167, and after the bereavement (or divorce) of Claudius Severus, Marcus offered Severus his second daughter.¹⁵¹ Nothing debar the notion of a betrothal contracted even earlier. Such details would depend on the manner and timing of the termination of the previous marriage.¹⁵² There is also the figure of M. Ummidius Quadratus, nephew to the emperor. He was presumably lacking a son, through bereavement or an inability to produce progeny. Marcus was responsible for both the marriage and the adoption. The marriage of his daughter was a political matter: the heirless status of his nephew scarcely less so. Certainly both matters were worthy of attention from Marcus, an emperor who had spent his youth surrounded by family politics. He himself owed his imperial status to such adoptions which manipulated propinquity to the imperial family.

The adoption, whenever it occurred, requires inspection. It would mean that Marcus' mother's considerable fortune, which Marcus had passed to his nephew Ummidius Quadratus after the death of his sister Cornificia, would eventually pass to the son by adoption of Ummidius. This young man was of course the biological son of Claudius Severus.¹⁵³ In effect, Claudius Severus' son by his previous marriage gained a place in the imperial family, along with the fortune of Domitia Lucilla. Claudius Severus himself would be the father of grandchildren of the emperor

¹⁵¹ Faustina would be old enough for marriage by c. 166. The previously accepted date of the marriage of c. 162-3 should be moved forward to accommodate the revision of Faustina's date of birth, which was actually 151 or 153. See Ameling (1992), 149ff.; Birley (1987), 247.

¹⁵² Cf. *Marv.* 6.1-3; *Ant. Pius* 10.2. Such had been the case with Marcus and Faustina in 138: the marriage did not take place until 145.

¹⁵³ On the fortune of Marcus' mother, see Plin. *Ep.* 8.18, and for discussion, see Birley (1987), 29f.; R. Syme, 'The Testamentum Dasumii: Some Novelties', *Chiron* 15 (1985), 51f. = *RP* 5 (Oxford, 1988), 532ff. Interestingly, Tullus also provided for his wife, who would be Marcus' maternal great-grandmother, with a large sum of money and beautiful villas: *accepit amoenissimas villas, accepit magnam pecuniam uxor optima et patientissima ac tanto melius de viro merita, quanto magis est reprehensa, quod nupsit.*

through the young Faustina.¹⁵⁴ The adoption of a son of Claudius Severus into the imperial family is a factor, if any be needed, to ensure his eager agreement to the pact. Considered together, the arrangements – marriage and adoption – indicate an impressive upward leap in the fortunes of the Claudii Severi. It is worth emphasising in this context that Marcus' succession was far from secure in 167. The marriage of Lucius and Lucilla had produced children, and Marcus had already lost six children of his own; another son perished in 169.¹⁵⁵ Had Marcus predeceased Lucius, the situation would have become delicate. As matters stood in 167, a natural son of Claudius Severus becoming the son of the emperor's nephew did not just represent incorporation into the distaff line of the imperial family: it would in fact catapult the youth directly into the politics of imperial succession.¹⁵⁶

Thus the adoption and marriage together served the interests of all concerned: i) Ummidius Quadratus, a nephew of Marcus (and possibly the brother of Severus' first wife), gained a son and heir; ii) Claudius Severus would see his son join the imperial family and become heir to the fortune of the emperor's mother; iii) Claudius Severus would also be the father of the emperor's grandchildren. As for Marcus: he controlled the fate of his mother's estate, and ensured it would go to the biological grandson of his friend and mentor, the philosopher Cn. Claudius Severus Arabianus. The family of the man who had taught Marcus to love the Stoics would be amply rewarded with the supreme honour of joining the imperial family.

¹⁵⁴ It is expedient to recall the supposition of Syme (1968), 102-5. If Severus' first wife were indeed an Ummidia, then his son would already be the emperor's grand-nephew through his mother. If this be the case, then the adoption would represent a strengthening of ties among the imperial family following the death (or divorce) of Ummidia: Severus was given another princess of the dynasty, and Ummidius given an heir. In either case, the dynastic acumen of Marcus remains a constant.

¹⁵⁵ Stemma in Birley (1987), 239.

¹⁵⁶ It could further be suggested that in 167 M. Ummidius Quadratus, *ordinarius* in that year, would have been an alternative *capax imperii* to Lucius. It is plain that the conduct of Lucius was not entirely to the satisfaction of Marcus. Furthermore, it has been argued above that some fault-lines were extant, based along the lines of the respective familial interests represented by the co-emperors. Marcus was certainly the senior partner, but Lucius had returned in triumph from the Parthian War – a triumph he had shared with Marcus, who was never averse to claiming a share of the glory. Marcus had named his sons Caesars in 166, but they were all young: M. Ummidius Quadratus was of age, had been consul, and was the nephew of the more powerful co-emperor. However, he is not recorded after his consulship.

IV. *The regional importance of the Claudii Severi*

But for Marcus such arrangements were also advantageous in other areas. The swift rise of the Claudii Severi is no doubt due in part to high imperial favour, but further factors are found.¹⁵⁷ The family's promotion is ancillary evidence of the wealth and connections of the Claudii Severi. These were no doubt concentrated in and around the *origo*, Pompeiopolis.¹⁵⁸ That this family retained their influence in the region is not doubted by Pflaum, who argues that this can explain why the latter members of this family managed to survive the mania of Commodus.¹⁵⁹ There are then, in addition to concerns of familial politics, more practical implications of the marriage that hinge on importance of regional influence and connections.

Some of these regional connections can be sketched out. As outlined above, Claudius Severus came from a family long domiciled in the East. Wealthy families from this region who aspired to be Roman senators formed large and intricate networks amongst their peers.¹⁶⁰ For Marcus, this may have been a significant factor in his decision to select Claudius Severus as a son-in-law. The marriage would ensure a measure of imperial influence in Paphlagonia, derived from the importance of the Severus' family in the region. First, the immediate family: Claudius Severus' grandfather had gained admission to the senate before Hadrian's reign, and had served as Trajan's first governor of Arabia. He had gained a suffect consulship in 112, no mean feat for a first generation senator.¹⁶¹ Claudius Severus' father had likewise prospered during the reign of

¹⁵⁷ R. Syme, 'Antonine Government and Governing Class', *RP* 5 (Oxford, 1988), 676, claims that 'Merit, favour, and chance operated.'

¹⁵⁸ *IGR* 3.134. Claudius Severus evidently still maintained his connections to Pompeiopolis, despite being a third generation consul.

¹⁵⁹ Pflaum (1961), 31. A great-granddaughter of Marcus, descended from Annia Faustina and Claudius Severus, married Elagabalus. Dio 79.4.5.

¹⁶⁰ The Claudii Severi themselves were connected to the Julii Severi, a family of royal descent from Ancyra, and the Julii Quadrati of Pergamum. Another apposite example are the Licinii of Oenoanda, connected to C. Avidius Cassius through marriage; see S. Jameson, 'Two Lycian Families', *Anatolian Studies* 16 (1966), 125-37. Alliances of families of similar social class, if varying background, were a feature of the region. See Syme (1988), 677-9; and more generally F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (Oxford, 1964), 182-90. The links of the Claudii Severi to the Julii Severi are discussed below, and the connections of Avidius Cassius in Chapter 3.

¹⁶¹ *PIR*² C 1023. At the earliest estimate, he was enrolled in the senate by Domitian.

Pius, and had been a great friend of Marcus. Their status in Paphlagonia should not be in question.¹⁶²

The wider influence of the family in Asia Minor should also be considered. Paphlagonia was near to Galatia and Cappadocia, and the Claudii Severi had connections in these regions. Among these connections is another prominent senatorial family of Asia Minor, the Julii Severi of Ancyra.¹⁶³ The first senator of this family, C. Julius Severus, a scion of old royalty from Ancyra, was adlected *inter tribunicios* to the senate by Hadrian. He served as consul c. 138, and commanded legions in Syria and Germania inferior.¹⁶⁴ The family was still prominent a generation later under Antoninus and Marcus. A son, also C. Julius Severus, was *cos. ord.* in 155 and governed the important province of Syria in 156-7; he had previously commanded a legion in Germania inferior.¹⁶⁵ This family was connected to the Julii Quadrati of Pergamum, another near-eastern family of royal lineage. The links between the Julii Severi, from explicit and iterated royal descent in Ancyra, the Julii Quadrati from Pergamum, and the Claudii Severi from farther north in Pompeiopolis, demonstrate that many of the earliest senators from this region came from large intermarried clans. These were comprised of members of the local aristocracy and royalty.¹⁶⁶ Another eastern senator of royal descent, C. Avidius Cassius, had not scrupled to forge connections to the wealthy Licinii of Oenoanda in Lycia.¹⁶⁷ It is germane to note here that Cappadocia and its legion, under P. Martius Verus, stayed loyal to Marcus in 175 on the occasion of Cassius' rebellion. This is not to be fully attributed to the imperial influence represented by the Claudii Severi in nearby Paphlagonia: but no doubt having a prominent family of Asia Minor

¹⁶² Pflaum (1961), 29f. The son-in-law of Marcus, a third-generation consul, was honoured in his *origo*, Pompeiopolis; see *IGR* 3.134

¹⁶³ *IGRR* 3.173. C. Julius Severus boasts of his descent from the kings Attalus, Deiotarus, and Amyntas, and records his consular relations and connections. He claims to be related to the powerful A. Julius Quadratus, *cos. II ord.* 105, a Pergamene, who had governed Lycia-Pamphilia, Syria, and Asia, and to C. Claudius Severus, who in this context must be the consul of c. 112, grandfather of Marcus' son-in-law.

¹⁶⁴ Alföldy (1977), 137-8, places his consulship without certainty in 138. See *PIR*² J 573; *IGRR* 3.173-5.

¹⁶⁵ Halfmann (1979), no. 81; *PIR*² J 574. The command in Germany was possibly when his father was legate.

¹⁶⁶ C. S. Walton, 'Oriental Senators in the Service of Rome', *JRS* 19 (1929), 54f. The connections are not based on the common *cognomen* Severus.

¹⁶⁷ Jameson (1966), 125-37, discusses *IGR* 3.500 in full, with a stemma at 136f. Cassius' daughter is not named on the inscription. Walton (1929), 57, n. 2, raises the possibility of *damnatio memoriae*.

linked to the interests of the ruling dynasty at Rome did no harm. Perhaps it also served to provide a counterpoint to Cassius' own connections in the region. Claudius Severus had gained his second consulship, this time as *ordinarius*, just two years before the rebellion.

Such connections of Claudius Severus, however impressive genealogically and geographically, require careful treatment. They should not lead to the notion of a rigorous and purposeful alliance of prominent and wealthy families, spread across Asia Minor. It is enough that connections between such families were considered important enough to emphasise: the prestige attached to such links is crucial. It is sufficient to state that there existed, among senators from Asia Minor, an acknowledgment of shared background, political aspirations, and often shared family. If this sense of identity were carried into Rome with the different families – and the importance of the *origo* was retained in succeeding generations – then it would at least form some demarcation of a group of like origin.¹⁶⁸

V. Conclusion

The political eminence of the Claudii Severi comes from two fronts: firstly, the wealth and influence of the family, which was concentrated in Asia Minor; secondly, they benefited from imperial favour. Claudius Severus himself, *gener imperatoris*, third-generation consul, was a *nobilis* and was situated physically and socially in the heart of the ruling oligarchy. His career, his marriage, and the adoption of a son by another *nobilis* are all representative of the practice of *amicitia*. Patronage and friendship were still standard currency, and needed to be repaid.¹⁶⁹ The

¹⁶⁸ The second-century cadre of senators from North Africa indicates the active interest maintained in their towns of origin by Romans of similarly provincial extraction. See E. Champlin, *Fronto and Antonine Rome* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), 5-20.

¹⁶⁹ Syme (1939), 12. His remarks are yet applicable to the imperial period: 'Amicitia was a weapon of politics, not a sentiment based on congeniality. Individuals capture attention and engross history, but the most revolutionary changes in Roman politics were the work of families or a few men.'

career and rise of Claudius Severus was ensured by the status of his family and the proximity of his father to Marcus Aurelius.

Hadrian and Antoninus had made good use of senators of Eastern extraction, and Marcus, with his predilection for *nobiles* unfettered by previous dynastic links, did not fail to follow suit.¹⁷⁰ For Marcus, the appeal of Claudius Severus lay not only in his friendship with the father, but also in the prominence of the Claudii Severi. The young man was hardly selected as a son-in-law using the criteria which Herodian attributed to Marcus, though on the surface he seems the most credible candidate for their application.¹⁷¹ The marriage, and the adoption which is attendant upon it, should be viewed in their full context, which is regional and political. Marcus had co-opted a family that, was outside the older nexus of Hadrian and, by extension, Lucius. The stake of the Claudii Severi in the imperial power was dependent entirely upon the double ties of a marriage contracted with a daughter of Marcus, and the adoption of a son by the emperor's nephew. Co-option of an influential family was a principle as old as Rome, and well understood by Marcus, and before him by his adoptive father Antoninus.¹⁷²

4. M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus (*cos. ord* 177), married to Fadilla

I. Summary

M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus,¹⁷³ the husband of Fadilla, was eminent by both blood and adoption.¹⁷⁴ On the side of his natural mother, Ceionia Fabia, he was the nephew of Lucius and

¹⁷⁰ Walton (1929), 61f. According to Walton, Marcus increased the amount of Eastern senators compared to Hadrian.

¹⁷¹ Herodian, 1.2.2; on Severus' intellectual pursuits see Galen, *On Prognosis* 2.24-7, 5.17.

¹⁷² *Marc.* 19.9. Probably a part of the interpolation, yet at the very least it demonstrates the importance attached by the author to the adoption and marriage arrangements of the Antonine dynasty.

¹⁷³ Henceforth 'Peducaeus Quintillus', to distinguish him from his father, Plautius Quintillus.

¹⁷⁴ Though the adoption is not proven. M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus, PIR² P 474, esp. I. *Ephesos* 704 = *AE* 1939, no. 127. The putative adoption is discussed in full below. For stemma, see Appendix 1.

the grandson, great-grandson and great-great-grandson of consuls.¹⁷⁵ His natural father Plautius Quintillus was consul *ordinarius* in 159, a paternal uncle in 162, his paternal grandfather, L. Epidius Titius Aquilinus, in 125, and his paternal grandmother's father, Avidius Nigrinus, in 110.¹⁷⁶ There are also links between the families of his father and mother. The maternal grandparents of his father – Plautia and Avidius Nigrinus – are the maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother of his mother and Lucius. Thus Plautia, through different husbands, was grandmother to both of Peducaeus Quintillus' parents. Her son, L. Aelius Caesar, by L. Ceionius Commodus was the father of Ceionia by Avidia (a daughter of Avidius Nigrinus from a previous marriage), and her daughter Avidia Plautia by Avidius Nigrinus was the mother of Plautius.¹⁷⁷

Peducaeus Quintillus was thus of the highest aristocracy in Rome, and the marriage to Fadilla would confirm the double tie he already shared with the imperial family.¹⁷⁸ The marriage of Ceionia Fabia's son to a daughter of Marcus and Faustina meant that a nephew of Lucius by blood was marrying a niece of Lucius by adoption – though Lucius was probably deceased when the marriage took place.¹⁷⁹ Peducaeus Quintillus himself was consul *ordinarius* in 177 alongside Commodus, surely by that year his brother-in-law.¹⁸⁰ Already a member of the imperial family through his natural mother's family, his marriage to Fadilla brought the connection back into prominence. For Marcus in his later years, as the succession of Commodus loomed in the aftermath of the rebellion of Cassius, the co-option of this male relation of Lucius was crucial.

II. *Adoption and problems*

¹⁷⁵ PIR² C 603-5 for his maternal forebears, who included of course L. Aelius Caesar; discussion in Syme (1957), 306-15.

¹⁷⁶ The elder Plautius Quintillus: PIR² P 473; his uncle L. Plautius Aquilinus: PIR² P 460; Avidius Nigrinus: PIR² A 1408. See also Syme (1957), 306-15; Syme (1984), 31-60. On his grandfather L. Epidius Titius Aquilinus, see A. Degraffi, *I fasti consolari dell'Impero Romano dal 30 avanti Cristo al 613 dopo Cristo* (Rome, 1952), 36; PIR¹ E 55; Birley (1987), 247.

¹⁷⁷ Avidia Plautia: PIR² A 1412, esp. *CIL* 10.6706 = *ILS* 8217. The maternal relationship to Plautius Quintillus and Plautius Aquilinus is not explicit, but invoked to make sense of the names. On the elder Plautia, see above.

¹⁷⁸ That is, by being both the nephew and the cousin of Lucius.

¹⁷⁹ Fadilla was born c. 159. See Ameling (1992), 150-2.

¹⁸⁰ The chronology of the marriage is discussed in detail below.

That the *gener* of Marcus was adopted by M. Peducaeus Stloga Priscinus, *cos. ord.* 141, was first proposed by E. Groag on the basis of the complete nomenclature provided by an inscription: M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus.¹⁸¹ It has been accepted since.¹⁸² It is not, however, the only possible explanation for the nomenclature. Indeed, the PIR entry on Peducaeus Quintillus (PIR² P 474) appears to err concerning the chronology of the supposed adoption. *I. Ephesos* 704 can be securely dated to 169-80 by the mention of Lucius, but not Marcus, as divine. It is the only inscription that provides the full nomenclature of Peducaeus Quintillus. Since the *nomen* 'Peducaeus' did not form part of his abbreviated nomenclature (which, like his father, was 'Plautius Quintillus'), it is no surprise that it is not included on any of the inscriptions which merely refer to Peducaeus *in consulatu*. There is no reason, then, to suppose that he actually acquired the *nomen* 'Peducaeus' between 169 and 180. All that should be deduced from the inscription is: i) that his full name was M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus; and ii) that any adoption that occurred took place not necessarily between 169-80, but rather before 180, which is the latest possible date for the inscription.¹⁸³

Due consideration of other possibilities adds care and caution to an investigation of the inner workings of the Antonine dynasty. The adoption by a third party of a male relation of Lucius – if the adoption indeed occurred – is of particular interest in terms of Marcus' construction and manipulation of his familial nexus. In this case, it is germane to note that there is perhaps a pre-existing connection between the families of Peducaeus Stloga and Peducaeus Quintillus. A lady named Pedania Quintilla married Peducaeus Saenianus, *cos. suff.* 89. Perhaps then an old link existed between the Peducaeii and the Plautii Quintilli, and such is the hypothesis of Wachtel in

¹⁸¹ Groag, R.E. 19, 53f.; the complete nomenclature appears only on *I. Ephesos* 704 = *AE* 1939, no. 127.

¹⁸² Groag's identification of the adoption was accepted by, among others, Pflaum (1961), 34, n. 59; Birley (1987), 247.

¹⁸³ PIR² P 474. The entry is correct to note, however, that the notion that the *nomen* 'Peducaeus' was acquired after his consulship in 177 is shown to be false by R. Syme, 'The Paternity of Polyonymous Consuls' *ZPE* 61 (1985), 191-8 = *RP* 5 (Oxford, 1988) 639-47. Cf. commentary on *AE* 1939, no. 127 (= *I. Ephesos* 704): 'consul en 177 avec Commode, il fut adopté entre 177 et 180, période à laquelle appartient notre base, par un Peducaeus Stloga Priscianus'; J. Kiel, 'Kaiser Marcus und die Thronfolge', *Klio* 31 (1938), 298: '...nach seinem Konsulat, aber vor dem Tode des Marcus, durch Adoption in die bis in die Republik zurückreichende Gens der Peducaeii übergegangen ist.'

the PIR.¹⁸⁴ But the connection is perhaps direct enough to rule out the adoption of Peducaeus Quintillus by Peducaeus Stloga. It is possible to argue that the *nomen* was transferred to Peducaeus Quintillus in the usual fashion by his father, Plautius Quintillus.

Due caution is necessary. The full nomenclature of Plautius Quintillus is nowhere attested; he is known only by his abbreviated nomenclature. An inscription provides *Plautius Quintil[i]us* during his consulship, but otherwise only *Quintillus* or *Quintilius*.¹⁸⁵ For this reason, Salomies, in his excellent monograph on nomenclature, admits the ‘theoretical possibility’ that Plautius Quintillus, the father of Peducaeus Quintillus, already possessed the *nomen* ‘Peducaeus’.¹⁸⁶ Salomies does not, however, mention the probable marriage of Pedania Quintilla and M. Peducaeus Saenianus, *cos. suff.* 89.¹⁸⁷ Taking due account of this marriage, it is more than a theoretical possibility that Plautius Quintillus, *cos. ord.* 159, already possessed the *nomen* ‘Peducaeus’. ‘Peducaeus’ and ‘Quintillus’ are rare, and, significantly, the presence of the *cognomen* ‘Quintillus’ is unaccounted for in Plautius Quintillus, the son of L. Epidius Titius Aquilinus and Avidia Plautia.¹⁸⁸ An explicit connection between the *nomen* ‘Peducaeus’ and the *cognomen* ‘Quintillus’ thus precedes our M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus, the *gener* of Marcus, by three generations at the outside, possibly fewer.

Thus, confirmation that the *nomen* ‘Peducaeus’ was inherited by Peducaeus Quintillus, rather than conferred by adoption, may lie in the regrettably unknown full nomenclature of his father, Plautius Quintillus. It is apposite to state that both father and son used the same abbreviated

¹⁸⁴ Pedania Quintilla, PIR² P 206; M. Peducaeus Saenianus, PIR² P 226; stemma in PIR² vol. 6, 85. On the best estimate, Peducaeus Saenianus is the paternal great-uncle of Peducaeus Stloga. This marriage is discussed in full below, and a new stemma is set out in Appendix 1.

¹⁸⁵ CIL 9.5823. M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus, his son, uses the same abbreviated nomenclature.

¹⁸⁶ O. Salomies, *Adoptive and Polyonymous Nomenclature in the Roman Empire* (Helsinki, 1992), 101. Throughout this chapter, ‘*nomen*’ is used in accordance with Salomies’ usage, which is identical to meaning 1c in the *OLD*, 1185: ‘*nomen*’ is the gentile name, with one slight alteration: it will occasionally be used to indicate the maternal family name, with the qualifying adjective.

¹⁸⁷ Discussed in detail below.

¹⁸⁸ It is a rare and striking *cognomen*, appearing in the consular *fasti* of the second century only in the names of Plautius Quintillus and his son. Degraffi (1952), 265.

nomenclature.¹⁸⁹ This abbreviated nomenclature warrants brief comment. The *cognomen* ‘Quintillus’ remains of uncertain provenance, and is discussed below. Plautius Quintillus also bears his mother’s *nomen*. The incorporation of maternal *nomina* is not uncommon in this period. Both Plautius Quintillus and his brother Plautius Aquilinus bear ‘Plautius’, transmitted in the two preceding generations by the maternal line.¹⁹⁰ No doubt in this case the motivation was to emphasise his connections to the ruling dynasty. He could, as the husband of Ceionia Fabia, claim by blood the same grandmother as his wife and Lucius. This was worth emphasising, particularly in the late 150s.¹⁹¹ A glance at the full nomenclature of his brother, L. Titius Plautius Aquilinus, would suggest that ‘Titius’ and ‘Aquilinus’, derived from their father, could form part of Plautius Quintillus’ full nomenclature.

Some uncertainty lingers over the provenance of the *cognomen* ‘Quintillus’, used by both Plautius and Peducaeus in the abbreviated form of their names. From here, the argument must turn on the possibility that the Plautius Quintillus bore the *nomen* ‘Peducæus’. There remain three possible explanations for the full nomenclature of the Peducaeus Quintillus, consul of 177 and the *gener* of Marcus. These are: i) Plautius Quintillus bore the *nomen* ‘Peducæus’ by birth, because he was descended from the marriage of Peducaeus Saenianus and Pedania Quintilla, and bequeathed it to his son, Peducaeus Quintillus, ii) Plautius Quintillus acquired the *nomen* ‘Peducæus’ upon adoption by a Peducaeus, added the *nomen* to his full nomenclature, and thence passed it to an eponymous son, Peducaeus Quintillus, the *gener* of Marcus, and iii) the hitherto accepted theory, that Peducaeus Quintillus was adopted by Peducaeus Stloga and therefore added ‘Peducæus’ to his nomenclature. Each of these possibilities requires close examination, as do any adoptions so close to the ruling dynasty.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *CIL* 9.5823, 6.631, 14.328.

¹⁹⁰ See the examples in O. Salomies ‘Names and Adoptions in Ancient Rome’, in M. Corbier, ed., *Adoption et Fosterage* (Paris, 1999), 149-51. One of these examples is T. Fundanius Vitrasius Pollio, the son of Marcus’ cousin Annia Fundania Faustina and Vitrasius Pollio, *cos. II ord.* 176. Here, as in the case of the Plautii brothers, the motivation for placing the *nomen* of the mother first is plainly to emphasise the dynastic connections. Note also ‘Annianus’, discussed by Syme (1968), 98-9.

¹⁹¹ Many connections of Lucius became consuls in this period. Discussed in Chapter 1, above.

i) *Plautius Quintillus bore the nomen Peducaeus' by birth*

The first possibility hinges on the mysterious *cognomen* 'Quintillus', used by both father and son. As noted above, a common link between 'Peducaeus' and 'Quintillus' is possible through the marriage of Peducaeus Saenianus and Pedania Quintilla. The presence of 'Quintillus' in the abbreviated nomenclature of Plautius Quintillus, *cos. ord.* 159, may lead to an argument that 'Peducaeus', along with 'Quintillus', was hereditary, and possibly included in his full nomenclature. The parentage of his mother Avidia Plautia is known, and accounts for 'Plautius', but not for 'Quintillus'. Therefore 'Quintillus' must be derived from the parentage of his father, L. Epidius Titius Aquilinus, *cos. ord.* 125.¹⁹² This man does not evince 'Quintillus' among his *cognomina*; but then, very little is known of him. He was favoured with a dynastic marriage – that is, in sum, the verdict of scholarship, and the marriage is necessarily invoked to explain the consulship.¹⁹³ Since 'Quintillus' is not part of his nomenclature, it is more likely a maternal *cognomen*.

If the mother of L. Epidius Titius Aquilinus were an unrecorded Peducaea Quintilla, then Plautius Quintillus, the consul of 159, could acquire by birth the *nomen* 'Peducaeus' and the *cognomen* 'Quintillus', and could pass them to his son.¹⁹⁴ The suggestion is not spurious: this Peducaea Quintilla, would herself be the daughter of M. Peducaeus Saenianus and Pedania Quintilla.¹⁹⁵ The implication of a connection to the Spanish Pedanii in the forebears of the consul of 125 will do no harm to the supposition that he was favoured by Hadrian: such a

¹⁹² Avidia Plautia's parents were Avidius Nigrinus and Plautia; stemma in Birley (1987), 238.

¹⁹³ Cf. the remarks of Birley (1987), 247.

¹⁹⁴ Be it noted also that the reconstruction of the unrecorded lady's name, Peducaea Quintilla, is not overly audacious. For an analogous case of a daughter receiving both the paternal *nomen* and the maternal *nomen* it is not necessary to look far: Avidia Plautia, the daughter of Avidius Nigrinus and Plautia, patently acquired her names in the same manner.

¹⁹⁵ Peducaeus Saenianus was suffect consul in 89; he was likely to be married by then. If his daughter had married in a year around time of his consulship – a not unreasonable suggestion – then her son, L. Epidius Titius Aquilinus, would be old enough for the consulship by c. 125, especially considering his favourable marriage.

connection could explain his marriage to Avidia Plautia and his consulship.¹⁹⁶ Pedanii are not lacking among Hadrian's beneficiaries at the beginning of his reign – or among his victims in his final years.¹⁹⁷ It is significant that Peducaeus Quintillus is thus possibly connected through his paternal grandfather to the Spanish Pedanii. This would make him a nephew and cousin of Lucius, and a distant connection of Hadrian's as well.¹⁹⁸

To proceed, it is necessary to examine more closely the putative marriage of Pedania Quintilla and Peducaeus Saenianus, *cos. suff.* 89. Her identity and marriage are indicated by three roof tiles.¹⁹⁹ On the identity of her husband, *CIL* 15.644 provides *ex praed(iis) Quintill(ae) Saeniani (uxoris)*, but the editor soberly concludes with some misgivings.²⁰⁰ In the PIR, it is on this basis, together with *CIL* 15.642-3, that the marriage is established: or at least *ut videtur*, as Wachtel remarks.²⁰¹ The provenance of the marriage is firm, but certainty is impossible.

Certainly is likewise absent in the identification of the family of Pedania Quintilla. Wachtel suggests a connection with the Spanish Pedanii, judiciously qualified by *fortasse*. It is a sound idea, and from it follows his suggestion that Pedania Quintilla be considered the sister of Cn. Pedanius Fuscus Salinator, *cos. ord.* 118, the husband of Julia Paulina. She would then be the daughter of Pedanius Fuscus Salinator, *cos. suff.* 84.²⁰² Apposite then that the suffect consul of 84 was granted patrician status probably by Vespasian in 73-4; his son, betrothed to Julia Paulina c. 107 (who

¹⁹⁶ The marriage would then be before the suppression of Avidius Nigrinus in 118.

¹⁹⁷ Hadrian's connections to the Spanish Pedanii, and his eventual disfavour of them, are well documented. *Hadr.* 15.8, 23.3-9; Dio 69.17.1ff.; see also Champlin (1976), 79-89; Birley (1987), 201f. See also Chapter 1.

¹⁹⁸ See stemma in Appendix 1.

¹⁹⁹ *CIL* 15.642-4.

²⁰⁰ *CIL* 15.644: *ex pr Quintill Saeniani figil tunne sex uism ne*. The problem is outlined in the final note: 'dubitari potest utrum *ex pr(aedis) Quintill(ae) Saeniani* legendum sit an *ex pr(aedis) Quintill(ae) Saeniani(s)*. Figlinae Saenianae nominantur in tegula n. 475.' This second reading produces an adjective concerning the tile itself, which would be more problematic concerning the identity of Quintilla's husband. However, the PIR is surely correct to place *Quintill(ae)* and *Saeniani* in apposition. *CIL* 15.475 does little to clear matters: *de figulinis Saenianis Caeli Iuliani*, read as *De figulinis Saenianis Caeli Iuliani c(larissimi v(iri))* (in the context of the mass of entwined connections created by Marcus, an alternative reading is slightly interesting, if enigmatic: *C. Aeli* for *Caeli*). Further, *De figulinis Saenianis* is in curved script, whilst the rest is straight. In this case at least, then, *Saenianis* is certainly an adjective agreeing with *figulinis*.

²⁰¹ PIR² P 206.

²⁰² PIR² P 199-200.

was the daughter of the triple consular Servianus), and consul *ordinarius* in 118, was thus born c. 85.²⁰³ A brief examination of chronology is necessary in order to examine this proposition.

If the suggestion that Pedania Quintilla was the sister of the consul 118 be accepted, then she should be considered an elder sister by some margin. There is no reason to think that Peducaeus Saenianus, her putative husband, reached the suffect consulship in 89, *suo anno*. His immediate forebears are a prefect of Egypt under Vespasian and an imperial procurator under Claudius.²⁰⁴ Even if he did reach the consulship *suo anno*, his first marriage would be at least a decade earlier, c. 79. If he did not reach the consulship until his early forties, then perhaps he was married to Pedania Quintilla as early as 70. Such broad strokes admittedly do little to assist the estimation of when Pedania Quintilla was born. Rather, they demonstrate the problem and the possibilities. A suggestion of c. 66 for Pedania's birth is necessary. It would permit matrimony in 79, and would place her birth probably during her own father's twenties – he was consul in 84. She should also then be considered almost two decades older than her brother, the consul of 118, who was born around the year of her father's consulship. Twenty years difference in siblings is possible, but unlikely.

However, she could just as easily be considered the aunt, rather than the sister, of the Pedanius Fuscus who was consul *ordinarius* in 118 with Hadrian, and so admired by Pliny.²⁰⁵ That is, she could be the sister of that Pedanius who was suffect consul in 84 and the daughter of that Pedanius who reached the office in 61. If her husband Peducaeus Saenianus reached his consulship in his early forties, and was married c. 70, then this conjecture fits the marriage more comfortably.²⁰⁶ Finally, the point of such chronological speculation is to demonstrate that, considering the early marriage age of the upper-class Roman women at the time, and the large window of fertility it provided, it is possible that Pedania Quintilla and Peducaeus Saenianus had

²⁰³ PIR² P 200; Syme (1953), 156-7.

²⁰⁴ PIR² P 222-3, stemma 85: L. Peducaeus Colon, *praef. Aegypti* 70-2; L. Peducaeus Fronto, *proc. imp. Claudii*.

²⁰⁵ Plin. (Y) *Ep.* 6.11, 6.26.

²⁰⁶ A marriage c. 70 would place Pedania's birth after c. 55; in the twenties or thirties of her father, Pedanius Fuscus, who reached the suffect consulship in 61. PIR² P 201.

children by c. 70 at the earliest, and probably by c. 79. Significantly in this case, a daughter of Pedania Quintilla and Peducaeus Saenianus – Peducaea Quintilla – born 70-80 could have children of her own by 85-95.

The unrecorded Peducaea Quintilla, on this measure, married a certain Epidius Titius Aquilinus, likewise unrecorded. Such a union could bear children – namely, L. Epidius Titius Aquilinus, *cos. ord.* 125 – and leave no trace of the parents. Both parties perhaps died young. Chronology is no bar. The theory requires Plautius Quintillus, *cos. ord.* 159, father of the *gener* of Marcus, to incorporate a *nomen* from his paternal grandmother, and then pass it on to his son. Not so far-fetched: this Plautius Quintillus, husband to the sister of the emperor Lucius, certainly used his mother's *nomen* for his abbreviated name, patently for the advantages it gave him in public life. Speculation could be advanced that, wishing to disassociate himself during the reign of Antoninus from his father Epidius, a favourite of Hadrian, he associated himself more directly with his maternal line, which included not only Plautia, a fulcrum of the imperial dynasty, but also a certain Peducaea Quintilla.²⁰⁷ Perhaps his complete nomenclature, which included the *nomina* 'Plautius' and 'Peducacus', and the *cognomen* 'Quintillus', reflected the full glory of Plautia's imperial connections, together with the three recent consulships of his paternal grandmother's family.²⁰⁸

Finally, there is a potential difficulty that requires discussion. L. Titius Plautius Aquilinus, *cos. ord.* 162, the brother of Plautius Quintillus, does not bear the *nomen* 'Peducacus'. But since the *nomen* would, on the present argument, come from the paternal grandmother, the nomenclature of the brother is no rebuke. Plautius Aquilinus represents the more usual formula, in the concise terminology of Salomies, of P + N + N + C: the *praenomen* of the father, followed by the two

²⁰⁷ His maternal line on this argument would link him to the Pedanii, also sometime favourites of Hadrian. However, the end of young Pedanius Fuscus and his grandfather Servianus would not be forgotten, and this *gens* cannot be said to have ended Hadrian's reign in his favour. Interesting too, that although Plautius Quintillus married Ceionia Fabia, his maternal grandfather was another victim of Hadrian's, Avidius Nigrinus.

²⁰⁸ (M. Peducacus?) Plautius Quintillus was born c. 127, and thus could harness the prestige of the recent consulships of M. Peducacus Saenianus, *cos. suff.* 89, Q. Peducacus Priscinus, *cos. ord.* 93, and M. Peducacus Priscinus, *cos. ord.* 110. PIR² P 224-4, with stemma, 85.

nomina (in this case of the father and then the mother), followed by the *cognomen* of the father.²⁰⁹

But such formulae, furnished with numerous examples by Salomies, are also hedged about – of necessity – with acknowledgements of exceptions, and admissions that there are no firm rules that can be relied upon to predict the nomenclature of an upper-class Roman, particularly in the second century.²¹⁰ In this case, it is also relevant that L. Titius Plautius Aquilinus does not seem to bear the *cognomen* ‘Quintillus’, securely attested for the consul of 159.²¹¹ That the consul of 159 bore the names ‘Plautius Quintillus’ is without doubt. Thus already the names of the brothers are differentiated by the *cognomen* ‘Quintillus’, recalling on this assertion the father’s mother. Perhaps then another difference was the *nomen* ‘Peducaeus’, which one brother bore from his paternal grandmother. Thence may be derived the name of the arguably eponymous son, the *gener* of Marcus, recorded on the Ephesian inscription: M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus.

ii) *Plautius Quintillus, not Peducaeus Quintillus, acquired the nomen by adoption*

The second possibility is a variation on the accepted theory. Passing over the *cognomen* ‘Quintillus’ – or using it to adduce a more distant connection to the Peducaei, which would make an adoption agreeable on both sides – there is no reason to suppose that the adoption could not occur in the generation of Plautius Quintillus. Chronology, fickle though it can be, can permit – even encourage – the theory that the adoption took place a generation earlier, and it was the father of the *gener* of Marcus who was adopted by Peducaeus Stloga, not the *gener* himself.

Peducaeus Stloga, who remains the only possible adopter, was consul in 141: eighteen years before Plautius Quintillus, and thirty-six years before Peducaeus Quintillus. The symmetry of these gaps is striking. Eighteen years constituted one Roman generation and was considered the

²⁰⁹ Salomies (1999), 147, 149f. Of further note is the fact that, if the theory argued above be true, the nomenclature of M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus, the *gener* of Marcus, fits the same pattern.

²¹⁰ Salomies (1999), 147-8, 153-6.

²¹¹ Plautius Aquilinus, PIR² P 460; Plautius Quintillus, PIR² P 473.

minimum age gap for the relationship between adopter and adoptee to be considered natural.²¹² Peducaeus Stloga, himself the son and grandson of *consules ordinarii*, was born c. 109 if he served his consulship *suo anno*. This would be relatively late in the married life of his father, who was *cos. ord.* 110, but well within credibility. Being thirty-two at the youngest at the time of his own consulship in 141, he would be fifty in 159, and seventy-eight in 177. The estimates are approximate but instructive. The matter then turns on when Peducaeus Stloga found himself in need of an heir, and was without the prospect of producing one of his own. This is impossible to answer in any accuracy; fifty is as likely as seventy-eight.²¹³ Suffice to note that adoptions occurring both in childhood and adulthood are possible.

There is, however, another possible issue of nomenclature. The *praenomen* of L. Titius Plautius Aquilinus is identical to that of his father, L. Epidius Titius Aquilinus. One might expect from this that he is the elder son, yet his consulship lags behind his brother by three years.²¹⁴ Both brothers evince the *nomen* 'Plautius' and thus associate themselves directly with the nexus of relatives around Lucius. The explanation for an earlier consulship of Plautius Quintillus, if L. Plautius is indeed the elder brother, could well be the marriage of Plautius Quintillus to Ceionia Fabia. Lucius' connections were prominent at the time, and his sister's husband was perhaps a beneficiary. It is possible that his consulship was granted to him several years earlier than was usual, placing him ahead of his elder brother.²¹⁵

A final possibility may be apposite: if L. Plautius be considered the elder, then Avidia Plautia and her husband had a younger son in Plautius Quintillus: a younger son whom they could profitably

²¹² J. F. Gardner, *Family and Familia in Roman Law and Life* (Oxford, 1998), 146-8.

²¹³ Both estimated ages, fifty or seventy-eight, would presumably mean that Peducaeus Stloga had lost any sons of his own, and their sons as well, or that he had only daughters during his married life. Certainly if he were seventy-eight then the adoption could only have been the result of an unexpected loss; a man of fifty would have more time to plan. An adoption earlier cannot be ruled out.

²¹⁴ A problem dealt with by O. Salomies, *Die römischen Vornamen: Studien zur römischen Namengebung* (Helsinki, 1987), 211-24. The *praenomen* by this time indicated little.

²¹⁵ A probable parallel case is the nephew of Marcus, M. Ummidius Quadratus, possibly consul in his late-twenties. Syme (1968), 97

give in adoption.²¹⁶ On this measure, Peducaeus Stloga, a member of the ancient Italian *gens* Peducaea – which family was ornamented in 141 with its third successive *consul ordinarius*, and was perhaps connected in some distant manner to the children of Avidia Plautia – would be a fine candidate as an adopter. He would, in turn, gain an heir of superior breeding. If some connection already existed, so much the better, and both families could profit by the adoption. The fact that the Plautius Quintillus, in his abbreviated nomenclature, continued to prefer the *nomen* that was his by birth – that of his mother, no less – is no real bar to the possibility that is was he, not his son Peducaeus Quintillus, who was adopted into the *gens* Peducaea.

iii) *The gener of Marcus acquired the nomen 'Peducæus' by adoption*

The third possibility is the hitherto accepted theory: that it was the son of Plautius Quintillus who was adopted by M. Peducaeus Stloga. In his abbreviated nomenclature the son is known, as is the father, as 'Plautius Quintillus'.²¹⁷ If a man were adopted in adulthood, subsequent to the beginning of his career, the abbreviated form of the nomenclature would be perhaps less likely to be altered.²¹⁸ Thus the accepted theory rests partially on the implicit assumption that Peducaeus Quintillus was adopted in adulthood, as his abbreviated name remains identical to that of his natural father. Where his full name is exhibited it contains first the *nomen* of his putative adoptive father, the consul of 141, but this is not proof of an adoption that applied specifically to him. Be it acknowledged that nomenclature is often uncertain: the same statement would apply to all three theories discussed here, including the accepted version.

²¹⁶ Indeed, should the older thesis be followed – that L. Titius Aquilinus is the third son, younger than Plautius Quintillus, and endowed with the father's *praenomen* due to an elder son dying in childhood after the birth of Plautius Quintillus – the result remains the same. Avidia Plautia and her husband would still have two living sons, and could profitably give one up for adoption.

²¹⁷ Cf. *CIL* 9.5823, 6.631, 14.328.

²¹⁸ Salomies (1999), 153.

Thus, the argument for Peducaeus Quintillus being the adoptee is not without difficulties. If the connection between the families were extant a few generations previously, it would make the Peducaeus Quintillus, future *gener* of the emperor, an ideal candidate for adoption by a Peducaeus lacking heirs. But the same possible connection is of use to all three arguments. Certainly the chronology would permit the father to be the adoptee, and onomastics will permit the supposition that the *nomen* 'Peducaeus' was borne by Plautius Quintillus, transmitted to him by his paternal grandmother. The accepted theory stands, but merely on the accident of explicit attestation.

III. *Conjecture: the Peducaei and reasons for possible adoption*

Even if doubt be cast on the adoption, the adoptive family of M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus requires consideration.²¹⁹ Scrutiny is required on possible dates of an adoption. His possible adoptive father, M. Peducaeus Stloga Priscinus, *cos. ord.* 141, scion of an ancient Italian family that could show three successive consuls, was scarcely less august than his natural parents.²²⁰ If the date of the adoption were known, speculation could be advanced concerning possible motivations. Information is scarce: a barely useful *terminus ante quem* of 180 is furnished by the inscription from Ephesus, but it is likely that the adoption, if it took place at all, took place well before 180.²²¹ A reasonable chronology may be constructed, allowing for the usual factors of

²¹⁹ It is possible that at birth Peducaeus Quintillus did not possess the *nomen* 'Peducaeus'. However, for the sake of clarity, Peducaeus Quintillus will continue to be referred to by his (potentially) adoptive name.

²²⁰ PIR² P 227. He probably did not serve as proconsul of Asia in 155/6. For the erroneous supplementation of an inscription from Ephesus that led to this assumption, see R. Syme, 'The Proconsuls of Asia under Antoninus Pius', *ZPE* 51 (1983), 280f = *RP* 4 (Oxford, 1988), 335f. Syme notes that the error persists, or is at least not questioned, by Alföldy (1977), 214. The *nomen* 'Peducaeus' recalls an ancient house of praetorian rank in the Republic which showed its first consul in 35 BCE; see Syme (1939), 235, 498. The consul of 35 BCE had no known issue, thus the connection of this ancient family to the consuls who bore the same *nomen* through the reigns of the Flavians, Nerva and Trajan is unclear.

²²¹ *I. Ephesos* 704: his adoptive name is included, and indeed known from this inscription. See above.

adoption among the Roman elite: considerations of lineage, inheritance, and a lack of male heirs.²²²

First, the age of Peducaeus Quintillus himself should be considered. Making due allowance for the status of his natural and adoptive fathers, his connections to the dynasty, and his own imperial marriage, his consulship should certainly be considered *suo anno*. It was in 177, alongside Commodus: thus a date of birth c. 144.²²³ Thus, the marriage of Ceionia Fabia and Plautius Quintillus should be dated prior to 144. For Ceionia Fabia a date of birth before 130 should be supposed: as Lucius himself was born in December 130, little room is left for a sister born after 130 (late 131 is the earliest possible date for the next child) to be married by c. 143.²²⁴ So, before 130, but not too long before: a date of birth shortly before 130 should be preferred if Ceionia's later offer of marriage to Marcus, after Faustina's death in 176, be considered plausible.²²⁵ 128 or 129 for Ceionia's birth would fulfil these requirements.

If Peducaeus Quintillus was born c. 144, several other factors fall neatly into place. It is not difficult to suppose that Peducaeus Stloga found himself lacking an heir by c. 154, when young Plautius Quintillus would perhaps be considered old enough for adoption.²²⁶ No other sons of Ceionia Fabia and Plautius Quintillus are recorded: not evidence that young Plautius was an only son. The chances of a successful son leaving a record are relatively high, but for a younger child, dying before adulthood, or even in early adulthood, there is only the slim hope of a chance

²²² Corbier (1991), 74-7.

²²³ Pflaum (1961), 35.

²²⁴ Again, an early betrothal is possible, but marriage for a girl in her thirteenth year is unusual even by Antonine standards. It is also relevant that Ceionia Plautia, the other sister of Lucius, married a man with the encouraging name of Q. Servilius Pudens, who became *cos. ord.* in 166. Hence she should be considered the younger of the two sisters.

²²⁵ *Marc.* 29.10. Ceionia would be in her middle or late forties in 176, probably too old for children: but not too old for a profitable marriage if she had interests to promote; see Champlin (1979), 301f. In this context it is also interesting that Marcus is reported to have rejected her overture, with an excuse – he did not wish his children to have a stepmother – which Birley (1987), 196, correctly identifies as weak.

²²⁶ Rawson (2003), 205, 233-4. But an earlier adoption need not be ruled out; they could also potentially occur earlier in the life of the adoptee (or adopter). A stipulation seems to have existed that the adopter ought to be old enough to be the father of a potential adoptee; a gap of at least eighteen years was preferred. See Gardner (1998), 145f., who cites *Gai. Inst.* 1.11.4 and *D.* 1.7.42, and discusses the difficulties.

inscription surviving.²²⁷ Perhaps Plautius Quintillus and Ceionia Fabia were unfortunate with their children. It is not difficult to suppose that the couple had two or more sons when one was given in adoption to Peducaeus Stloga: if the adoption be believed, then the existence of at least one more son is surely required.²²⁸ The date of Peducaeus Quintillus' birth c. 144, probably soon after the marriage of his parents, indicate that it is not likely that the adoption took place during the infancy of the adoptee – another healthy son would be needed before Plautius Quintillus could be given in adoption. Childhood or early adulthood are the more likely times for this adoption; *viz.* the cautious offering of c. 154.

The timing is of great importance: throughout latter half of the sixth decade of the second century, and the first part of the seventh, the relations of Lucius were in the ascendant. Consulships were frequent and prestigious.²²⁹ Against this background it is possible that a son of Plautius Quintillus, the brother-in-law of Lucius, was given in adoption to Peducaeus Stloga Priscinus, who had been consul as far back as 141. Briefly, the situation can be reconstructed thus: Peducaeus Stloga Priscinus, *cos. ord.* 141, lacking an heir, adopted one of the sons of Ceionia Fabia and Plautius Quintillus. This was probably after 154, when Peducaeus Quintillus was old enough and his parents had alternate heirs. Peducaeus Quintillus would be an attractive prospect for adoption. At this time the relatives of Lucius were numerous, and cannot have lacked influence and power in the aristocracy under Antoninus Pius. Their frequent consulships, and the grudging favours Antoninus bestowed on Lucius, attest to this influence.

The purpose behind the adoption would be worth knowing. Some speculation may be advanced. Adoption of a relative was certainly preferred where possible, but was not a prerequisite.²³⁰ The

²²⁷ Burton (1995), 227-8, nn. 29-30.

²²⁸ Ceionia herself may have remarried after her marriage to Plautius Quintillus. Champlin (1979), 301f., argues that she was the mother of the ill-fated Sosius Falco by a later marriage. Indeed, it is not necessary to insist that Ceionia Fabia and Plautius Quintillus were still married in 159 when Plautius Quintillus served his consulship. Again, be it noted that the connection to Lucius was not dependant entirely on his marriage to Lucius' sister. They were both descendants of Plautia.

²²⁹ Discussed in full above.

²³⁰ Corbier (1991), 66-77.

ties of *amicitia* could also furnish an heir, an arrangement beneficial to both parties: the adopter ensured the continuation of his line; the adoptee would gain the patrimony of an allied family and could also retain his cognate rights.²³¹ In the case of Peducaeus, *amicitia* may suffice since propinquity is impossible to prove. It is not to be forgotten that *amicitia* was as much as anything a political sentiment: politics may have played a role in the adoption.²³² A political motivation is worth examination.

This motivation postulates the guiding hand of Antoninus. By the putative date of the adoption of young Plautius (c. 154), it was already clear that Marcus, not Lucius, was the favourite of Antoninus.²³³ Lucius was not the only noble whose prospects were sublimated to those of Marcus: the husband of Marcus' sister had not achieved the high honour of the ordinary consulship.²³⁴ The marriage of Lucius himself was held back for dynastic reasons; to allow a daughter of Marcus to reach marriageable age. A connected motivation was also to deny Lucius the opportunity to beget male heirs: unless they were also the grandchildren of Marcus. In the case of young Peducaeus Quintillus, an adoption that moved a nephew of Lucius away from propinquity could have similar motivations. It would reduce the number of possible heirs to Lucius; consistent with the policy of Antoninus.

Adoptions could also be used in the opposite fashion: in order to bring a potential heir into increased propinquity. Marcus and Lucius had good reason to know this.²³⁵ Furthermore, adoptions by a maternal uncle without heirs – in this case the maternal uncle is the still-

²³¹ However, agnate rights were not retained, though *pietas* was expected between the son and his natural parents. Note that this applies to cases of *adoptio*, but not necessarily *adrogatio*, where the adoptee's *familia* was extinguished and he became then part of a new *familia* under the *potestas* of the adopter. This was almost invariably when the adoptee was *sui iuris* and thus had already inherited his patrimony. Corbier (1991), 67f.

²³² The adoption discussed above, of a son of Claudius Severus by M. Ummidius Quadratus, was motivated by politics as much as anything else. Certainly Marcus was an interested party; the fortune of his mother was at stake.

²³³ Lucius and his connections reached the ordinary consulship in the years 154, 156, 157, 159, 161, 162 and 166. But Marcus had been granted for greater concession by Antoninus Pius; see Birley (1987), 108-9. Discussed above.

²³⁴ C. Annianus Verus, the husband of Marcus' sister and also possibly his cousin. Syme (1979), 307-8.

²³⁵ The emperors Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus, Marcus, and Lucius all benefited from the manipulation of propinquity. Septimius Severus also made good use of a spurious adoption. Adoption within the imperial family had served a similar function in the time of Augustus, viz. the adoptions of Tiberius, Gaius, and Lucius, and Tiberius' own adoption of Germanicus.

unmarried Lucius – were not uncommon.²³⁶ Perhaps the adoption of young Plautius Quintillus by Peducaeus was intended to negate this possibility. Peducaeus Quintillus was at that time possibly Lucius' closest male relative.²³⁷ Perhaps, by the transfer of young Peducaeus Quintillus from the *gens* Plautia to the *gens* Peducaea – a transition enforced by Antoninus – the imperial prospects of the Ceionii and their connections were to be reduced. Marcus and Antoninus had firsthand experience with the imposition by an emperor of adoptions and marriages. Although in this case the adoption of young Plautius would mean decreasing rather than increasing propinquity to the imperial family, one thing remains constant: the principle motivation of control. Such an adoption would leave Lucius with fewer potential male heirs, and the position of Marcus – which Antoninus had enhanced and promoted – would be protected and secured.

IV. *Imperial marriage and context*

Whatever the adoptive status of Peducaeus Quintillus, his natural parents made him a tempting prospect for an imperial marriage. The dynastic appeals are plain. For Marcus, the marriage – which surely took place before the consulship of Peducaeus and Commodus in 177 – would tie one of the last surviving male links to Lucius with the imperial nexus.²³⁸ In the aftermath of the rebellion of Avidius Cassius, this was no small matter. The rebellion, however downplayed by Marcus and Cassius Dio, was a shock and exposed the vulnerability of Marcus' dynastic plans.²³⁹ As Marcus aged, he promoted Commodus rapidly to the position of virtual co-emperor and surrounded him with a solid bloc of *amici* drawn from his sons-in-law and trusted adherents. These were men who had little connection to the Ceionii. Peducaeus Quintillus is the exception to this trend, being himself closely related to the Ceionii, but in this case it made an imperial

²³⁶ Corbier (1991), 69-70; Syme (1985), 639-40.

²³⁷ However, Lucius' other sister Ceionia Plautia was married to Q. Servilius Pudens, *cos. ord.* 166, probably around this time. Issue is unknown.

²³⁸ *CIL* 14.328. Not enough is known of the ages of his two children by Fadilla to give a date for his marriage; certainly the logical conjecture is that it was before his joint consulship of 177. See Birley (1987), 182.

²³⁹ The rebellion is discussed in full in Chapter 3, below.

marriage all the more essential: the only options available to Marcus regarding this close relative of Lucius were co-option or suppression.²⁴⁰

The date the marriage to Fadilla is not known. Fadilla was born c. 159, making her old enough for marriage c. 172.²⁴¹ But this is merely the earliest date. What is certain is that a close relation of Lucius was co-opted by marriage into the august ranks of the sons-in-law of the emperor. Connected to the family of Lucius through his mother, an adoption had perhaps already removed Peducaeus Quintillus from the immediate orbit of the Ceionii. A marriage into the imperial family ensured his dependency on the favour of Marcus. The marriage indicates that Marcus still required the support of the families to which Peducaeus Quintillus was connected by blood. With Lucilla married to the *novus homo* Claudius Pompeianus, the marriage of an imperial princess to a nephew of the deceased Lucius may have been expedient. In this context, the marriage could easily be dated after the rebellion of Cassius, and represent another attempt by Marcus to reduce the lingering influence of the Ceionii and ensure the succession of Commodus.

V. Conclusion

The investigation into the adoption of Peducaeus Quintillus has yielded uncertain results. He possibly possessed already the *nomen* 'Peducæus' by birth, and was descended from a marriage between Peducaeus Saenianus and Pedania Quintilla. This would mean that as well as being distantly connected to Peducæi, he was also connected to the Pedanii. If on the other hand he were adopted by Peducaeus Stloga, the adoption may have been a stratagem on the part of Antoninus and Marcus to reduce his propinquity to Lucius, and hence the imperial power. What

²⁴⁰ Hadrian and the Severans were less scrupled than Marcus. Pflaum has noted, and Hekster emphasised recently, how whenever imperial ambition or connections became pronounced by a connection of the Antonines, catastrophe soon followed. The spurious adoption of Septimius Severus would evidently not stand competition with genuine relations of the dynasty. See O. J. Hekster, 'All in the Family: The Appointment of Emperors Designate in the Second Century A.D', in de Blois, ed., *Administration, Prosopography and Appointment Policies in the Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2001), 44-46, esp. nn 44-8.

²⁴¹ On Fadilla's date of birth, see Ameling (1992), 152ff.

is certain is that Peducaeus Quintillus was a close relative of Lucius through his maternal Plautian ancestry as well as being the son of Lucius' sister. Whatever the exact adoptive status of Peducaeus Quintillus, Marcus would have been very conscious of the connection to Lucius.

The consulship of Peducaeus Quintillus was in 177 and his fellow consul *ordinarius* was the young Commodus. The marriage of Fadilla represents the consolidation of an already extant tie to the imperial family, which was by then comprised of only Marcus and his connections. In terms of Marcus' concerted move away from the Ceionii (which nexus had been personified in his early reign by his co-ruler Lucius), this marriage represents the co-option of the last possible heir of Lucius. Only a daughter of the marriage between Lucius and Lucilla survived childhood.²⁴² As a close male relative of Lucius, Peducaeus Quintillus was no doubt an important factor in the dynastic calculations of Marcus. This is particularly poignant in the context of the time: the rebellion of Avidius Cassius forced Marcus to advance quickly his succession plans for Commodus. It would be expedient to form a marriage connection to Lucius' nephew. The only alternative would be instead to ignore or suppress him; an alternative palatable to Hadrian but less so to Antoninus or Marcus. For Peducaeus Quintillus, there was still status to be gained from being connected with the Ceionii, and it was necessary for Marcus, in order to safeguard the succession of his own line, to induct Peducaeus Quintillus into the dynasty.²⁴³

Again, necessity and utility dictated Marcus' choice of son-in-law. The aftermath of the rebellion of Avidius Cassius, the subsequent swift promotion of Commodus, and the awareness by Marcus of his impending death: all point to the same conclusion. Whatever the actual familial status of Peducaeus Quintillus, these factors argue for a dynastic marriage contracted i) to help

²⁴² Dio 71.4.4. This daughter was married to the young Claudius Pompeianus, who was killed along with Lucilla after the failed conspiracy of 182. He was perhaps a nephew of Claudius Pompeianus. PIR² C 975.

²⁴³ Marcus no doubt wanted to avoid a similar situation to that which perhaps developed after 193, when the subordinate Ceionii branch of the dynasty attempted to reclaim primacy from the heirs of Commodus. See Champlin (1979), 305: 'If...Pertinax was indeed the interim candidate of Claudius Pompeianus and Acilius Glabrio, and if Sosius Falco was indeed the son of Ceionia Fabia, the intrigues of the reign of Pertinax could resolve themselves into a simple struggle between two branches of the Antonine dynasty, with the Ceionii, unsullied by the excesses of Commodus, seeking to fulfil the promise made to them by Hadrian sixty years before.'

ensure the succession of Commodus, and ii) to confirm the loyalty of this prominent man, who would certainly expect a consulship by his august birth and connections.

5. M. Petronius Sura Mamertinus (*cos. ord.* 182), married to Cornificia.

I. Summary

The Petronii Mamertini were from Africa, and related to Marcus' tutor, Fronto.²⁴⁴ The father of M. Petronius Sura Mamertinus was a suffect consul in 150.²⁴⁵ A great-uncle had been governor of Egypt from 133-7 (preceding in the post the father of Avidius Cassius), and had served as praetorian prefect under Antoninus.²⁴⁶ Another Petronius, probably also a great-uncle, was prefect of Egypt c. 147.²⁴⁷ Petronius Mamertinus himself served as consul *ordinarius* for 182 and his brother, Petronius Sura Septimianus, was consul *ordinarius* for 190.²⁴⁸ A familial link with Septimius Severus has been argued for the latter.²⁴⁹ Both Petronius Mamertinus and Petronius Septimianus were inducted *inter patricios* by Marcus, but the precise date of the marriage of Petronius Mamertinus and Cornificia is unknown. It would be significant.²⁵⁰

Petronius Mamertinus was killed, along with his son – Commodus' nephew – and brother, between 190 and 192 on the orders of Commodus.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, his marriage to Cornificia, in the latter part of the reign of Marcus, serves to demonstrate again the method which Marcus employed to create his own nexus. The Petronii Mamertini were of excellent standing, and, like

²⁴⁴ Fronto, *ad. Am.* 1.10. The connections are set out in brief by Champlin (1980), 9-10.

²⁴⁵ M. Petronius Mamertinus, PIR² P 287. Probably the addressee of Fronto, *ad. Am.* 1.10.

²⁴⁶ M. Petronius Mamertinus, PIR² P 288. M. Corbier, *L'aerarium Saturni et l'aerarium Militare* (École française de Rome, 1974), 285-9, believes 'sans doute' that the praetorian prefect and the *cos. suff.* 150 (PIR² P 287-8) should be considered identical. On this measure, then, the father of the *gener* of Marcus was *praef. Aeg.* in 137, and *praef. praetorio* in 139-43 before serving as *cos. suff.* 150. In this context the identification matters little; it is enough to note the rise of the family in the generation before the *gener* of Marcus.

²⁴⁷ M. Petronius Honoratus, PIR² P 281.

²⁴⁸ PIR² P 312.

²⁴⁹ The mother of Septimianus was most likely a Septimia. See Birley (1988), 225.

²⁵⁰ Birley (1987), 182, believes the marriage had taken place by 175. Cornificia, born in 160, would be old enough by this year, but when exactly the marriage occurred is a question of some interest. Discussed below.

²⁵¹ *Comm.* 7.5.

the Claudii Severi, owed to Marcus the final swiftness of their rise in status. Marcus, by choosing a family with excellent provincial connections, again based his choice of son-in-law on politics and dynastic security.

I. Background and regional connections

The Petronii of Africa had furnished a procurator under Hadrian in the person of M. Petronius Sura, and close relations of this man served as prefects of Egypt and the guard under Antoninus.²⁵² The family gained a suffect consulship in 150 in the person of M. Petronius Mamertinus, the father of the *gener* of Marcus. The postulated African origin of the Petronii Mamertini is based on their connection to Fronto and Septimius Severus; this origin places them in an important context.²⁵³ They should, like Fronto, be considered ‘products of the process of Romanization which was leading the African aristocracy to its destined role in the Roman senate in the late first and early second centuries, after a proper period of training in the equestrian class.’²⁵⁴

Apposite is the network of relationships among prominent African families during the reigns of Marcus and Commodus, when strands of a cohesive alliance can be detected.²⁵⁵ The fates of the Petronii, when they were eventually overtaken by catastrophe, were linked to the fates of Aufidius Victorinus (the son-in-law of Fronto), Antistius Burrus (a fellow African and son-in-law

²⁵² PIR² P 310, stemma on 118. Cf. the stemma of Corbier (1974), 286. In the present context, the two stemmata indicate much the same thing – the steady rise of the family.

²⁵³ Birley (1988), 225. It is apposite to note here that another consul of this period, Iulius Geminius Marcianus, PIR² J 340, was from Cirta and is connected by friendship at least to Fronto. He also served in Cappadocia during the Parthian War, and as governor of Arabia (preceding Q. Antistius Adventus, the father of Marcus’ second African *gener*, discussed below). Marcianus was *cos. suff.* c. 164-5, and proconsul of Asia in 183-4. His eventual fate is not known; his career is set out on *CIL* 8.7050. On his connection to Fronto, see *ad. M. Caes.* 3.4, and Champlin (1980), 14-15.

²⁵⁴ Champlin (1980), 10.

²⁵⁵ C. R. Whittaker, ‘The Revolt of Papirius Dionysius A.D. 190’, *Historia* 13 (1964), 348-69.

of Marcus), and Arrius Antoninus (another African).²⁵⁶ The Petronii retained their links to Africa and to the African bloc of senators empowered by Marcus in a similar manner to which the Claudii Severi retained their links to Paphlagonia. There the resemblance ends. The African Petronii were not protected by their regional influence: Africa in 188-9, after the deaths of Burrus and Arrius Antoninus, was the centre of a rebellion, swiftly suppressed.²⁵⁷

II. *Imperial marriage and context*

The date of the marriage of Cornificia and Petronius Mamertinus would be worth knowing. The marriage was designed to bring the African Petronii into the immediate imperial orbit, and confer the advantages of such a connection to the dynasty. That this marriage served a similar function to the betrothal and marriage of Antistius Burrus and Vibia Sabina is not to be doubted.²⁵⁸ Less clear are the circumstances in which Marcus admitted Petronius Mamertinus into the imperial nexus. If the marriage occurred in the aftermath of the rebellion of Cassius, it would indicate an immediate act on the part of Marcus to consolidate support for his heir among African senators of influence. His swift promotion of Commodus to the position of virtual co-ruler would be strengthened by the familial link to a vigorous group of nobles from Africa.²⁵⁹ In terms of chronology, it is necessary to examine the possible dates for Cornificia's marriage to Petronius Mamertinus, and to comment on the implications of these dates concerning the operations of Marcus.

²⁵⁶ Whittaker (1964), 352-3. See also *ILS* 7218: descendants of Petronius, Fronto, and Victorinus, are recorded in 256 at Pisaurum, the *origo* of Victorinus: Petronius Victorinus, *PIR*² P 317, and Petronius Aufidius Victorinus, *PIR*² P 317, stemma on 125.

²⁵⁷ Possibly suppressed by Pertinax, who had been the accuser of Burrus and Arrius Antoninus. See Whittaker (1964), 353-4, n. 38.

²⁵⁸ Discussed in full below.

²⁵⁹ Champlin (1979), 306, uses the term 'cousinhood' to describe the bloc of families empowered by admission into the imperial dynasty. The Petronii Mamertini and Antistii, provincial African families, are certainly members of this extended family, and were inducted into the dynasty at a time when Marcus looked forward to the succession of Commodus. The Septimii Severi are not too distant from the 'cousinhood', as Champlin's concluding remarks make clear.

Cornificia was born c. 160, and she was thus old enough for marriage by c. 173.²⁶⁰ Birley prefers to place her marriage before the news of the rebellion of Cassius reached Marcus in 175.²⁶¹ This is entirely possible on chronological grounds. However, the marriage could just as easily take its place among the acts of Marcus in response to the rebellion of Cassius. Lack of evidence restricts final judgement. It must suffice to remark that the marriage of Cornificia to Petronius Mamertinus, who would be in his early twenties in 175, fits the pattern of Marcus' reactions to the rebellion. Commodus, after distributing largesse to the people, was immediately summoned to the front and presented to the troops. Thus began his swift rise to virtual co-emperor.²⁶² Another African, Vettius Sabinianus, was immediately sent to Rome by Marcus with soldiers to quell the panic.²⁶³ Vettius was rewarded with a consulship, possibly in 175.²⁶⁴ Birley notes that the coins struck at the time convey a sense of unease.²⁶⁵ Within such an atmosphere in the middle and late months of 175, it is possible to consider the marriage of Petronius Mamertinus and Cornificia as one part of the swift response of Marcus to the rebellion. Perhaps when Marcus summoned Commodus to his side, the message also contained instructions for the matrimony of Cornificia.²⁶⁶ An imperial marriage may have gained Marcus and his heir much needed support at a delicate time in Rome.²⁶⁷ The marriage may well have taken place after the news of the rebellion broke, and was designed to shore up support for the dynasty in the short term.

The new *gener*, from a consular family of provincial African extraction, is yet another example of a *nobilis* not connected to the old Hadrianic nexus. Whether or not the marriage was a response by Marcus to the rebellion of Cassius, the career of Petronius benefited from his induction into

²⁶⁰ PIR² C 1505. On her date of birth, Champlin (1980), 131, dates *Ant. Imp.* 1.1 to 139 or 161; see also Ameling (1992), 150-9, esp. nn. 17, 67.

²⁶¹ Birley (1987), 182; *Marc.* 24.6; Dio 71.17f.

²⁶² *Marc.* 16.1, 27.5; *Comm.* 2.2-5; Birley (1987), 187, n. 7.

²⁶³ *AE* 1920, no. 45. The inscription attests to his long career, which began under Antoninus. He was perhaps from Thuburbo Maius.

²⁶⁴ Alföldy (1977), 190.

²⁶⁵ Birley (1987), 187, n. 8, cites *BMC 4 MA* 1495ff, which issue bears the legend *concord exerc*, and 625ff. (*securitas publica*). To this it is apposite to add 1491ff. (bearing possibly the figure of *Fides Exercituum*), 1530ff. (*spes publica*), and 1537ff. (*clementia Aug*).

²⁶⁶ Dio 71.17.2.

²⁶⁷ Discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

the imperial nexus. He and his brother were shortly raised to patrician status by Marcus, and the marriage was followed within a few years by a first consulship.²⁶⁸ The date of his consulship, in the first years of the reign of Commodus, places Petronius Mamertinus among those men whom Marcus hoped would assist the young emperor in growing into his imperial power. It succinctly indicates the purpose behind the marriage. Whatever the precise circumstances, the marriage connected Marcus and Commodus to a prominent group of nobles, which included the fellow Africans Arrius Antoninus and Antistius Burrus, as well as the prominent Umbrian son-in-law of Fronto, Aufidius Victorinus. Moreover, Petronius' appointment for 182 is part of a larger pattern of appointments, perhaps made by Marcus before his death, the aim of which was to provide stability and a solid base of support to assist the new emperor.

In summation, Petronius Mamertinus was consul *ordinarius* in 182, but his marriage to Cornificia certainly predates the decease of Marcus. The date of his consulship, and that of his brother Petronius Septimianus in 190, indicates clearly that the family was prominent through most of the reign of Commodus – an assertion that does not require the supposition that they retained until the end the favour of Commodus.²⁶⁹ The marriage of one of Marcus' daughters to Petronius Mamertinus, possibly as a response to the rebellion of Cassius, indicates that he intended the marriage to confirm support among a group of connected nobles.²⁷⁰

III. Conclusion

In his choice of Petronius Mamertinus, the objective of Marcus was the preservation of his dynasty. The Petronii remained beholden to the dynasty for their entry into the nexus of power,

²⁶⁸ PIR² P 311 esp. *z.* 9; PIR² P 312 esp. *z.* 1-3; Pflaum (1961), 39.

²⁶⁹ The consulship of Mamertinus Septimianus in 190 surely indicates both the continuing influence of the *amici* of Marcus and the importance of the brothers-in-law of Commodus, whatever the attitude of Commodus to them after the executions of c. 187 and the trouble in Africa that followed.

²⁷⁰ The marriage of Antistius Burrus to Vibia Sabina, discussed below, was driven at least partly by the same motivation.

their fortunes inextricably tied to its favour. Both brothers were killed on the orders of Commodus, but the reason for their prominence, and consequent endangerment, came from the imperial marriage of Petronius Mamertinus, which occurred under Marcus.²⁷¹ Despite the eventual catastrophe of Commodus as an emperor, the policy of Marcus in choosing his sons-in-law remains clear: he empowered families which possessed strong connections of their own, and he understood the importance of their regional links.²⁷² By allying the Petronii of Africa to the imperial house Marcus gained their support – and that of their connections – for Commodus.

6. L. Antistius Burrus (*cos. ord.* 181), married to Vibia Aurelia Sabina

I. Summary

L. Antistius Burrus was the son of a *novus homo* from Tibilis in Africa.²⁷³ He was consul *ordinarius* in 181, and was put to death c. 189, according to the *HA* by the machinations of Cleander, who had accused him of plotting against Commodus.²⁷⁴ A similar accusation is recorded against Burrus by Pertinax.²⁷⁵ The prominence of Antistius Burrus was due to his betrothal and subsequent marriage to the daughter of Marcus. The reasons for Marcus' selection of him should be sought in his background and connections. Not for nothing was a provincial from a newly ennobled family chosen to be the husband of an imperial princess. Decisive is the status of his father, a prominent general: Q. Antistius Adventus, *cos. suff.* c. 167.²⁷⁶ In the aftermath of the rebellion of Cassius, the importance of Antistius Adventus, who represented in his person a powerful bloc of African connections, gained for the Antistii of Tibilis an imperial connection through the betrothal and eventual marriage of his son. The motivation for Marcus was again the

²⁷¹ Cf. the conclusion of Pflaum (1961), 39: 'Après la chute de Perennis en 185, Commode comprit que le fait d'être le fils unique de Marc-Aurèle constituait le seul atout dans son jeu'.

²⁷² As with the Claudii Severi and Plautii, discussed above; and the Antistii, below.

²⁷³ PIR² A 757. Groag remarks of his extraction that he was *viro provinciali originis modicae neque de re publica merito*.

²⁷⁴ *Comm.* 6.11. Cf. Whittaker (1964), 352, who places the executions in 187 on the basis of the PIR for Arrius Antoninus, PIR² A 1088.

²⁷⁵ *Pert.* 3.7. Pertinax around this time also suppressed the rebellious elements in Africa, see *Pert.* 4.2.

²⁷⁶ Set out in *ILS* 8977 from Tibilis; for discussion see A. R. Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1981), 131-2.

protection of the dynasty. Vibia Sabina, his youngest child, was probably not old enough to marry until after his death, but this did not prevent Marcus from making the arrangements necessary to secure the support of the Antistii for the dynasty.

I. African connections

The African connections of Antistius Burrus are crucial to appreciate fully the motivations of Marcus in selecting this man for a son-in-law. Like the Petronii Mamertini, Antistius Burrus should be viewed in a regional context: African provincials were becoming more prominent at Rome.²⁷⁷ Additionally, acknowledgment of common origin seems to be reflected in the links retained between African senators in their latter careers.²⁷⁸ Antistius Burrus and Arrius Antoninus, *cos. suff.* 170, were executed together by Commodus on the accusations of Pertinax.²⁷⁹ Like Petronius Mamertinus, Arrius Antoninus is linked to Fronto and was also from Cirta, itself in turn not distant from Tibilis, the ancestral home of Antistius Burrus.²⁸⁰

The mother of Antistius Burrus completes the connections. She was Novia Crispina, the daughter of L. Novius Crispinus Martialis Saturninus, *cos. suff.* 150, a man who held numerous military posts, including the command of the *Legio III Augusta* in Numidia.²⁸¹ That the daughter of Novius Crispinus married a prominent *novus homo* from Tibilis is not entirely surprising.

Petronius Mamertinus, Arrius Antoninus and Antistius Burrus were linked by shared origin and shared politics; all had risen high under Marcus. It was not long after the executions of Arrius Antoninus and Burrus that the Petronii too were suppressed on the instigation of Commodus.²⁸²

Whittaker's argument is convincing: a loose-knit faction, built around African senators of

²⁷⁷ M. G. Jarret, 'The African Contribution to the Imperial Equestrian Service', *Historia* 12 (1963), 209-26.

²⁷⁸ Fronto retained his connections: Fronto, *ad. Am.* 1.10, which addresses the father of Petronius Mamertinus. See also Champlin (1980), 14-15, 135, 139-42.

²⁷⁹ *Comm.* 6.11-7.1; *Pert.* 3.7; *ILS* 1119; Whittaker (1964), 353.

²⁸⁰ Arrius Antoninus, *PIR*² A 1088, esp. *ad. Am.* 2.7.

²⁸¹ Novia Crispina, *PIR*² N 195; L. Novius Crispinus, *PIR*² N 181.

²⁸² Crucially, Pertinax appears to have gone to Africa and suppressed rebellious elements in the province. *Pert.* 4.2.

common origin and standing against Cleander, was at last extinguished in 190 or soon after.²⁸³

The origin of this faction is the favour of Marcus to the Petronii and Antistii, and toward men such as Arrius Antoninus and Aufidius Victorinus, the son-in-law of Fronto. By promoting them, Marcus availed himself of a powerful and cohesive group of newly ennobled families.

II. *The importance of Q. Antistius Adventus*

In discussing the reasons for the selection by Marcus of Antistius Burrus, the prominence of Burrus' father must be examined. The career of Q. Antistius Adventus Postumius Aquilinus indicates succinctly the high regard which Marcus held for his capabilities. He was *cos. suff.* c. 167, and had previously served in the Parthian War.²⁸⁴ The consulship took place during his term as governor of Arabia, from c. 165-7.²⁸⁵ He then commanded the newly-made *praetentura Italiae et Alpium* in either 168 or 171.²⁸⁶ Despite the successful invasion of northern Italy by the Marcomanni in these years, the career of Antistius does not seem to have stalled. Subsequently he served as consular legate in Lower Germany, and then Britain.²⁸⁷ It is apposite to note that his consulship was gained close to the first consulship of Claudius Pompeianus, who at that time had recently been governor of Lower Pannonia.²⁸⁸ Another man of a military persuasion, the would-be usurper C. Avidius Cassius, was suffect consul c. 166.²⁸⁹ All three generals should be

²⁸³ Whittaker (1964), 353. The argument is sound, although Whittaker does confusingly label L. Bruttius Praesens, *cos. ord.* 187, 'Marcus' own grandson'. He is the brother, not the son, of Bruttia Crispina, the wife of Commodus.

²⁸⁴ Set out in *ILS* 8977 from Tibilis; for discussion see Birley (1981), 131-2.

²⁸⁵ Alföldy (1977), 183; Birley (1981), 131.

²⁸⁶ The difference in dating hinges on the argument of whether the *praetentura* was created before or after the invasion of northern Italy by the Quadi and Marcomanni in c. 169-171. For a summary of the problems and possible solutions, see P. Kovács, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain Miracle and the Marcomannic Wars* (Leiden, 2009) 181-99. Kovács prefers late 169 or 170 for the date of the invasion of Italy.

²⁸⁷ In Lower Germany c. 170; Britain c. 173-6. See Birley (1981), 131.

²⁸⁸ *PIR*² C 973.

²⁸⁹ Syme (1987), 209-14. The dating of Syme is here preferred for the consulship of Cassius. It places him in a firm context with the other generals of the Parthian War. Syme is somewhat more cautiously followed by Alföldy (1977), 181.

counted among the men awarded consulships for services in the Parthian War: a delicate matter for an emperor.²⁹⁰

It is no coincidence that Marcus succeeded in forging familial links with two of the four prominent generals of the Parthian War: Claudius Pompeianus and Antistius Adventus. Of the two others, P. Martius Verus stayed loyal in Cappadocia and justified his *cognomen*, but the aristocratic Avidius Cassius, entrusted with the entire East, attempted to claim the imperial power. The need for Marcus to conciliate his generals would be apparent in the uneasy aftermath of the rebellion, and the support of Antistius Adventus was important to Marcus: from his long career, it is clear that Antistius Adventus was a capable general. His posts were uniformly important ones: a command in the Parthian War, governor of Arabia, an extraordinary command in northern Italy, consular legate in Lower Germany, Britain. A possible failure to protect northern Italy does not appear to have harmed his career.²⁹¹ Particularly important in the context of the marriage – or betrothal – of his son to Vibia Sabina is his position in Britain.²⁹²

In the years immediately following the rebellion of Cassius, the well-garrisoned frontier provinces of Britain and Syria acquired a more ominous importance for Marcus.²⁹³ The rebellion of Cassius had been a shock to Marcus, and perhaps reminded him of the cyclical nature of the history of the principate.²⁹⁴ In 175, Marcus sent over five thousand Sarmatian cavalry to Britain.²⁹⁵ These additional troops were perhaps not trusted by Marcus, and may have been needed in Britain; often a troublesome province.²⁹⁶ Both these reasons would require a skilled,

²⁹⁰ Along with Martius Verus, *cos. II ord.* 179. PIR² M 348; Syme (1987), 214.

²⁹¹ Birley notes that it is possible Adventus had already been transferred to Lower Germany. Birley (1981), 131; *CIL* 13.8812.

²⁹² The marriage of Vibia Sabina and Antistius Burrus occurred in all likelihood after the death of Marcus, as Vibia Sabina was born c. 170. On the chronology and the argument for an earlier betrothal arranged by Marcus, see discussion below.

²⁹³ Martius Verus, who had warned Marcus of the rebellion of Cassius, was installed in Syria until his second consulship in 179. PIR² M 348.

²⁹⁴ The accessions of Trajan and Hadrian, assured by the legions, perhaps loomed large in the mind of Marcus.

²⁹⁵ Dio 71.16.2.

²⁹⁶ During the Antonine period Britain was a troublesome province and in the main governed by men of proven military ability. On Antistius Adventus see Birley (1981), 131; A. R. Birley, *The Roman Government of Britain* (Oxford, 2005), 157-60; P. Salway, *Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1981), 203-10.

capable and loyal governor of Britain. It was this quality of loyalty that Marcus needed to ensure in his generals after the rebellion of Cassius. In a very direct sense, it was the military acumen of Q. Antistius Adventus that enabled the entrance of his son into the imperial dynasty.

The importance of Antistius Adventus in the context of the imperial marriage of his son is thus apparent. Like his selection of Claudius Pompeianus, Marcus' selection of Antistius Burrus was based on the precautionary need to link the dynasty to a successful general. Marcus had dealt with crisis after crisis in his reign. He had not hesitated to marry his daughter Lucilla, at that time recently bereaved, to his most prominent general. In the case of Antistius Burrus the situation was more complex: the rebellion of Cassius, though short-lived, had dramatically demonstrated the precarious nature of imperial rule. No emperor could rule without the support of the dominant faction of the oligarchy, and Marcus had attempted the reconfiguration of this faction, away from Hadrian's nexus. The rebellion of Cassius may have been the last confrontation between two competing groups. Marcus attempted to bequeath Commodus supporters through the marriages of his daughters.²⁹⁷ In this case, in place of the general himself being honoured with an imperial marriage, it is the son of the general who is the beneficiary. Antistius Burrus owed his imperial marriage to the military talent and success of his father, as well as to the network of connections the family possessed in Africa. The choice by Marcus of the son of one of his generals, a *novus homo* from Africa, demonstrates yet again the determined shift of Marcus away from the old Hadrianic nexus, and the concerted attempt to construct his own.

III. *The aftermath of the Rebellion of Cassius and the Fasti of 176-83*

One motivation for the betrothal of Vibia Sabina to Antistius Burrus was to secure the support of Burrus' father Antistius Adventus, the governor of Britain c. 175. The other was to secure in

²⁹⁷ Syme (1987), 220-1, prefers to view Marcus' choices for his sons-in-law as favouring 'inconspicuous husbands' to guarantee the prominence of Commodus. But a strong argument can be made for more ambition in Marcus' choices.

the long-term the support of a powerful group of African families. These arguments gain much prominence when they are placed in the context of the aftermath of Avidius Cassius' rebellion. The betrothal, and eventual marriage, of Vibia Sabina to Burrus should be viewed as a direct consequence of the rebellion. For Marcus, ensuring the loyalty of his generals would have seemed both the opportune and necessary course to pursue in the years immediately following the rebellion.

The loyalty of Antistius Adventus would be assured by the induction of his son into the imperial family. The veteran general could become paternal grandfather to grandchildren of Marcus: a significant move upward for a *novus homo* of African origins. Marcus in 169 had used an imperial marriage to bring the Syrian new man, Claudius Pompeianus, into the family: the motivation in the case of Antistius Burrus is similar, but the circumstances are different. The conditions at the time – the unease of the aftermath of the rebellion of Cassius, the hurried promotion of Commodus – were more subtle and complex than those facing Marcus in 169, when he had hastily married Lucilla to Pompeianus. In 175, the dangers were internal, as the rebellion had shown. The loyalties of all Marcus' generals, particularly those far from Rome and with great autonomy, were surely now in question. For Marcus, instead of a reaction to an external crisis, the planned marriage of Burrus and Vibia Sabina was a response to a new sense of uneasiness, and looked forward to the planned succession of Commodus.

Support for the existence of a betrothal between Vibia Sabina and Burrus pre-dating the death of Marcus can be drawn from the consular *fasti* for the years 176-82. The list of *consules ordinarii* for these years is an impressive list of *adfines* and *amici* of Marcus, together with men whose families had risen under Antoninus.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ The *fasti*: Alföldy (1977), 190-1, (cf. however 192, n. 215, on Cn. Julius Verus); Leunissen (1989), 129. Apart from Commodus himself and his brothers-in-law and father-in-law, discussed elsewhere in this chapter, the *consules ordinarii* of 176-82 include Marcus' cousin Vitrasius Pollio, and Quintilius Condianus, a son of one of the two Quintilii brothers who had been consuls together in 151. Pomponius Vitrasius Pollio, *CIL* 6.41145; Flavius Aper, *PIR*² F 209; Cornelius Scipio Salvidienus Orfitus, *PIR*² C 1448; Velius Rufus Julianus, Halfmann (1979), no. 189;

176: T. Pomponius Proculus Vitrasius Pollio II and M. Flavius Aper II

177: Imp. Caesar L. Aelius Aurelius Commodus and M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus

178: Ser. Cornelius Scipio Salvidienus Orfitus and D. Velius Rufus Julianus

179: Imp. Caesar L. Aelius Aurelius Commodus II and P. Martius Verus II

180: Q. Bruttius Praesens II and Sex. Quintilius Condianus

181: Imp. Caesar L. Aelius Aurelius Commodus III and L. Antistius Burrus

182: M. Petronius Sura Mamertinus and Q. Tineius Rufus

Of the fourteen ordinary consulships available for these years, Commodus himself accounts for three. His brothers-in-law Peducaeus Quintillus, Antistius Burrus and Petronius Mamertinus account for a further three. The cousin of Marcus, Pomponius Vitrasius Pollio, receives his second consulship in 176. The father-in-law of the emperor, Bruttius Praesens, occupies a place in 180; as does the proven loyalist Martius Verus in 179. This veteran, happily devoid of aristocratic ancestry, was no doubt now receiving the reward for his loyalty during the rebellion of Cassius, and his long service in the East.²⁹⁹ The appointments are plainly intended to show publicly, and provide politically, the support of Commodus' relatives for his succession. Comparison may be made with the opening consuls of the reign of Hadrian: the beneficiaries in both cases were the family and trusted adherents of the new emperor.³⁰⁰ Stability was the goal.

The *fasti* for the years 176-82 thus demonstrate a clear pattern. From 176, the first year after the rebellion, the only men who come close to the label *novi homines* – that is, Antistius Burrus, Martius Verus, and Petronius Mamertinus – are either the sons-in-law of Marcus, or proven

Martius Verus, PIR² M 348; Q. Bruttius Praesens, PIR² B 165; Quintilius Condianus PIR² Q 22; Tineius Rufus, Degraffi (1952), 50; Aufidius Victorinus, PIR² A 1393.

²⁹⁹ Possibly of Narbonensian extraction. R. Syme, 'More Narbonensian Senators', *ZPE* 65 (1986), 9 = *RP* 6 (Oxford, 1991), 217.

³⁰⁰ Syme (1984), 34ff.

loyalists of Marcus, rewarded for service. They were appointed to ensure a smooth succession. Most of them are positively attested *amici* and *adfines* of Marcus himself. That Marcus had a hand in the nomination of the consuls from 176-80 is not to be doubted. For Marcus, the rebellion of Cassius drove home the importance of the swift and secure promotion of Commodus. The *consules ordinarii* for the years 181-2 should also be included in the list of Marcus' appointees. The policy is in these years consistent with the five years immediately preceding it. Any accession was a delicate time: as Marcus had good to know. By such appointments as these he attempted to ensure the safety of his dynasty.

The *fasti* also indicate the likelihood that a betrothal existed between Vibia Sabina and Antistius Burrus before the death of Marcus. Such a betrothal would place Antistius Burrus in a proper context alongside the consuls of the years immediately preceding and succeeding the accession of Commodus. An early betrothal would also account for the relative youth of Vibia Sabina: she cannot have been ready for marriage before 183/4, but this did not preclude her use as a method of securing the support of Antistius Burrus and his father, the experienced general Antistius Adventus.

IV. *Imperial marriage and chronology*

The connections of Antistius Burrus and the circumstances of the time have provided the motive for his selection by Marcus. The chronology of the betrothal and marriage must be examined. Burrus' consulship is in 181. If he received it *suo anno* then he was born in 147-8. It is logical, given the way in which the rise of Commodus was hastened and augmented by Marcus, to suppose specific planning on the part of Marcus. With the lingering warning of the rebellion of Cassius, Marcus wished to lay firm foundations for the succession of his son.

However, ascertaining the date of the marriage remains problematic due to the confusion around the year of Vibia Sabina's birth. For the marriage to have been before the death of Marcus, Vibia Sabina would have to have been born at the latest in 167. Pflaum assigns her birth to 163, and her marriage to Burrus to 178: *En ce cas, c'est elle la petite fille qui, avec ses parents, séjournait à Sirmium, siège du quartier general, entre 170 et 174. Si elle avait donc entre 7 et 11 ans à cette époque, elle a pu se marier vers 178.*³⁰¹ His judgement is rightly rejected by Birley, who also dismisses Fittschen's proposed date for her birth of 166.³⁰² Vibia Sabina's age depends on when the trial of Herodes Atticus at Sirmium took place, and if she be indeed the girl-child referred by Philostratus.³⁰³ In the course of investigating the chronology of reforms at Athens, J. H. Oliver convincingly places the trial of Herodes at Sirmium in 173/4.³⁰⁴ The birth of Vibia Sabina should thus be c. 170, making her nine years younger than Commodus, twenty-three years younger than her oldest sister Annia Faustina, and eight years younger than her closest (but by this time deceased) sibling, M. Annius Verus. The gaps are striking, but possible considering the proven fertility of Faustina.³⁰⁵

The best evidence indicates then that the earliest possible time for the marriage of Burrus and Vibia Sabina is c. 183. A marriage before she reached her fourteenth year is unlikely, but there are sufficient precedents for betrothals at a young age.³⁰⁶ The eventual marriage, occurring after Marcus' death, should nonetheless be considered an arrangement of Marcus: circumstances compelled him to arrange an advantageous match for Vibia Sabina before his own death and the succession of Commodus. Thus, an earlier betrothal, taking place before Marcus' death in 180, is logical. The marriage subsequently took place when Vibia Sabina was of age.

³⁰¹ Pflaum (1961), 37.

³⁰² Birley (1987), 249.

³⁰³ Philostratus, *VS* 561.

³⁰⁴ J. H. Oliver, 'Marcus Aurelius: Aspects of Civic and Cultural Policy in the East', *Hesperia Supplements* 13 (1970), 80-1, nn. 30-4. Oliver's argument relies on the dating of a letter of Marcus written as sole emperor.

³⁰⁵ W. Scheidel, 'Emperors, Aristocrats, and the Grim Reaper: Towards a Demographic Profile of the Roman Élite' *CQ* 49 (1999), 274-5.

³⁰⁶ Notably that of Marcus and Faustina, who was perhaps eight. *Marv.* 6.2; *Verus* 2.2-4.

V. Conclusion

The betrothal of Vibia Sabina and Antistius Burrus would guarantee the support of the prominent and well-connected Q. Antistius Adventus, as well as his son, for the new emperor. The family connection between the Antistii and the imperial family should be considered extant – perhaps not formalised – before Burrus was honoured with the consulship in 181 alongside the Commodus. In the years after the rebellion of Cassius and before his own death in 180, Marcus did not lack motivations to arrange the marriage of his youngest daughter in a manner consistent with his policy in all such arrangements. A betrothal arranged by Marcus before his death takes into proper account the youth of Vibia Sabina, the policy of Marcus regarding the marriages of his daughters, the importance of Burrus' father Q. Antistius Adventus, and the circumstances of the years after the rebellion of Commodus.

7. Bruttia Crispina, married to Commodus

I. Summary

If the imperial *generi* are significant for the analysis of the imperial nexus constructed by Marcus, then also crucial is the sole daughter-in-law, Bruttia Crispina. The marriage of Commodus and Crispina took place in 178, before the final departure of Marcus and Commodus to the Danubian front.³⁰⁷ The father of the bride was C. Bruttius Praesens, first consul *ordinarius* in 153, thus a near-coeval of Marcus.³⁰⁸ He would be honoured again in 180, the last year which began under the rule of Marcus. Crispina was eventually accused of adultery by Commodus, exiled, and

³⁰⁷ PIR² B 170; Birley (1987), 206.

³⁰⁸ PIR² B 165. For his full nomenclature, *CIL* 10.408; for discussion see Alföldy (1977), 379-80.

executed.³⁰⁹ Crispina's brother, L. Bruttius Quintius Crispinus, was *cos. ord.* for 187, which places the death of Crispina after this year.

II. Background

The father of Bruttia Crispina was twice consul, as was his father. The first consulship of the elder Bruttius was under Hadrian c. 119, the second in 139, this time as *ordinarius*: the opening year of the reign of Antoninus. His career was rich and varied: he had military experience in the east, and had served as governor of Cilicia, Cappadocia, Moesia inferior; he also served in Africa, and Syria on a special commission.³¹⁰ The list of appointments indicates the high degree of trust placed in him by Hadrian and Antoninus. His son was to benefit from a similar relationship with Antoninus and then Marcus. The family was Lucanian by origin, and probably related to L. Bruttius Maximus, the governor of Cyprus in 80.³¹¹

The *nomen* Crispinus entered the family through Bruttia Crispina's paternal grandmother, Laberia Marcia Hostilia Crispina Moecia Cornelia, though it does not appear among the many names of her father. This Laberia Crispina was the daughter of M'. Laberius Maximus, who after serving his second consulship in 103 under Trajan fell from that emperor's favour.³¹² The odium attached to his bride's father may have affected the early career of L. Bruttius Praesens; it seems probable that it was Hadrian who promoted him.³¹³ He was governor of Cilicia when Hadrian

³⁰⁹ *Comm.* 5.9; Dio 71.4.6. Dio records that both Lucilla and Crispina were first exiled to Capri, and later killed. He reports their fates together, but they need not have both been executed in 182. The chronology remains uncertain. See Millar (1964), 125-6. O. J. Hekster, *Commodus: An Emperor at the Crossroads* (Amsterdam, 2002), 71ff.; PIR² B 170.

³¹⁰ PIR² B 164. His career is set out in IRT 545, his name supplied by AE 1950, no. 66. For discussion, see R. Syme, 'Pliny's Less Successful Friends', *Historia* 9 (1960), 374-6 = RP 2 (Oxford, 1979), 489-92.

³¹¹ R. Syme, 'Hadrianic Proconsuls of Africa', *ZPE* 37 (1980), 9-10 = RP 3 (Oxford, 1984), 1308-10.

³¹² Laberius Maximus PIR² I 9; Laberia PIR² L 15; see esp. M. Torelli, 'Laberia Crispina e un Praefectus Castrorum in Due Epigrafi Inedite di Trebula Mutuesca', *Epigraphica* 24 (1962), 56-7, for the inscription; 58-68 for discussion.

³¹³ Syme (1960), 375.

succeeded Trajan, and all his major posts are dated after this, including the special appointment to Syria.³¹⁴

On her father's side, then, Crispina could claim three double-consulars in her father, grandfather, and great-grandfather; her father was, moreover, probably around the same age as Marcus.³¹⁵ His second consulship in 180, coming after a delay of twenty-seven years, is the requisite evidence to place the marriage in its political context. The illustrious Bruttii were given a stake in the imperial power, the result of a marriage that looked forward as well as backward: Bruttia Crispina had a brother who, as brother-in-law of Commodus, would serve as consul in 187.³¹⁶

III. *Imperial marriage and context*

Commodus and Bruttia Crispina were married in 178, and largesse was given to the people. This was the third such *donatio* in four years (the others being in 175 when the news of the revolt of Cassius broke, and in 176 upon the return of Marcus and Commodus to Rome and the occasion of their triumph).³¹⁷ Commodus married young: necessity had again trumped convention. Bruttia Crispina herself was perhaps relatively young when she married Commodus, but circumstances may have dictated otherwise.³¹⁸ The political context of the marriage requires little discussion. Plainly Marcus, aware of his own ill-health, and still concerned at the youth of Commodus, thought it wise to bring the Bruttii directly into the imperial nexus. The marriage of Commodus

³¹⁴ *AE* 1938, no. 137. The precise dating and nature of the appointment to Syria is uncertain, but it was certainly in Hadrian's reign. See Alföldy (1977), 240-1; R. Syme, 'Hadrianic Governors of Syria', in G. Wirth, ed., *Romanitas-Christianitas. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Literatur der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Berlin, 1982), 239-40 = *RP* 4 (Oxford, 1988), 58-9.

³¹⁵ Alföldy (1977), 162, 379-81.

³¹⁶ Leunissen (1989), 131. He was presumably born around the time of his father's first consulship. Among his names he bears the *nomen* 'Quintius'; it is tempting to connect his nomenclature with the Quinctilii of the republic and early imperial period, in which family the *cognomen* Crispinus also occurs, viz. *PIR*² Q 44-5. There is in addition an inscription of M'. Laberius Maximus, the great-grandfather of Bruttius Quintius, which perhaps records 'Quintium', see V. Velkov, 'Eine neue Inschrift über Laberius Maximus und ihre bedeutung für die Ältere Geschichte der Provinz Moesia Inferior' *Epigraphica* 27 (1965), 92, 94-5. The *PIR* prefers 'Marcium' on the basis of the full name of Laberia Marcia Hostilia Crispina Moecia Cornelia, derived from Torelli, 56-7, and *CIL* 8.110.

³¹⁷ *Marc.* 22.12; 27.5, 8; *Comm.* 2.4; Dio 71.32.1

³¹⁸ Dio 71.33.1. Dio's remarks that the match with Bruttia Crispina was not Marcus' preferred choice could indicate an unusual age discrepancy between the couple; her father's first consulship was in 153. Certainty is impossible.

would leave only Vibia Sabina unmarried among the children of Marcus, and she was perhaps betrothed to Antistius Burrus around this time. The logical time for such arrangements to be made would be before Marcus left for the front in 178.

Worth emphasis is the fact that the marriage of Commodus and Bruttia Crispina again fits the pattern that can be glimpsed in the *fasti* of 176-83. The illustrious Bruttii, with a son slightly older than Commodus, were inducted into the imperial nexus to ensure the stability of the coming succession. Crispina's father was made consul for 180, and was present at the deathbed of Marcus.³¹⁹ The family had prospered under Hadrian, Antoninus, and Marcus. It was necessary for Marcus, before leaving on what would be his last campaign, to look to the arrangement of the succession. Perhaps what Xiphilinus records of Dio could indicate that Bruttia Crispina was not Marcus' preferred choice, but nonetheless he found a suitable match for Commodus in a daughter of the illustrious Bruttii of Lucania.³²⁰ Again Marcus looked for support to a family which had not previously been connected with the dynasty: the bride's father, Bruttius Praesens, himself the son of a double-consular father, consul for the second time at the age of around sixty, perhaps embodied to Marcus and others the legitimacy and stability of the senate. Stability and legitimacy in the senate were precisely those qualities which Marcus, always solicitous in his behaviour toward that body, wished to bequeath to his son. Such qualities had recently been lacking during the revolt of Cassius.³²¹

IV. Conclusion

The credentials of Bruttia Crispina were her august ancestry and the successful careers of her father and grandfather. The grandfather prospered under Hadrian and Antoninus, the father under Antoninus and Marcus. Her father had by the time of her marriage been in the senate for

³¹⁹ CIL 10.408: *comiti Im Ant[onini et Commodi Augg.] expeditionis Sarmaticae*.

³²⁰ Dio 71.33.1.

³²¹ *Mar.* 25.2; Dio 71.17.

more than three decades, and perhaps symbolised the prestige and stability of that body, crucial for any emperor to appease. Moreover, Crispina had a brother who would be of consular age soon, a young man who after 180 bore the distinction of being descended in the last three generations from double-consulars. In summation, whilst there is little that is hidden or intricate in the marriage of Commodus and Crispina, it is crucial to recognise the manner in which Commodus' marriage forms just one facet of the policy of the emperor; the goal was the construction of a faction capable of ensuring a smooth transition. Marcus used the marriage of Bruttia Crispina and Commodus to confirm a political alliance with a coeval, not linked to him by pre-existing ties, who would then in turn lend his prestige and connections to the succession and rule of Commodus.

Conclusions

Among the *generi* of Marcus, apart from Lucius Verus, there are four sons of consular fathers, and one son of an *eques* from Syria. There is also his daughter-in-law Crispina, of the noblest Italian ancestry. Of the four *nobiles* among the *generi*, Claudius Severus was the son of a friend of Marcus, Peducaeus Quintillus was a nephew of Lucius, and Petronius was the son a friend of Fronto's from Africa. The last was Antistius Burrus, also from Africa, the son of a valued general. Claudius Pompeianus stands apart; the *vir militaris*, risen up by his military skill, and gaining a suffect consulship even before his marriage to Lucilla, the widow of Lucius. This marriage was opportunistic on both sides, and Pompeianus received soon afterwards the honoured place of consul *ordinarius*.

All Marcus' sons-in-law served as *consules ordinarii*. The dates of the marriages should be placed before their respective promotions to the *fasti*. The one exception is Antistius Burrus, where the circumstantial evidence is strong for the existence of a betrothal before his consulship. The

marriages, considered together, show the astute operations of Marcus as a dynastic politician. Over a period of twenty years, he used marriages to consolidate the position of the imperial family. Old ties were reinforced, friendships bolstered, and, crucially, new connections with prominent provincials were formed.

Importantly, Marcus accomplished this within a larger framework. He moved consistently away from connections of Lucius, who had been the ultimate choice of Hadrian. Despite his family being part of the charmed circle of Spanish, Narbonensian, and Italian families that surrounded Hadrian, Marcus preferred to craft a nexus independent of the past, and attempted to build among the elite classes a separate power base for his own dynasty. Convinced of his own family's right to rule, perhaps there was also for Marcus some disillusionment with the actions of Hadrian, actions from which he wished to be removed. The oligarchy was still relatively small, and memories could be long.

The promotion of relatives through marriage to enhance the power of the family as a whole is not a new device: but this precisely must remain the point. Marcus was concerned with the power of his family and the foundation of a dynasty. He used his daughters to facilitate this. Peducaeus Quintillus' consulship was undertaken with the young Commodus under the auspices of the aging emperor. Clearly the young heir was to be supported and abetted by his various brothers-in-law. Petronius Mamertinus and Antistius Burrus brought with them their African connections, unencumbered by previous imperial association. They served the same purpose. Burrus was most likely chosen both to secure him as a supporter for Commodus, and to ensure the allegiance of his father to the dynasty at an insecure time. That the same pattern continued under the reign of Commodus is clear. The husbands of his sisters and their families fared well – for a time. The power of the Antonine dynasty was constructed along the lines of family connections. The practice had not changed beyond recognition from the construction of a Republican faction: and Marcus knew his history. The leader of the dominant faction had

become an emperor, and it was cognisant upon the ruler to ensure the continued domination of his family.

Chapter 3:

The Rebellion of C. Avidius Cassius: Response and Consequences

Introduction

The rebellion of C. Avidius Cassius is a perplexing episode. Having lasted just over three months, it ended upon the murder of Cassius in Egypt.³²² Despite the apparent ease with which it was defeated, it was a very real military and political danger. That the rebellion was viewed as a serious threat by Marcus should not be doubted.³²³ There is some merit in the argument that support for the rebellion of Cassius was far greater among the upper classes than is apparent. This support, which no doubt Cassius supposed would be greater if he believed Marcus was dead, would probably be drawn from two connected groups: those opposed to the Marcomannic Wars and the military policy of Marcus along the Danubian frontier, and the discontented connections of Lucius. This chapter investigates the possible causes and motivations of the rebellion and the response of Marcus. The rebellion required Marcus to undertake a tour of the East, and adopt a more pro-active policy regarding the promotion of Commodus.

The main literary sources are dealt with first, followed by an analysis of the rebellion itself. Neither Dio nor the biographer of the *Historia Augusta* provide a full picture of the rebellion. The biographer of the *Historia Augusta*, across the *vitae* of Marcus and Cassius, provides a typically muddled version of the rebellion and the response of Marcus. It need barely be mentioned that

³²² Dio 71.27.3. The evidence for the rebellion is mired in difficulties. See e.g. the conclusion of Syme (1987), 222.

³²³ Dio 71.17, 72.23; *Marv.* 24.6, 25.1; Hekster (2002), 34-9; Birley (1987), 184-98; F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.-A.D. 337* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 115-18; J. Spiess, *Avidius Cassius und der Aufstand des Jahres 175* (Dissertation, University of Munich, 1975); M. L. Astarita, *Avidio Cassio* (Rome, 1983). The rebellion certainly disrupted the prosecution of the Marcomannic War and compelled Marcus to undertake an eastern tour. According to Dio, Cassius was proclaimed emperor in Egypt, and this is supported by A. K. Bowman's analysis of *SB* 10295 in 'A Letter of Avidius Cassius?', *JRS* 60 (1970), 20-6.

much of the information in the *vita* of Cassius is scarcely to be trusted.³²⁴ The rebellion becomes more coherent when the account of Dio is added. An examination of both sources is necessary. Most importantly, the rebellion illuminates the policy Marcus pursued aggressively in the final years of his reign: Commodus' position as heir was secured, and firm supporters of the dynasty were promoted to ensure a smooth succession. Following an examination of the literary sources several problems are examined: the career of Cassius; his connections in the East and possible supporters; the position of *capax imperii* in 175; and the possible motivations of Cassius. These are essential in order to place the rebellion in its proper context as a serious threat to Marcus and an event that compelled him to accelerate his dynastic plans.

1. The account of Cassius Dio

Dio's account of the rebellion is recorded in Xiphilinus' epitome of Book 72. Upon the news of the rebellion, Marcus made terms on the Danubian frontier in great haste, not even informing the senate – a sign of the unexpected nature of the news.³²⁵ The connection between the rebellion and the summoning of Commodus to the frontier for the purpose of assuming the *toga virilis* is stated clearly, as are the Syrian origins and imperial ambitions of Cassius.³²⁶ The reasons for the rebellion given by Dio are largely consistent with those provided in the *vita Marci*: Faustina had prepared Cassius to seize the imperial power on her behalf should Marcus die before Commodus was old enough to rule.³²⁷ According to Dio, Cassius acted impulsively on the rumour without confirmation, and proceeded despite learning that Marcus had not died.³²⁸

³²⁴ Syme (1987), 207, 220; cf. the remarks of J. Schwartz, 'Avidius Cassius et les Sources de l'histoire Auguste', *HAC* 1963 (1964), 139ff.

³²⁵ Dio 71.17; Millar (1993), 123. Marcus was usually scrupulously respectful in his dealings with the senate and the upper classes.

³²⁶ Dio 71.17.

³²⁷ Dio 71.22.3.

³²⁸ Dio 71.23. Cf. *Marv.* 24.7, where the biographer offers the alternate account that Cassius himself had spread false rumours of Marcus', demise.

I. *The speech of Marcus to the soldiers*

Once Marcus learnt of the rebellion, he addressed his legions on the Danubian frontier. The subsequent speech reported – or inserted – by Dio bears the marks of having been composed after the event.³²⁹ Over the three sections of the speech, two important elements lead to this judgement. In the first section, Marcus states that he would give up his power to Cassius if it seemed to be for the good of the state.³³⁰ The third section of the speech records Marcus' apparent apprehension that before Cassius can be forgiven, Cassius will either commit suicide upon finding out that Marcus is still alive, or someone will kill him.³³¹ Neither of these sentiments is credible in the light of Marcus' actual response: Commodus was summoned and presented to the legions on the Danube and the legions there were made ready to fight the usurper.³³² Stanton is correct to point out that one of the statements attributed to Marcus – that Cassius can only have acted if he thought Marcus was dead – indicates strongly that the speech was composed after the facts were known.³³³ In addition, Cassius met his death in precisely one of the circumstances mentioned in the speech: he was killed by officers who cut off the usurper's head in order to present it to the emperor.³³⁴

If the first and third parts of the speech bear clear marks of insertion after the fact, much of the middle section looks more authentic (Dio 71.25.1-3):³³⁵

ἐπεὶ δ' οὐκ ἂν ποτε συγκαθεῖναι ἐξ τοῦτο ὁ Κάσσιος ἐθελήσειε (πῶς γὰρ ἂν πιστεύσειέ μοι, ἄπιστος οὕτω περὶ ἐμὲ γεγεννημένος), ὑμᾶς γε ᾧ συστρατιῶται χρὴ θαρρεῖν. οὐ γάρ που κρείττους Κίλικες καὶ Σύροι καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι ὑμῶν

³²⁹ Dio 71.24-26.4. G. R. Stanton 'Marcus Aurelius, Emperor and Philosopher', *Historia* 18 (1969), 581-3. Cf. P. A. Brunt, 'Marcus Aurelius in his *Meditations*', *JRS* 64 (1974), 13-14, who believes the speech to be in character. On the speeches in Dio more generally; see Millar (1964), 78ff.

³³⁰ Dio 71.24. Cf. *Av. Cass.* 2.8, where the same sentiment is quoted in a phony letter of Marcus.

³³¹ Dio 71.26.

³³² Dio 71.24.4; Birley (1987), 249-55. The precise chronology of events is uncertain.

³³³ Stanton (1969), 582.

³³⁴ Dio 71.27.2.

³³⁵ Translation from Cary's Loeb edition.

οὔτε ἐγένοντό ποτε οὔτε ἔσονται, οὐδ' ἂν μυριάκις πλείους ὑμῶν, ὅσῳ νῦν ἐλάττους εἰσὶν, ἀθροισθῶσιν. οὐ μὴν οὐδ' αὐτὸς ὁ Κάσσιος, εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα καὶ στρατηγικὸς εἶναι καὶ πολλὰ κατωρθωκέναι δοκεῖ, λόγου τινὸς ἄξιος νῦν ἂν φανείη· οὔτε γὰρ ἀετὸς κολοιῶν ἢ καὶ λέων νεβρῶν ἡγησάμενος ἀξιόμαχος γίνεται, καὶ τὸν Ἀραβικὸν τὸν τε Παρθικὸν ἐκεῖνον πόλεμον οὐ Κάσσιος ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς κατειργάσασθε. ἄλλως τε, εἰ καὶ ἐκεῖνος ἐκ τῶν πρὸς Πάρθους πραχθέντων εὐδόκιμός ἐστιν, ἔχετε καὶ ὑμεῖς Οὐῆρον, ὃς οὐδὲν ἤττον ἀλλὰ καὶ μᾶλλον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐνίκησε πλείω καὶ κατεκτήσατο. ἀλλὰ τάχα μὲν καὶ ἤδη μετανενόηκε, ζῶντά με μεμαθηκώς· οὐ γάρ που καὶ ἄλλως ἢ ὥς τετελευτηκότος μου τοῦτ' ἐποίησεν. ἂν δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἀντίσχη, ἀλλ' ὅταν γε καὶ προσιόντας ἡμᾶς πύθηται, πάντως γνωσιμαχήσει, καὶ ὑμᾶς φοβηθεῖς καὶ ἐμὲ αἰδεσθεῖς.

But since Cassius would never consent to adopt this course – for how could he trust me after having shown himself so untrustworthy toward me? – you, at least, fellow-soldiers, ought to be of good cheer. For surely Cilicians, Syrians, Jews, and Egyptians have never proved superior to you and never will, even if they should muster as many tens of thousands more than you as they now muster fewer. Nor would even Cassius himself appear to deserve any consideration now, however much he may seem to possess high qualities of generalship or however many successes he may seem to have gained. For an eagle is not formidable when in command of an army of daws nor a lion when in command of fawns; and as for those Arabian and Parthian wars, it was not Cassius, but you, that brought them to an end. Again, even though he is renowned because of his achievements against the Parthians, yet you have Verus, who has been no less successful than he, but, on the contrary, more successful, in winning many victories and in acquiring much territory. But Cassius has perhaps already changed his mind on hearing that I am alive; for surely he has done this thing on no other assumption than that I was dead. But even if he persists in his

course, yet when he learns that we are approaching, he will surely think better of it, both out of fear of you and out of respect for me.

This section of Marcus' speech seems the most appropriate for the occasion.³³⁶ Significant here is Marcus' remark on the importance of trust.³³⁷ As Cassius had been granted *imperium maius* in the East, Marcus' description of the rebellion as a betrayal is certainly accurate.³³⁸ The idea of trust does appear in the *Meditations*, and is perhaps connected with Cassius.³³⁹

Marcus' statement concerning Cassius' betrayal follows immediately upon his assertion that he would give up his imperial power for the good of the state.³⁴⁰ This in turn calls into question the diplomatic sentiments expressed in the previous and subsequent sections of the speech.³⁴¹ A contradiction is present, and expresses the tension between the roles of philosopher and emperor: Dio's Marcus certainly might like to entertain the possibility that the coming civil war could be peacefully resolved between gentlemen. However, the middle section of the speech – that section which appears most authentic – blames Cassius and his betrayal for leaving no possibility for a diplomatic solution.

It is possible that the reported speech and its seeming contradictions express a genuine internal dilemma which Marcus faced at the time. However, a more likely explanation is that the tension between the sentiments expressed results from Dio's efforts to portray Marcus in a favourable light.³⁴² Whatever source, official or otherwise, Dio was using at this point – and not forgetting the uncertain role played by Xiphilinus – it seems that in the middle section of the speech

³³⁶ Stanton (1969), 582, n. 85. Stanton is convincing on this matter. See also Syme (1987), 219-20, who argues convincingly that the denigration of Cassius' abilities as a general may be justified.

³³⁷ Dio 7.25.1.

³³⁸ Dio 71.3. See also the concise but erudite treatment of the rebellion by Millar (1993), 115-8.

³³⁹ In the Loeb edition of the *Meditations*, Haines notes that 9.42.4 may refer to Avidius Cassius, and that the terminology is similar to that used in Dio. C. R. Haines, *Meditations* (Harvard, 1930), 258-9, n. 2; Brunt (1974), 13, n. 82 suggests 6.53, 7.3, 7.30, 8.61, 9.22, 9.27, and 10.37 as allusions to Marcus' experience of the rebellion.

³⁴⁰ Dio 71.24.3-4.

³⁴¹ Dio 71.24; 71.26.

³⁴² Certainly Marcus' treatment of the upper classes was considered exemplary, and provided Dio with a useful contrast to Commodus and the Severan emperors. See Millar (1964), 122ff.

Marcus desires to have things both ways. It is a curious blend of philosophical and practical concerns. This is true of the whole speech, but it is most striking in the section that is the most difficult to dismiss as apocryphal. The speech as it is establishes Marcus' credentials as the benign philosopher-emperor. But then he hastens to assure his legions that Cassius possesses poor soldiers, little talent as a military leader, and that P. Martius Verus, another decorated general of the Parthian War, remains loyal in Cappadocia.

Finally, however, the significant fact is this: whatever speech Marcus made to his soldiers, and whatever Cassius himself heard of it, both men knew that the moment Cassius was proclaimed emperor that only one outcome was possible. Marcus' decisive actions belie the speech attributed to him by Dio, and recall better the sentiments expressed by the biographer at the end of his *vita* (29.6): *Dederunt et vitio quod fictus fuisset nec tam simplex quam videretur, aut quam vel Pius vel Verus fuisset* (Some maintain – and held it as a fault – that he was insincere and not as guileless as he seemed, indeed not as guileless as either Pius or Verus had been).

II. *Dio's account of the aftermath*

The eventual fate of Avidius Cassius in Dio's account is similar to that in the *vita Marci*: Cassius is killed by soldiers, along with a son.³⁴³ One of the killers is identified as Antonius, a centurion; the other is a nameless decurion.³⁴⁴ There is no account of a corresponding military action, so the implication must be that the killing was undertaken by soldiers whom Cassius had thought to be loyal – that is, soldiers from the legions of Syria or Egypt.³⁴⁵ What Marcus had so pointedly feared in his speech on the frontier had occurred. Immediately following is the statement that

³⁴³ Dio 71.27.2-3.

³⁴⁴ Dio 71.27.2.

³⁴⁵ Birley (1987), 186. There were three legions in Syria, two in Palestine, and one each in Arabia and Egypt. But not all of these went over to Cassius, and he was presumably killed by soldiers in a legion which had nominally joined him.

Marcus, in his tour of the rebellious provinces, did not have anyone executed.³⁴⁶ The inference seems clear: the deaths of Cassius and his son did not occur on the specific orders of Marcus.³⁴⁷ However, it is also stated that Marcus did indeed execute some individuals guilty of additional crimes.³⁴⁸

The empress Faustina died upon the journey home from the east, and Dio mentions again her possible collusion with Cassius.³⁴⁹ The potentially incriminating papers of Cassius are then found and burnt unread. Two versions of this significant incident are recorded offered by Dio. In one version, Marcus himself finds them in the chests of the vaguely labelled Pudens; in the second it is the loyal P. Martius Verus who finds the papers among the effects of Cassius and anticipates the wish of the emperor by destroying them.³⁵⁰ A further description of the leniency of Marcus towards the supporters of Cassius follows: no doubt placed to support the anecdote of the burnt correspondence.³⁵¹

The relative lack of information concerning the allies of Cassius can perhaps be traced back to the destruction of the evidence. Marcus may well have been concerned by how deep the rebellion ran, and perhaps viewed conciliation as the safer alternative to revealing the extent of Cassius' sympathisers among the aristocracy.³⁵² Marcus' leniency is further emphasised in a request to the senate after Faustina's death. He wished that no senator be punished by execution.³⁵³ Such high-minded sentiments, however, did not interfere with the promulgation of a law both practical and topical: that no one should in future govern the province in which he was born, as Cassius had Syria.³⁵⁴ Marcus' return to Rome and largesse to the populace are

³⁴⁶ Dio 71.27.3.

³⁴⁷ Marcus is exonerated of complicity by the biographer at *Av. Cass.* 7.4; cf. *Marv.* 24.4-5.

³⁴⁸ Dio 71.28.3-4. Marcus does not seem to have been averse to executing men of lesser status, but an ally of Cassius, C. Calvisius Statianus, prefect of Egypt in 175, also escaped lightly. PIR² C 356.

³⁴⁹ Dio 71.29.1.

³⁵⁰ Dio 71.29.1-2.

³⁵¹ Dio 71.29.1.

³⁵² F. Gasco, 'The Meeting between Aelius Aristides and Marcus Aurelius at Smyrna', *AJP* 110 (1989), 474-8. Expanded upon below.

³⁵³ Dio 71.30.1.

³⁵⁴ Dio 71.31.1. Cf. however Millar (1993), 118ff., on the nature of 'provincial' identity in the late second century.

recounted, as is the marriage of Commodus to Crispina, the daughter of Q. Bruttius Praesens, before Marcus returned to Rome and eventually to the front on the Danube.³⁵⁵

2. The account of the *Historia Augusta*

The rebellion in the *Historia Augusta* is recorded in a haphazard manner even by the standards of this notoriously difficult work.³⁵⁶ Valuable information is inserted without regard for context.³⁵⁷ It is possible to trace in the response of Marcus to the rebellion a hardening of his dynastic policy.

The interpolation which runs from the death of Lucius at 15.3 to 19.12 contains the first mention of the rebellion, but fails to go beyond a bare statement: *Cassius post mortem Veri a Marco descivit*.³⁵⁸ This is accurate, but devoid of context. Similarly, the promotion of Commodus is recorded in a desultory fashion, without connection to the rebellion (16.1-2):

Iam in suos tanta fuit benignitate Marcus ut cum in omnes propinquos cuncta honorum ornamenta contulerit, tum in filium et quidem scelestum atque impurum cito nomen Caesaris et mox sacerdotium statimque nomen imperatoris ac triumphi participationem et consulatum. quo quidem tempore sedente imperator filio ad triumphalem currum in circo pedes cucurrit.

Such was Marcus' kindness toward his own family that he bestowed the insignia of every office on all his kin, while on his son, and accursed and a foul one he was, he hastened to bestow the name of Caesar, then afterward the priesthood, and, a little later, the title of

³⁵⁵ Dio 71.31.3-33.4.

³⁵⁶ The difficulties of the *Historia Augusta* are legendary and seductive. See Millar (1993), 124: 'The problem of the *Historia Augusta* is one into which sane men refrain from entering'; and R. Syme, 'The Secondary Vitae', *HAC* 1968/69 (1970), 285: 'Nature in all her freaks and sports never brought forth anything like the *Historia Augusta*. It is a monster.' On the *vitae* of Cassius, see Schwartz (1964), 135-164; Syme (1970), 292ff.

³⁵⁷ E.g. *Mar.* 15.6, 16.1-2.

³⁵⁸ *Mar.* 15.6.

imperator and a share in the triumph and consulship. It was at this time that Marcus, though acclaimed imperator, ran on foot in the Circus beside the triumphal car in which his son was seated.

Likewise, the description of the assumption of the *toga virilis* of Commodus at 22.12 makes no connection to Cassius' rebellion.³⁵⁹ An account of Marcus' fiscal, legal and social policies follows.³⁶⁰ This leads eventually into his wish to create new provinces of Marcomannia and Sarmatia, in which objective he was impeded by the news of Cassius' rebellion (24.5): *uoluit Marcomanniam provinciam, uoluit etiam Sarmatiam facere et fecisset, nisi Avidius Cassius rebellasset sub eodem in Oriente*.³⁶¹ Faustina's machinations are blamed as the cause of the rebellion; she was apparently motivated by her fear for Marcus' health and dislike of her son-in-law, Ti. Claudius Pompeianus.³⁶² The biographer reports rumours but declines to take sides.³⁶³ Curiously, the biographer then records that Marcus was not overly worried by the rebellion, and did not take any severe action (24.8): *et Antoninus quidem non est satis motus defectione Cassii nec in eius affectus saevit*. This contradicts the statement at 24.5, and indeed the rapid political and military responses of Marcus do not justify such a remark.

Marcus set out for the East, and despatched troops to quell the panic at Rome lest Cassius arrive there.³⁶⁴ However, Cassius was quickly killed.³⁶⁵ The biographer's account of Marcus' reaction to the news is close to that of Dio: Marcus refused to rejoice at the death of Cassius.³⁶⁶ One Maecianus, a colluder in the rebellion, was also killed.³⁶⁷ A further account of the mercy of

³⁵⁹ Also at 22.12 is the mention of Commodus' first consulship in 177. Again, two important consequences of the rebellion of Cassius are reported without connection to it. Cf. however *Comm.* 2.2.

³⁶⁰ *Marc.* 23-24.4.

³⁶¹ Cf. Dio 71.17-20. The biographer and Dio both indicate that the policy of Marcus on the frontier was aggressive. Marcus could indeed be a ruthless military campaigner; see Kovács (2009), 213-41.

³⁶² *Marc.* 20.6-7.

³⁶³ 24.6-7: *ut quidam dicunt...alii dicunt*.

³⁶⁴ *Marc.* 25.2; cf. *AE* 1920, no. 45. The commanding officer was Vettius Sabinianus, possibly from Thuburbo Maius.

³⁶⁵ *Marc.* 25.2-3.

³⁶⁶ *Marc.* 25.3; Dio 71.27.2.

³⁶⁷ *Marc.* 25.4-5. Maecianus is either a son of Cassius, or his father-in-law. The precise nature of the connection is elusive, and is dealt with below.

Marcus toward his enemies follows, including the request that no senator should be killed during his rule.³⁶⁸ Marcus also dealt with affairs in the provinces that had joined Cassius.³⁶⁹ Here there is an indication that in some accounts of the rebellion Marcus was not as lenient as he appears in most of his *vita*: Marius Maximus apparently reported a speech where Marcus described the inhabitants of Antioch as *eos seditiosos*.³⁷⁰ Marcus' subsequent tour of the east included Commodus, another indication of the seriousness with which he saw the rebellion.³⁷¹ The Caesar was being groomed and presented to the provinces and eastern armies. Marcus refused to visit Cyrrhus, the putative birthplace of Cassius.³⁷²

A further account of his clemency toward the family of Cassius is included.³⁷³ The postscript to the Eastern tour is telling: Marcus returned to Rome via Athens, triumphed for his Danubian campaigns, gave largesse to the people and held games. Commodus was given the tribunician power and married to the daughter of Q. Bruttius Praesens.³⁷⁴

3. Analysis

I. Introduction

The rebellion has been much analysed in modern scholarship, but continues to confound.³⁷⁵ Syme's conclusion is characteristic of these attempts:

Without the reports in Dio and Maximus, an alert student of men and government might arrive at the same conclusion. Otherwise the action of Avidius Cassius remains an

³⁶⁸ *Marc.* 25.6-12.

³⁶⁹ *Marc.* 25.8-12.

³⁷⁰ *Marc.* 25.10.

³⁷¹ *Marc.* 25.11-26.4.

³⁷² *Marc.* 25.11.

³⁷³ *Marc.* 26.10-13.

³⁷⁴ *Marc.* 27.8; PIR² B 170. Discussed in Chapter 2.

³⁷⁵ Dio 71.17, 71.23; *Marc.* 24.6, 25.1; Birley (1987), 184-98; Millar (1993), 115-18; Spiess (1975); M. L. Astarita (1983).

enigma: blind ambition and a total miscalculation. No pretender insurgent in the Orient could hope to prevail against the armies of the Danube.³⁷⁶

According to Syme, for the rebellion to make sense Cassius must have genuinely believed Marcus to be dead, and been prepared for this course of events by Faustina. Therefore, Cassius believed himself to be entering into a struggle for succession, not a rebellion under arms against an established emperor.³⁷⁷ This conclusion captures – but does not solve – the chief problem in dealing with the rebellion: the motive of Cassius. Syme is perhaps too hasty in dismissing the possible role of T. Claudius Pompeianus.³⁷⁸ Nonetheless, from one perspective at least the rebellion serves to illuminate rather than to obscure: Marcus' response to the unfolding crisis reveal him clearly as a ruler concerned above all with the preservation of his power and the status of his family.

Preservation of power and family is not a controversial theme. The response of Marcus – his promotion of Commodus, the tour of the East – is predictable behaviour for a Roman emperor. However, this is itself significant. It indicates that Marcus operated within the paradigm of a typical Roman emperor. There would be no question of an adoption or regency: Commodus could not be passed over, and Marcus was determined protect the grip of the dynasty on the imperial power.³⁷⁹ His upbringing is not to be forgotten. Marcus since his childhood would be familiar with the dynastic machinations of Roman *nobiles*. He owed his position as emperor to such scheming.³⁸⁰ The rebellion of Cassius highlights Marcus' succession policy during the final years of his reign. His careful selection of his sons-in-law, seen through the dramatic context of the failed rebellion, is revealed as a policy designed to move away from the connections of the Ceionii and build the power of the imperial nexus. Cassius demonstrated vividly the danger of

³⁷⁶ Syme (1987), 222.

³⁷⁷ Syme (1987a), 221.

³⁷⁸ Syme (1987a), 220-2; Champlin (1979), 288-306. Syme places much emphasis on the age and status of Pompeianus. These were not factors in 192-3 after the death of Commodus and the accession of Pertinax, they should not be considered factors in 175. See below.

³⁷⁹ The point is made forcefully by Hekster (2002), 32-9.

³⁸⁰ Stanton (1969), 583.

ambitious and near-autonomous generals. The secret that emperors could be made away from Rome had been long known.³⁸¹

II. *The career of Avidius Cassius and the context of the rebellion*

From the mire of misinformation present in the sources, the following three points may be securely adduced concerning the person and career of C. Avidius Cassius: i) that in early 175, when he embarked on his rebellion, Cassius stood in the full confidence of Marcus; ii) that he possessed prominent family connections in the East; and iii) that the rebellion was ended swiftly after his death. Leaving aside the stoic protestations attributed to Marcus, the final result of the rebellion was that Cassius was killed, one of his sons was possibly killed,³⁸² and another was exiled.³⁸³ On any measure the rebellion was dealt with decisively, and the right of the dynasty to the imperial power was protected.

In 175, immediately prior to his rebellion, Cassius stood high in the imperial favour. He had been rewarded for his success in the Parthian War with a consulship, and by 172 at the latest possessed the overall command in the east.³⁸⁴ He was the son of Avidius Heliodorus, who had been prefect of Egypt under Hadrian and Antoninus Pius from 137-42.³⁸⁵ Cassius was born around the year 130 in Cyrrhus, or perhaps in Alexandria, where his father had accompanied Hadrian as *ab epistulis*.³⁸⁶ Cassius himself was of praetorian rank in the Parthian War.³⁸⁷ The date

³⁸¹ *Med.* 3.14, cf. also 7.1, 8.31, 10.27. Marcus was a student of history, and cannot have failed to appreciate the numerous examples furnished by such as Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, and Vindex.

³⁸² *Mar.* 25.4; *Av. Cass.* 7.4; Dio 71.72.3. The possible connection to the enigmatic 'Maecianus', mentioned by the biographer is investigated below.

³⁸³ Avidius Heliodorus, bearing the *cognomen* of his paternal grandfather. PIR² A 1404.

³⁸⁴ Either after the suppression of the Boucolis in Egypt in 172, or in 169 after the death of Verus. Dio 71.3.1; Philostratus, *VS* 563; Syme (1987), 215, 220; Astarita (1983), 78-89; Alföldy (1977), 181, esp. n. 176; PIR² A 1402.

³⁸⁵ PIR² A 1405.

³⁸⁶ Dio 71.22.2; cf. 69.3.5; Syme (1987), 215, 220; Bowman (1970), 23ff. If *SB* 10295 does indeed refer to Cassius, Syme advances the possibility that Cassius was born Alexandria in 130 during the visit of Hadrian, for whom his father was *ab epistulis*. This would make Cassius thirty-six in the year of his suffect consulship; not unreasonable for the son of a prefect of Egypt. The argument is attractive, but it is enough to follow Bowman: Cassius evidently had support in Alexandria, and had certainly been there as a child during his father's term as *praefectus*. For the present purpose it is enough to emphasise that Cassius had support from Alexandria during his rebellion.

of his consulship, once considered to be between 161 and 163, has been restored by Alföldy to 166.³⁸⁸ His Syrian origin and his service in the Parthian War, together with his likely acquaintance with the imperial family, made him an excellent candidate to stay on in the east after 166.³⁸⁹ He probably married around 152: the daughter of the jurist L. Volusius Maecianus would fit well.³⁹⁰ Volusius was the right age to have a daughter of marriageable age in 152, and would be consul *suffectus* in 166, possibly the same year as his putative son-in-law.³⁹¹

III. *The supporters of Cassius: The identification of Maecianus*

There are few positively identified supporters of Cassius' rebellion. Despite the difficulties, the attempt to seek out possible followers is worthwhile. Even supposing that Cassius acted to secure what he thought was the succession, it is surely inconceivable that he acted alone. Certainly he had some support among his family connections.³⁹² It is in this context that a misconception must be examined. A certain Maecianus was killed at around the same time as Cassius.³⁹³ He is now typically identified as a son of Cassius, who apparently possessed the *cognomen* 'Maecianus'.³⁹⁴ However, there is reason to suppose that Maecianus was not a son of

³⁸⁷ Syme (1987), 215-19.

³⁸⁸ Alföldy (1977), 181-2, esp. n. 176.

³⁸⁹ Champlin (1980), 36-7. On the constitutional details of Cassius' overall command of the East, see F.J. Vervaet, 'The reappearance of the supra-provincial commands in the late second and early third centuries C.E.: constitutional and historical considerations', in O. Hekster, G. de Kleijn, and D. Slootjes, eds., *Crises and the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the Seventh Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Nijmegen, June 20-24, 2006)* (Leiden and Boston 2007), 132-4.

³⁹⁰ *Mar.* 25.4; *Av. Cass.* 7.4; Lelis et al. (2003), 63-5; Syme (1987), 218ff. The name of Cassius' wife, Maecia, may be correctly inferred from an inscription, *IGR* 3.500. On this are listed the children of Alexandria, the daughter of Cassius, and her husband Claudius Dryantianus: a son was named Cassius Agrippinus, a daughter Maeciana Alexandra. See Jameson (1966), 126-7, stemma 136f., nos. 22, 24; Walton (1929), 57, n. 2. Alexandria herself does not appear on the inscription, and Walton raises the possibility that her name may have been erased due to *damnatio memoriae*.

³⁹¹ Alföldy (1977), 182, with some doubt on the year of Volusius', consulship.

³⁹² Discussed below.

³⁹³ *Mar.* 25.4; *Av. Cass.* 7.4.

³⁹⁴ Maecianus is considered a son of Cassius by the following: *PIR*² A 1406; Bowman (1970), 24, n. 24; H. G. Pflaum 'La valeur de la source inspiratrice de la vita Hadriani et de la vita Marci Antonini à la lumière des personnalités contemporaines nommément citées', *HAC* 1968-69 (1970), 221; Birley (1987), 192; Syme (1987), 218; H. Sidebottom, 'The Changed Outward Trajectory of the Roman Empire', *Historia* 54 (2005), 325-6; Spiess (1975), 61. An exception is J. Schwartz, 'La place d'Égypte dans l'Histoire Auguste', *BHAC* 1975/76 (1978), 177. For an older

Cassius, and was in fact his father-in-law, the famed jurist L. Volusius Maecianus.³⁹⁵ If he can indeed be identified as Volusius Maecianus then some further light can be thrown on the supporters of Cassius during his rebellion.³⁹⁶

Firstly, the chronology. If he were a son of Cassius, then Maecianus cannot have been much older than twenty-five in 175.³⁹⁷ It is true that rebellions and crises had previously rendered void any perception of the limitations of youth: but the same may be said for the infirmities of old age.³⁹⁸ The post in Alexandria attributed to the Maecianus in the *vitae* would suit a man of Volusius Maecianus' experience – he had been governor of Egypt.³⁹⁹ The chronology proves indecisive. What remains in the *vitae* is a Maecianus of uncertain provenance, killed by the army at the conclusion of the rebellion. There is also an unnamed son of Cassius who was also killed around the same time, reported by Dio.⁴⁰⁰ Perhaps there is a temptation to put these two accounts together, and conclude that the Maecianus in the *vitae* is the son mentioned by Dio.

More important for the question of identification are the textual difficulties in the *HA*. Maecianus appears in the *vitae* of both Marcus and Cassius, and was entrusted by Cassius with the city of Alexandria during his rebellion.⁴⁰¹ At first glance, there seems little to object to in

view which captures the confusion around the issue, cf. S. H. Ballou, 'The Carriere of the Higher Roman Officials in Egypt in the Second Century', *APA* 52 (1921), 108.

³⁹⁵ PIR¹ V 657, where Volusius is identified as the 'Maecianus' killed in the rebellion of Cassius; Alföldy (1977), 182; H. G. Pflaum, *Les carrieres procuratoriennes equestres sous le Haut-Empire romain* (Paris, 1960-82), no. 141, 333-6. On Volusius', term as prefect of Egypt see G. Bastianini 'Lista dei prefetti d'Egitto dal 30^a al 299^e', *ZPE* (1975), 295. Alföldy rightly sounds a note of caution concerning the career of Volusius: 'Es ist nicht auszuschließen, daß er noch vor dem Antritt seines Konsulates verstarb, da seine Ämter in jener Inschrift aus Ostia, die seinen *cursus honorum* enthält, nur bis zum *consul designatus* aufgezählt werden.' For the inscription itself, see *AE* 1955, no. 179, esp. line 3; cf. *CIL* 14.5347-8. The problem of the identification of Maecianus in the *vitae* of Marcus and Cassius is discussed below. See also Syme (1987), 218, n. 59; Pflaum (1970), 221-2. Pflaum interprets *Marv.* 25.4 to mean not the city, but the daughter of Cassius: 'Parmi eux Maecianus qui avait la garde de sa soeur Alexandria'. This does not, however, alter the problem of the identification of Maecianus.

³⁹⁶ A distinction must be drawn: it is entirely possible that the father-in-law of Cassius was L. Volusius Maecianus. However, this is not crucial to the present question, which is whether the 'Maecianus' in the *vitae* refers to Volusius Maecianus or his grandson, who would be a son of Cassius with the *cognomen* of his maternal grandfather.

³⁹⁷ Allowing a reasonable date for the marriage of Cassius, probably c. 152. See above.

³⁹⁸ The senatorial class could not no doubt recall the suppression of the aged Ursus Servianus and the young Pedanius Fuscus, Hadrian's brother-in-law and grand-nephew respectively.

³⁹⁹ For his career, *AE* 1955, no. 179; *CIL* 14.5347.

⁴⁰⁰ Dio 71.27.3.

⁴⁰¹ *Marv.* 25.4; *Av. Cass.* 7.4.

supposing this individual a son of Cassius; the *cognomen* did enter the family at about this time.⁴⁰² However, the justification for this identification is not robust. It relies on: i) a particular reading of the *vita Marci*; ii) the dismissal of a passage in the *vita Avidii Cassii*; and iii) the addition of a partially helpful passage in Dio.⁴⁰³ It is germane to set out the two relevant extracts from the *vita*.⁴⁰⁴

vita Marci, 25.4:

Maecianum etiam, [filium Cassii] cui Alexandria erat commissa, exercitus occidit.

vita Avidii Cassii, 7.4:

Imperatorio animo cum processisset, eum qui sibi aptauerat ornamenta regia statim praefectum praetorii fecit; qui et ipse occisus est Antonio invito ab exercitu, qui et Maecianum, cui erat commissa Alexandria quique consenserat spe participatus Cassio, invito atque ignorante Antonino interemit.

Thus perishes Maecianus, a colluder in the rebellion. The only son of Cassius known to posterity is Avidius Heliodorus (possessing the *cognomen* of his paternal grandfather), and, although it is possible that Cassius had multiple sons, there are good reasons to doubt that Maecianus was one of them.⁴⁰⁵ In terms of the text, the passage from the *vita Marci* is problematic. The *Codex Palatinus* reads *filium Cassii* (*Marc.* 25.4), yet Ernst Hohl, in his Teubner edition of 1927 expressed doubts and suggested the deletion of the phrase; he also notes that ‘*fautorem Cassii*’ was preferred by Mommsen.⁴⁰⁶ In the Loeb edition of 1921 David Magie amended ‘*filium*’ to ‘*socium*’, following

⁴⁰² Stemmata: Jameson (1966), 126-7, 136f.; Pflaum (1970), 222. Both Jameson and Pflaum here assume Maecianus to be a son of Cassius, but the entry of the *cognomen* itself into the family is not in question.

⁴⁰³ Dio 71.27.3. The son is not named.

⁴⁰⁴ Both passages are from the Teubner text of Hohl (1927) 69, 90. His redactions are included.

⁴⁰⁵ Avidius Heliodorus is named by the biographer as a son of Cassius. *Marc.* 26.11-12; PIR² A 1404. The biographer uses *alii liberum* (26.11) and *fili Cassii* (26.12) when referring to the leniency of Marcus toward the children of Cassius, but it is possible he includes Dryantianus and Alexandria under the plurals. Cf. *OLD*, 701, 1024.

⁴⁰⁶ Hohl (1927), 69.

the suggestion of Peter, the editor of the 1865 Teubner.⁴⁰⁷ Despite the difficulties of the text, for the last seventy years the identification of Maecianus as a son of Cassius has been generally accepted, and is based in part on the reading of *filium Cassii*.⁴⁰⁸

By contrast, the passage from the *vita Cassii* is free from major textual difficulties.⁴⁰⁹ Before proceeding, it is worth noting that the *vita Marci* as a whole contains much more verifiable information than the fiction-ridden *vita* of Cassius. However, there are yet parts of the latter biography that are replicated from the better *vitae*.⁴¹⁰ While the minor *vitae* may not add a great deal of historical import, the sections of them securely correlated with the more reliable major *vitae* should not be dismissed without comment. It is certainly necessary to consider the information in both of the passages quoted above before passing a judgement upon a reading of one of them.

In this case, the crucial argument against the reading of *filius* in the *vita Marci* is the passage above from the *vita Cassii*. Here, the same Maecianus is described in terms more suited to a follower than a son of Cassius (*consenserat spe participatus Cassio*). The passage is clearly nothing more than an extended re-phrasing of the passage in the *vita Marci*. At this point there are no forgeries or peccadilloes presented to distress the scholar. The passage in the *vita Cassii* represents a clearer, uncontroversial version of the biographer's knowledge, whereas the equivalent passage in the *vita Marci* has become mired in a textual problem. In the *vita Cassii*, it is clear that the biographer did not identify Maecianus as a son of Cassius. Thus, the three premises for the identification of Maecianus as the son of Cassius are unreliable: i) the reading of *filius Cassii* in the *vita Marci* is uncertain; ii) the context provided by the passage in the *vita Cassii* should not be lightly

⁴⁰⁷ Magie (1921), 194-5; cf. H. Peter, *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (Teubner, 1865), 83.

⁴⁰⁸ Maecianus is considered a son of Cassius by: PIR² A 1406; Bowman (1970), 24, n. 24; Pflaum (1970), 221; Birley (1987), 192; Syme (1987), 218; Sidebottom (2005), 325-6. Cf. Schwartz (1978), 177; Ballou (1921), 108.

⁴⁰⁹ There are only two trivial textual issues. Hohl in 1927 followed the emendations of Peter, who amended the *senserat* of the *Codex Palatinus* to *consenserat*, and corrected *Mecianum* to *Maecianum*. Hohl (1927), 90.

⁴¹⁰ Syme (1970), 288.

dismissed; and iii) there is no convincing reason to combine the reading of *filius Cassii* in the *vita Marci* with Dio's account, in which neither name nor location is given for the son killed.⁴¹¹

IV. *The supporters of Cassius: The possibility of L. Volusius Maecianus*

An alternative may be offered. At the very least a note of caution must be added to the identification of Maecianus as a son of Cassius. That the *cognomen* 'Maecianus' or 'Maecius' entered the family is certain.⁴¹² Therefore, a Maecianus connected with Cassius need not be his son, but could rather be his father-in-law. The best candidate for the identification of Cassius' father-in-law is L. Volusius Maecianus, the noted jurist and tutor of Marcus. The chronology for his participation in the rebellion presents no difficulty. If a youth of twenty-five is to be considered for Maecianus, so too may an eminent consular. But the effectiveness of the argument need not be entrusted purely to the vagaries of chronology and nomenclature: Volusius Maecianus' career may be drawn upon in two particulars. These are: i) his attested post as *praefectus Aegypti*, proving previous experience in Egypt; and ii) his probable past acquaintance with Cassius.

First, his previous experience in Egypt. Volusius Maecianus was *praefectus Aegypti* when Marcus and Lucius succeeded Antoninus.⁴¹³ Cassius' father Avidius Heliodorus had likewise been prefect of Egypt (137-42), and it is possible that Cassius himself was born there during his father's time as *ab epistulis* to Hadrian, when that emperor visited Egypt in 130.⁴¹⁴ Cassius certainly gained the support of Egypt during his rebellion.⁴¹⁵ During his tour of the East subsequent to the collapse

⁴¹¹ Dio 71.27.3.

⁴¹² *Marc.* 26.12; *Av. Cass.* 9.3; Jameson (1966), 126-7, 136; cf. Cassius' granddaughter Maeciana Alexandra, PIR² A 512.

⁴¹³ PIR¹ V 657; Bastianini (1975), 295.

⁴¹⁴ Syme (1987), 218-22.

⁴¹⁵ Bowman (1970), 23ff.

of the rebellion, Marcus left one of his own daughters in Alexandria.⁴¹⁶ It is apposite that a daughter of Cassius was named Alexandria.⁴¹⁷ By leaving an imperial princess in a city which had espoused enthusiastically the cause of Cassius, Marcus was drawing a clear contrast between the usurper and his own legitimate imperial power. It was surely a pointed gesture, and not merely one of forgiveness.⁴¹⁸ It was also a practical decision. To the citizens of Alexandria, the presence of the emperor's daughter would serve as a constant reminder of the emperor's reach, as well as their own past misdeeds.⁴¹⁹ Marcus' decision was calculated to nullify Cassius' successful procurement of Egypt and the city of Alexandria during his rebellion. Such a move would be doubly necessary if Alexandria were in fact the birthplace of Cassius. Clearly the city played an important part in the rebellion. The connections between Cassius and Alexandria add up: his father had governed Egypt during Cassius' childhood, he himself was perhaps born there, and his putative father-in-law had also governed Egypt. If the Maecianus killed in the *vita* were indeed L. Volusius Maecianus, then the decision of Cassius to place him in charge of Alexandria is logical. Having previously been prefect of Egypt, L. Volusius Maecianus could perhaps help ensure the loyalty of the most important city to Cassius.

Secondly, there is the role of Volusius Maecianus as a tutor to Marcus.⁴²⁰ It follows that Volusius was in Rome during the youth of Marcus and Lucius. Cassius was around the same age as

⁴¹⁶ *Marv.* 26.3.

⁴¹⁷ *Marv.* 26.12; *Av. Cass.* 9.3.

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Birley (1987), 193.

⁴¹⁹ It would be worth knowing which daughter Marcus left in Alexandria, as the husband of the chosen daughter would surely serve to keep a watch on Egypt in some capacity. Of Marcus', five daughters, Vibia Sabina was too young, and Lucilla had probably remained behind with Pompeianus. Any of the three remaining daughters would fit well – Annia Galeria's husband, Claudius Severus, had connections in the East, albeit in a different region. Cornificia and Fadilla were probably married by 175, to Petronius Mamertinus and Peducaeus Quintillus respectively. Both these men would be relatively young in 175/6 – assuming consulships close to *suo anno* for both, Mamertinus would be in his mid-twenties and Quintillus in his early thirties. Perhaps Petronius Mamertinus is more the likely candidate to accompany Marcus and be left in Alexandria: he had strong African connections to Fronto and Aufidius Victorinus, and thus also to Arrius Antoninus, who also accompanied Marcus to the East. The connections between these families are confirmed in the third century, see *ILS* 7218. Descendants of Petronius, Fronto, and Aufidius Victorinus are recorded in 256 at Pisaurum, the *origo* of Victorinus: Petronius Victorinus, *PIR*² P 317; Petronius Aufidius Victorinus, *PIR*² P 317, stemma on 125.

⁴²⁰ *Marv.* 3.7; cf. *Ant. Pius* 12.1.

Lucius, and therefore almost the same age as Faustina.⁴²¹ Cassius served in the Parthian War under Lucius, and presumably spent much of his youth in Rome.⁴²² He would be well known to L. Volusius Maecianus, tutor of princes. Thus a personal acquaintance between Cassius and Volusius Maecianus dating back to Cassius' youth in Rome is possible on chronological grounds. If this acquaintance were enhanced by marriage and ambition, then, in view of the prior career of L. Volusius Maecianus, there would have been few better candidates in 175 for Cassius to entrust with the city of Alexandria.

It is, however, salient to outline some reasons for caution regarding Volusius Maecianus' participation in the rebellion. Nothing is known of his possible involvement beyond the reference in the *vitae*. Indeed, what is known of his career does not make him seem especially suited for such a role, though his duties in Alexandria during the rebellion would perhaps have been more administrative than military.⁴²³ The laws preserved in the *Codex Justinianus* that bear his name make no mention of his involvement in any scandal or rebellion.⁴²⁴ Again, however, it is worth stating that the various accounts of the rebellion are mired in confusion. If the rebellion were indeed based on the mistaken assumption that Marcus was dead, the tutor and jurist L. Volusius Maecianus perhaps thought he was simply lending his support, in a role to which he was suited, to the succession of his son-in-law.

In conclusion, it must suffice to say that the identification of Maecianus as a son of Cassius is uncertain. Above all, caution should prevail. The argument for the presence of Volusius Maecianus during the rebellion is worth consideration. If this identification be accepted, it is possible to see immediately that the rebellion becomes a much more threatening situation for Marcus. Not simply a general mounting the rebellion on his own auspices, perhaps due to bad

⁴²¹ Syme (1987), 218-9. Cf. however Astarita (1983), 29, esp. n. 49.

⁴²² Syme (1987), 218-9.

⁴²³ Although like most prefects he did have at least some military experience. See *AE* 1955, no. 179; P. A. Brunt, 'The Administrators of Roman Egypt', *JRS* 65 (1975), 131f. However, a prior career is not always as sound a guide as hindsight: the career of Cassius did not seem to incline him inevitably toward armed rebellion. Certainly according to Dio the rebellion surprised Marcus. Dio 71.17; 71.23.

⁴²⁴ *Dig.* 37.14.17.

information: in the person of Cassius, it is possible Marcus was confronted with an ambitious Eastern dynast with a faction of his own that included a former tutor of Marcus himself. For Marcus, the psychological blow of the rebellion would have been a double one: a trusted marshal, in overall command of the East, and an old tutor. The swift response of Marcus, somewhat muted in the sources, was then a reflection of both fear and anger.

V. *The supporters of Cassius: Eastern connections*

Apart from the problematic ‘Maecianus’, there are more certain indications of Cassius’ family connections in the East. His daughter Alexandria was married to a noble of Lycian extraction, Ti. Cl. Dryantianus.⁴²⁵ The marriage gives a glimpse of a base of noble support from the region which Cassius drew upon in 175. Dryantianus’ father, Claudius Agrippinus, was consul *suffectus* after 151, perhaps c. 160, close to the time Cassius himself was praetor.⁴²⁶ Dryantianus was connected through his consular father to two wealthy Lycian dynasties, one from Oenoanda and the other from Patara. His paternal grandmother’s family, the Licinnii, could trace their enfranchisement back to Nero.⁴²⁷ The union no doubt enhanced Cassius’ own Eastern connections.

In 175, it is possible that Dryantianus actively supported his father-in-law. However, his treatment immediately after the rebellion was relatively lenient.⁴²⁸ Dryantianus and Alexandria were placed under the protection of relatives, probably Claudia Helena, Dryantianus’ paternal aunt, and her husband Claudius Titianus.⁴²⁹ Dryantianus’ extended family does not seem to have been affected by the rebellion. Indeed, during the reign of Marcus only Dryantianus seems to

⁴²⁵ S. Jameson (1966), 126-7, 136f.; on Dryantianus see PIR² C 859; *Marc.* 26.11.

⁴²⁶ PIR² C 776.

⁴²⁷ S. Jameson (1966), 126ff.

⁴²⁸ Schwartz (1978), 177: ‘La seule chose sure est la clemence de l’empereur.’

⁴²⁹ Jameson (1966), 126.

have suffered at all, and that posthumously.⁴³⁰ This would seem to indicate mercy on the part of Marcus, and that the more extended members of the family had little to do with the rebellion of Cassius. But action was eventually taken, and it was severe: the property of Dryantianus was seized for the *fiscus* upon his death in 178. This confiscation is specifically ascribed to his participation in the rebellion of Cassius, and survives as a precedent in the *Codex Justinianus*.⁴³¹ If the motive for this cannot have been fiscal, as Birley argues, then the only explanation is that the confiscation of property was undertaken to punish the family of a traitor.⁴³² It would disinherit the children of Dryantianus and Alexandria. This attested decision forms an interesting contrast with the reported lenience of Marcus' behaviour in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion.⁴³³ The fact that any action against Cassius' daughter and son-in-law was deferred for three years, and occurred only after the (possibly natural) death of Dryantianus, perhaps indicates that, in 178, Marcus felt himself in a sufficiently strong enough position to exact some measure of punishment on the family of Cassius. At the same time, Commodus was being aggressively promoted and the various relatives and supporters of the dynasty are prominent in the *fasti*.⁴³⁴

VI. *Other supporters of Cassius*

There is little evidence remaining with which to reconstruct a wider faction for Cassius. Pudens and Manilius, purportedly Cassius' secretaries of correspondence, are little more than ciphers.⁴³⁵ The prefect of Egypt who supported Cassius, Calvisius Statianus, is used by Dio as an example

⁴³⁰ Cf. however *Av. Cass.* 13.7.

⁴³¹ *Mar.* 26.12; *Av. Cass.* 9.3-4; *Cod.* 9.8.6.

⁴³² Birley (1987), 205. Birley stops short of this conclusion, noting only that the motivations for the confiscation are unknown.

⁴³³ *Mar.* 26.10-13; cf. *Av. Cass.* 7.4-6.

⁴³⁴ Discussed in Chapter 2.

⁴³⁵ On Pudens, see Dio 71.29.1; on Manilius, Dio 71.7.4; PIR² M 129; Astarita (1983), 167, n. 18; G. B. Townend 'The Post of Ab Epistulis in the Second Century', *Historia* 10 (1961), 378-81. Townend includes a list (380-1), but makes no mention that Cassius may have employed Pudens as his *ab epistulis Graecis*, whilst Manilius served as his *ab epistulis Latinis*.

of the mercy of Marcus.⁴³⁶ Again, it is important to note that the lack of further evidence is possibly due to the actions of Marcus himself, or P. Martius Verus. According to Dio, the correspondence of Cassius was burnt when it was discovered.⁴³⁷ There seems little doubt that Dio intended the story to show evidence of the emperor's mercy, but there are hints too that the destruction of evidence was motivated by pragmatism.⁴³⁸ The destruction of evidence served to conceal the extent of the connections of Cassius, and to obscure the seriousness of the rebellion.⁴³⁹ Perhaps Marcus felt it wiser in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion to tread the path of reconciliation. Certainly he felt that the rebellion was serious enough to require a tour of the east to re-establish the imperial presence and demonstrate that the succession was secure.⁴⁴⁰

VII. *Conjecture: Cassius, the connections of Lucius, and opposition to the Marcomannic Wars*

It is probable that Cassius possessed many more supporters among the upper classes than is apparent. He could rely on a substantial portion of the legions.⁴⁴¹ But in order to mount a successful rebellion – or claim the throne in a succession struggle – he required some degree of senatorial support. Presumably he believed he could count on at least a substantial minority: otherwise, it is impossible to understand his actions on the news of the supposed ‘death’ of Marcus. Where this senatorial support could come from is difficult to establish. However, it is feasible that Cassius believed he could expect support from two groups in the aristocracy: i) opponents of the Marcomannic Wars, and ii) discontented connections of Lucius, deliberately overlooked by Marcus after 169.

⁴³⁶ Dio 71.28.3-4; PIR² C 356; Bastianini (1975), 298. Flavius Calvisius in Dio, now identified as Calvisius Statianus. He was exiled, but Marcus had the records of his case burnt.

⁴³⁷ Dio 71.29.2, 72.7.4; Gasco (1989), 475-6.

⁴³⁸ Dio 71.29.2, 72.7.4; Gasco (1989), 475-6.

⁴³⁹ Gasco (1989), 478; Walton (1929), 54ff. Cf. the career inscription of Valerius Maximianus: *AE* 1956, no. 124, esp. lines 12-13.

⁴⁴⁰ Birley (1987), 189-97; Hekster (2002), 37-9.

⁴⁴¹ Birley (1987), 186. There were three legions in Syria, two in Palestine, and one each in Arabia and Egypt. It is not to be forgotten, however, that Cassius was killed by his own soldiers.

On the first point, the aggressive military policy of Marcus along the Danube is crucial: Cassius in 175 may have been one of many senators who deemed the Marcomannic Wars unnecessary and expensive.⁴⁴² The issue of the aggressive northern campaigns had previously proved divisive. Marcus and Lucius disagreed on the extent of the policy before the latter's death in 169; and Lucius, according to the biographer, was less respectful toward Marcus after his triumphant return from the East.⁴⁴³ It is certainly possible that Cassius, himself of eastern extraction, held a negative view of the Marcomannic Wars. The opposition may have been widespread: even some of Marcus' friends were against the seemingly endless campaigns.⁴⁴⁴ Additionally, Cassius had been passed over by Marcus in 169 for the husband of Lucilla. The contrast between the two Syrians would be hard to miss. Cassius may have felt embittered that it was Pompeianus, his social inferior, who was selected to enter the imperial nexus.⁴⁴⁵ Finally, when Cassius was promoted to the Eastern command in 169 or 172, he assumed a powerful political and military position.⁴⁴⁶ The only possible rival to him in 175 (if Cassius believed the report of Marcus' death) was his fellow Syrian, the marshal and husband of Lucilla, Ti. Claudius Pompeianus.⁴⁴⁷ Pompeianus owed his imperial marriage to his military skill and his humble origins, and seems to have been a firm supporter of Marcus' expansionist policy along the Danubian frontier.⁴⁴⁸ In 175, then, if Cassius genuinely believed the rumour of Marcus' decease, he could naturally expect to gain the support of those senators who favoured peace along the Danube.

The second point, concerns the connections of Lucius and their possible support for Cassius. Before Lucius' death, relations between the co-emperors had not been completely harmonious.

⁴⁴² On the policy of Marcus along the Danube, see Kovács (2009), 213-41; Birley (1987), 188. Birley argues that the issue between Marcus and Cassius 'can only have been the question of peace or war'.

⁴⁴³ *Ver.* 8.6; Barnes (1967), 72. Although it is difficult to judge the veracity of the statement at 8.6, Barnes notes that the anecdotes in the same section of the *vita* (8.7-8), concerning Lucius' love for actors, seem to be confirmed by *ILS* 5203.

⁴⁴⁴ *Marv.* 22.8.

⁴⁴⁵ Stanton (1969), 582.

⁴⁴⁶ The position of Cassius in 175 is discussed in full below. His promotion was either after the suppression of the Boucoli in Egypt in 172, or in 169 after the death of Verus. Dio 71.3.1; Philostratus, *VS* 563; Syme (1987), 215f.; Astarita (1983), 78-89; Alföldy (1977), 181, esp. n. 176; *PIR*² A 1402.

⁴⁴⁷ Syme (1987), 220-2. The positions of Cassius and Pompeianus are discussed in full below.

⁴⁴⁸ *Herod.* 1.6.4-9.

The more scandalous rumours concerning Marcus' hand in the death of Lucius may be discounted.⁴⁴⁹ However, there were disagreements between two individuals of such differing characters. Their differences – personally and along policy lines – may not have died with Lucius. Rather, the death of Lucius simply meant that Marcus was left as the sole ruler of the empire, and could craft his own nexus around the imperial power independent of the connections of Lucius. It is necessary to emphasise at this point that Marcus had raised Lucius to the position of co-emperor on account of the latter's powerful family connections.⁴⁵⁰ Many of these connections would still be active in the senate in 175: but none had graced the consular *fasti* after the death of Lucius in 169,⁴⁵¹ and none were included among the *comites augusti* in 175/6 for eastern tour.⁴⁵² This is surprising considering Lucius' relatives had dominated the *fasti* from 154-61.⁴⁵³ Perhaps death had carried some off by 175, but surely not all. Old age alone was no barrier to a place among the imperial *comites*. Among them were the elder Quintilii, the consuls of 151.⁴⁵⁴ Marcus can only have excluded the relatives of Lucius from the ruling circle by deliberate policy.

Philostratus' account of the trial of Herodes Atticus at Sirmium suggests that tensions still existed in 174/5.⁴⁵⁵ The elder Quintilii had clashed with Herodes Atticus, the Athenian plutocrat, senator and consular of Rome, and sophist. The rival parties were culturally different. The Quintilii were from a Roman colony in Asia province, whereas Herodes was from an illustrious

⁴⁴⁹ It is difficult to establish the truth of the relationship between Marcus and Lucius, and it is important to discard the more implausible rumours, such as *Marv.* 15.5-6. However, it is possible that Marcus felt somewhat burdened by his younger co-emperor, and the issue of the northern campaigns was perhaps a genuine point of difference between them. *Marv.* 15.5, 22.8; *Ver.* 9.2, 9.7-11.4; Dio 70.3.1; Birley (1987), 158. Cf. *Med.* 1.17.4.

⁴⁵⁰ The accession of Lucius and the importance of his family is discussed in Chapter 2.

⁴⁵¹ An exception to this is Lucius', nephew, Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus. But he would not be consul until 177 – by which time he was the son-in-law of Marcus. He and the other consular relatives of Lucius are listed and discussed in Chapter 2.

⁴⁵² Birley (1987), 190-1. Accompanying Marcus were Commodus, Faustina, Pertinax, M. Valerius Maximianus, the elder Quintilii, Arrius Antoninus, Bassaeus Rufus, and (since Marcus left one of his daughters in Alexandria) at least one other son-in-law. Petronius Mamertinus is perhaps the more likely candidate: he had strong African connections to Fronto and Aufidius Victorinus, and thus also to Arrius Antoninus (*ILS* 7218 confirms the connections between the Petronii and Aufidii Victorini in the third century). The important provinces were securely held by loyal followers and family: the younger Quintilii were probably in the Pannonian provinces; Pompeianus was also probably left behind. The son-in-law of Fronto, Aufidius Victorinus, may still have been in Spain, and Antistius Adventus, whose son would be married to Vibia Sabina, was probably governor of Britain. The loyal P. Martius Verus had secured Syria in the aftermath of the rebellion.

⁴⁵³ Discussed in Chapter 2, above.

⁴⁵⁴ The elder Quintilii: *PIR*² Q 21, 27.

⁴⁵⁵ Philostratus *VS* 559-63. See also Oliver (1970), 66ff.

Athenian family that had possessed the citizenship for several generations.⁴⁵⁶ According to Philostratus, the dispute had begun when the Quintilii were made aware of the treatment of the Athenians by Herodes. There is also a suggestion of personal rivalry; that Herodes saw the Quintilii as his inferiors and mocked them.⁴⁵⁷ The Quintilii, eminent consulars and *amici* of Marcus, could well have reacted sharply to any insult. It is likely that Herodes resented what he saw as the interference of his social inferiors in the domestic affairs of Athens, where he was dominant. What is known of his character supports this interpretation.⁴⁵⁸ The conflict became serious enough for Herodes to bring a charge forward that the Quintilii were inciting the Athenians against him.⁴⁵⁹ The charge itself may have been relatively unimportant except as a medium for Herodes to prosecute his enemies, rival Athenian politicians and by extension the Quintilii. The result of the trial was unclear: Herodes was possibly exiled, or at least lived away from Athens for a time.⁴⁶⁰ Significantly, Philostratus also records that during the trial Marcus was distrustful of Herodes due to rumours of a previous conspiracy involving Lucius.⁴⁶¹ This anecdote need not be taken as proof a conspiracy existed, but neither should it be dismissed outright. Philostratus' sources for the trial were of good quality.⁴⁶² No conspiracy is necessary for the belief that Herodes' was indeed disadvantaged by his previous friendship with Lucius.⁴⁶³ It is

⁴⁵⁶ Herodes Atticus: Philostratus *VS* 546-66; PIR² C 802; M. Gleason 'Making space for bicultural identity: Herodes Atticus commemorates Regilla', in ed. T. Whitmarsh, *Local Knowledge and Microidentities in the Imperial Greek World* (Cambridge, 2010), 125-30; C. Jones 'Ancestry and Identity in the Roman empire', in ed. T. Whitmarsh, *Local Knowledge and Microidentities in the Imperial Greek World* (Cambridge, 2010), 112-3; Oliver (1970), 66ff.

⁴⁵⁷ Philostratus *VS* 559.

⁴⁵⁸ Gleason (2010), 126: 'His affluence, his eloquence and his arrogance put him in a league of his own.'

⁴⁵⁹ Philostratus *VS* 559-60.

⁴⁶⁰ Philostratus, *VS* 562; Birley (1987), 181. Birley suggests that Marcus merely asked Herodes to live away from Athens for a time. If this be true, then Marcus' delicate handling of the matter indicates the gravity of the situation.

⁴⁶¹ Philostratus *VS* 560-1; Dio 71.1.3. Cf. S. Swain, 'The Reliability of Philostratus's "Lives of the Sophists"', *Classical Antiquity* 10 (1991) 153-6, 162-3.

⁴⁶² The sources of Philostratus for Herodes: *VS* 566; Swain (1991), 153-6, 162-3.

⁴⁶³ A. Papalas 'Lucius Verus and the Hospitality of Herodes Atticus', *Athenaeum* 51 (1978), 182-5. Cf. Swain (1991), 163; Brunt (1974), 6, n. 28. Swain, although arguing for the general reliability of Philostratus in the *VS*, states that the comment concerning the conspiracy of Lucius and Herodes is an example of Philostratus' occasional gullibility. Brunt explains away the rumour by arguing that anything concerning Lucius not confirmed by Dio – who reports via the uncertain medium of Xiphilinus a plot involving Lucius, but declines to endorse its veracity – is likely to be 'tittle-tattle', from an inferior source (meaning the *HA* and its sources). He also argues that Herodes could not be condemned for any conspiracy involving Lucius because the trial was for a different matter. Whilst the trial was indeed nothing to do per se with any conspiracy involving Lucius and Herodes, Brunt displays remarkable faith in the incorruptibility of Marcus. There were at least contemporary rumours concerning tension between Marcus and Lucius.

further possible that Herodes only regained the favour of Marcus due to the rebellion of Cassius, when Marcus needed his influence in Athens.⁴⁶⁴ The whole episode, though difficult, does demonstrate that tensions existed among the upper classes. They were now composed of individuals of many regions and cultural affiliations, and the aspirations and values of the various groups were not always in accord. The concerns of a Roman consular of Athenian extraction – who was also an active Athenian politician – would not be the same as those of militarily experienced consulars from a Roman colony. In this case there was also possibly a link to previous tensions between Marcus and Lucius: without necessarily giving credibility to the existence of a conspiracy, the anecdote may have its source in more than malicious gossip. Marcus had shunted aside the relatives and connections of Lucius after his co-ruler's death, and this was occurring during the same years in which the issue of the Marcomannic Wars was perhaps proving divisive among the culturally disparate upper classes.

If Lucius were indeed opposed to the campaigns in the north, then he was presumably the most prominent mouthpiece of the opposition. This opposition would include his family connections, aristocratic and ensconced in the heart of the oligarchy. After Lucius' death, Marcus' disfavour toward the connections of Lucius may well have left in its wake disgruntled nobles of high family and high aspirations. If they did not oppose the Marcomannic Wars, they may still have had their own reasons to be less than content under Marcus.⁴⁶⁵ Cassius, despite his long tenure in the East, would no doubt be aware of this through correspondence. He would also probably have personal acquaintance with many of these individuals. In the context of the situation in 175, Cassius may well have believed (supposing Marcus dead) that he was ideally placed to receive the support of any senators who had reason to be less than content under Marcus. Thus, as well hoping for the support of any senators who opposed the Marcomannic Wars, Cassius may also have counted on the support of the relatives of Lucius.

⁴⁶⁴ Oliver (1970), 33-5, 79ff.

⁴⁶⁵ Champlin (1979), 305-6. Champlin makes an eloquent argument that in 193 the Ceionii and their allies were still alert for imperial opportunity, and were willing to intrigue for the imperial power after the death of Commodus.

VIII. *The Senate and the Rebellion*

The attested role the senate played in the rebellion is intriguing. As argued above, it is possible that Cassius had many more supporters among the upper classes and in the senate than is apparent from the sources. The merciful conduct of Marcus during his tour of the east may have been motivated by a desire to present a strong front, concealing as best he could the depth of sympathy for the rebellion.

From the role of the senate in the rebellion of Cassius may be glimpsed a different picture of the heretofore respectful attitude of Marcus towards this body.⁴⁶⁶ It is the senate who declare Cassius *hostis* and remove his property into the public treasury.⁴⁶⁷ Once this step was taken, the fate of Cassius was sealed, and misinformation and confusion over his motives would matter little. In the *HA*, the implication is that the senate acted independently when it condemned Cassius. Nevertheless, according to the biographer elements of the very same senate were judiciously selected by Marcus (10.4-5):

multos ex amicis in senatum adlegit cum aedilicus aut praetoriis dignitatibus. multis senatoribus verum pauperibus sine crimine dignitates tribunicias aediliciasque concessit. nec quemquam in ordinem legit, nisi quem ipse bene scisset. hoc quoque senatoribus detulit ut, quotiens de quorum capite esset iudicandum, secreto pertractaret atque ita in publicum proderet...

Marcus enrolled many of his friends in the senate, with the rank of aedile or praetor. He bestowed the rank of aedile or praetor on many senators who were poor but undeserving of blame – and he did not appoint anyone as a senator whom he did not know personally. He granted senators the further privilege that whenever any of them was to

⁴⁶⁶ *Mar.* 10.1-9.

⁴⁶⁷ *Mar.* 24.9.

be tried on a capital charge, he would examine the evidence behind closed doors and only after doing so would bring the case to public trial...

A positive perspective is given here to Marcus' use of his powers to adlect individuals to the senate. In the absence of examples, the number of senators who were actually adlected by Marcus is more difficult to ascertain.⁴⁶⁸ The passage is more usually viewed as confirmation of Marcus' respect for the institution of the senate, a hallmark of his reign.⁴⁶⁹ But in the context of the senate's condemnation of Cassius, a different reading can be argued for. Marcus, according to the biographer, appointed only men whom he knew: *multi ex amicis*. Furthermore, he alone would decide if a capital charge went ahead in the case of a senator.⁴⁷⁰ Generosity perhaps: but double-edged. The passage hints at the control that Marcus exercised over the senate. If the biographer be correct, then many senators were beholden to Marcus personally.

It was this senate that declared Cassius a public enemy. On the news of the rebellion, Marcus – unusually, as Dio notes – also did not consult the senate on the hasty truce he concluded with the Iazyges.⁴⁷¹ Perhaps this also indicates he did not have time to consult the senate on the status of Cassius specifically. Evidently any supporters of Cassius did not constitute a majority; but it is impossible to gauge the level of support Cassius would have gained had Marcus actually died. The level of division in the senate remains unclear.

Logic and chronology may yet assist. The senate, on the news of the rebellion, either acted immediately to condemn Cassius without instructions from Marcus, or followed an imperial directive to do so. The first possibility would preserve for Marcus the appearance of leniency in his dealings with the senate: he may 'respect' the wishes of the senate, and loses nothing by his

⁴⁶⁸ Perhaps some individuals from the Eastern provinces. See Walton (1929), 58-60.

⁴⁶⁹ Indeed most of this section of the biography (*Mar.* 10.1-9) is concerned to emphasise Marcus', careful and respectful attitude toward the senate.

⁴⁷⁰ *Mar.* 10.6.

⁴⁷¹ Dio 71.17; cf. *Mar.* 25.1.

expression of mercy toward Cassius.⁴⁷² In this case, Marcus would be free to speak for leniency and diplomacy in full knowledge that the senate - *his* senate - would take the logical step of declaring Cassius a public enemy. The second possibility, however, would mean that the remarks of Marcus on forgiveness and reconciliation (either uttered by Marcus at the time, inserted after the fact into the recorded speech, or inserted by Dio) contained sentiments that should not be taken seriously. Had Marcus sent an explicit directive, then he was certainly anxious that the outlawing of Cassius be accomplished swiftly. There are reasons for supposing apprehension on the part of Marcus concerning the decisions of the senate in Rome.

This apprehension is centred on the panic in Rome which broke out upon the news of the rebellion of Cassius. The elite of the city feared he would wreak bloody vengeance upon the senate for having declared him a public enemy.⁴⁷³ Marcus immediately sent the experienced Vettius Sabinianus to Rome. The appointment was not out of character: Sabinianus, of equestrian origins and admitted to the senate by Antoninus, had previously served in two special appointed capacities.⁴⁷⁴ Clearly he was valued by Marcus. His identity is preserved by an inscription, and his role during the rebellion of Cassius is blandly described as *ad tutelam urbis*: the protection of the city.⁴⁷⁵ A different interpretation of events may be offered. The senate had declared Cassius *hostis*. Panic and chaos gripped Rome. Marcus sent one of his most reliable men, experienced in extraordinary commissions, with a small force. The biographer and the inscription describe the task of Sabinianus as to protect the city from Cassius.⁴⁷⁶ Instead, it is possible that the senate was not entirely united in its condemnation of Cassius. The purpose of the expedition of Sabinianus could well have been the pacification of Rome, not the protection. The aristocratic supporters of Cassius, whoever they may have been, were quickly confronted

⁴⁷² *Mar.* 10.2; 25.5-6.

⁴⁷³ *Av. Cass.* 7.7-9. Senators could no doubt recall stories of the final years of Hadrian. Conspiracy and bloody revolution were not at all foreign concepts to senators under the Antonines.

⁴⁷⁴ *AE* 1920, no. 45. The inscription attests to his long career, which began under Antoninus.

⁴⁷⁵ *AE* 1920, no. 45.

⁴⁷⁶ *Av. Cass.* 7.7.

with a show of force by Sabinianus. The intention would be to reassure loyal elements, as well as to quell any agitation on the part of senators inclined to favour Cassius.

The paucity of evidence means that the point cannot be pressed too far. Patently, however, Marcus viewed the rebellion as a serious threat. One facet of this perceived threat could well have been that Cassius did indeed have a substantial group of supporters behind him. It is not to be supposed that he would embark on such a course without support from prominent men. The usurper would surely not be the lone beneficiary if he succeeded in his audacious bid for power.

IX. *The Motivations of Cassius: Capax Imperii and the role of Pompeianus*

By 175 Cassius had been in the east for at least ten years. His suffect consulship in 166 was served in absence, and he was governor of Syria and the entire east from 169 or 172. With a hitherto successful career, a secure position as the commander of the east and possible personal acquaintance with the imperial family, Cassius in 175 possessed a strong claim to be *capax imperii*. Cassius' own imperial ambitions - whatever they truly were - would surely be enhanced by positioning himself as the guardian of the young Commodus. Even lacking a secret arrangement with Faustina, the death of Marcus in 175 would offer an ambitious general much in the way of possibilities. Cassius would have had much to gain from a crisis of succession in 175, and he would gain it, so he apparently believed, as a successor, not a usurper. The difficulty was the question of who would be – or could be – *capax imperii*. Cassius was indeed in a strong position in 175. But there was one man who was in a stronger position still. This was Lucilla's second husband, Tī. Claudius Pompeianus. He had been prominent in the Marcomannic Wars since before his marriage to Lucilla in late 169, and since then his prestige had only grown.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁷ Pompeianus' second consulship was in 173, as *ordinarius*, after an interval of only six years. Marcus was possibly unable to spare him from the front, and he may have served his term in absentia. Birley (1987), 175-6, 185-6; Alföldy (1977), 187: 'Abgesehen von dem Mitgliedern der kaiserlichen Familie wie auch von Cn. Claudius Severus und Tī.

Pompeianus is the one son-in-law excepted from Syme's assessment that Marcus, 'insistent that a son should succeed, had consigned his daughters to inconspicuous husbands.'⁴⁷⁸ Yet Syme still dismisses Pompeianus on the basis that he was 'advanced in years and an Antiochene of humble extraction.'⁴⁷⁹ Pompeianus indeed possessed both age and a relatively humble background, but the emphasis placed on these factors by Syme can be nullified. In terms of the advanced years of Pompeianus, two brief statements should suffice. Whatever his exact age – and he was probably well into his fifties by 175 – Pompeianus' health was obviously vigorous.⁴⁸⁰ This is attested by five years of solid campaigning as Marcus' chief marshal and military advisor, and the fact that he was still alive in 193 to aid his protégé, Pertinax.⁴⁸¹ If Pompeianus is to be considered advanced in years in 175, the same could be easily said of Cassius, who would be in his mid-forties.

Neither is the humble extraction as weighty a burden as it seems. Pompeianus had been Marcus' son-in-law for five years by 175. The biographer records that neither the Lucilla nor Faustina favoured the marriage.⁴⁸² The marriage in any event does not seem to have been very connubial, despite the birth of a son c. 176.⁴⁸³ Pompeianus was also no doubt trusted by the Danubian legions, and possessed the adherence of men like Pertinax.⁴⁸⁴ His humble birth is thus rendered a cipher by recourse to chronological facts: in 175 he was the trusted marshal and son-in-law of Marcus and presumably in the full favour of the powerful Danubian legions. In the event of a contested succession, humble origin might not matter as much as to whom these hardened

Claudius Pompeianus, den Schwiegersöhnen des Kaisers Marcus, betrug bei den Senatoren der Antoninenzeit das Intervall zwischen dem ersten und dem zweiten Konsulat mindestens 13 Jahre'.

⁴⁷⁸ Syme (1987), 220.

⁴⁷⁹ Syme (1987), 221.

⁴⁸⁰ PIR² C 973; *Marc.* 20.6-7.

⁴⁸¹ For the role of Pompeianus in the accession and reign of Pertinax, see Champlin (1979), 288ff.; Birley (1988), 89.

⁴⁸² *Marc.* 20.7.

⁴⁸³ Their son was Aurelius Commodus Pompeianus, consul in 209 and killed by Caracalla in 212, perhaps because of his status as a grandson of Marcus Aurelius. Due to the date of his consulship, he was probably born c. 176. His nomenclature was a source of some confusion, and it is still uncertain if he is to be identified with the dedicatee of *ILS* 4794, a military tribune named Ti. Claudius Pompeianus. See now J. F. Oates 'A Sailor's Discharge and the Consuls of A. D. 209', *Phoenix* 30 (1976), 285-6; cf. Pflaum (1961), 33; PIR² C 972. The marriage was not a success; it was probably due to this, as well as his prestige, that Pompeianus survived the downfall of Lucilla in 182. On the plot of Lucilla, see *Her.* 1.8.3-6; *Dio* 71.4.4-6; *Comm.* 4.1ff.

⁴⁸⁴ Pertinax was rescued from obscurity on the recommendation of Pompeianus. *Pert.* 2.4-5; Birley (1988), 63-7.

soldiers gave their loyalty. Compared to Pompeianus, Cassius would have seemed virtually an eastern potentate.⁴⁸⁵

There are also reasons enough for Pompeianus to have justified his own claim for regency, ostensibly or truthfully on behalf of Commodus. That the opportunity was not presented to Pompeianus in 175 is not as important as what Cassius believed to be the situation. Enough sons of Marcus and Faustina had died young already to make Pompeianus' position in 175 analogous to that of *capax imperii*.⁴⁸⁶ Cassius and Pompeianus would both know this. That Pompeianus did not pursue such a position in the event of Marcus' actual death in 180, or after the murder of Commodus in December 192, are not arguments against his position in 175. Circumstances had changed much after five years, and unrecognisably so after seventeen.⁴⁸⁷ But in 175, Cassius cannot have been unaware of the position of Pompeianus. Again, then, the question returns to one of motivation. The necessity of the search for the motives behind Cassius' rebellion is not reduced by its unrewarding nature. The problem can be summed up: were Marcus alive, Cassius would be a usurper; were Marcus dead, he would be in a seriously weaker position than Pompeianus, the esteemed marshal who was present on the Danube, and the husband of Lucilla Augusta.

Here, then, the analysis of Syme must be revised: Cassius was by no measure the *capax imperii*, possessed of no rivals.⁴⁸⁸ Had Marcus died in 175, Cassius was not in the strongest position to succeed. His military achievements, his high post in the east, and family connections: all were indeed formidable. But they are bettered at every turn by Pompeianus. It was Pompeianus who had been inducted by marriage into the imperial family, not Cassius. It was Pompeianus who had

⁴⁸⁵ Syme (1987), 209-10. Syme corrects the erroneous assumption that Cassius had served in Moesia Superior (based on *AE* 1979, no. 516).

⁴⁸⁶ According to the stemma of Birley, seven or eight children of Marcus and Faustina had died by 175. Commodus was possibly the only son alive. Birley (1987), 239.

⁴⁸⁷ By 180, Commodus was firmly entrenched as the heir of Marcus, but, in 175, owing to his extreme youth of Commodus, the situation was far less stable. In 193, Pompeianus refused the power for himself and actively supported Pertinax on the throne. Champlin (1979), 288-91.

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. Syme (1987), 220.

built a reputation alongside Marcus on the harsh frontiers of the Danube, not Cassius. Even supposing Cassius wilfully believed the false report of the emperor's death, it was Pompeianus who would be present on the frontier. Pompeianus, not Cassius, would be in attendance at the alleged (and eventually the actual) death-bed of Marcus. In breeding and marriages, Cassius' connections were not decisively superior after 169.

There remains then only one factor able to explain the rebellion of Cassius, whether he was honestly mistaken or not. Cassius, in 175, must have assumed – or known – that he could count on a sizeable faction among the aristocracy, and thus mitigate his military disadvantages. The difference between Cassius and Pompeianus was the question of aristocratic support.⁴⁸⁹ This argument is rendered more reasonable if Cassius did indeed believe Marcus dead, but certainty here is not possible. Considering the response of Marcus to the rebellion, it is plain that it was viewed as a serious threat. A genuine rebellion cannot be ruled out, and Cassius indeed pressed on with his plans even after he knew Marcus was alive.⁴⁹⁰ Ambition is a possible factor, and the arrangement with Faustina is not impossible. Cassius perhaps relied on winning the loyalty of the governor of Cappadocia, his old comrade P. Martius Verus.⁴⁹¹ Had Marcus died in 175, such a gambit may have succeeded. But still Pompeianus would stand in the way of Cassius' claim. In the end, the belief of Cassius in the death of Marcus is not the critical issue it seems. The question which becomes crucial is what support Cassius hoped for or expected: he must have had reason to believe he could succeed against Pompeianus at least, and possibly Marcus. Whether or not he thought Marcus deceased, nothing else can explain his rebellion.

⁴⁸⁹ Perhaps the issue of aristocratic support was linked to policy. The driving force behind the aggressive northern campaigns appears to derive from the conviction of Marcus himself. Perhaps Cassius with his origin and connections firmly in the East, was, like Lucius, persuaded that the war along the Danube was costly and wasteful. The sentiments of Pompeianus, the loyal general of Marcus, certainly did not incline towards this direction. Discussed above.

⁴⁹⁰ Dio 71.23.1.

⁴⁹¹ Martius commanded *V Macedonia* (CIL 3.6169), in the Parthian War, and afterward governed Cappadocia. PIR² M 348.

4. Conclusions

That Cassius possessed ambition in abundance is not in question. Whether his erroneous belief in Marcus' early decease was genuine does not, in the final measure, matter overmuch. Cassius may have expected more support if he truly thought Marcus was dead; but if he were mistaken, then presumably he quickly became aware of his error. If Cassius did not act under false information, the events of the rebellion are more easily understood and follow a simpler path of logic. The problem remains to show convincingly the beginning of the path. This may lie in opposition to the Marcomannic Wars. Cassius perhaps became the leader of this opposition: he was in an excellent position to do so after 169 or 172, and may have benefited from the support of the connections of Lucius. It is at least clear Cassius he did not stop his rebellion upon discovering his error – if indeed he was genuinely mistaken. He chose not to sue for peace: when he died, Marcus was preparing to march East with his legions. The fact that Cassius did not or could not halt his rebellion is a more important point than questions over the relative innocence of his ambitions and motivations. It reveals something not only about Cassius, but also about Marcus. Clearly Marcus felt that his rule was not as stable as he had supposed.

As soon as he heard that Marcus was alive and was rousing the Danubian legions to move east against him, Cassius could have thrown himself on the mercy of the emperor. But Marcus was no fool, and the suggestions of possible reconciliation in the sources should be treated cautiously. At the very least, the public career of Cassius would be over and he could expect exile. No emperor could afford to shelter a proven usurper, whether or not some claim of innocence through ignorance could be justified. Marcus may have held an olive branch out to Cassius, but his senate had already duly declared Cassius an enemy of the state and his property forfeit to the *fiscus*. Marcus' Eastern tour continues this theme. On the one hand, he is confirming his son Commodus as his heir and strengthening the position of the dynasty in the east, an area he now knew he could not afford to neglect. The other purpose of Marcus was

possibly more subtle, but should still be differentiated from the more obvious purpose of promoting Commodus. The seriousness of the rebellion had shaken Marcus, and the tour of the East was necessary to see how deep it had run and to restore the lustre of the imperial power. But this was the only reason: the infamous incident of the burning of the correspondence of Cassius is of crucial importance. It indicates the Marcus did not wish the full extent of the rebellion to become clear. The Eastern tour was as much for the benefit and punishment of those cities and regions that had supported Cassius as it was for the succession of Commodus. It was in essence an expedition driven both by proactive and reactive motivations. For examples of the latter motivation, Marcus did not visit Cyrrhus, the probable birthplace of Cassius, and referred to the inhabitants of Antioch as rebels.⁴⁹² In a marked contrast, he lavished his forgiveness upon Egypt and in particular Alexandria, a city with close ties to Cassius. Cassius had perhaps been born there, he certainly would have accompanied his father there as a young boy, and had astutely used the connections in his rebellion. Marcus went so far as to leave one of his daughters in Alexandria.⁴⁹³

Cassius' rebellion may have begun in error. This is not, in the first cause, because he was honestly mistaken about the death of Marcus, although this cannot be ruled out. A final resolution on the matter cannot be decisive, but the premise of a previous argument has been shown to be less important. Cassius made an immense gamble, whatever the state of his information. Perhaps he was embittered by perceived slights, perhaps misinformed about more than the state of the emperor's health. He may have expected more support. In the end his rebellion expedited and exposed fully the dynastic designs of Marcus. The precise motives of Cassius remain as obscure as ever; the only recourse is to argue the manner and extent of his misinformation. One shred of clarity may finally be mentioned. It is clear is that once he placed

⁴⁹² *Marc.* 25.10.

⁴⁹³ *Marc.* 26.3.

his feet on the road to rebellion – or, as he may have thought, succession – he could not retrace his steps. Cassius knew this as well as Marcus.

Conclusions

Hadrian's Heir?

The succession policy of Hadrian is a difficult matter. The events of 136-8 eventually propelled Marcus to the imperial power, but were also to cast a long shadow. Hadrian turned on his great-nephew Pedanius Fuscus and his brother-in-law, the triple consul Ursus Servianus. His first choice as heir, Aelius Caesar, died and Hadrian then selected T. Aurelius Fulvus Boionius Arrius Antoninus, who was then made to adopt the young L. Ceionius Commodus, and the nephew of Aurelius' wife, M. Annii Verus. From a young age then Marcus was embroiled in the dynastic schemes of the oligarchy; at stake was nothing less than the imperial power. Adoptions were used to manipulate propinquity and proximity to the power. It was a lesson Marcus would not forget.

In both arrangements of Hadrian the superior position went to Lucius, but the support of the Annii Veri was crucial for Hadrian to obtain. The hostility of the senate was a menace to Hadrian in his final years; there were no doubt long memories among the aristocracy regarding the possibly doubtful adoption of Hadrian himself and his suppression of four consulars in the first year of his reign. It was perhaps this hostility that led Hadrian to select Antoninus Pius, a sober and inoffensive man of excellent connections, especially to the powerful triple-consular Annii Verus and his extended family. Marcus was thus brought into the immediate orbit of the imperial family through Antoninus, married to an aunt of Marcus. Antoninus wasted little time after the death of Hadrian in ensuring the prominence of his wife's nephew over Hadrian's choice, Lucius. Lucius extended family could not be cast aside, however, and the actions of Antoninus had their ultimate consequence in the conciliation of Lucius in 161.

Hadrian's ultimate intention was for Lucius and the Ceionii to succeed him. His intentions were undone: first by Antoninus Pius, and subsequently by Marcus himself in 161. Marcus appeared to fulfil the wishes of Hadrian, but it was politics. Lucius and his connections were conciliated, and Lucius given a share the imperial power. The connections of Lucius continued to gain access to the highest honours for a time, but not after Lucius' death in 169.

The sons-in-law of Marcus

Marcus chose his sons-in-law with care. On each occasion, immediate requirements and long-term policy were served. Marcus required men not beholden to any previous imperial nexus, and he required men with strong connections of their own. His sons-in-law and the circumstances of their marriages show Marcus as an astute politician: the general Pompeianus was secured for the dynasty in 169, and Antistius Adventus' support was secured through the marriage of his son to Vibia Sabina in the aftermath of Cassius' rebellion. Peducaeus Quintillus, a close male connection of Lucius and as such a possible threat, was co-opted. The only other option would have been suppression, but Marcus was unwilling to sacrifice his carefully cultivated relationship with the aristocracy. Claudius Severus, the son of a friend of Marcus, was chosen for his family connections; likewise Petronius Mamertinus, a representative of the vibrant and growing African-Roman aristocracy.

All Marcus' sons-in-law served as *consules ordinarii*, and this is crucial for the chronology of their marriages. None, except perhaps Antistius Burrus, received the honour before marriage. Marcus, over a period of twenty years, used marriages to consolidate the position of the imperial family and build his own nexus. New connections with prominent provincials were formed. Throughout, Marcus moved consistently away from the connections of Lucius. This is particularly clear after 169, and discontent among some members of the aristocracy, combined

with unhappiness concerning the military policy of Marcus during the near-constant Marcomannic Wars, may have contributed to the delicate circumstances that culminated in the rebellion of Cassius.

The Rebellion of Cassius

The rebellion of Cassius may represent the last stand of the *amici* and connections of Lucius. It is probably that discontent concerning the Marcomannic Wars existed, and that some of this discontent lay along regional lines. This may have enabled the connections of Lucius to view the rebellion as a possibility for change, and Cassius as the agent of that change. Cassius had extensive connections in the East, and was in a powerful position when he mounted his rebellion. If he truly believed Marcus dead, then he gambled that he would have enough military and political support to defeat Pompeianus, who would surely be his rival in such a situation. Commodus was too young to rule alone, and the struggle would be one of regency – or succession. Cassius was certainly ambitious, but it will never be known how much he knew and when he knew it. But he kept on with his rebellion. It is clear that he did not stop his rebellion upon discovering his error – if indeed he was genuinely mistaken. Cassius knew, in the end, that he could not turn back.

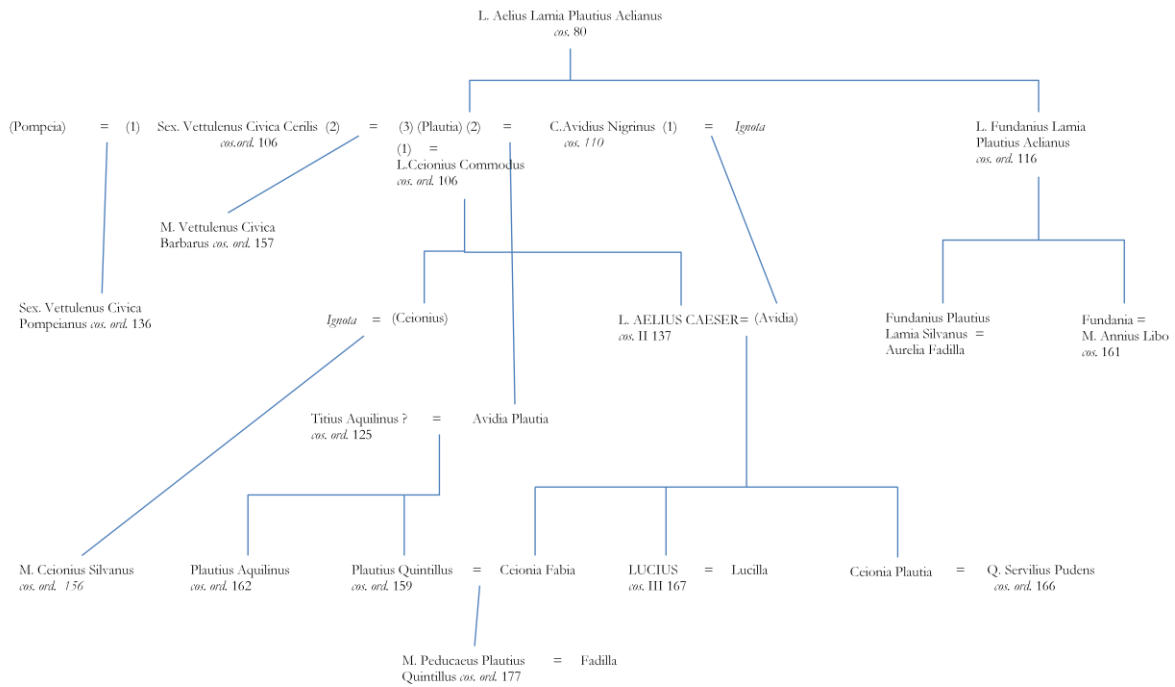
Reconciliation was impossible, and any suggestion of such in the sources should be treated cautiously. The public career of Cassius would be over and he could expect exile at least. The seriousness of the rebellion had shaken Marcus, and thrown his dynastic arrangements onto an insecure footing. The burning of the correspondence of Cassius is of crucial importance. If it be true, it argues equally for fear as for forgiveness on the part of Marcus. he did not fail to punish the cities which had supported Cassius. The Eastern tour was motivated by trepidation, politics, and pragmatism.

A final resolution on the rebellion of Cassius cannot be decisive. Cassius made an immense gamble, whatever the state of his information. Perhaps he was embittered by perceived slights, perhaps misinformed about more than the state of the emperor's health. For this thesis, it is important that in the end his rebellion expedited and exposed fully the dynastic designs of Marcus. The men selected by Marcus as his sons-in-law after the rebellion of Cassius reflect a growing anxiety on the part of Marcus as to the internal security of his position, and indicate that his ultimate objective was, as always, the protection and retention of the imperial power. He accelerated the creation of his own independent nexus, and in the end successfully bequeathed to Commodus a powerful and influential group of *amici* who owed their advancement entirely to Marcus' imperial favour.

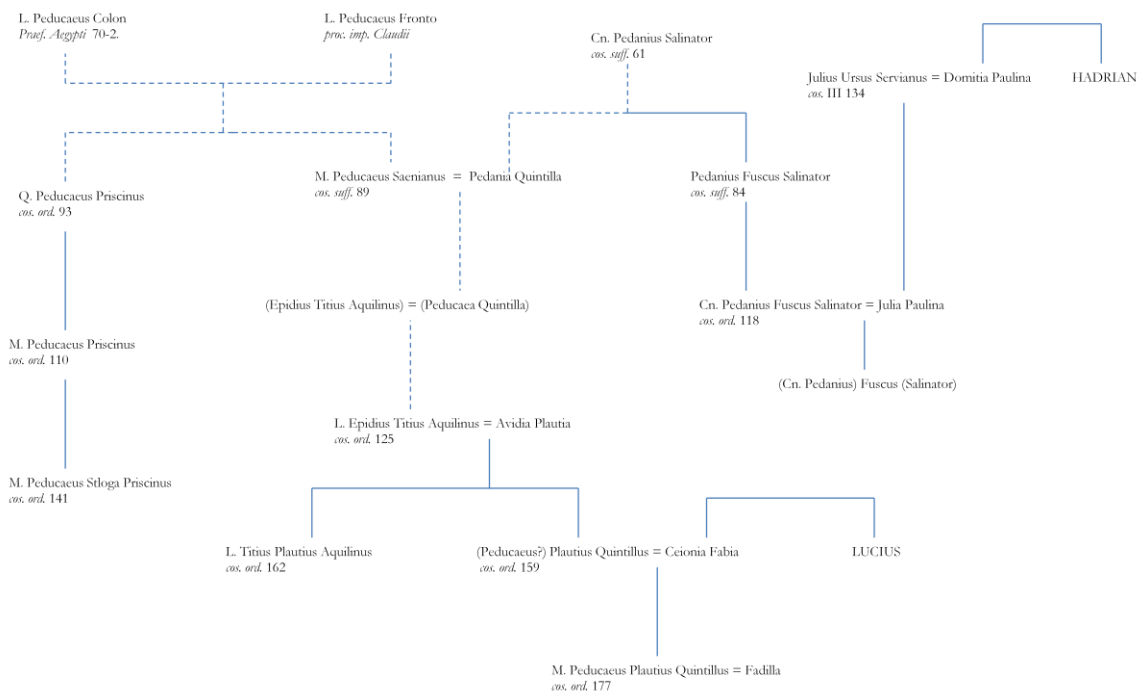
Marcus, throughout his reign, constructed his own nexus around the imperial power. His sons-in-law were crucial parts of this nexus, and they brought with them their own families and connections. We cannot know the mind of Marcus from prosopographical evidence. But it is clear that from a prosopographical analysis of his sons-in-law and the context of his decisions that Marcus, whatever else he was, was a shrewd and politically motivated Roman emperor.

Appendix 1: Stemmata

Stemma I: LUCIUS



Stemma II: PEDUCAEUS



Appendix 2:

The date of Claudius Severus' first consulship

The date of the first consulship of Claudius Severus is doubtful. Many older scholars prefer an earlier date of 162-3; e.g. Walton (1929), 59f.; Degraffi (1952), 132. Against this, Pflaum (1961) p. 29f., argues that Claudius Severus was born at the earliest in 133 (dating his father's birth by counting back from the consulship of 146, thus c. 114, in Arabia) and thus should not have reached the consulship before 166. V. Nutton (*Galen: On Prognosis*, 166-7, cf. 2.24-7; 5.17) defends the earlier date by reference to Galen's usual reliability, and suggests Pflaum may be adhering too strictly to the convention of the consulship *suo anno*; and that a consulship before 163 is possible if the marriage were before this date. Claudius Severus, on that argument, would benefit from an early consulship based on his imperial marriage. However, with the more recent work on Faustina's date of birth by such scholars as Ameling (1992) 149ff., it is less likely that Claudius Severus had married Faustina by 163. An earlier betrothal could be argued, but less likely a marriage before 163, in which year Faustina was either in her tenth or twelfth year.

Pflaum (1961), p. 29f., also argues on two points that it cannot have been later than 166: i) Claudius Severus' precedence over Pompeianus on the *fasti* in 173 meant that he must have reached his first consulship before the first consulship of Pompeianus; ii) if Claudius Severus' first consulship were any later than 166 then the consulship of 173 would follow too quickly. It is certainly possible to argue that Claudius Severus could reach his first consulship before 166. His father's date of birth, which according to Pflaum was 114, is used to account for his consulship in 146. It could easily be placed earlier. Arabianus' father – Claudius Severus' grandfather – was governor of Arabia from c. 107 – 115. If Arabianus were born earlier he could marry earlier (on the current measure Arabianus is 19 when his son Claudius Severus is born, counting from c. 114-33). Thus Claudius Severus could be born earlier than 133 and be eligible for a consulship before 166. Cf. however Alföldy (1977) 182-3, who places the consulship tentatively in the first

half of 167 by arguing that Claudius Severus had greater standing than both the *ordinarii* of 166 (Q. Servilius Pudens and L. Fufidius Pollio), and thus had he been old enough (32/3) in this year, as the son of an *ordinarius* he would have been granted the status of *ordinarius* (he thus implicitly accepts Pflaum's measurement of the age of Claudius Severus). According to Alföldy, then, Claudius Severus should be considered *suffectus* early in 167 (before the term of Pompeianus): if he were old enough by 167 his not gaining the more prestigious place as *ordinarius* is no affront. He could not outrank the *ordinarii* of 167, who were Lucius and Marcus' nephew M. Ummidius Quadratus.

Alföldy's view is tempting, but may be countered: Q. Servilius Pudens, the consul *ordinarius* of 166, was in fact married to Ceionia Plautia and was thus the brother-in-law of Lucius. Thus he would outrank Claudius Severus - unless Claudius Severus had already married Faustina. But, as noted above, the old date for the marriage of c. 163 must in all likelihood be moved forward, as it was based partially on the erroneous assumption that Faustina's birth permitted a marriage by this year. If the date for the marriage should be moved forward, it makes an earlier consulship for Claudius Severus less likely.

Faustina was younger than Lucilla, who was born in 150. Birley, (2000) 102f., places Faustina's birth between 151 and 153, the year before or after the birth of the short-lived infant T. Aelius Antoninus. If the earliest possible date of 151 be correct, Faustina can hardly have been married to Claudius Severus before 164. Accounting for the uncertainty in her age a date of c. 166 for the marriage seems the more reasonable. This maintains the putative date of birth for the consul of 200, Ti. Cn. Claudius Severus Proculus, used by Pflaum as a *terminus ante quem* for the marriage (again, this estimate relies on a consulship in the thirty-third year of life). Claudius Severus then, if not married until sometime in 166, could surely serve as *suffectus* earlier in that year without questions of his status arising.

There is a larger issue here: both Alföldy's and Pflaum's arguments rest on a rather rigid interpretation of the *cursus*. The assumption that the son of an *ordinarius* inherited the consulship and became consul at 32/3 has been questioned with some success: Burton (1995), 218-31. For the contrary view, held also by Alföldy, cf. Hahn and Leunissen (1990), 60-81. Something may, however, be said about Burton's approach regarding brothers holding the consulship (pp. 226f). As he rightly points out, there are few attested examples among the sons of *ordinarii* or *suffecti*. He uses this as a part of his argument that the consulship did not become an inheritance under the Antonines: essentially, if this were true then there should be more sets of brothers. He correctly notes too that Alföldy's point (that we know of no son of an *ordinarius* who, upon reaching the correct age, failed to obtain a consulship) is nullified by the nature of the evidence: only the successful brothers would be known, and many of these are no more than ciphers. A low birth-rate does not account for the lack of brothers on the *fasti*, the statistics are too anomalous. Burton does not, however, consider the importance of the family unit in this part of his analysis. If the consulship were inherited, might it not be possible for the *family* to inherit it? That is, it was necessary for the emperor to pay due acknowledgement to the status of the aristocracy, but at the time also encourage new senatorial families and reward merit. It is surely plausible that in terms of inheritance, the consulship should be seen in a familial sense. Once a family had obtained the consulship, and the *ordinarius* in particular, which Burton concedes shows an unusually high rate of retention, the elder (or best suited) son of the next generation would be entitled to obtain the same status. Subsequent brothers may not have entered the senate: one thinks of the non-senatorial members of the senatorial class in the Republic, constrained from membership by the size of the senate. Younger brothers of *ordinarii* whose fathers were also consuls may also disappear into the mass of *ignoti*, who are all *suffecti* for this period; inscriptions pertaining to them may have been subsumed by their more successful brothers, especially possible if inscriptions with only abbreviated names have been mistakenly attributed.

Finally, in terms of the age strictures themselves: traditions and rules could be relaxed at the whim of the emperor. Compare M. Ummidius Quadratus: in 167 he was probably in his late twenties. It is true that Ummidius was the nephew of the emperor, but Claudius Severus stood probably not much lower in favour, as evinced by the friendship his father enjoyed with Marcus, and his own (eventual) imperial marriage. He did not serve his first consulship as *ordinarius*, but nothing argues against him being awarded a position as *suffectus* before the usual age. Perhaps the betrothal to Faustina predated the marriage by some years, as may have been the case with Antistius Burrus and Vibia Sabina. In the final measure, the first consulship of Claudius Severus could well be 166 or 167, or perhaps even earlier: with the date of the marriage so imprecise there are no decisive factors to rule out either of these dates. He must, unfortunately, take his place among Alföldy's list of consuls of uncertain date between 161 and 168 (194ff.), with a supposition that his consulship should belong sometime in the years 164-8.

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