

MARIUS MAXIMUS AND AUSONIUS' CAESARES

The disappearance of the imperial biographies written by Marius Maximus is one of the more frustrating losses of Latin literature, for various reasons: the well-known testimony of Ammianus,¹ the interest (and frivolity) of Marius Maximus' attested contribution to the *Historia Augusta*, his importance, much in dispute, to the writer of that work, the lack of information on much of the period he covered, and, not least, the fascinating role assigned to him by modern scholars, remodelling a previous duality of sources, of bad biographer in contrast to the good Ignotus. It has recently become common practice for the evidence of Ausonius' (so-called)² *Caesares* to be used in the search for this biographer. The suggestion goes back to a dissertation of F. della Corte in 1956/7,³ and was taken up in his edition of Ausonius' works by Pastorino,⁴ and discussed in the following year by Cazzaniga⁵ who, though uncertain about the dependence of Ausonius on Marius Maximus, does misleadingly assert (perhaps echoing Momigliano)⁶ 'e certo che l'ultima epigramma tocca Elagabalo, che chiude la silloge'. More recently, della Corte has returned to the question⁷ and sketched a possible model for the growth of the whole extant collection of Ausonius' *Caesares*, on the basis of the manuscript tradition.⁸ The same volume contains a contribution to the question by S. d'Elia and includes, by a felicitous piece of editing, an extended footnote in which d'Elia is able to comment on the relevant part of della Corte's paper.⁹

Meanwhile, outside Italy, there have been parallel and independent developments. In 1967¹⁰ there appeared a seminal footnote in an article of T. D. Barnes on 'Hadrian and Lucius Verus', which reads as follows: 'it is tempting to suppose that he [Marius Maximus] wrote precisely of those twelve Caesars listed by Ausonius, *Caesares* XIII–XXIV (compare also *Quadrige Tyrannorum* l. 2)'. It is instructive to observe the development of this idea. First, another footnote:¹¹ 'Ausonius furnishes a clue. On his *XII Caesares* in verse follow twelve quatrains, Nerva to Elagabalus (omitting Aelius Caesar, L. Verus, Geta and Diadumenianus)'. This glosses the following

¹ Ammianus, 28. 4. 14: *Quidam detestantes ut venena doctrinas, Iuvenalem et Marium Maximum curatior studio legunt, nulla volumina praeter haec in profundo otio contractantes.*

² *Caesares* is a title of convenience; it has not yet replaced the more antiquated title *Ausonii de XII Caesaribus per Suetonium Tranquillum scriptis*, originating ultimately with Aleander and standardized by editors from Scaliger to Prete.

³ F. della Corte, *Ausonio* (disp. univ. Genova 1956/7), 133 ff.

⁴ *Opere di D. M. Ausonio*, a cura di A. Pastorino (Turin, 1971), 90.

⁵ I. Cazzaniga, *La Parola del Passato* 27 (1972), 150.

⁶ A. Momigliano, *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* 103 (1968/9), 435.

⁷ F. della Corte, in *Gli Storiografi Latini Tramandati in Frammenti*, edd. S. Boldrini et al. (Urbino, 1975), 483–91.

⁸ The possibility of mechanical corruption (perhaps caused by the repetition of *tetrasticha*?) in the family Z is dismissed in two lines; and that of deliberate omission, to which Ausonius' manuscripts seem highly prone, is not considered. The weakness of the chronological evidence for the idea of multiple editions (see O. Seeck, *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* (1887), 513 ff.) was exposed by G. Jachmann in *Concordia Decennalis. Festschrift der Universität Köln zum 10-jährigen Bestehen des Deutsch-Italienischen Kulturinstitut Petrarcahaus*, 47 ff. (Köln, 1941), but the notion remains popular.

⁹ S. d'Elia in *Gli Storiografi*... (n. 7), 463, n. 12.

¹⁰ T. D. Barnes, *JRS* 57 (1967), 66 n. 11.

¹¹ Sir R. Syme, *Ammianus and the Historia Augusta* (Oxford, 1968), p. 90 n. 1. Cf. *Hermes* 96 (1968), 496.

sentence in the text of this influential book: 'Maximus continued Suetonius, the twelve rulers from Nerva to Elagabalus happily corresponding in number' (i.e. to Suetonius). An unobjectionable statement of the facts; but later we read of 'a second and post-Suetonian set of twelve';¹² they are a 'second series of twelve', a 'sequel of twelve' or a 'sequence of twelve Caesars',¹³ and develop a title 'The Twelve Caesars',¹⁴ which is repeated in the most recent work,¹⁵ where it is stated, 'Ausonius includes Macrinus in his set of quatrains on "The Twelve Caesars after Suetonius", which clearly correspond to the contents of Maximus' lives and reproduce some of Marius' main themes...' (the detail will concern us later). Thus a speculative footnote has acquired the authority of 'a plausible conjecture', 'generally held',¹⁶ and is now used as firm evidence both for the number and identity of the emperors treated by Marius Maximus (so Maximus devoted a book to Macrinus but not to Verus)¹⁷ and for the views of Marius Maximus, with consequent inferences of what in the HA did or did not derive from him, which augment considerably the previous arguments in favour of the primacy of Ignotus.

It is time to ask whether this increasing certainty may be justified, and what the evidence is. Although the difficulties are sometimes dismissed, the data concerning the extent of Maximus' writing are not beyond dispute, and have been summed up most recently by S. d'Elia,¹⁸ whose study reinforces earlier doubts about the number of emperors from Nerva to Elagabalus about whom a biographer might be expected to have written.¹⁹ This matter will remain controversial; the evidence of Ausonius is rather more straightforward. Let us begin with the manuscripts, the evidence of which confirms the statement of an earlier writer:²⁰ 'Cette mutilation fâcheuse ne permet pas de dire avec certitude où s'arrêtait Ausone'. Schwartz is here referring to the fact that the manuscripts which contain the last existing part of the *Tetrasticha* break off after two lines on Elagabalus, presumably in mid-quatrain. *V*, a manuscript of the ninth century held in high regard, leaves two lines vacant, making what is probably an assumption, and an obvious one, of a lacuna,²¹ before adding *conclusio*; other manuscripts (but without the two vacant lines) finish similarly – a fact which of course cannot be taken to indicate anything more than the absence of material after the two lines on Elagabalus. The titles of this section are no more helpful:²² *V* gives *Nerva tetrarcha*, as does *Γ*; *Σ* gives *Nerva tetrarca*; *b* a *tetrasti*; *l* ϕ apparently (the apparatus

¹² *idem*, *Emperors and Biography* (Oxford, 1972), p. 57.

¹³ *idem*, *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium* 1970 (1972) (Antiquitas, Reihe 4, Band 10), 288; *Emperors and Biography*, 92.

¹⁴ *Emperors and Biography*, 94; *Bonner HA-Colloquium* 1970 (1972), 289.

¹⁵ T. D. Barnes, *The Sources of the Historia Augusta* (Brussels, 1978), 103.

¹⁶ Sir R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography*, 83; *Bonner HA-Colloquium* 1968/9 (1970), 294.

¹⁷ But cf. A. D. E. Cameron, *JRS* 62 (1972), 264 ff.; G. Barbieri, *Rivista di Filologia* 82 (n.s. 32) (1954), 63/4.

¹⁸ S. d'Elia, loc. cit. (n. 9), 459–81.

¹⁹ Hesitation is expressed by (for example), A. Birley, *Septimius Severus* (London, 1971), 318 ff.; J. Schwartz, op. cit. 262 (n. 20); A. D. E. Cameron, loc. cit. (n. 17).

²⁰ J. Schwartz, *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium* 1970 (1972), 266–7.

²¹ The following couplet is mentioned by Dousa: *quo numquam neque turpe magis neque fedius ullum/monstrum Romano sedit in imperio*, and as Schenkl, more clearly than any other editor, points out, is ascribed by him to v.c., which elsewhere signifies *V*; but the lines are not in *V*, and the second couplet will be the work of an interpolator unable to resist the obvious temptation.

²² I have followed for the most part the evidence given in the *apparatus criticus* in the new edition of Ausonius (Leipzig, 1978) by Sesto Prete; but although it is often the fullest available, it is also one of the least accurate, and sometimes unclear, and I have checked the manuscript readings of *V*, *C*, *K*, *M*, *T*, and *Q*, and made necessary corrections in three places. Prete's article on the *Caesares* in *Respublica Litterarum* 1 (1978), 255–62 does not deal with the titles.

is ambiguous) have *Nerva* only; in the *Z* family, we have *de Caesaribus post Tranquillum*. *Nerva* in *QMOCI*; *de Caesaribus post Tranquilla Nerva* in *K*; *de Caesaribus post Tranquillum Nervam* in *T*; *tetrasticha de Caesaribus post Tranquillum* in *L*. Other manuscripts have no title. It is quite possible that these variants may be reconciled in a single title which the manuscripts of the family *Z* preserve in a better form than the others; but there is clearly no justification here for assuming a title that would indicate that Ausonius intended to end a series with the twelfth emperor from *Nerva*, *Elagabalus*. Whether or not a heading was originally given by Ausonius – an authentic title might carry implications of some attempt at structuring his material – is indeterminable; other evidence is not closely analogous, and is also diverse. The *Ephemeris*, a dramatic work in varying metres, probably lacked titles (the existing ones are sometimes rather inept); it would seem that the individual works of the *Parentalia* were given titles by the poet, whereas those of the *Professores* received their titles from a later hand; the case of the *Ordo Urbium Nobilium* is hard to determine, but the work did not need titles for its understanding. We do not, then, know Ausonius' plan for the *Caesares*; it must be added that the format implied by most editors who begin with *de XII Caesaribus per Suetonium Tranquillum Scriptis*, followed at the appropriate point by a title based on *Z*, is conventional (see n. 2).

Although, then, the services of a definitive title to this part of the *Caesares* are lacking, we may appeal to an introduction to the poem, written presumably by Ausonius:

nunc et praedictos et regni sorte sequentes
expediam, series quos tenet imperii.
incipiam ab divo percurramque ordine cunctos,
novi Romanae quos memor historiae.

It would be difficult not to conclude from this that it was Ausonius' intention to follow the *monosticha* on the first twelve emperors by a long series, extending beyond *Elagabalus*; perhaps to *Theodosius*, as della Corte suggested.²³ Such a conclusion would fit well with his known tendency to write what some have called versified catalogues. Examples, to omit various portions of the *Moselle* and concentrate on completed works alone, are the *Parentalia* and *Professores*, works which seem to have been brought as far up to date as possible and to cover all those with any relationship at all to the writer; the *Fasti*, a work of which we possess only four accompanying poems and which was probably a prose list of consuls – it is difficult to see how such material could have been versified, even by Ausonius – but which certainly went from *Romulus* (*sic*) to Ausonius; the *Ordo Urbium Nobilium*, which includes twenty cities known in some way to Ausonius, ending with the nearby ones of *Toulouse*, *Narbonne* and *Bordeaux*. It appears that Ausonius' main concern in such works was with completeness, and with exhaustiveness where reasonably possible, and only to a lesser degree with elegance and arrangement. Any attempt on his part to arrange his series of *Caesars* in sets or dozens is accordingly not so likely as it appears from the work in the state in which the extant manuscripts have it.

At this point it is necessary to mention an interesting piece of evidence recently discussed²⁴ in the context of the manuscript history of Ausonius. In his long history of rulers from *Augustus* to *Charlemagne* the Veronese antiquary *Johannes de Matociis* (*Giovanni Mansionario*) adds a valuable note to his section on *Theodosius I* which purports to give a list of Ausonius' works then known to him. For our purposes, two

²³ F. della Corte, op. cit. (n. 7), 485.

²⁴ R. Weiss in *Classical Influences on European Culture 500–1500 A.D.*, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 67–72, and M. D. Reeve, *Prometheus* 3 (1977), 112–20.

items are relevant. The first reads *item ad Hesperium filium suum de ordine imperatorum*, which is clearly our *Caesares*, the notice being derived from the first two headings which are (in the reconstruction of all editors, which is secure) *Ausonius Hesperio filio s.d.* and *Monosticha de Ordine Imperatorum*. No further details are given (not even the metrical form, which Mansionario usually mentions). The second item reads *ad eundem de imperatoribus res novas molitis a Decio usque ad Dioclecianum versu iambico trimetro iuxta libros Eusebii Nannetici ystorici*. This cannot be identified with any extant work of Ausonius; it is rather perplexing, and at first sight might seem to be of doubtful authenticity, as seems to be the case with the later items *cronicam ab initio mundi usque ad tempus suum* and *libellum de nominibus mensium Hebreorum et Atheniensium*. *Res novae* might, in the language of Mansionario's time, refer to persecution of Christians (of notable ferocity in this period), and the source be Eusebius of Caesarea (cf. Mansionario's confusion a little earlier between the Paulini of Nola and Milan); yet it is unlikely that Ausonius would have revelled in a story of persecutions. (This is one proposition that all contributors to the swollen bibliography on his religious allegiance might accept.) Or the notice might be explained away – if an allegedly garbled notice were thought to need such treatment – as a confusion of the sources of this period (we know that Mansionario made use of the HA),²⁵ or, by the cynical, as an attempt to imply a source for a poorly documented part of his own researches.

But the notice can be interpreted in fourth-century terms so as to yield some sense; as a study of usurpers from Decius to Diocletian. *Res novae* is so used by Tacitus, *Ann.* 15. 35; Ausonius uses *novare* at *Caesares* 83; and *res novas moliri* (going back to *nova moliri* in Vell. Pat. 2. 129. 2 and Tac. *Ann.* 12. 32. 1, or *novi (quid) moliri* in Cic. *Rep.* 1. 31 and Livy 6. 9. 4) is actually found in Eutropius 9. 5. The strong favour shown by Ausonius to Severus in the passage just cited indicates that it is no shame in his eyes to bring *res novae* (assuming that the implication of *titulum ne horresce novantis* is not 'do not worry about the charge of being a usurper' but 'although you are a usurper, do not worry'); hence the famous emperors Decius and Diocletian could be included under this rubric, although they were certainly not 'tyranni'. It is quite unlikely that *a Decio usque ad Dioclecianum* is to be taken by exclusive reckoning. This work, then, would have included both such successful usurpers as the two above mentioned, and the many less successful ones of the period: a good number, even without such inventiveness as we see in the HA's *Triginta Tyranni*, including some whom Ausonius would be well-informed about, and very interested in, namely those who arose in Gaul. Many of them would fit into the iambic metre naturally, and it is the most accommodating metre for such a task (as Ausonius found in writing the *Ludus Septem Sapientum*); it would also have made possible a continuous narrative if the author felt that to be more appropriate than the individual treatment of the *Caesares*. This supposition, however, is not without difficulties: one is that the mixture of defeated usurpers and emperors who thus rose to legitimacy and honour is an awkward one, and apparently excludes from the series such entirely legitimate emperors as Gallienus, Tacitus and others: but this might be explained as being the residue left for the *Caesares*, as suggested below, and the implied indignity to Decius and Diocletian might be acceptable under a Christian regime. Another concerns Ausonius' alleged source: even supposing (this is not difficult) that Ausonius possessed enough Greek to read Eusebius of Caesarea if a translation was not yet available,²⁶

²⁵ See R. Sabbadini, *Le Scoperte dei Codici Latini e Greci ne' Secoli XIV e XV* (Florence, 1905), pp. 2/3.

²⁶ Prof. 8. 12 (Peiper) describes his early efforts; his later poetry suggests considerable proficiency.

Eusebius' simplified framework of emperors would have been of rather limited value even for the most compressed accounts, and one wonders how he came to be named as a source. Alternatively, and more probably, the reference is to the Eusebius mentioned by Evagrius, *Church History* 5. 24, who is certainly different from his more famous namesake mentioned elsewhere in that chapter, and who wrote 'from Octavian and Trajan and Marcus to the death of Carus'. We have no independent record of his birthplace, but nothing rules out Nantes. His association with a nearby city could have earned him a favourable mention from Ausonius; more speculatively, it is possible that Ausonius was related by marriage, if Eusebius were the *proavus* of Veria Liceria, the wife of his nephew Arborius (*Parentalia* 16 Peiper and Prete, 18 Schenkl);²⁷ the poem shows that Ausonius had a high regard for the eloquence of Eusebius who, Ausonius claims rather artificially, *transcripsit partes in mea verba suas*, and also that Veria was not from Bordeaux.

Its absence from the extant collections of Ausonius' work does not, given the character of the existing manuscript populations, tell against the possible authenticity of this work. If it is accepted as a lost fragment of his vagrant *opuscula* it might be taken as evidence either for the supposition that he did not continue the *Caesares* as far as he had intended, on the grounds that some emperors would in this case have been duplicated, or for the possibility that the *Caesares* did not include Decius or Diocletian. The latter is surely inconceivable if the work reached the fourth century; but the former possibility is not to be ruled out, though Ausonius could have dealt with some emperors twice, just as the Suetonian emperors are treated in both tetrastichs and monostichs. It certainly does not imply or confirm that the previous work had ended with Elagabalus: why omit Severus Alexander and Philip?

Mansionario's evidence does, however, hold considerable significance for our question if a third possibility, which fits the evidence as well as, if not better than, any other, is accepted. I suggest that the missing work is authentic and *is* in fact part of Ausonius' *Caesares*; only its description is erroneous. The change of metre would have been a wise choice for Ausonius to make so that he could accommodate such essential names of emperors as Valerianus, Gallienus, Aurelianus and Diocletianus (unless he used Diocles) and those of such usurpers as Regalianus, Laelianus and Florianus; a name such as Ingenuus, which is tailor-made for the hexameter, is not impossible in the iambic trimeter, and names such as Postumus are easier to treat in iambics. Mansionario, who was interested in the different metres, thought this a different work, not knowing, as his list makes clear, Ausonius' habit of varying his metres within a poem, which is apparent in the *Parentalia* and the *Professores* where the metre is changed partly to suit the names (as in 13 and 17 Prete (Avitianus and Herculanus respectively)) in the early *Parentalia*, where the elegiac metre is standard, and partly because as the dual work proceeded he espoused a different artistic plan. The antiquary needed a title and provided one of unusual length, which incorrectly gives its content; this error may be due to superficial examination or to perusal of the first and last notices only. It is possible that the words *res novas molitis* were based on the text before him; the fact that Eutropius uses the same phrase (of an opponent of Decius' successor) in 9. 5 could be taken to indicate a contribution from that writer or the *Kaisergeschichte*²⁸ but, as has emerged above, the phrase is common coin among historians. The way in which Eusebius was introduced is uncertain; Mansionario may have glimpsed the name, put in by Ausonius *honoris causa*.

²⁷ Schenkl and Prete are certainly right to print Vinet's *vox* for V's *uxor*.

²⁸ Ausonius' use of this *Kaisergeschichte* was suggested, but without any attempt at corroboration, by its inventor, A. Enmann, in *Philologus*, Supplementband IV (1884), 443.

If this interpretation is accepted, then the notion of a deliberately designed series of Caesars from Nerva to Elagabalus, whether titled or not, becomes far less plausible; while the detection of another fragment once preserved in one particular branch of Ausonius' manuscript tradition cannot be taken as evidence of a new series designed as such from Decius to Diocletian; we cannot be sure even where the iambic portion began, or how many names of emperors and usurpers it will have contained. But even if the notice is rejected as a testimony to a fragment of Ausonius, then the doubt surrounding the end of the extant *Caesares* remains an objection to the conventional method of detecting Marius Maximus. In either event, however, it might perhaps be objected that for the twelve Caesars from Nerva to Elagabalus Ausonius will surely have used a source, and if he used Suetonius for the earlier ones, then he could well have continued with Marius Maximus, who was in some sense the continuator of Suetonius. But it is a highly doubtful supposition that such an experienced teacher as Ausonius, who wrote most of his poetry, and therefore probably the undateable *Caesares*,²⁹ towards the end of his long life and after his *dura experientia* of teaching, stood in need of a source. It is of course highly likely that Suetonius was the *fons et origo* of his knowledge of the first twelve, and he is mentioned in the dedication to the *Monosticha* and again in the *Tetrasticha* (line 28), and has also been detected in three other places;³⁰ but other reasons for mentioning the biographer are more likely, such as the need conveniently to denote the twelve emperors, or the desire to allow himself to bask in the prestige of the biographer's name and perhaps to advertise his poetic imitation or his skill in the reduction of the biographies into verse. (If this was his purpose he was excelled when Paulinus wrote, probably at his master's bidding, his own version of Suetonius' *de Regibus*.)³¹ When Ausonius came to continue beyond Domitian, there was not the same prestige to be gained from citing Marius Maximus, even if he used him. It is in these terms that an answer should be given to the question of Cazzaniga (albeit based on a false premise) – why does Ausonius not mention Marius Maximus?³²

It is time to consider the internal evidence for Ausonius' use of Marius Maximus; for this purpose ten³³ quatrains will now be considered with the help of the material offered in their previously mentioned works by della Corte, Barnes and Syme, and also, for the sake of completeness, that advanced by Cazzaniga, who argues for similarities between Ausonius' *Caesares* and certain epigrams in the HA, and that assembled by Schwartz in order to demonstrate, not that Ausonius used Marius Maximus (he refutes this suggestion in a final paragraph in an argument from premises that cannot be accepted), but that Ausonius was used by the 'rédacteur' of the HA.

Hadrianus

Aelius hinc subiit mediis praesignis in actis:
 principia et finem fama notat gravior.
 orbis et hic: cui iunctus erit documenta daturus,
 adsciti quantum praemineant genitis.

²⁹ Peiper (CV) followed by Syme, suggested 379, on the basis that such a season suits the similar *Fasti* also addressed to Hesperius. Cazzaniga and della Corte assume that Hesperius in his youth was the beneficiary, but Hesperius later had other children in his care: see *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 25 (1978), 24/5.

³⁰ By Peiper at *Tetrasticha* 17 (*Caligula*, 9); 46 (Titus, 1); 47 (Titus, 10). Schenkl cites the first, Prete the first and third. There are occasional garbled mentions of *Suetonii versus* in late manuscripts, as Schenkl's apparatus (fuller on this point than Prete's) makes clear.

³¹ *Ep.* 23 Peiper, 19 Schenkl and Prete.

³² I. Cazzaniga, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 150.

³³ There are only two fragments of Marius Maximus from his *Lives* of Nerva and Trajan, from *schol. Juv.* 4. 53 and HA, *Alexander* 65. 4 respectively; they offer nothing of use here.

Della Corte has argued for a significant similarity here between the emphasis on the variation in Hadrian's fame, and the statement of Marius Maximus cited at *Hadrian* 20. 3 *Marius Maximus dicit eum natura crudelem fuisse et idcirco multa pie fecisse quod timeret ne sibi idem quod Domitiano accidit eveniret*, a statement similar in content to that in *Epitome de Caesaribus* 14. 6; his cruelty is noted by Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 14. 11. In fact Ausonius' first two lines are notably close to Xiphilinus at Dio 69. 2. 5, while the testimony of the HA does not offer a close resemblance, either here or in the other five attested uses of Marius Maximus in this Life: 2. 10, 12. 4, 25. 4, 16. 7 and 21. 4, of which the last two are traced by the comparison of almost identical passages in *Aelius* 3. 9 and 5. 5 respectively.

Antoninus Pius

Antoninus abhinc regimen capit: ille vocatu
consultisque Pius, nomen habens meriti.
filius huic fato nullus; sed lege suorum
a patria sumpsit, qui regeret patriam.

No link has been made between this quatrain and anything Marius Maximus said or may have said about Pius; there is one citation of him in the HA, concerning the authenticity of his speeches (11. 3): hardly a matter to concern our *rhetor*. The opportunity may be taken, however, to note Schwartz' mention of Ausonius' great interest in the principle of adoption in the poems on Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian and Pius; he compares HA, *Aurelian* 14. 6, *Severus* 20. 1–2 and 21. 4.

M. Antoninus

Post Marco tutela datur; qui scita Platonis
flexit ad imperium, patre Pio melior.
successore suo moriens, sed principe pravo,
hoc solo patriae, quod genuit, nocuit.

Schwartz and Cazzaniga have adduced the similar phrase in *Marcus Antoninus* 2. 1, *philosophiae scita* and the quotation in 19. 12 and 27. 7 of that life of Plato's famous statement in *Republic* 473 c/d on the need for philosophers to be kings. This quotation and the use of *scita* may have generated Ausonius' phrase; but those passages do not expressly derive from Maximus (of whom there are two certain citations in this life, at 1. 6 and 25. 8–10).

Commodus

Commodus insequitur, pugnis maculosus harenae,
Thraecidico princeps bella movens gladio.
eliso tandem persolvens gutture poenas,
criminibus fassus matris adulterium.

Della Corte points out that Marius Maximus' hostility to Faustina is demonstrated by *Avidius Cassius* 9. 9 *cum dicat Marius infamari eam cupiens quod ea conscia Cassius imperium sumpsisset*. The episode is of course different; although the examples of hostility to Faustina have all been traced to Marius Maximus by Syme. Our episode is close to a passage of similar innuendo in *M.A.* 19, where Commodus' passion for the sports of the arena is traced to his mother's union with a gladiator. It is not certain that Ausonius alludes to this for the words of his last line ('after revealing by his crimes his mother's adultery') may be entirely general in their reference ('low birth, low manners'), or refer to his general attitude (e.g. Herodian 1. 8. 7), but Syme³⁴ connects it closely with *pugnis maculosus harenae* in the first line, in which case the parallel would

³⁴ Sir R. Syme, *Bonner HA-Colloquium* 1970 (1972), 293 ff.

be close. The HA introduces the story with *quidam aiunt*, and Barnes and Syme hold that Marius Maximus is being used. Schwartz in citing this parallel draws attention to the common word *adulterium*. Cazzaniga compares *Diadumenianus* 7. 3, where in a poem reference is made to Commodus' title of Hercules, which he received as a result of killing wild beasts in the amphitheatre (HA, *Commodus* 8. 5; cf. *Caracalla* 5. 5).

Helvius Pertinax

Helvi, iudicio et consulto lecte senati,
princeps decretis prodite, non studiis.
quod doluit male fida cohors, errore probato,
curia quod castris cesserat imperio.

Pertinax' attitude to power is indicated also in HA, *Pertinax* 15. 8, *horruisse autem illum imperium epistula docet, quae vitae illius a Mario Maximo apposita est*. The same point is made in *Epitome* 18. 1 but in different language; and in Dio 74. 1. 4.

Didius Iulianus

Di bene, quod sceptri Didius non gaudet opimis
et cito periuro praemia adempta seni.
tuque, Severe pater, titulum ne horresce novantis:
non rapit imperium vis tua, sed recipit.

It may be noted that *horresco*, used in the passage of the HA just quoted, occurs here.

*Severus Pertinax*³⁵

Impiger egelido movet arma Severus ab Histro,
ut parricidae regna adimat Didio.
Punica origo illi, sed qui virtute probaret,
non obstare locum, cum valet ingenium.

Three separate points require attention here.

(i) The use of *adimo* (also used, *pace* Prete, in the previous poem) has attracted the attention of Schwartz, who claims that it is used only thrice in the HA: at *Pertinax* 9. 8 (the return of the privileges which Commodus had removed); *Severus* 7. 1 (the withdrawal of standards from the praetorians); and *Severus* 9. 5 (the removal of privileges from the citizens of Antioch, who had collaborated with Niger). Schwartz does not consider, however, the possibility of Marius Maximus' presence here.

(ii) The phrase *egelido...ab Histro* is rightly stated by Schwartz to show no significant connection with HA's *apud Carnuntum* (5. 1).

(iii) The detail of Severus' unpromising birth is also given in HA, *Severus Alexander* 5. 4, where, in the context of a quotation of Marius Maximus, he is stated to be *non magni satis loci*. (For his low or African origin, cf. respectively Victor 20. 28, Eutropius 8. 18.) No other similarities have appeared, although Marius Maximus' life of Severus is referred to more often in the HA than any other life.

Bassianus Antoninus sive Caracalla

Dissimilis virtute patri et multo magis illi,
cuius adoptivo nomine te perhibes;
fratris morte nocens, punitus fine cruento,
inrisu populi tu, Caracalla, magis.

³⁵ The historical fact that Severus took the name Pertinax is not in doubt, but since some manuscripts do not include it here, this reading should be suspected of being due by dittography to *Helvius Pertinax* above.

The second line is compared by Schwartz to HA, *Geta* 2. 3 *dicunt aliqui non in Marci honorem tantum Antonini nomini*³⁶ *delatum cum id Marcus adoptivum habuerit*, part of a statement attributed only to *aliqui*.

Opilius Macrinus

Principis hinc custos sumptum pro Caesare ferrum
vertit in auctorem caede Macrinus iners.
mox cum prole ruit. gravibus pulsare querellis
cesset perfidiam: quae patitur meruit.

This life, inane in the HA but highly controversial, has produced no useful similarities (Marius Maximus is not quoted in the life), but Barnes³⁷ has drawn attention to various passages that may involve Ausonius. In *Macrinus* 7. 6 ff., *denique versus exstant cuiusdam poetae, quibus ostenditur Antonini nomen coepisse a Pio et paulatim per Antoninos usque ad sordes ultimas pervenisse*... there may be a covert allusion to the next, and last, poem of Ausonius. (Syme and Barnes have tentatively suggested that Ausonius' work put the author of the HA on the track of Marius Maximus).³⁸ In 11. 6 the word *gabalus* is acutely traced to Ausonius via *Fragmenta Poetarum Latinorum* (ed. W. Morel, Leipzig 1927) *Incerta*, fr. 58, *Elio nam gabalus* ('artificium Ausonio dignum', the editor comments), and to the missing couplet on Elagabalus in particular; but the word *gabalus* (scanned differently) can be satisfactorily explained otherwise, and it would be difficult to fit *Elio nam gabalus* into the defective quatrain on that ruler not only because of *nam* and of the shortage of suitable places for the hemiepes but also because the frivolous tone of the tmesis would be out of place after the indignation of Ausonius' first two lines.

Elagabalus

Tune etiam Augustae sedis penetralia foedas,
Antoninorum nomina falsa gerens?
(*desunt cetera*).

(i) The jibe at his possession of the name *Antoninus* is also known to the HA (*Elagabalus* 33. 8, most clearly; but the label *ultimus Antoninorum* occurs at *Macrinus* 7. 8, *Elagabalus* 1. 7, 18. 1, 34. 6: Syme conjectures its derivation from Marius Maximus).³⁹ The connection is also made by Cazzaniga and Barnes.

(ii) As often noted, the phrase *Antoninorum nomen* occurs in line 2 of the anonymous verses (*unde etiam versus exstant huiusmodi*) quoted in HA, *Macrinus* 14. 2, as does the phrase *nomen...gerere*; Schwartz infers that this hexameter is inspired by Ausonius. *Foedas* is a rare word found also in HA, *Maximus et Balbinus* 9. 2, and *polluo* (also found in *M.B.* 9. 2) is common in the lives of Caracalla and Elagabalus. The proximity of the names Augustus and Antoninus in *Caracalla* 9. 2 and *Geta* 2. 2 is another joint feature.

The task of inferring that one writer is the sole source of another is not an easy one where clear and continuing similarities in language, in choice of material and its

³⁶ Read *nomen*, assuming dittography of *-ini*?

³⁷ T. D. Barnes, op. cit. (n. 15), p. 56; *JRS* 57 (1967), 70 n. 23, a note which collects possible similarities with Ausonius in the Lives of Hadrian and Macrinus, to which might be added *Antoninus Pius* 2. 3 (cf. *Ep.* 31 Peiper, 86/7, in fact from a letter of Paulinus) and *Hadrian* 14. 11 (cf. his elegies, *passim*).

³⁸ Sir R. Syme, *Bonner HA-Colloquium* 1968/9 (1970), 299; T. D. Barnes, *ibid.* 31; cf. *JRS* 62 (1972), 125.

³⁹ *idem*, *Emperors and Biography*, 80.

arrangement are hardly to be expected, but it is doubtful whether even a composite case based on these suggestions would carry much conviction. The raw material – forty-six lines of Ausonius and twenty-six fragments of Marius Maximus – is not promising in its scope. Attempts to add to fragments of Marius Maximus are illegitimate for this purpose because keenly disputed: for example, the parallel with *M.A.* 19 in which Barnes traces a main theme of Marius Maximus is precisely that which Schwartz uses in his equally brusque argument to the effect that, because the gap which he sees in Maximus' data in this life is filled by Eutropius and Ausonius, Ausonius must have offered different material from Maximus. If those passages are excepted which are not clearly stated to be derived from Marius Maximus, then very little remains to bolster the thesis: generally unfavourable attitudes to Hadrian and to Faustina, and the mention of the reluctance of Helvius, and of the low or foreign birth of Severus. The significance of these passages is further reduced by the fact that Ausonius' material brings no surprises (in the words of Syme),⁴⁰ and therefore what similarities there are might equally well be connected ultimately with other sources, such as have been indicated, or taken from unknown sources, or derived from Marius Maximus but subsequently re-expressed by the poet, or derived indirectly from Marius Maximus. It would surely be safest to conclude that while it is highly likely that Ausonius, in common with his aristocratic friends, did read Marius Maximus, it cannot be determined with any exactness or certainty what he derived from Marius Maximus, or asserted that he is Marius Maximus in miniature. We have already discussed the value of 'sources' to Ausonius, and in fact two valuable clues to Ausonius' procedure may be derived from a comparison of his lines on Severus – which are in effect six in number, beginning in the quatrain on Didius – with what Marius Maximus certainly gave to the *Historia Augusta* (which derives more certain material from that biography than from any other). First, as is pointed out in d'Elia's footnote:⁴¹ while Ausonius' notice of Severus is uniquely favourable (not excluding the testimony of his enthusiastic follower Aurelius Victor), it is clear that Marius Maximus, albeit an apparent supporter at one stage, did not share this attitude, for in one passage (the only moral judgement on this ruler that can in fact be ascribed to him) Marius accuses Severus of cruelty and duplicity: *denique cum occisi essent nonnulli, Severus se excusabat et post eorum mortem negabat fieri iussisse quod factum est. quod de Laeto praecipue Marius Maximus dicit* (15. 6). (Barbieri⁴² also mentions *Severus* 11. 9 and *Albinus* 9. 5, and sees Maximus in *addunt alii* in the former passage, but this is a speculative attribution.) Secondly, an argument may be drawn from a *locus similis* at least as certain as those quoted above: compare in the third line of the same life, *Punica origo illi, sed qui virtute probaret...* with *Prof.* 21. 27, as reconstructed by Vinet and Schenkl:⁴³ *liberti ambo genus, sed quos meruisse deceret...* An 'echo'⁴⁴ of this kind, exhibiting a similarity in both grammatical structure and thought, is not uncommon in a voluminous writer, and where it is not required to determine authorship may be taken to show the workings of a single mind: in this case the mind whose attitudes were excellently analysed in a study of nearly twenty years ago by M. K. Hopkins.⁴⁵ Ausonius' profound conviction that one's status at birth is not a bar to success has

⁴⁰ *ibid.* 92.

⁴¹ S. d'Elia, *op. cit.* (n. 9), p. 463, n. 12.

⁴² G. Barbieri, *Rivista di Filologia* 82 (1954), 61.

⁴³ A reasonable reconstruction: Schenkl (not Scaliger as stated by Prete) created better sense with *liberti for liberi et*, and *doceret*, impossible in sense, is improved by *deceret* (Vinet).

⁴⁴ The term 'echo' is perhaps the most apt; 'self-quotation' would be misleadingly explicit.

⁴⁵ M. K. Hopkins, *CQ* n.s. 11 (1961), esp. 248.

influenced his account of Severus' career, as it does his poems on many of his relatives and teachers.

Further traces of various influences on these forty-six lines may perhaps be shown by subsequent, more detailed studies; but the various considerations here brought forward seem to make the possibility of Ausonius' exclusive dependence on Marius Maximus rather pale and dubious. Perhaps the well-educated and capable Ausonius has been judged too harshly by his juvenilia, works written for the young and by one who could claim to have a young mind; but he was no simpleton (as certain historical compilers of this period, with more justification, are assumed to be), and unlikely to be obsessed with a single source. Future research on the lives of these emperors in the HA, as it proceeds along its subtle and sophisticated paths, should be divested of the belief that Ausonius may be used as a mirror of Marius Maximus.⁴⁶

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