

SCRIPTOR HISTORIAE AUGUSTAE

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A recent study of the Theodosian Code,¹ which includes the identification of constitutions composed by Ausonius (A.D. 375 to 377²) and Nicomachus Flavianus (A.D. 388 to 390³) as quaestors prompts a fresh interpretation of the *Historia Augusta* and its author, whom I shall call Scriptor. On this interpretation his work is subtler than is generally conceded. The enigmatic series of biographies meant, and was intended to mean, different things to different people: to the vulgar it was an entertaining and often salacious series of lives interspersed with jokes; to the author an enjoyable exercise in teasing others and not least himself;⁴ to the insider a set of puzzles behind which lurked personal and political allusions, but also a reflection on certain political themes:⁵ the role of the Roman senate and urban prefecture, the importance of regular administration, the overriding need to defend Gaul and the west.

If, taken as a whole, *HA* combines a number of genres—history, entertainment, riddles, and a covert form of political commentary—its complexity and variable tone are in my view to be accounted for by its author's career and the events he lived through. His career, I shall argue, ran somewhat as follows. A pupil of Ausonius, or at any rate a *grammaticus* from Gaul, he moved to Rome, possibly when Symmachus was urban prefect (384–5) and became an official in the urban prefect's office. While there he undertook in 393 or early 394 to write biographies of the emperors up to Diocletian, began writing in 394 and completed the *HA* in 395. The battle of the Frigidus in September 394 and the death of Theodosius I in January 395 required some changes of emphasis as the writing proceeded. A *grammaticus* in Gaul, then a bureaucrat in Rome, his writing combines the learned frivolity of Ausonius with official and political interests acquired in the capital.

Though it is not possible to establish securely all the elements of this *curriculum vitae*, which at a lower level resembles that of Ausonius⁶ and Eugenius,⁷ I hope to show that the character of *HA* requires some such background. My argument rests on two assumptions which should be spelled out at the start. The first is that *HA* had a single author.⁸ The second is that its date falls in the last decade of the fourth century.⁹ My study serves to reinforce these opinions,¹⁰ but does not purport to rebut in detail the views of those who argue for earlier¹¹ or later¹² dates.

¹ Honoré, 'The Making of the Theodosian Code', *ZSS* 103 (1986), 133–222, especially 147–50, 203–16.

² To be printed by R. P. H. Green in his edition of Ausonius and cf. Honoré, 'Ausonius and Vulgar Law', *Iura* 35 (1984), forthcoming 1987.

³ To be precise, 10 Oct. 388 (*CT* 15. 14. 7) to 6 Aug. 390 (*CT* 9. 7. 6), correcting earlier views. These texts will be published in Honoré, 'Some Writings of Nicomachus Flavianus', *Xenia*, ed. W. Schuller (forthcoming).

⁴ e.g. attacks on the frivolity of 'Aelius Iunius Cordus' (*Albinus* 5. 10; *Macr.* 1. 3–5; *Gord.* 21. 4; *Maximus* 4. 5), really self-directed (*Quad. Tyr.* 4. 4, 6, 2–4, 11. 4, 12. 6–7), on verbosity ('quam me urbane declinare confingo': *Gord.* 1. 5, cf. *Trig. Tyr.* 32. 7), and on unscholarly ways (*Aur.* 2, *Tac.* 7. 7–8. 2, *Quad. Tyr.* 2).

⁵ That 'an earnest political design is not disclosed' (R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography* (1971), 287) is true, but does not exclude strong feelings about certain political issues. Despite inevitable dissent on some points I am deeply indebted to the above work and to *Ammianus and the Historia Augusta* (1968) and *Historia Augusta Papers* (1983).

⁶ *PLRE* 1 Ausonius 7: teacher of grammar/rhetoric, then *quaestor sacri palatii*, PPO, consul.

⁷ *PLRE* 1 Eugenius 6: teacher of grammar/rhetoric,

magister scrinii, then Augustus.

⁸ Asserted by H. Dessau, *Hermes* 24 (1889), 337, this widely accepted view is now supported by the statistical study of I. Marriott in *JRS* 69 (1979), 65–77.

⁹ Dessau, *op. cit.*, argued for the last quarter of the fourth century; W. Hartke, *Römische Kinderkaiser* (1951), 413 for the period in 394–5 between Frigidus and the death of Theodosius; A. Alföldi, *A Conflict of Ideas in the Late Roman Empire* (1952), 126 for a date not long after Frigidus; J. Schwartz, *Bull. Fac. Lettres Strasbourg* (1961), 176 and *Historia* 15 (1966), 454 for 392–4; A. Chastagnol, *BHAC* 1963 (1964), 63, with a review of opinion on the date, for 394–8; A. D. E. Cameron, *Hermes* 92 (1964), 363–77 for substantial revision in the late fourth century; Syme, *Ammianus*, 72–9, with whom I agree, for a work rapidly composed and terminated in 395 or 396. So far as I can tell, nothing in *HA* requires an earlier period; on the other hand, it is possible (below n. 9) to argue for revision at a later period.

¹⁰ On authorship, below, n. 271; on date, nn. 147–55, supporting 393 or 394 as *terminus post quem*, 402 as *terminus ante quem* and 394–5 as preferred dates.

¹¹ Th. Mommsen in 1890 favoured a Constantinian original, later revised: *Ges. Schr.* vii. 302–62; N. H. Baynes, *The HA, its Date and Purpose* (1926) opted for 362/3 (also (for Julian's reign) Hohl, Ensslin);

I. THE DEDICATIONS

It is best to concentrate on certain structural features of *HA*: changing dedications, a bizarre use of documents, the allocation of the lives to six different authors.

The shifting dedications present a puzzle. Are they 'merely a device of the author, to insinuate both date and authenticity?'¹³ That should not be assumed without further scrutiny. Far from pointing to authenticity, the dedications seem to point away from it, since they require time to run backwards. They fall into three sets. The early lives are dedicated to Diocletian, the middle ones to Constantine, the later biographies to one or more Roman magnates who are friends of Scriptor, the ruler now being Constantius Chlorus.¹⁴ Something will be said about the nature of these dedications later;¹⁵ for the moment it is their order which concerns us. On plausible assumptions about the order of composition of the lives, these three sets of dedication correspond to three stages in the composition of *HA*. Thus there is no overlap between the Constantine group of lives and the magnate/Constantius group. Scriptor last addresses Constantine in the *Gordiani*,¹⁶ and first addresses a magnate at the beginning of the lost life of Philip,¹⁷ or anyhow not later than the *Valeriani*.¹⁸ On the other hand, the Diocletian set of dedications seems at first sight to overlap to a minor extent with the Constantine set. *Macrinus* is addressed to Diocletian, *Albinus* and *Geta* to Constantine. But whether this represents an overlap in the time of writing depends on the order in which the lives were composed. A scrutiny of the references is called for. In the following schedule of passages where emperors are addressed, I list for 'Diocletian' first the main and then the subsidiary lives, vice versa for 'Constantine':

Diocletian. Main: Marcus 19. 12, Severus 20. 4, Macrinus 15. 4; subsidiary: Aelius 1. 1, 2. 2, Verus 11. 4,¹⁹ Avidius 3. 3, Niger 9. 1.

Constantine. Subsidiary: Albinus 4. 2, Geta 1. 1; main: Heliogabalus 34. 1, Alexander 65. 1, Maximinus 1. 1, Gordianus 1. 1,²⁰ 34. 6.

I have assumed, in accordance with informed opinion,²¹ a division into main and subsidiary lives. So far as subsidiary lives are concerned the passages addressed to Diocletian precede those addressed to Constantine, assuming that *Niger* was composed before *Albinus*. The same is true of the main lives if *Macrinus* was written before *Heliogabalus*. The only problem is whether *Macrinus* was written before Scriptor turned to the subsidiary lives, beginning with Aelius. If it was, all the Diocletian passages precede all the Constantine ones. If not, Scriptor, after transferring his allegiance to Constantine, reverted on one occasion to Diocletian. But why?

By the time he finished *Caracalla* Scriptor was contemplating a separate life of Geta.²² Shortly before, when composing *Severus*, he shows no sign of intending to write separately about Niger and Albinus. Perhaps reflection on the rivals of Severus reinforced his conviction that the loser is often a better man than the winner, even if he was not then persuaded that fortune is nearly always the enemy of justice.²³ To do

Momigliano, *Secondo Contributo alla storia degli studi classici* (1960), 105–43 expresses a conservative agnosticism.

¹² J. Straub, *Studien zur HA* (1952); *Heidnische Geschichtsapologetik in der christlichen Spätantike* (1963) argues for post 405, probably about 420; A. Alföldi, *BHAC* 1964/5 (1966), 18 for soon after 405.

¹³ Syme, *Emperors*, 273.

¹⁴ The plural is found in *Val.* 8. 5; *Trig. Tyr.* 22. 12; *Prob.* 2. 8 but singular in *Val.* 5. 3 (unless Scriptor is addressing the reader); *Trig. Tyr.* 31. 8–10, 33. 7; *Claud.* 3. 1, 5. 5; *Aur.* 43. 1; *Car.* 21. 2. Constantius is treated as ruling in *Claud.* 1. 1, 10. 7; *Aur.* 44. 5.

¹⁵ Below, nn. 30–7.

¹⁶ *Gord.* 34. 6.

¹⁷ *Aur.* 2. 1 with *Trig. Tyr.* 22. 12.

¹⁸ *Val.* 5. 3, 8. 5.

¹⁹ I take his life to be subsidiary rather than main because (i) it is omitted from Ausonius, *Tetrasticha*, (ii) *Ael.* 2. 9 in which the author looks forward to writing the life of Verus should be taken at face value, (iii) I. Marriott's study (above n. 8), at pp. 68–70, implies that *Verus* is a secondary life. Syme, *Emperors*, 32–3, 69 took a different view.

²⁰ Constantine is not actually named in this text, though he is in the next.

²¹ e.g. Syme, *Emperors*, ch. 4.

²² *Carac.* 9. 1.

²³ Contrast *Sev.* 14. 9 with *Car.* 3. 6–7: 'prope semper inimica fortuna iustitiae', cf. *Trig. Tyr.* 10. 17, 13. 2.

justice to the defeated,²⁴ or simply to comply with the wishes of a patron or dedicand, subsidiary lives were called for, though incidentally this meant including persons of no consequence such as Hadrian's adopted son Aelius ('Helius'). By the end of *Caracalla* the project of writing subsidiary lives had taken shape, but it does not follow that Scriptor turned straight from *Caracalla* to *Aelius*. On the contrary, *Macrinus* could have provided a bridge between the main and subsidiary lives, because, though by Ausonian standards he was a main-line emperor,²⁵ Scriptor knows little about him²⁶ since the sources used previously have now run out. On that view *Macrinus* serves as a trial run in the art of making bricks without straw. The passages which stress the difficulty of writing about emperors of whom we know little could have been written in the order: *Macrinus* 1. 1, *Aelius* 1. 1-3, 7. 4-5, *Avidius* 3. 1-3, *Niger* 1. 1-2, 9. 1-4, *Quadragesima Tyranni* 1. 1-2.²⁷

If so, nothing stands in the way of the view that the passages addressed to Diocletian all predate those addressed to Constantine, and that the latter predate those addressed under Constantius to a Roman magnate or magnates. But how are we to explain this progression from one dedicand to another? The dedicands cannot really be Diocletian and Constantine, the latter giving way as ruler to his father Constantius Chlorus.²⁸ Apart from the chronological difficulty, and independent evidence that *HA* is familiar with names and events of the late fourth century,²⁹ the invocations are often not such as could have been addressed to Diocletian or Constantine. For example, in the life of Albinus, said to be descended from the Ceionii, 'Constantine' is told that he has promoted and will promote this family: 'quae familia hodie quoque, Constantine maxime, nobilissima est et per te aucta et augenda, quae per Gallienum et Gordianos plurimum crevit'.³⁰ The reference may indirectly be meant to flatter Ceionius Rufius Albinus, prefect of Rome in 389-91.³¹ But Scriptor's justification for the remark is that an earlier Ceionius Rufius Albinus was urban prefect in 335-7, at the end of Constantine's reign. The word *augenda* however implies that this honour has not yet been conferred. Yet Scriptor would not have dared to tell Constantine that he ought to promote or would promote members of the Ceionii family. Nor could he have known that at the end of his reign Constantine was going to make Ceionius prefect.³² The form and accuracy of the prophecy show that it is retrospective. Indeed one striking feature of the dedications is the impertinence to which Scriptor is prone when he invokes these formidable emperors. For example he attributes to Constantine, son of an Augustus, the opinion that emperors owe their position to fortune,³³ reminds him that bad advisers are worse than bad emperors³⁴ and asserts that Constantine has been in thrall to eunuchs from whose clutches he has now freed himself.³⁵ He is, perhaps significantly, warmer to Diocletian³⁶ than to Constantine, to whom he enjoys being rude without risk to himself, but towards both his tone is didactic and at times presumptuous.³⁷

At one level, then, the dedications are hoaxes, but the deception is detectable now and must have been so then to those few who knew enough history. This prompts the question whether the dedications have a secondary purpose. Are they meant, at a more sophisticated level, to relate to the present rather than the past? Ought we to take the

²⁴ 'Meae satisfaciens conscientiae': *Ael.* 7. 5.

²⁵ Ausonius, *Tetrasticha* no. 24.

²⁶ *Macr.* 1. 1.

²⁷ *Contra*, tentatively, Syme, *Emperors*, 55 n. 2, 75 n. 1.

²⁸ Dessau, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 337-48.

²⁹ Syme, *Emperors*, 1-16.

³⁰ *Alb.* 4. 2.

³¹ *PLRE* Albinus 15.

³² Ceionius Rufius Albinus, *PUR* 335-7; *PLRE* Albinus 14.

³³ *Elag.* 34. 5: 'quod tua Clementia solet dicere credidi esse respiciendum "Imperatorem esse fortunae est"'.³⁴

³⁴ *Alex.* 65. 4: 'notum est illud Pietate tuae, quod in Mario Maximo legisti, meliorem esse rem publicam et

prope tutiorem, in qua princeps malus est, ea, in qua sunt amici principis mali'.

³⁵ 67. 1: 'Scio, imperator, quod periculo ista dicantur apud imperatorem, qui talibus (eunuchs) serviit, sed salva re publica posteaquam intellexisti quid mali clades istae habeant ...', cf. Syme, *Emperors*, 272-3.

³⁶ *Ael.* 1. 1 ('tot principum maxime'), *Verus* 11. 4 (on a level with Marcus).

³⁷ e.g. *Avid.* 3. 3: 'ut cognosceres'; *Macr.* 15. 4: 'te cupidum veterum imperatorum esse perspeximus'; *Marc.* 19. 12: 'saepe dicitis, vos vita et clementia tales esse cupere qualis fuit Marcus' (all to 'Diocletian'); *Alex.* 65. 1: 'soles quaerere'; *Gord.* 34. 6: 'ne quid tuae cognitioni deesset' and above nn. 33-5 (to 'Constantine').

variable dedications in an Aesopian spirit, as referring to contemporary rulers? It seems to me that this is the best way to make sense of them. 'Diocletian', I suggest, refers in a covert way to the late fourth-century emperor who in his policies at the time of writing most resembles Diocletian, and 'Constantine' to the emperor who then most resembles Constantine. The *HA* technique is on this view to present a puzzle, a Griphus.³⁸ When the puzzle is solved the dedications are seen to combine genuine or feigned respect for the ruler with comments, sometimes critical, on his behaviour. Scriptor is thus able to speak to an inner group with rather greater freedom than would be possible in straightforward contemporary history or in a panegyric.

As stated earlier,³⁹ I assume the correctness of the view that *HA* was composed in the last decade of the fourth century, and am impressed in particular by Syme's opinion that 395 or 396 should be taken as the date of completion of a work composed in some haste.⁴⁰ Imagine yourself in the west, then, just before these dates, during the reign of Eugenius (392–4), planning to write an imperial history. The year 392, when Eugenius was elevated by Argobast, was the centenary of Diocletian's settlement of 293, the tetrarchy, a reform designed to ensure that only experienced men became Augusti. A person acquainted with imperial constitutions will have been aware of the centenary, for with the tetrarchy came a change in nomenclature from 'Diocletianus et Maximianus AA' to 'Diocletianus et Maximianus AA et CC'⁴¹ and a transition from the *Codex Gregorianus* to the *Codex Hermogenianus*. Besides favouring experience Diocletian was a conservative, a supporter of paganism and ultimately a persecutor of the Christians. The current western emperor, Eugenius,⁴² proclaimed on 22 August 392, was an experienced teacher of rhetoric and bureaucrat who, unable to obtain recognition from Theodosius, entered Italy in the spring of 393 and by 394 had allied himself with the pagan party in Rome. In the eastern empire Theodosius, a militant Christian, had on 23 January 393 elevated his younger son Honorius, then aged eight, to the rank of Augustus and by the end of that year was actively preparing war against Eugenius. There was an analogy between Theodosius and Constantine, the Christian who abandoned the tetrarchic scheme of Diocletian in favour of dynastic rule and bequeathed the empire to his three surviving sons. Experience plus paganism confronted Christianity plus dynastic rule. 'Diocletian' is in this context an apt code name for Eugenius, about to go to war under the aegis of Jupiter and Hercules. 'Constantine' fits Theodosius, protagonist of Christianity and dynasticism.

But why employ a code at all? Why should a western author writing in or around 394 not decide openly to dedicate his work to Eugenius? Presumably because he knows that without eastern recognition Eugenius' title is insecure, and that, as the *HA* will progressively emphasize, fortune is not always on the side of justice.⁴³ A few years previously, in 388, Maximus, worthy defender of Gaul and the west,⁴⁴ had been defeated by Theodosius. Under what may turn out to be a usurpation it is wise to hedge one's bets. Scriptor therefore sets his biographies a century earlier than the actual time of writing and dedicates his work to Eugenius under the flattering label 'Diocletian'. This will not deceive the knowing, but it means that support for Eugenius can be disclaimed if fortune deserts him. The indirect approach had other advantages. It was easier to write the lives of emperors whose title was in doubt under the pretence that Diocletian rather than Eugenius was interested in them.⁴⁵ It was more tactful to plead for justice to the memory of the usurper by ostensibly addressing

³⁸ Ausonius, *Griphus Ternarii Numeri* forms a model.

³⁹ Above nn 9–12.

⁴⁰ Syme, *Ammianus*, 72–9, *Emperors*, 287–8.

⁴¹ i.e. 'Constantius et Maximianus (= Galerius) CC'. Scriptor makes Galerius senior to Constantius (*Ael.* 2. 2; *Car.* 18. 3) perhaps because he is used to the shortened form AA et CC as used e.g. in the *Codex Hermogenianus*.

⁴² His exact age is not known, but after teaching rhetoric he had become *magister scrinii* at the time of his elevation on 22 August 392; *PLRE* I Fl. Eugenius 6.

⁴³ *Car.* 3. 6–7.

⁴⁴ Orosius 7. 34. 9.

⁴⁵ *Ael.* 1. 1: 'In animo mihi est, Diocletiane Auguste, tot principum maxime, non solum eos qui principum locum in hac statione quam temperas retentarunt, ut usque ad divum Hadrianum feci, sed illos etiam qui vel Caesarum nomine appellati sunt nec principes aut Augusti fuerunt vel quolibet alio genere in famam aut in spem principatus venerunt, cognitioni numinis tui sternere'; *Avid.* 3. 3: 'proposui enim, Diocletiane Auguste, omnes qui imperatorum nomen sive iusta causa sive iniusta habuerunt, in litteras mittere, ut omnes purpuratos Augustos cognosceres'.

the plea to Constantine rather than to Theodosius himself.⁴⁶ It was possible by indirection to voice criticisms that could not have been made openly and could if necessary be disclaimed. Scriptor's writing, like that of Symmachus, is designed to be meaningful to the intended reader without causing embarrassment should there supervene a change of fortune.⁴⁷

In the first part of *HA*, then, Diocletian/Eugenius is the dedicand. Then, between *Niger* and *Albinus*, Scriptor changes allegiance. Why? The simplest explanation is that news of the battle of the Frigidus, of the victory of Theodosius on 6 September 394 and the death of Eugenius, has reached Rome after the composition of *Niger* but before that of *Albinus*. 'Diocletian' has been defeated and will no longer serve as dedicand. As Syme has pointed out, the sudden wind at the Frigidus is perhaps reflected in the unusual storm which ensured the defeat of the younger Gordian in Africa.⁴⁸ But note that the African storm is mentioned after 'Constantine', the new dedicand, has displaced 'Diocletian'. The victorious Theodosius would be flattered to be called 'Constantine'. But Theodosius is obliquely reminded of the merits of the defeated party and its leaders, 'Licinius' and 'Maxentius',⁴⁹ for whom read Maximus and Eugenius. If Scriptor tells the truth about the virtues of the vanquished, this will but enhance the glory of the victor.⁵⁰ For, according to 'Constantine' fortune makes a man emperor,⁵¹ a maxim in truth better illustrated by the career of Theodosius than that of his forerunner. The new dedicand's influence seems to extend to minor details. Thus, when *Albinus* sings the praises of the Ceionii⁵² we note that the latest urban prefect, Ceionius Rufius Albinus, was elevated to that post by Theodosius in 389.

It seemed at one time a powerful argument in favour of an early fourth-century date for *HA* that there is no point in flattering a dead emperor.⁵³ The argument falls away if Flavius Constantinus stands for Flavius Theodosius. But it is not just to flatter that Scriptor insists on the descent of Constantine from Claudius⁵⁴ ('Flavius Claudius' as he is later called⁵⁵). Flattery is combined with political blandishment. The supposed connection with Claudius is a subdued reminder that the Christian empire is continuous with the pagan, and that Theodosius and his successors⁵⁶ owe their position in both law and fact to that tradition. Scriptor stresses this continuity in a number of ways:⁵⁷ family connection, title to rule, achievement. Constantius was the nephew of Claudius.⁵⁸ He owed his appointment as Caesar to Diocletian.⁵⁹ It was he who returned the provinces of Gaul to the laws of Rome⁶⁰ and secured the empire for the dynasty to come.⁶¹ Respect is due not merely to Diocletian but to the rough Maximinian⁶² and to Galerius, who avenged the disgrace of Valerian.⁶³

I move now to the discussion of the last phase of the dedications. After the *Gordiani* Constantine is addressed no longer. Why so? Presumably because news of Theodosius' death on 17 January 395 reached Scriptor soon after he wrote these lives. 'Constantine' was no longer an appropriate dedicand. The remaining third of *HA* can be divided into two. In the earlier lives, written by Pollio, we are living not under an Augustus but a Caesar, Constantius Chlorus.⁶⁴ Ruler and dedicand are now separate

⁴⁶ *Elag.* 35. 6: 'his addendi sunt Licinius et Maxentius, quorum omnium ius in dicionem tuam [i.e. Constantini] venit, sed ita ut nihil de eorum virtute derogetur. non enim ego id faciam quod plerique scriptores solent, ut de iis detraham qui victi sunt, cum intellegam gloriae tuae accedere, si omnia de illis, quae bona in se habuerint, vera praedicarō'.

⁴⁷ Above nn. 33–5; *Trig. Tyr.* 33. 8, cf. Symmachus, *Ep.* 2. 12, 25. Who the inner group, for which *HA* was specially meant, consisted of is obscure; perhaps mainly officials. *Trig. Tyr.* 33. 8 ('da nunc cuius libellum') implies circulation within a limited circle.

⁴⁸ Syme, *Ammianus*, 75–6; Claudian, *De III cons. Honorii* 93 f.

⁴⁹ *Elag.* 35. 6. Though support for a defeated usurper would not lead to revenge killing in the manner of Caracalla's massacre of Geta's supporters, it could hamper an official in his prospects of promotion.

⁵⁰ *Elag.* 35. 7.

⁵¹ *Elag.* 34. 4.

⁵² Above, n. 30.

⁵³ Mommsen, *Ges. Schr.* VII. 340 ff.; Momigliano, *Secondo Contributo*, 119 ff. Mommsen was in my view right, but the object of flattery is not Constantius.

⁵⁴ *Elag.* 35. 2: 'auctor tui generis Claudius', cf. *Gall.* 7. 1, 14. 3; *Claud.* 1. 1, 3, 9. 9, 10. 7; *Aur.* 44. 5.

⁵⁵ *Claud.* 7. 8; *Aur.* 17. 2; cf. *Claud.* 3. 6; *Trig. Tyr.* 33. 2.

⁵⁶ And later Flavius Stilicho.

⁵⁷ Syme, *Ammianus*, 115–16 is on the verge of adopting this explanation.

⁵⁸ *Claud.* 9. 9, 13. 2.

⁵⁹ *Ael.* 2. 2, cf. *Elag.* 35. 4, *Car.* 17. 6.

⁶⁰ *Car.* 18. 3.

⁶¹ *Claud.* 9. 9.

⁶² *Elag.* 35. 4, cf. *Claud.* 10. 7.

⁶³ *Claud.* 10. 7; *Car.* 18. 3.

⁶⁴ *Gall.* 7. 1; *Claud.* 1. 1, 3. 1, 10. 7, 13. 1.

and both are distinct from Scriptor's interlocutor, who is an urban prefect.⁶⁵ Why is the ruler now a Caesar, not an Augustus, and why has time flowed backwards from Constantine to his father Constantius? The change is deliberate, since Scriptor is alive to the distinction between the powers of an Augustus and those of a Caesar.⁶⁶ The mystery can be explained without supposing a reversal of the arrow of time or of the chronological order of composition of the lives. Though in the west Honorius was Augustus, Stilicho was the effective ruler. Not technically a Caesar, Stilicho was nevertheless a quasi-official regent, guardian of Honorius⁶⁷ and, as he claimed, of Arcadius also.⁶⁸ He was *de facto* in the position of a Caesar appointed by Theodosius. *Constantius vigilissimus Caesar*⁶⁹ can be taken as a code name for and flattering description of Stilicho. This identification is strengthened by the assertion that Constantius' family, sprung from Augusti, will provide many later Augusti.⁷⁰ To put it in the form of a riddle: Who is it that, though not himself an Augustus, is the son and father of Augusti? Answer: Stilicho. For Stilicho had become a member of the imperial family by marrying Theodosius' niece and adoptive daughter⁷¹ Serena in 394.⁷² He was, therefore, Theodosius' son-in-law. His daughter Maria married Honorius as soon as they attained the age of puberty, fourteen and twelve respectively, in 398.⁷³ This made Stilicho the father-in-law of an emperor.⁷⁴ But the match had been planned earlier. Engagements (*sponsalia*), though not legally enforceable, were not invalid merely because the prospective spouses were under age,⁷⁵ and the match could have been arranged between Stilicho and Honorius as early as 395 or, by Theodosius, even earlier.⁷⁶ Emperors might have issued from this union,⁷⁷ so that the genealogical comparison with Constantius Caesar, though bold, was not absurd. It is, however, hardly surprising that Scriptor was accused of being out to flatter Constantius/Stilicho.⁷⁸ In this, though not in his flattery of Probus and the Anicii,⁷⁹ he anticipates Claudian. But the flattery is accompanied, as with Constantine/Theodosius, by a reminder of the need to respect the defeated pagan party and, one may guess, the eastern emperor Arcadius. 'Constantius' will indeed give us many Augusti, but 'salvo Diocletiano et Maximiano Augustis et eius fratre Galerio'.⁸⁰

In the later lives, when Scriptor turns himself into Vopiscus, Constantius is *iam imperator*.⁸¹ Time has now moved on again to 305–6 and Diocletian has abdicated.⁸² Despite, or perhaps because of this apparent promotion,⁸³ Scriptor's attitude to Stilicho is arguably more critical than when he was writing as Pollio. He utters what can be taken as a warning against civil war between the realms of Honorius and Arcadius: 'eant nunc, qui ad civilia bella milites parant, in germanorum necem arment dexteram fratrum, hortentur in patrum vulnera liberos'.⁸⁴ Is *nunc* perhaps to be taken

⁶⁵ *Aur.* 1–2.

⁶⁶ *Car.* 16. 2.

⁶⁷ Zosimus 4. 59.

⁶⁸ Zosimus 5. 4; Claudian, *In Rufinum* 2. 4–6.

⁶⁹ *Gall.* 14. 3.

⁷⁰ *Claud.* 10. 7.

⁷¹ A. D. E. Cameron, *Claudian* (1970), 57; Claudian, *Laus Serenae* 104–5.

⁷² *PLRE* 1 *Serena*; Claudian, *de cons. Stil.* 1. 69–83.

⁷³ If the marriage took place as early as February 398 (Cameron, *op. cit.*, xv), it was irregular, since on the prevailing view a male was *impubes* until he completed his fourteenth year (*CT* 4. 8. 6. 3, 18 May 323), and Honorius was born on 9 Sept. 384 (*PLRE* 1 *Fl. Honorius* 3). Despite this, the defect was cured if the spouses continued to live together until they attained the proper age: *Dig.* 23. 2. 4 (Pomponius 3 *Sab.*: 'minorem annis duodecim nuptam tunc legitimam uxorem fore, cum apud virum explesset duodecim annos'). Hence a date such as 17 March, the traditional date of the *Liberalia*, in Honorius' fourteenth year, 398, may have been regarded as suitable for the wedding, especially if Honorius was precocious (Ambrose, *De obitu Theod.* 15: 'Honorius continuo pulsat adolescentiae fores'; Claudian, *Epithalamium* 1–2: 'Hauserat in-

solitos promissae virginis ignes/Augustus primoque rudis flagraverat aestu'), since on the Sabinian view puberty was a matter of physical maturity (Gaius, *Inst.* 1. 196, Ulp., *Reg.* 11. 28).

⁷⁴ Claudian, *Fesc.* 111. 8–9: 'gener Augusti pridem fueras/nunc rursus eris socer Augusti'.

⁷⁵ Pauli *Sententiae* 2. 19. 1; *Dig.* 23. 1. 14 (Modestinus 4 *diff.*: 'et a primordio aetatis sponsalia effici possunt'—provided the persons concerned understood what was involved).

⁷⁶ As implied by Claudian, *Epithalamium* 295–308: 'en promissa tibi (Theodosio) Stilicho iam vota peregit'—obviously a suspect source.

⁷⁷ Claudian, *Epithalamium* 340–1.

⁷⁸ *Claud.* 3. 1. His earlier flattery of Claudius (*Elag.* 35. 3) was directed at Constantine/Theodosius, both Flavii, as of course was Stilicho. On the Flavius connection see *Claud.* 7. 8; *Aur.* 17. 2.

⁷⁹ Claudian, *Prob.* 31 ff.

⁸⁰ *Claud.* 10. 7.

⁸¹ *Aur.* 44. 5.

⁸² *Aur.* 43. 2.

⁸³ An 'imperator' is not unequivocally an Augustus.

⁸⁴ *Prob.* 23. 5. Syme, *Emperors*, 259. The *patres* are Theodosius, and, representing him, Stilicho.

literally, as referring to the confrontation, which then seemed imminent, between west and east, Honorius/Stilicho and Arcadius/Rufinus, in 395? There is also renewed emphasis on the value of paganism and the Sybilline books, which Stilicho ultimately destroyed.⁸⁵ No more than with Eugenius and Theodosius are we confronted with pure flattery of Stilicho.

Under Stilicho the status of the senate improved. 'The court of Milan and the Roman aristocracy were drawn closer to each other by the operation of a variety of factors.'⁸⁶ Scriptor adapted himself to the new situation by praising the new defender of Gaul and the west, but dedicated his work to certain Roman magnates who are not clearly identified⁸⁷ and who perhaps vary from one life to the next. Scriptor is on friendly terms with them, or some of them.⁸⁸ One or both of the Anicii, consuls in 395, must be considered for the position(s) of dedicand, but the claims of present or past urban prefects should not be overlooked.⁸⁹ The consular identification may be supported by a certain ambivalence about whether the dedicand is singular or plural,⁹⁰ and by passages which imply that one at least is responsible for games, and may be criticized for his parsimony in providing them.⁹¹ Though it may seem strange that a pagan should dedicate his work to the Christian Probinus, Claudian did so,⁹² no doubt reading the signs of the times correctly. But Scriptor could have played for safety by choosing a variety of dedicands, some Christian, some pagan. One dedicand defends Scriptor against his critics,⁹³ just as the latter, calling Diocletian to witness, defends the dedicand against charges of meanness.⁹⁴ As for the urban prefect with whom the author discusses historians at the beginning of *Aurelian*, why should he not be Nicomachus Flavianus junior, who held the office in 392-4?

HA was composed in a hurry. The writer dictates, his patron or dedicand chivvies him.⁹⁵ The composition cannot have taken more than a year or two. Two changes of dedicand, pointing to two changes in the political scene, occurred while he was writing. If we grant a date in the last decade of the fourth century, all this converges, I think uniquely, on 394-5, dates which have the merit of fitting precisely the views of Syme⁹⁶ and more loosely those of Chastagnol⁹⁷ and several other authors.⁹⁸ After 395 a long time elapses before we meet an equally plausible context, if indeed we ever do, for then begins the twenty-eight-year reign of Honorius and the thirteen-year ascendancy of Stilicho. Accepting, then, the dates 394-5 and postulating a fairly even rate of composition, we can construct a rough schedule for the individual biographies. If allowance is made for the lost lives of Philip, Decius, Gallus,

⁸⁵ Rutilius 2. 41 ff.; below nn. 111-38.

⁸⁶ J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court A.D. 364-425* (1975), 264.

⁸⁷ He or they may have been named in the introduction to the lost life of Philip, or they may be the Pinianus(?), Celsinus and Bassus addressed at *Aur.* 1. 9, *Prob.* 1. 3 and *Quad. Tyr.* 2. 1.

⁸⁸ 'mi Piniane/Celsine/Basse', above n. 87 and cf. 'mi amice': *Car.* 21. 2.

⁸⁹ The consuls were Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius and Anicius Probinus, sons of Petronius Probus, whence the Scriptor's eulogy of the emperor Probus. 'Pinianus', if that is the right spelling, could be Valerius Pinianus PUR 385-7, who was still alive in 395-6: Symm., *Ep.* 2. 55; 6. 22, 26. Bassus could be Anicius Auchenius Bassus PUR 382-3, a Christian (Symm., *Rel.* 20. 1, 23, 4, 6, 7; 26. 2; 34. 7) or alternatively the *vir spectabilis* (*Ep.* 4. 36) or *clarissimus* (*Ep.* 4. 48) who was a correspondent of Symmachus c. 396-9 (*Ep.* 9. 20, 24). Celsinus is probably not Titianus Celsinus the brother of Symmachus (Symm., *Ep.* 1. 46, 62-4; 3. 19; *CT* 14. 3. 17) since he died about 380 (*Ep.* 1. 54, 83, 101; 9. 113) but could be a son or other relative, who may have shared descent from Aurelius Celsinus PUR 341, 351. Syme, *Ammianus*, 193.

⁹⁰ Above n. 14.

⁹¹ *Claud.* 5. 5 ('tuus libellus munerarius'); *Aur.* 15. 4 (excessive expense recently in the consulship of 'Furius Placidus'), a combination of opposites, derived from

the names of the PUR of 346-7, which might covertly designate Q. Aurelius Symmachus, consul in 391, who was preoccupied with his son's quaestorian games in 393: Symm., *Ep.* 2. 46, 76-8; 5. 20-2, 59; 7. 76; 9. 117, 119-20—despite his advocacy of paganism a man fond of peace and quiet who had burned his fingers supporting Maximus: *Ep.* 7. 27. Cf. Syme, *Ammianus*, 159; A. Chastagnol, *Bonner HA Colloquium 1964/5*, 67. See also *Car.* 19-21, where the excursus on the expense of games only makes sense if intended to reassure the dedicand ('mi amice').

⁹² Cameron, *Claudian*, 30 ff. Whereas Claudian moves from the patronage of the Probinus to that of Stilicho, Scriptor seems to move at about the same time in the opposite direction.

⁹³ *Trig. Tyr.* 33. 7.

⁹⁴ *Car.* 20.

⁹⁵ *Trig. Tyr.* 33. 8.

⁹⁶ *Emperors*, 287; *Ammianus*, 79.

⁹⁷ *BHAC* 1963 (1964), 49; *Antiquitas* 4 ser. 6 (1969), 90-1; *Historia* 19 (1970), 444-63. While I accept Chastagnol's view of the influence on *HA* of Claudian, *Paneg. Prob. et Olyb.* (Jan. 395), I am dubious about the influence which he claims to detect, after a gap of some years, in the poems of mid-398 to mid-399. If proved, the influence would point to a revision in 398-9 of a text originally composed in 394-5, which is possible—but why would revision have been needed?

⁹⁸ Above, n. 9.

Aemilianus and the early part of Valerian, which belong to the third phase, the proportions of *HA* material for the three periods (Diocletian, Constantine, Constantius/Magnate) come to about 27:33:40. The middle period between the Frigidus and the death of Theodosius lasted just over four months. On this admittedly rough basis the first part, before Frigidus, took just under four months to write and the final part, written under Honorius and Stilicho, about five. In that case the *HA* was composed in the eventful period between the summer of 394 and the summer of 395. But the original conception of a series of lives of emperors up to and perhaps including Diocletian⁹⁹ could—though it need not—go back to 393, the year when confrontation between west and east came to seem inevitable, and when, in Rome at least, some thought that the causes for which Diocletian had stood a hundred years before might triumph. Scriptor may have spent several months searching for and reading source material. The difficulty of finding books and documents even in the capital must not be underestimated. The fact that often documents could not be traced made it plausible for the author to assert from time to time that he could not find some important text.¹⁰⁰

That the political climate changed twice during the composition of *HA* is suggested by the fact that certain contentious issues are handled differently in its three parts. Scriptor's treatment of dynastic succession, in particular of child emperors, and of religion varies according to whether the life is addressed to 'Diocletian', 'Constantine' or a Roman patron. In *Severus*, which belongs to the Diocletian period, Scriptor remarks that, according to 'Aelius Maurus',¹⁰¹ Severus took pleasure in the thought that he was leaving two sons, Caracalla and Geta, to rule the empire with equal power. His hopes were deceived, and none of the other examples of dynastic succession is reassuring. 'Diocletian' is informed that hardly any great man has left behind him a competent son of good character.¹⁰² But in the second part of *HA* Scriptor does not condemn dynastic succession. The sustained comparison of Elagabal and Alexander proceeds on the basis that a young emperor can be a successful ruler provided that he is of good character¹⁰³ and surrounded by wise advisers.¹⁰⁴ That theme is repeated in the life of Gordian III, depicted as a good ruler until the death of Timesitheus.¹⁰⁵ In both cases there is mention of the potentially harmful influence of eunuchs.¹⁰⁶ On the darker side, too, lies the danger of an evil disposition against which no influence can prevail. The model of a cruel *impubes* is Diadumenianus,¹⁰⁷ but the warning is perhaps uttered in case Honorius, who was of the same age, should prove vicious. Of course the objections to dynastic succession and to young emperors are not exactly the same. But the two converge, since no child is likely to be made emperor except by virtue of his relationship to the imperial family. Elagabal was supposedly the son of Caracalla¹⁰⁸ and Alexander was Elagabal's cousin. Between *Severus* and *Elagabal* there has been at least a change of emphasis as regards the succession of young members of the imperial family. The replacement of Eugenius by Theodosius as ruler of the west provides a plausible explanation. Previously the discerning reader was invited to ponder with foreboding on the parallel between the succession of Caracalla and Geta and the prospective succession of Arcadius and Honorius. Now he is to understand that all may be well if the sons of Theodosius are, like Alexander, properly educated and advised.

⁹⁹ *Prob.* 1. 5.

¹⁰⁰ *Prob.* 7. 1.

¹⁰¹ *Sev.* 20. 1, citing Aelius Maurus, imaginary freedman of an equally imaginary Phlegon: Syme, *Ammianus*, 60.

¹⁰² *Sev.* 20. 4: 'et reputanti mihi, Diocletiane Auguste, neminem prope magnorum virorum optimum et utilem filium reliquisse satis claret'.

¹⁰³ But even at a young age a child may display a character worse than his father's: *Diad.* 8. 3-9. 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Alex.* 31. 1-3, 65. 4-5.

¹⁰⁵ *Gord.* 23. 7. *Ibid.* 25. 3, 31. 4 are perhaps more ambiguous.

¹⁰⁶ *Alex.* 66. 3-4; *Gord.* 24. 2-5; Syme, *Ammianus*, 73. The likely target is the influence under Theodosius from c. 393 of Eutropius, whose mission to the monk John in Egypt had resulted in a correct prediction of the outcome of the war against Eugenius: *Soz.* 7. 22. 7-8.

¹⁰⁷ *Diad.* 8. 5-9. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Carac.* 9. 2, 11. 7; *Marc.* 3. 4, 7. 6, 8. 4, 9. 4, 6; *Diad.* 9. 4-5; *Elag.* 1. 4, 5, 7, 2. 1, 3. 1, 17. 4; *Alex.* 5. 3: altogether a strong insistence that the basis of his election was dynastic.

In the last part of the work Scriptor changes course again. In *Tacitus* the senate comes out emphatically for experienced rulers and condemns young emperors: 'di avertant principes pueros'.¹⁰⁹ Gallienus is reproached with governing like a child.¹¹⁰ It may seem bold to assert that these texts were written in the early months of the *princeps puer* Honorius, but the sentiment was not unflattering to Stilicho.

The *HA* displays the same, at first sight erratic, course as regards religion. Though alive to the comical aspects of religion, Scriptor is a pagan;¹¹¹ but his work as a whole is not conceived as a tract against Christianity or in favour of religious tolerance.¹¹² Syme rightly defines Scriptor's attitude to Christianity as 'negative but casual'.¹¹³ Nevertheless, anyone touching on political themes in the 390s could hardly help reflecting the tense politico-religious atmosphere, not to mention the wishes of his patrons.¹¹⁴ When Ambrose after the massacre of Thessalonica (390) humiliated Theodosius, and the latter in his law of 391 forbade pagan sacrifice,¹¹⁵ the balance underlying co-existence between Christians and pagans was upset. It took some years, and a number of oscillations, to re-establish a different balance. In *HA* there are corresponding variations of emphasis. The first part asserts that Severus forbade and heavily penalized conversion to Judaism and Christianity;¹¹⁶ it is Scriptor's practice to bracket the two religions.¹¹⁷ This sentiment, on my dating, belongs to the period when Nicomachus Flavianus the elder at least was looking forward to the triumph of paganism and the end of Christianity, prophesied for the year 394.¹¹⁸ In the second period, however, Scriptor credits the pagan emperors with a more benign attitude. Even Elagabal recognizes the value of the cult of Christ and wishes to amalgamate it with his own.¹¹⁹ Alexander not only tolerates Christianity¹²⁰ but admires its precepts¹²¹ and organization.¹²² Both he and Hadrian plan to build temples to Christ,¹²³ a project which Scriptor omitted to mention when writing *Hadrian*. Alexander was dissuaded from proceeding with the Christian temples because the entrails showed that if he did so everyone would be converted to Christianity,¹²⁴ but he showed proper respect by putting a statue of Christ in his private chapel.¹²⁵ Conversion to Christianity is not condemned. On the contrary, the cult is admirable provided that not everyone has to adopt it. Paganism is now played down, at least in its extreme forms; the disreputable Elagabal alone in *HA* is *tauroboliatus*.¹²⁶ The changing balance is conveyed with some delicacy. In the third period, however, or to be precise, in the time of Vopiscus, the author adopts a more critical stance, at least towards Christians in the east. Egyptian Christians are of bad character and, despite their freedom, keep complaining.¹²⁷ Their bishops are devotees of Serapis¹²⁸ or worship nothing but money.¹²⁹ They coerced the Jewish patriach into adoring Serapis and Christ.¹³⁰ Under Stilicho there was of course no harm in drawing attention to disorder in the eastern empire. Scriptor now reasserts pagan values. A meeting of the senate should not be treated as a Christian assembly.¹³¹ The future welfare of the state, in particular the possibility of advancing beyond Ctesiphon, will depend on fidelity to the gods.¹³² More importantly, *Aurelian* is, I suspect, meant as a pagan counterweight to the Christian hero Theodosius whom Ambrose had shortly before exalted in a famous

¹⁰⁹ *Tac.* 6. 5.

¹¹⁰ *Gall.* 4. 3, cf. *Trig. Tyr.* 3. 3.

¹¹¹ Syme, *Emperors*, 27, 286. Comical aspects: *Elag.* 7; *Tac.* 19. 6.

¹¹² J. Straub, *Studien zur Historia Augusta* (1952), 122; *Heidnische Geschichtsapologetik in der christlichen Spätantike* (1963), 192 f. *Contra*, A. D. E. Cameron, *JRS* 55 (1965), 241.

¹¹³ *Ammianus*, 73.

¹¹⁴ Below, nn. 133–8.

¹¹⁵ *CT* 16. 10. 10 (24 Feb. 391).

¹¹⁶ *Sev.* 17. 2.

¹¹⁷ cf. *Sev.* 17. 1, *Elag.* 3. 5 (Jews, Samaritans and Christians), *Alex.* 22. 4, 29. 2, 45. 7, 51. 7–8. Jews are often mentioned first. Cameron, *JRS* 55, at 247, points out that this was no way to conciliate Christians.

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 18. 5. 3.

¹¹⁹ *Elag.* 3. 5.

¹²⁰ *Alex.* 22. 4.

¹²¹ *Alex.* 51. 7–8.

¹²² *Alex.* 45. 7.

¹²³ *Alex.* 43. 6.

¹²⁴ *Alex.* 43. 7.

¹²⁵ *Alex.* 29. 2.

¹²⁶ *Elag.* 7. 1; Syme, *Ammianus*, 196.

¹²⁷ *Quad. Tyr.* 7. 5, 8. 2–3, 7.

¹²⁸ Syme, *Emperors*, 286.

¹²⁹ *Quad. Tyr.* 8. 2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 8. 4.

¹³¹ *Aur.* 20. 5.

¹³² *Car.* 9. 3, cf. *Trig. Tyr.* 15. 3; *Aur.* 21. 4.

funeral oration at Milan.¹³³ Thus, Aurelian wins a battle through consulting the Sybilline books and performing pagan sacrifices¹³⁴ and another as the result of a supernatural apparition ('quadam divina forma'¹³⁵). Theodosius had, allegedly with divine aid,¹³⁶ restored the unity of the empire. So also had Aurelian, *restitutor orbis*. That is no doubt why the urban prefect 'Iunius Tiberianus' urgently demands that his life be written,¹³⁷ and why in the same life Scriptor proposes, if he lives long enough, to write a book about the pagan saint Apollonius of Tyana who brought the dead back to life.¹³⁸ All this does not imply that Scriptor was a religious enthusiast of any sort. He was simply doing, with an admixture of self-mockery, what he had currently been asked to do.

The hypothesis that *HA* can be divided into three parts composed under three successive emperors or rulers in 394–5 therefore helps to explain the erratic course it pursues in handling certain contentious issues. There are some further points about the date of composition. The panegyric of the emperor Probus in the last part has often been seen as reflecting the fact that in 395 two Anicii, sons of Petronius Probus, were consuls: a remarkable event, since two members of the same non-imperial family seldom hold consulships in the same year¹³⁹ and their tenure in 395 meant that there was no consul from the east. It may, therefore, be significant that until we come to *Tacitus*, *HA* does not mention Probus.¹⁴⁰ Nothing in the first two parts shows that he was an emperor of exceptional merit, still less the best of all.¹⁴¹ Claudius in contrast has already attracted praise.¹⁴² This is some evidence that the first two parts of *HA* were composed before 395. That the third part was composed in 395 seems likely in that the adulation of Probus was more appropriate in that year than later and that, if my interpretation of *Aurelian* is correct,¹⁴³ a prompt reply to Ambrose's funeral oration of February 395 was called for. There is a further point about dates. Scriptor recognizes that it is objectionable to write the life of a living emperor.¹⁴⁴ The same was true, in the Severan age, of citations of living jurists.¹⁴⁵ In the later empire convention required that authors should not overtly refer to the living. Ausonius, for instance, writes only of his deceased colleagues who were professors at Bordeaux.¹⁴⁶ If Scriptor accepted this convention, it is noteworthy that he refers to Eugenius¹⁴⁷ in a semi-overt, as opposed to an encoded way (Eugamius for Eugenius as opposed to Diocletian for Eugenius), only in the second, Ausonius¹⁴⁸ and Nicomachus Flavianus the elder¹⁴⁹ only in the third part of *HA*, and not at all to Symmachus.¹⁵⁰ For if Eugenius and Nicomachus died, as I suppose, at the end of the composition of the first part they were not referred to when living, at any rate not in this semi-transparent mode. Ausonius, still alive in 393¹⁵¹ but then aged about 83, may have died before 395, in which case the same is true of him. Indeed, *HA* could be taken as evidence of his date of death.¹⁵² Symmachus, however, was still alive in 400 and perhaps died about 402.¹⁵³ Given his prominence, would Scriptor not have mentioned him in the semi-transparent mode had he felt free to do so?¹⁵⁴ Finally my interpretation of *Tacitus*¹⁵⁵ requires for *HA* an end date later than 394. These arguments together point to a date between 393/4 and 402 and lend extra support to the dates 394–5.

¹³³ Ambrose, *De ob. Theod.* (25 Feb. 395; *PL* 16. 1386). This fits the proposed chronology.

¹³⁴ *Aur.* 21. 4.

¹³⁵ *Aur.* 25. 3.

¹³⁶ Ambrose, *De ob. Theod.* 7–10; *Explanatio psalmi* 36. 25; *Epist.* 62. 4.

¹³⁷ *Aur.* 1. 5–8, but note that Scriptor undermines the effect by confessing to mendacity: *Aur.* 2.

¹³⁸ *Aur.* 24. 2–9; Syme, *Ammianus*, 111, 196.

¹³⁹ Claudian, *Prob.* 275 ff.; Syme, *Ammianus*, 164.

¹⁴⁰ *Tac.* 16. 6.

¹⁴¹ *Tac.* 16. 6: 'vir Aureliano, Traiano, Hadriano, Antoninis, Alexandro Claudioque praeferendus'.

¹⁴² *Elag.* 35. 2.

¹⁴³ Above nn. 133–8.

¹⁴⁴ *Car.* 18. 5: 'maxime cum vel vivorum principum vita non sine reprehensione dicatur'.

¹⁴⁵ Honoré, *Ulpian*, 217–19.

¹⁴⁶ Ausonius, *Commem. Prof. Burg.* 1. 4: 'commemorabo viros morte obita celebros'.

¹⁴⁷ *Maximin.* 27. 5 ('Graecum rhetorem Eugamium sui temporis clarum') noted by Syme, *Ammianus*, 78.

¹⁴⁸ *Tac.* 19. 1–2 ('Autronius Tiberianus'). Below, nn. 218–22.

¹⁴⁹ *Tac.* 5. 3–6. 9 ('Maecius Faltonius Nicomachus') on whom see below, n. 281.

¹⁵⁰ Syme, *Ammianus*, 144–6.

¹⁵¹ *Ep.* 27–31.

¹⁵² As could the reference to Aurelius Victor Pinio (*Macr.* 4. 2–4) for the death before late 395 of Sextus Aurelius Victor the historian, *PUR* 388/9; Syme, *Ammianus*, 9; *PLRE* I Victor 13.

¹⁵³ *PLRE* I, p. 868.

¹⁵⁴ For a possible encoded mention as 'Furius Placidus' see *Aur.* 15. 4–5, above n. 91.

¹⁵⁵ Below, nn. 279–87.

II. THE DOCUMENTS

It is time to turn to a second structural feature of *HA*, its eccentric deployment of documents. Scriptor likes documents and is proud of his expertise in finding or composing letters, speeches and *senatus consulta*. But as *HA* progresses, the use of documents, genuine or invented, increasingly follows legal and administrative models rather than any historiographical norm. The documents are appended, often at the end of a life¹⁵⁶ or section of a life, to support a thesis advanced in the text. For example there are many letters and testimonials, written by¹⁵⁷ or about¹⁵⁸ a present or future emperor, usurper,¹⁵⁹ pretender,¹⁶⁰ or other prominent figure,¹⁶¹ which are adduced to show that the character of the writer or subject was what was the text alleges it to have been. These letters are treated as indispensable evidence for that purpose. 'Haec epistula probat'.¹⁶² Senatorial and imperial speeches or decrees are at times adduced sometimes for the same purpose,¹⁶³ though at others simply as part of the narrative.¹⁶⁴ Scriptor's practice recalls the way in which an applicant for an administrative post or party to a lawsuit will produce a letter from some prominent person to show that he is of good character or has faithfully served the state. In general, the function of *HA* documents is not to expound the thought of the protagonists but to sustain an allegation made by Scriptor or some other writer, real or imaginary, whose view he reports.¹⁶⁵ His practice conforms to the legal and administrative norm that a submission should be backed by documentary evidence. Even when he excludes a document because of its length he apologizes.¹⁶⁶

These bureaucratic aspects of *HA* remind us that there are precise contexts in which a submission must as a matter of law be supported by documents, including appeals (*appellationes*) and references to higher authority (*relationes*). Thus, if the urban prefect wants to refer a point which has arisen in litigation to the emperor he must, on pain of a charge of sacrilege, send not just a letter of the sort familiar from the *Relationes* of Symmachus but the whole record of the proceedings¹⁶⁷ ('gesta litteris conexa',¹⁶⁸ 'litteris sociata gesta'¹⁶⁹). To this record additional documents containing allegations of the parties¹⁷⁰ or of the respondent to an appeal¹⁷¹ are added. Even if litigation is not involved, the relevant submissions¹⁷² and records¹⁷³ are attached to the *relatio*. *Litterae* by themselves, containing the bare exposition of a problem by the prefect, are not enough. Not only the prefect but those officials who assist in the preparation of *relationes* are guilty of sacrilege if they fail to follow the prescribed form.¹⁷⁴ So they are likely to be specially aware of the need for proper documentation, and they know, from scrutinizing the record of litigation, how litigants document their submissions.

Scriptor's method resembles the administrative practice of annexing documents to a report in order to substantiate it or to explain the *allegationes partium*. He speaks the language of charges and rebuttal.¹⁷⁵ Biographers, like officials, have a duty to include the documents which support their submissions.¹⁷⁶

¹⁵⁶ e.g. *Claud.* 14–18; *Tac.* 18–19.

¹⁵⁷ e.g. *Avid.* 1. 7, 2. 1, 11. 3, 12. 2, 14. 2–8; *Alb.* 12. 5; *Macr.* 6. 2; *Diad.* 8. 5, 9. 1; *Maximin.* 29. 7; *Gord.* 25. 1; *Alex.* 53. 5; *Aur.* 7. 5, 47. 2; *Quad. Tyr.* 12. 7; *Car.* 6. 2.

¹⁵⁸ *Maximin.* 29. 1; *Gord.* 24. 2; *Claud.* 14. 2, 15. 1, 16. 1, 17. 2; *Aur.* 8. 2, 9. 2, 11. 1, 17. 2; *Prob.* 4. 1, 3, 5, 5, 6. 2, 6, 7. 3; *Car.* 6. 2.

¹⁵⁹ *Avid.* 1. 7; 14. 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Nig.* 3. 9, 4. 1, 4; *Alb.* 2. 2.

¹⁶¹ *Gord.* 27. 5 (Timesitheus).

¹⁶² *Maximus* 18. 1, cf. *Prob.* 5. 1: 'et haec quidem epistulis declarantur'.

¹⁶³ *Comm.* 18. 3–19. 9; *Claud.* 18. 2; *Aur.* 13. 2.

¹⁶⁴ *Gord.* 11. 4, 8; *Maximus* 1. 3, 2. 2, 10.

¹⁶⁵ e.g. *Avid.* 9. 7, 11, 10. 1 (alleged collusion between Avidius and Faustina); *Maximus* 17. 2 (identity of Maximus and Papienus); *Car.* 4. 6 (ancestry of Carus); *Quad. Tyr.* 5. 3.

¹⁶⁶ *Pert.* 15. 8.

¹⁶⁷ *CT* 11. 29. 4 (Valentinian, 10 May 369: 'actis

etiam necessario sociandis'); 11. 29. 5 (Valentinian, 14 Feb. 374). Examples are Symm., *Rel.* 39. 5 ('gestis omnibus de more subiectis'), cf. 23. 15 ('instructio subiecta'), 29. 2, 31. 3, 40. 6, 41. 8, 44. 3.

¹⁶⁸ Symm., *Rel.* 16. 2.

¹⁶⁹ *Rel.* 25. 4.

¹⁷⁰ *Rel.* 33. 4 ('omnium gestorum fida documenta cum supplementis partium relationi ex more sociata sunt'), cf. 26. 7, 28. 11, 30. 4, 49. 4.

¹⁷¹ *Rel.* 32. 4 ('gestis ac refutatoris cohaerentibus').

¹⁷² *Rel.* 19. 10, ('coniunctae paginae allegationes partium et supplementa sumpserunt'), cf. 27. 4, 46.

¹⁷³ *Rel.* 24. 2 (report of a speech), 46.

¹⁷⁴ *CT* 11. 29. 5. 7–9.

¹⁷⁵ e.g. *Did.* 9. 1: 'obiecta sane sunt Iuliano haec' (four accusations follow, one of which is rejected), cf. *Alex.* 64. 3.

¹⁷⁶ e.g. *Alb.* 14. 3: 'ut autem hoc verum intellegatur epistulam Commodi ... inserui'.

It is reasonable to infer that Scriptor was a bureaucrat and worked in an *officium*. What other background could explain this way of using documents? Some of his habits as a writer derive, I suggest, from experience in the office of the urban prefect in a capacity which made him familiar with and responsible for legal documentation.¹⁷⁷ The role played by the urban prefecture¹⁷⁸ in *HA* is best accounted for on this hypothesis. In *Tacitus* the senate writes to Carthage, Trier and seven other towns to inform them that, the powers of the senate having been restored, all appeals from proconsuls and governors now lie to the urban prefect: 'omnis provocatio praefecti urbis erit',¹⁷⁹ or, as it is put in a later letter in the same biography, 'redierunt ad praefectum urbi appellationes omnium potestatum et omnium dignitatum'.¹⁸⁰ By a further provision in *Probus* appeals from *magni iudices*, including presumably the urban prefect, go to the senate itself, which also acquires the right to confirm or reject imperial legislation.¹⁸¹ Despite the assertion that appeals are being restored (*redierunt*) to the urban prefecture, this system of appeals has no basis in Roman history and, had it been introduced would have overburdened both prefect and senate. It is pure fantasy, like the dream in *Probus* of a world free from soldiers;¹⁸² but in that world of fantasy officials of the urban prefecture would have enjoyed a pre-eminent status. That is not to deny that prompting this fantasy there were genuine conflicts of jurisdiction between the urban prefect, the *vicarius*¹⁸³ and the *comes rei privatae*.¹⁸⁴

A number of passages attest to the privileged status in *HA* of the Roman prefecture. When Decius makes Valerian censor, itself a bizarre event, he gives him power to pass judgment on the imperial palace, provincial governors and the most eminent prefects (including, clearly, praetorian prefects) but not on the urban prefect or ordinary consuls.¹⁸⁵ Again, Carinus is supposed to have made one of his secretaries, a *cancellarius*, urban prefect. Scriptor comments that 'nothing more disgusting can be said or imagined'.¹⁸⁶ This sounds like more than routine vituperation. The writer is enraged by the degradation of the office. Again, he does not pretend to be on familiar terms with emperors and their families. It is his father or grandfather who knew Tetricus junior, Saturninus, the wife of Bonosus and above all Diocletian.¹⁸⁷ But Scriptor himself knows the urban prefect, and discusses history with him. He even persuades 'Iunius Tiberianus'¹⁸⁸ to endorse historical falsification.¹⁸⁹

Scriptor can, therefore, reasonably be located in the urban prefect's office. He has the right attitudes. A bad emperor like Carinus has an aversion to office work: 'fastidium subscribendi';¹⁹⁰ the conscientious Alexander liked to pore over papers and spent his afternoons reading and signing letters.¹⁹¹ The unfortunate young ruler is, like a conscientious clerk, made to keep the most detailed notes and statistics.¹⁹² A good emperor has his business processed by heads of the *scrinia* and jurists.¹⁹³ Of the

¹⁷⁷ A phrase derived from classical legal culture is 'nullius sunt momenti'; *Car.* 20. 1; cf. *Avid.* 3. 3: 'sive iusta sive iniusta causa'; *Aur.* 11. 1, 12. 3: *adrogatio* (in technical sense not in *CT*). The legal classification into necessary, useful and voluptuary expenses (e.g. *Dig.* 5. 3. 38-9), applied by Scriptor to rulers, underlies much of the language of *HA*, e.g. *Alex.* 15. 3; and the ludicrous concept of a *tacitum senatus consultum* (*Gord.* 12) is based on legal analogies such as *tacitum fideicommissum* (e.g. *CT* 16. 5. 17, Theodosius-Nicomachus, 4 May 389) cf. J. Straub, *BHAC* 1975-6 (1978), 195-216.

¹⁷⁸ K.-P. Johne, *BHAC* 1972-4 (1976), 131-42; G. Alföldy, *BHAC* 1975-6 (1978), 1 ff.

¹⁷⁹ *Tac.* 18. 3, 5.

¹⁸⁰ *Tac.* 19. 2.

¹⁸¹ *Prob.* 13. 1.

¹⁸² *Prob.* 23. 1-5.

¹⁸³ *Symm.*, *Rel.* 33. 2.

¹⁸⁴ *Rel.* 33. The point is dealt with in *CT* 11. 30. 49 (Theodosius-Nicomachus Albino PUR 25 July 389), issued at a time when I take Scriptor to have been an

official in the office of the PUR.

¹⁸⁵ *Val.* 6. 6.

¹⁸⁶ *Car.* 16. 3: 'quo foedius nec cogitari potuit aliquando nec dici', cf. plan of Elagabal to create fourteen city prefects of the worst possible character: *Elag.* 20. 3.

¹⁸⁷ *Trig. Tyr.* 25. 3 (Tetricus junior); *Aur.* 43. 2 (Diocletian); *Quad. Tyr.* 9. 4 (Saturninus), 15. 4 (wife of Bonosus); *Car.* 13. 3, 14. 1 (Diocletian).

¹⁸⁸ There was a Iunius Tiberianus PUR 291-2, 303-4, but he is mere camouflage, perhaps for the PUR of 392-4, Nicomachus Flavianus the younger, whose father had written *Annales*.

¹⁸⁹ *Aur.* 2. 2.

¹⁹⁰ *Car.* 16. 8, cf. *Comm.* 13. 7.

¹⁹¹ *Alex.* 21. 6-8.

¹⁹² *Alex.* 21. 6-8.

¹⁹³ *Alex.* 15. 6. Jurists, e.g. Ulpian (*ibid.* 15. 6, 51. 4, 67. 2, 68. 1), are highly esteemed in *HA*, Scriptor being, like Ammianus, a partisan of the rule of law. 'Not interested in law or lawyers' (Syme, *Ammianus*, 188) is wide of the mark; cf. e.g. *Sev.* 21. 9-10 (Papinian), *Alex.* 26. 5-6, 27. 2, 31. 2-3 (Ulpian and Paul).

legal literature Scriptor knows at least the *Institutes* of Gaius,¹⁹⁴ the *Codices Gregorianus*¹⁹⁵ and *Hermogenianus*¹⁹⁶ and one or more works of Ulpian;¹⁹⁷ and he prefers, at least in theory, the plain legal style, *genus humile*. He adheres to the standard legal-administrative view that rescripts interfere with the proper administration of the law.¹⁹⁸ The culminating defect of an evil emperor is ignorance of public affairs.¹⁹⁹

Scriptor's precise position in the urban prefecture cannot be settled, but documentation was his strong point, and *cognitionalis*²⁰⁰ a possible post. He tells us that Alexander, that model administrator, always consulted the heads of the *scrinia*, allowing them to sit if they felt unwell, while the secretaries (*librarii*) and those in charge of the *scrinium* read out the documents.²⁰¹

More important than Scriptor's precise position in the prefecture is how he came to be in Rome at all. As was long since noticed, much in *HA* connects him with Gaul and, we may add, with Ausonius. At the deepest political level the special needs of Gaul,²⁰² threatened by barbarians, constitute the thread which binds together other strands of policy. It is in the light of these that, in the west at least, rulers require experience, young emperors are inadequate, frivolous emperors are pernicious, usurpers are often better than lawful rulers. On the whole, Scriptor, even when denouncing vice or folly, recognizes that a ruler can be forgiven much provided that his faults do not endanger the state.²⁰³ But Gallienus and Carinus, dissipated emperors who are alleged to have neglected the defence of Gaul,²⁰⁴ he assails with real venom. How far *HA*'s picture of Gallienus is true to history is unclear. But in any event these violent attacks cannot really be meant for such remote historical figures. 'Gallienus' and 'Carinus' are rather forerunners of and code names for Gratian, that pious but frivolous emperor whose defects were fresh in the minds of contemporaries. Recall that in 367 Valentinian I, disregarding the claims of more experienced statesmen,²⁰⁵ made his eight-year-old son Gratian Augustus. When Valentinian died in 375 Gratian, though not cruel, proved irresponsible.²⁰⁶ His neglect led to the usurpation in 383–8 of the conscientious Magnus Maximus.²⁰⁷

This sequence of events more than any other seems to me to have determined the political framework of *HA*, composed a decade later. Scriptor is not indeed a blind admirer of the Gauls. Laudable in their refusal to tolerate frivolous and self-indulgent princes who depart from Roman standards of virtue,²⁰⁸ they are, nevertheless, too

¹⁹⁴ The ludicrous but accurate reference to the Lex Caninia at *Tac.* 10. 7 comes from Gaius, *Inst.* 1. 42–6. Ausonius also used this source: *Griphus* 63–4, explicable only in the light of *Inst.* 4. 143–55.

¹⁹⁵ *Macr.* 13. 1 (Trajan issued no rescripts) could plausibly be asserted only by someone who knew that there were no rescripts of Trajan in the Codex Gregorianus, cf. J. Straub, *BHAC* 1975–6 (1978), 203. D. Liebs, *BHAC* 1982–3 (1985), 221–37, shows at p. 223 that if rescripts are taken to mean *subscriptions* Scriptor was correct.

¹⁹⁶ *Marc.* 19. 12, on the veneration of Diocletian for Marcus, is derived from *CJ* 5. 17. 5 (Diocletian/Hermogenianus 293 or 294; Honoré, *Emperors and Lawyers* (1981), 119–32). A. D. E. Cameron, *CR* 18 (1968), 17–18; Syme, *Emperors*, 272. This is a good example of Scriptor's ability to exploit a small hint: Syme, *ibid.*, 259.

¹⁹⁷ *Prob.* 5. 1: 'et haec quidem epistulis declaratur' reflects Ulpian's phrasing 'constitutionibus/rescripto/epistula/senatusconsulto etc. declaratur': *Dig.* 1. 12. 1 *pr.* (1 *off. pr. urb.*), 50. 4. 6 *pr.*, 50. 6. 3 *pr.* (4 *off. proc.*), 48. 18. 1. 3, 23 (8 *off. proc.*), 49. 5. 5. 3 (4 *appell.*), 17. 2. 32 (13 *Sab.*), 26. 7. 2. *pr.* (9 *ed.*), 11. 4. 1. 2 (11 *ed.*), 18. 3. 4 *pr.* (32 *ed.*). Scriptor will certainly have read Ulp. *off. pr. urb.*, probably also *off. proc.* and *appell.*

¹⁹⁸ *Macr.* 13. 1. The point arose in *CT* 13. 3. 13 (Valentinian 11 ad Pinianum PUR 22 Jan. 387) and 12. 16. 1 (Theodosius/Nicomachus Albino PUR 16 Aug.

389), dates when I take Scriptor to have been working in the office of the PUR.

¹⁹⁹ *Aur.* 43. 1, cf. *Macr.* 13. 1: 'hominum imperitorum voluntates'.

²⁰⁰ Symm., *Rel.* 41. 8.

²⁰¹ *Alex.* 31. 1: 'relegentibus cuncta librariis et iis qui scrinium gerebant'.

²⁰² *Car.* 7. 2: 'Gallicanum, quod maxime constantem principem quaerit ... imperium'. The connection with Gaul was discerned by Domaszewski, though his dating to the late sixth century was mistaken, cf. Momigliano, *Secondo Contributo*, 114; Syme, *Ammianus*, 189–90.

²⁰³ *Ael.* 5. 9: 'quae etsi non decora, non tamen ad perniciem publicam prompta sunt'; *Trig. Tyr.* 3. 10: 'sciatis nusquam gentium reperiri qui possit penitus adprobari' (attr. Valerian); *Aur.* 43. 2–5 (attr. Diocletian).

²⁰⁴ *Car.* 7. 1–2, 10, 16. 2, 8. The position was retrieved by Constantius, who restored Roman rule ('qui Gallias Romanis legibus redderet'): *Car.* 18. 3.

²⁰⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus 27. 6.

²⁰⁶ Rufinus 11. 13; Ammianus 31. 19 (comparison with Commodus). Presumably the Lampridius theme (below ad nn. 256–68) depends on this passage of Ammianus.

²⁰⁷ Orosius 7. 34. 9.

²⁰⁸ *Gall.* 4. 3: 'Galli, quibus insitum est leves ac degenerantes a virtute Romana et luxuriosos principes ferre non posse'.

prone to rebellion.²⁰⁹ Yet, whatever their virtues and vices, concern for Gaul leads Scriptor to emphasize the services to the state of a number of Gallic usurpers, especially in the disorderly reign of Gallienus.²¹⁰ Among other motives for the composition of *Triginta Tyranni* the desire to do justice to these usurpers, virtually all better men than the legitimate emperor, has its place. It does not matter that some were hard men. *Severitas*, particularly towards soldiers and common people, is often necessary. Because he was strict, honourable and self-controlled, the Gauls loved Severus as no other ruler.²¹¹

Within Gaul there is much to connect Scriptor with Ausonius, in particular the erudition, levity, and fondness for puzzles which they share. The Aquitanian poet writes to Symmachus and encloses his ingenious *Griphus Ternarii Numeri*. He seeks to excuse the frivolity and obscurity of the composition: it was written on military service, at a time of licence, as the result of a wager.²¹² As for obscurity, 'if you, who have read and understood everything, find my meaning obscure then indeed I shall be happy, because I shall have achieved my object...'.²¹³ To set puzzles to be solved by pupils, colleagues or friends comes naturally to a man who spent some thirty years as professor of grammar and rhetoric in Bordeaux.²¹⁴ Such puzzles are often mere foolery (*ineptiolae*),²¹⁵ to be solved with a drink at one's elbow. Scriptor's erudite jokes—and the Roman audience liked jokes²¹⁶—fit a pupil or colleague of Ausonius. The Ausonian corpus and *HA* also have a didactic element in common. Recall with what schoolmasterish pedantry Scriptor insists that Maximus and Pupienus are the same person.²¹⁷ It is true that in *Tacitus* Ausonius is gently teased. When the senate recovers its former powers a private letter from 'Autronius Tiberianus'²¹⁸ to 'Autronius Iustus'²¹⁹ his father expresses the son's unalloyed joy. Get well ('convalesce'), he says, and comes to our meetings. You will enjoy them, for we have recovered our powers, besides which appeals from every jurisdiction now go to the urban prefect. Though Autronius is a republican name,²²⁰ which may have served as camouflage, an alert contemporary would not miss the reference to Ausonius, who in 377 persuaded Gratian to appoint his father, then nearly ninety,²²¹ praetorian prefect—rather late to start attending the senate. Ausonius was, I suppose, dead²²² when Scriptor wrote *Tacitus*; and the joke is not really unkind. One other possible link with Aquitania, albeit tenuous, may be mentioned. Tetricus senior is said in *HA* to have been governor of Gaul.²²³ In fact Aquitania was his province.²²⁴ And Scriptor's grandfather is first introduced as a friend of the younger Tetricus,²²⁵ which may indicate that he thought this the least implausible link between his family and one of his biographical subjects.

Although, then, I have argued that *HA* was written by an official in the urban prefect's office, Syme was in my view right to perceive in Scriptor a *grammaticus*²²⁶—but at an earlier stage of his career. The link between these stages was, I suggest, that his literary background qualified him for the administrative post. His likely teacher is indeed Ausonius, who in the period c. 334–64 taught first grammar and later rhetoric

²⁰⁹ *Alex.* 59. 5; *Trig. Tyr.* 3. 6: 'novarum rerum semper ... cupidi'.

²¹⁰ *Gall.* 4. 5; *Trig. Tyr.* 3. 6, 10. 14. For Proculus as foreshadowing Argobast, who subdued the Alamanni see *Quad. Tyr.* 13. 4; Syme, *Ammianus*, 76.

²¹¹ *Sev.* 4. 1 and note the *severitas* of Maximus, an excellent urban prefect: *Maximus* 5. 10.

²¹² Ausonius, *Griphus* intro. 17–21; cf. *Cento Nuptialis* intro. 19–27; *Parent.* 18. 1: 'Qui ioca laetitiamque colis, qui tristia damnas'; *Lib. Protrepticus ad Nep.*, intro. 9–11: 'si qua tibi in his versiculis (nam vereor, ut multa sint) videbuntur fucatus concinnata quam verius ...'.

²¹³ Ausonius, *Griphus*, 52–5: 'postremo si etiam tibi obscurus fuero, cui nihil neque non lectum est neque non intellectum, tum vero ego beatus, quod adfectavi, adsequar, me ut requiras, me ut desideres, de me cogites'.

²¹⁴ c. 334–64; Ausonius, *Praef.* 1. 17, 20, 24.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, intro. 16.

²¹⁶ *Gall.* 9. 1; some semi-serious: *Geta* 4. 5.

²¹⁷ *Maximinus* 24. 5, 33. 3–4; *Gord.* 10. 1, 19. 9, 22. 1; *Maximus* 1. 2, 11. 1, 15. 1, 4–5, 16. 2, 7, 17–18.

²¹⁸ i.e. Ausonius imagined as being in Rome, on the Tiber: in *HA* Tiberianus often means 'in Rome' and Gallicanus 'in Gaul' or 'like a Gaul'.

²¹⁹ i.e. Iulius Ausonius, a just man: *PLRE* 1 Ausonius 5 (PPO Illyrici 377); Ausonius, *Epicedion in Patrem; Parentalia* 1.

²²⁰ Syme, *Ammianus*, 169.

²²¹ Ausonius, *Epicedion* 52; *Parentalia* 1. 4.

²²² Above, nn. 151–2.

²²³ *Trig. Tyr.* 24. 1.

²²⁴ Victor Caes. 33. 14; Eutropius 9. 10 (proclaimed emperor at Bordeaux c. 270).

²²⁵ *Trig. Tyr.* 25. 3.

²²⁶ *Ammianus*, 207, 211.

at Bordeaux.²²⁷ Scriptor's subject is grammar rather than rhetoric. He purports to be providing in a plain style²²⁸ facts for others with greater rhetorical expertise to convert into proper history.²²⁹ His role as he sees it, or pretends to see it, is like that of officials of the imperial *scrinia* who provide the plain facts as background material for the quaestor to use when producing a draft law²³⁰—material which may be of no interest to anyone else.²³¹ As quaestor in 376 Ausonius secured legislation for the appointment of grammarians and rhetoricians in the principal towns of Gaul,²³² the rhetoricians being paid a higher salary. The Aquitanian quaestor thus had plenty of academic patronage. Whatever his faults he was tireless in advancing the interests of his associates. Suppose Symmachus, urban prefect in 384²³³ and worried about the poor quality of some of his officials,²³⁴ wrote to ask if Ausonius could recommend an erudite man to help with the paper work. Why should Ausonius not have recommended Scriptor, a learned and entertaining *grammaticus*, perhaps teaching in one of the towns of Gaul under the legislation of 376? Scriptor goes to Rome, becomes ensconced in the prefecture and absorbs its ethos, without ever losing his Ausonian frivolity. Some years later, knowing the libraries of Rome better than most,²³⁵ he is asked or spontaneously decides to compose short biographies of the emperors up to Diocletian. A number of factors could have provided the stimulus: the centenary of the tetrarchy; the reign of an emperor whose career had something in common with his own and who stood for policies similar to those of Diocletian; a suggestion by Nicomachus Flavianus the younger, urban prefect in 392–4. In return Scriptor may have hoped, had Eugenius survived, to become 'Vulcacius Gallicanus v.c.'.²³⁶ As Symmachus says, 'iter ad capessandos magistratus saepe litteris promovetur'.²³⁷

III. SIX DIFFERENT AUTHORS

Why does Scriptor use six different pen-names? Why does he choose the names he does? 'The names have been assigned without much thought', says Syme. 'It is a gain to disregard them'.²³⁸ I suspect that, on the contrary, these ingenious labels will repay further scrutiny. At one level they are simply an extra item of camouflage and enable Scriptor in another identity to correct mistakes²³⁹ and laud his own past performance.²⁴⁰ But, since the style is consistent and the six writers sometimes forget what they are supposed to have written or to be about to write,²⁴¹ there are those who will have seen through the device of multiple authorship. The question then arises whether the inner group who detected the imposture were meant, as in the case of the dedications, to treat the six names as presenting an enigma. Is the reader invited to guess why a particular pen-name is chosen for the writer of a particular biography? To see how this might be the case, bear in mind how often Scriptor uses puns on the names of emperors not merely as a joke²⁴² but as an index of character or circumstance.²⁴³ Thus, Avidius was 'avidus';²⁴⁴ Probus was, according to an inscription on his funeral mould, 'vere probus';²⁴⁵ Macrinus was so cruel that his slaves called

²²⁷ Ausonius, *Praef.* 1. 17, 20.

²²⁸ *Trig. Tyr.* 1. 1: 'pedestri adloquio', cf. *Prob.* 21. 1: 'pedestris sermo'.

²²⁹ *Trig. Tyr.* 1. 1, 11. 6, 33. 8; *Prob.* 1. 6, 2. 6–7; *Car.* 21. 2.

²³⁰ W. E. Voss, *Recht und Rhetorik in den Kaisergesetzen der Spätantike* (1982), 22 ff.; Honoré, op. cit. (n. 1), 136–44.

²³¹ *Quad. Tyr.* 15. 9.

²³² *CT* 13. 3. 11 (23 May 376).

²³³ *CT* 4. 17. 4, 11. 30. 44 (29 Nov. 384). His correspondence with Ausonius at this period has not been preserved.

²³⁴ Symm., *Rel.* 17.

²³⁵ Files of the urban prefect (e.g. *Aur.* 9. 1), of the senate, documents in the Bibliotheca Ulpia. No reason to doubt that Scriptor sometimes consulted them, which is not to deny that often he could not find what he

wanted or had no time to look or simply preferred to invent.

²³⁶ Learned men deserve public office: *Sev.* 21. 8: 'ne homini (Papiniano) per se et per scientiam suam magno deesset et dignitas'; *Tac.* 4. 4: 'ecquis melius quam litteratus imperat?'

²³⁷ Symm., *Ep.* 1. 20.

²³⁸ Syme, *Ammianus*, 176.

²³⁹ *Trig. Tyr.* 2. 3, cf. *Aur.* 32. 2.

²⁴⁰ e.g. *Aur.* 2. 1–2, *Quad. Tyr.* 1. 3 (Vopiscus on Pollio); *Prob.* 2. 7 (Vopiscus on Capitolinus and Lampridius).

²⁴¹ *Marc.* 19. 4; *Nig.* 9. 3; *Ael.* 2. 9; *Elag.* 35. 2.

²⁴² *Gord.* 34. 3.

²⁴³ Dessau, op. cit., 384–5.

²⁴⁴ *Avid.* 1. 7 as 'ipsius Veri epistula indicat'!

²⁴⁵ *Prob.* 21. 4.

him Macellinus.²⁴⁶ Scriptor is equally fond of outlining his subjects' tastes in standard terms, as if he were ticking off items on a form. Niger was 'vini avidus, cibi parcus',²⁴⁷ whilst Claudius was 'vini parcus, ad cibum promptus',²⁴⁸ and Avidius 'avidus vini item abstinens, cibi adpetens et inediae patiens'²⁴⁹—the last a typical piece of tomfoolery. My suggestion is that the biographers' names combine these two features. They are puns based on a simple typology of imperial character.

To test this possibility, write the names of the first ten emperors in the main series of biographies in the order in which they appear in Ausonius' *Tetrasticha*²⁵⁰ and in *HA*,²⁵¹ and add the names of the biographers assigned by Scriptor to each:

Hadrian	Spartianus
Pius	Capitolinus
Marcus	Capitolinus
Commodus	Lampridius
Pertinax	Capitolinus
Didius Iulianus	Spartianus
Severus	Spartianus
Caracalla	Spartianus
Macrinus	Capitolinus
Elagabal	Lampridius

'Spartianus', for example, could mean harsh or spartan, 'Capitolinus' friendly with the Capitolium or senate, 'Lampridius' frivolous and fond of the night-lights. Each emperor is then assigned the biographer most suited to his character. 'Spartianus' writes about strict emperors, unfriendly to the senate, hence spartan, such as Aelius Hadrianus (biographer Aelius Spartianus), Severus, and Caracalla. Didius Iulianus also is hostile to the senate and threatens to massacre the conscript fathers,²⁵² who declare him an outlaw and have him murdered.²⁵³

By contrast Capitolinus writes the lives of emperors on good terms with the senate. Pius and Marcus are examples, but the prototype is Augustus and the biographer, consistently with this, is named 'Iulius Capitolinus'. Pertinax and Macrinus also qualify: Pertinax was affable towards senators²⁵⁴ and, despite Macrinus' bad character,²⁵⁵ the senate so detested Caracalla that it warmly welcomed his successor.²⁵⁶ Lampridius is chosen to write the lives of frivolous emperors such as Commodus and Elagabal. Though crude, the characterizations are not inept. Post-war American presidents provide parallels: Nixon's life demands a Spartianus, Johnson's a Capitolinus, Kennedy's a Lampridius.

The subsidiary lives²⁵⁷ were perhaps assigned according to the same pattern though with a new twist. Those who did not exercise effective rule are allotted the same biographer as the emperor who nominated them Caesar or Augustus, unless their character clearly puts them in a different category. Aelius, nominated by Hadrian, gets Spartianus as biographer. Verus owed his position as emperor to Marcus' generosity²⁵⁸ and, as he was not quite frivolous enough to be assigned to Lampridius, Capitolinus is his biographer. Avidius Cassius, a rebel against Marcus, fitted no existing category. He was therefore given a biographer suitable for rebels,

²⁴⁶ *Macr.* 13. 3, cf. *Avid.* 9. 7; *Nig.* 6. 5; *Alb.* 4. 4; *Macr.* 13. 3; *Elag.* 2. 2; *Trig. Tyr.* 10. 4-7, 33. 2; *Car.* 8. 5.

²⁴⁷ *Nig.* 6. 6.

²⁴⁸ *Claud.* 13. 5.

²⁴⁹ *Avid.* 3. 4, cf. *Sev.* 19. 8; *Alb.* 13. 1; *Carac.* 9. 3; *Macr.* 13. 4; *Maximin.* 28. 2; *Gord.* 6. 6, 19. 1; *Maximus* 7. 6; *Aur.* 6. 1.

²⁵⁰ In Ausonius the series begins with Julius Caesar and Hadrian is the fifteenth emperor.

²⁵¹ The order of composition is controversial: A. D.

E. Cameron, *JRS* 61 (1971), 254-67 answered by Syme, *JRS* 62 (1972), 123 ff. = *Papers*, 12-29. I have assumed, apart from the subsidiary lives (above n. 21), chronological order.

²⁵² *Did.* 6. 7 despite the dissenting view in 7.3.

²⁵³ *Did.* 8. 7-8.

²⁵⁴ *Pert.* 9. 9, 13. 2.

²⁵⁵ *Marc.* 12. 1, 14. 1.

²⁵⁶ *Macr.* 2. 3-4, 7. 1.

²⁵⁷ Syme, *Emperors*, 54-77.

²⁵⁸ *Marc.* 7. 5.

Vulcacius²⁵⁹ Gallicanus—suitable since the Gauls are prone to rebellion²⁶⁰ and the good usurper, of whom the *HA* makes much,²⁶¹ defends Gaul from its enemies.²⁶² We might expect Niger and Albinus to be treated as rebels and assigned to Gallicanus, but to Scriptor they are rivals of Severus for the vacant prize of empire. He draws a contrast between the harsh Niger, a stern man necessary to the state,²⁶³ whom he assigns to Spartianus and the amiable Albinus, a favourite of the senate,²⁶⁴ who even wants to restore senatorial rule,²⁶⁵ and is assigned to Capitolinus. Geta, given his title by Severus and in *HA* not particularly vicious, is allotted by derivation to Spartianus, but Diadumenianus,²⁶⁶ though only nine, displays such unfeeling cruelty²⁶⁷ that, though his father is allotted to Capitolinus, he gets Lampridius.²⁶⁸

The whole series of seventeen lives, main and subsidiary, up to Elagabal is on this view distributed among biographers so that the writer's pen-name corresponds to the assumed character of the emperor. It is not necessary to decide at what stage Scriptor assigned the various biographers to individual lives.²⁶⁹ The assignments, if I have deciphered them correctly, are intended partly as camouflage and partly as entertainment. They need not have been part of the design from the outset, but the multiple-author scheme must have been devised before Scriptor wrote *Alexander*, since with that life he abandons the original scheme. But the names and types must come from Scriptor himself rather than some later editor, for *Probus* mentions and praises both Capitolinus and Lampridius.²⁷⁰ The typology is enigmatic in the manner of Ausonius' *Griphus*. What are the three sorts of interdict?²⁷¹ the four types of emperor? It supplies an additional argument for the unitary authorship of *HA*.

The scheme applied to the first seventeen biographies was not carried through to the end, since with *Elagabal* Scriptor changed course. Though that life is assigned, consistently with the subject's character, to Lampridius, it was conceived as part of a sustained contrast between two youths, the corrupt Elagabal and the conscientious Alexander. The same author had to write both lives and Lampridius, unsuitable though he was for Alexander, was given both. From now onwards, lives are planned in groups rather than singly. From *Maximini* the subsidiary lives are incorporated with the main ones²⁷² and the ostensible authors write several lives in succession. Thus, the Maximinus and Gordianus families each together occupy a single *liber*, and they together with the senatorial emperors Maximus and Balbinus form part of a group of lives which centres on the events of A.D. 238. The fact that, though Maximinus would earlier have been assigned to Spartianus, this group as a whole falls to Capitolinus suggests that to Scriptor the main point of these events lay in the fact that in 238 the senate briefly asserted its independence and appointed its own emperors.²⁷³

The later lives up to Claudius are assigned to 'Trebellius Pollio' and from Aurelian to the end to 'Flavius Vopiscus of Syracuse'. The significance of the names is obscure,²⁷⁴ but the change of authorship may be connected with the desire to present the emperor Probus as the hero of the third part of *HA* and implicitly of the whole

²⁵⁹ The name suggests Vulcacius Rufinus, PPO in Gaul 354.

²⁶⁰ *Gall.* 4. 3-4, above, n. 208; *Trig. Tyr.* 3. 7: 'Galliarum rerum semper sunt cupidi'; *Quad. Tyr.* 7. 1: 'Gallus, ex gente hominum inquietissima et avida semper vel faciendi principis vel imperii'.

²⁶¹ e.g. *Avid.* 2. 6.

²⁶² *Gall.* 4. 5 (Postumus); *Quad. Tyr.* 13. 4 (Proculus); *Trig. Tyr.* 3. 6 (Postumus); 10. 14 (Claudius, Macrianus, Ingenius, Postumus, Aureolus).

²⁶³ *Nig.* 3. 5-6, 10. 1-9.

²⁶⁴ *Alb.* 7. 2, 9. 6, 12. 1. It may be that *Albinus* obliquely celebrates Ceionius Rufinus Albinus PUR 389-91.

²⁶⁵ *Alb.* 13. 3-10.

²⁶⁶ Syme, *Papers*, 46-62.

²⁶⁷ *Diad.* 8. 5-9. 3.

²⁶⁸ Is he assigned this character as a warning that even

the very young can be cruel (Honorius was nine in 394 as was Diadumenianus in 217)?

²⁶⁹ 'The labels are an afterthought': Syme, *Emperors*, 74. Perhaps, since it is easier after several lives have been written to see into what categories they might be divided.

²⁷⁰ *Prob.* 2. 7.

²⁷¹ Ausonius, *Griphus* 63, 88.

²⁷² *Maximin.* 1. 1 explains Scriptor's change of practice.

²⁷³ Syme, *Emperors*, 255.

²⁷⁴ Is 'Trebellius Pollio' connected with *rebellio*, an unusual word which *HA* uses to mean a rebel (*Marc.* 29. 4; *Avid.* 9. 11; *Gall.* 19. 6), his most ambitious piece being *Triginta Tyranni*? Vopiscus, whose style Marriott regards as most characteristically Scriptorial (*JRS* 69 at p. 70), seems to me most closely to represent Scriptor's considered views.

work.²⁷⁵ 'Pollio' is committed to Claudius, whom he describes as the most popular of emperors both before, during and after his rule.²⁷⁶ This predilection for Claudius may stem from Scriptor's flattery of Claudius' supposed descendant 'Constantius Caesar', i.e. Stilicho.²⁷⁷ It was not easy for Pollio to promote Probus to first place, and Pollio has, as in a soap opera, to be eliminated from the script.

IV. AESOPIAN HISTORY

The test of these hypotheses is whether they provide a context in which some of the problems of *HA* become less intractable. Time will tell. It remains to say something of Scriptor's characteristic techniques of transposition and self-refutation. As to transposition,²⁷⁸ what he says of one person, time, event or circumstance is often true in regard to a different person, time, event, or circumstance. His method is frequently distortion rather than invention. *Tacitus* provides a striking example. The speeches and letters in it are often regarded as forgeries concocted in order to indulge a senatorial day-dream. That is too simple a view. As we saw, the letter of 'Autronius' to his father, though an invention, satirizes his nepotism (or parentism) in an amusing way. Behind this light-hearted satire, moreover, lies a serious point: Ausonius' frivolity is like that of the senators who for a brief moment under Eugenius and Nicomachus Flavianus thought that the senate had been restored to its former glory and freedom. For it is essential to read *Tacitus* in the light of its final sentences.²⁷⁹ The senators were so carried away by the advent of 'Tacitus' that they sacrificed victims at home, uncovered the portraits of their ancestors, sat clothed in white and gave lavish parties. They supposed that ancient times had been restored and that they were again free to indulge in pagan sacrifice: 'antiquitatem sibi redditam crederent'. As readers of *HA* knew, they were in for a rude awakening, 'Tacito fataliter absumpto',²⁸⁰ after the Frigidus.

Tacitus is history of a sort, but history of the late fourth century, not the third. One of its highlights is a speech delivered in the senate by 'Maecius Faltonius Nicomachus'.²⁸¹ The position of this speech in the narrative is such that it ought to be a speech in support of the proposed election of the aged Tacitus. The text, however, assumes that Tacitus has already been elected and that he can be relied on to rule wisely. Nevertheless, 'Nicomachus' stresses that the senate has an important decision to make:

Semper quidem, patres conscripti, recte atque prudenter rei publicae magnificus hic ordo consuluit, neque a quoquam orbis terrae populo solidior umquam expectata sapientia est. attamen nulla umquam neque gravior neque prudentior in hoc sacrario dicta sententia est. senioem principem fecimus et virum qui omnibus quasi pater consulat. nihil ab hoc inmaturum, nihil praeproperum, nihil asperum formidandum est...

Always indeed, Conscript Fathers, has this noble body taken wise and prudent measures for the commonwealth, and from no nation in the whole world has sounder wisdom ever been awaited. At no time, however, has a more wise or more weighty opinion been voiced in this sacred place. We have chosen as prince a man advanced in years, one who will watch over all like a father. From him we need fear nothing ill-considered, nothing over hasty, nothing cruel ...

'Nicomachus' goes on to contrast the dangers presented by young rulers:

enimvero si recolere velitis vetusta illa prodigia, Nerones dico et Heliogabalos et Commodos—seu potius semper Incommodos—certe non hominum magis vitia quam aetatum fuerunt. di avertant principes pueros et patres patriae dici inpuberes et quibus ad subscribendum magistri litterarii manus teneant, quos ad consulatus dandos dulcia et

²⁷⁵ *Prob.* 21. 1; Syme, *Emperors*, 288.

²⁷⁶ *Claud.* 18. 4.

²⁷⁷ Above nn. 67–85.

²⁷⁸ A generalized version of the *Cento*, of which

Ausonius, *Cento Nuptialis* presented a recent model.

²⁷⁹ *Tac.* 19. 6.

²⁸⁰ *Prob.* 10. 1; cf. *Car.* 3. 7; *Tac.* 13. 5.

²⁸¹ Syme, *Ammianus*, 157–8.

circuli et quaecumque voluptas puerilis invitet ... sed quo diutius, patres conscripti, protrahor?

Indeed, if you should wish to consider those monsters of old, a Nero, I mean, an Elagabalus, a Commodus—or rather, always, an *Incommodious*—you would assuredly find that their vices were due as much to their youth as to the men themselves. May the gods forbend that we should give the title of prince to a child or of Father of his Country to an immature boy, whose hand a schoolmaster must guide for the signing of his name and who is induced to confer a consulship by sweetmeats or toys or other such childish delights ... But why, Conscript Fathers, do I proceed further?

The senate should therefore be satisfied with the elderly ruler it has rather than renew the lamentable experiences it has previously undergone:

magis gratulemur quod habemus principem senem, quam illa iteremus quae plus quam lacrimanda tolerantibus exstiterunt.

Let us be thankful that we have an elderly prince, rather than repeat experiences which appeared more than tearful to those who endured them.

The orator ends with an appeal to the emperor to follow the example of Hadrian and adopt a mature successor rather than to make his young children heirs to the empire:

gratias igitur dis immortalibus ago atque habeo, et quidem pro universa re publica, teque, Tacite Auguste, convenio, petens, obsecrans ac libere pro communi patria et legibus deprecans, ne parvulos tuos, si te citius fata praevenerint, facias Romani heredes imperii, ne sic rem publicam patresque conscriptos populumque Romanum ut villulam tuam, ut colonos tuos, ut servos tuos relinquant. quare circumspice, imitare Nervas, Traianos, Hadrianos. ingens est gloria morientis principis rem publicam magis amare quam filios.

And so I bring and offer thanks to the gods in heaven in behalf, indeed, of the entire commonwealth, and I appeal to you, Tacitus Augustus, asking and entreating and openly demanding in the name of our common fatherland and our laws that, if Fate should overtake you too speedily, you will not name your young sons as heirs to the Roman Empire, or bequeath to them the commonwealth, the Conscript Fathers and the Roman people as you would your farm, your tenants and your slaves. Wherefore look about you and follow the example of a Nerva, a Trajan and a Hadrian. It is a great glory to a dying prince to love the commonwealth more than his own sons.

The speech was clearly not delivered at the time of the election of Tacitus. Only *HA* credits him with children.²⁸² In any case, to demand that the emperor refrain from treating senators as his *coloni* is to insult a ruler whom the senate has supposedly elected for his qualities of wisdom and restraint. The sentence ‘magis gratulemur ...’ implies that the occasion is not that of the election of Tacitus or any other emperor. The issue is rather whether the senate, having previously elected an elderly emperor (‘seniorem fecimus principem’, ‘habemus principem senem’), should now change its mind and repeat the disagreeable experience of subjection to a young ruler.

There is a historical context which fits the debate. The Roman senate accepted Eugenius as emperor when he entered Italy in 393.²⁸³ Eugenius had hoped that Theodosius would do the same,²⁸⁴ but Theodosius refused, and instead in January 393 had made his eight-year-old son Honorius Augustus. Neither side gave way and by 394 the senate was confronted with imminent civil war. It had a difficult decision to make. Should it stand firm? Or should it go back on its previous judgment and defer to Theodosius, knowing that, if he died within the next decade or so, the west would be confronted with yet another inexperienced and possibly incompetent ruler? ‘Nicomachus’ urges the senate to stick to the elderly emperor whom it has elected and not to risk repeating the lamentable experiences it and the western empire have suffered

²⁸² *Tac.* 14. 1, 16. 4.

²⁸³ *ICUR* (n.s. ed. Silvagni) I. 1449 (14 Apr. 393).

²⁸⁴ Zosimus 4. 55.

under Gratian and Valentinian II.²⁸⁵ The final passage is on this view addressed not to the 'Tacitus' (Eugenius) whom the senate had previously elected but to a different 'Tacitus' (Theodosius²⁸⁶) who is insisting that his sons succeed him. The speech of 'Nicomachus' is as appropriate to that conjuncture as it is inappropriate to the accession of Tacitus, though perhaps we should eliminate one of Scriptor's less successful jokes.²⁸⁷

The place is therefore the Roman senate, the date 394. Who is the orator? His *HA* name is an amalgam of three fourth-century urban prefects.²⁸⁸ We might suppose that the person intended was Nicomachus Flavianus junior, prefect in 392–4. But the allusion is in the semi-overt mode²⁸⁹ and Nicomachus junior was still alive when *Tacitus* was composed, since he lived on into the 430s. When the style of the oration is compared with that of the constitutions composed by Virius Nicomachus Flavianus senior,²⁹⁰ it seems likely that the speech is genuine and attributable to the father rather than the son. Characteristically emphatic, it begins with a battery of universals: 'semper ... neque a quoquam umquam ... nulla umquam ... nihil ... , nihīl ... , nihil ... omnia ... cuncta'. Apart from the repetitions of *nihil*, we find 'quibus ... , quos ... ; qui ... , qui ... ;' and 'ut ... , ut ... , ut ...'. This hammering effect, produced by a combination of emphasis and repetition, is not, I believe, to be found in any other speech in *HA*,²⁹¹ but it occurs in many texts composed by Nicomachus as quaestor.²⁹² The extremism which Nicomachus displays in that capacity,²⁹³ and to which his political career bears witness, recurs when the orator not only requests but demands²⁹⁴ that Theodosius should prefer the state to his children. The reference to *communis patria* is a reminder that the interests of the west weigh no less than those of the east. Nicomachus truculently tells the emperor not to treat the state, the senate and the Roman people like his farm, his tenants and his slaves. He makes no attempt to be conciliatory.

Such vehement and contemptuous eloquence is beyond Scriptor's range. It is true that *parvulus* for 'youngster', which in the Theodosian Code is a mark of Nicomachus' quaestorship,²⁹⁵ is freely used in *HA*.²⁹⁶ But this merely shows some verbal influence of one writer on the other, possibly of Nicomachus on Scriptor rather than vice versa.

Scriptor has, as an act of piety,²⁹⁷ recorded for posterity in *Tacitus* a historic and moving speech of Nicomachus,²⁹⁸ who was at Rome in the spring of 394, energetically

²⁸⁵ Valentinian was proclaimed Augustus by the troops at age 4 and, after an ineffective reign, committed suicide at age 21.

²⁸⁶ Hence for 'teque, Tacite Auguste, convenio' read 'Theodosie Auguste'.

²⁸⁷ When the orator speaks of those monsters 'Nerones dico et Heliogabalos et Commodos', it may be Scriptor who adds 'seu potius semper Incommodos'.

²⁸⁸ Maecius Memmius Furius Baburius Caecilianus Placidus PUR 346–7; Faltonius Probus Alypius PUR 391; Nicomachus Flavianus PUR 392–4.

²⁸⁹ Above, nn. 147–54.

²⁹⁰ Honoré, op. cit. (n. 1), 209–16.

²⁹¹ Though a thorough analysis of the *HA* speeches would be desirable.

²⁹² *CT* 15. 14. 7 (10 Oct. 388: 'omne ... nullus ... nullus ...'), 10. 22. 2 (18 Oct. 388: 'omnibus ...', 1. 5. 9 (2 March 389: 'si quos ... , si quos ...'), 8. 11. 5 (28 Apr. 389: 'nihil ...'), 2. 4. 5 (2 May 389: 'universa ... ante omnia ... nullis ...'), 16. 5. 1 (4 May 389: 'omnes ... nec quemquam ... non ... , non ... , non ... , non ... , non ... nihil habeant commune'), 8. 4. 16 (5 May 389: 'nullo ... , nulla ...'), 16. 5. 18 (17 June 389: 'ex omni orbe terrarum ... nihil sit commune'), 2. 8. 19 (7 Aug. 389: 'omnes dies ...'), 9. 35. 5 (6 Sept. 389: 'nulla supplicia'), 16. 5. 19 (26 Nov. 389: 'omni modo propellantur'), 6. 30. 12 (15 Jan. 390: 'nullus ...'), 3. 17. 4 (21 Jan. 390: 'ne quid ... , ne quid ... , 15. 1. 26 (16 Jan. 390: 'quantum ... , per quos ... , quatenus'), 15. 1. 27 (4 Apr. 390: 'omnino non ... summam omnem ...'), 15. 1.

28 (4 May 390: 'nihil ...'), 9. 7. 6 (14 May 390: 'omnes ... nihil'). Another trait of style may be a fondness for strings of three rulers—*Tac.* 6. 4: 'Nerones ... et Heliogabalos et Commodos', 6. 9: 'imitare Nervas Traianos Hadrianos'; cf. *Epit. de Caesar.* 48. 11; 'ut Cinnam Marium Syllamque atque universos dominantium'.

²⁹³ e.g. *CT* 16. 5. 17, 4 Apr. 389: 'nihil ad summum habeant (Eunomiani) commune cum reliquis'; 16. 5. 18, 17 June 389: 'nihil ad summum his (Manichaeis) sit commune cum mundo'; 9. 7. 6, 14 May 390: 'nihil enim discretum videntur habere (cinaedi) cum feminis'; 15. 14. 7, 10 Oct. 388: total abrogation of acts of 'Maximus infandissimus tyrannorum'.

²⁹⁴ *Tac.* 6. 8.

²⁹⁵ Honoré, op. cit. (n. 1), 216.

²⁹⁶ e.g. *Sev.* 15. 5; *Alb.* 5. 6; *Geta* 3. 3; *Diad.* 4. 6; *Alex.* 14. 3; *Maximin.* 20. 2; *Gord.* 22. 2; *Maximus* 15. 6; *Trig. Tyr.* 27. 1. For other diminutives see *Elag.* 26. 4 ('puerulos'), *Macr.* 14. 1 ('putidulus'), *Prob.* 2. 2 ('Turdulus'), *Tac.* 11. 8 ('minutulas litteras'), *CT* 12. 16. 1 (Theodosius-Nicomachus, 16 Aug. 389: 'minusculis corporibus').

²⁹⁷ And as a reply from the grave to Ambrose, *De ob. Theod.* 6: 'nec movet aetas (Honorii); fides militum imperatoris perfecta est aetas', 8: 'fides ergo auget aetatem'.

²⁹⁸ *Tac.* 7. 1: 'Hac oratione et Tacitus ipse vehementer est motus et totus senatorius ordo concussus'.

promoting a pagan revival.²⁹⁹ He was then praetorian prefect and *consul ordinarius*, appointed in both cases by Eugenius.³⁰⁰ The *Tacitus* speech should, therefore, be dated to the months March–May 394. The disguise is thin. Scriptor does not pretend that the oration really relates to Tacitus. Tacitus, he admits, was away in Campania when named emperor.³⁰¹ His biographer brings him to Rome for the election so that he can listen to Nicomachus' speech.³⁰² The supposed evidence for his presence in the senate, the *senatus consultum* contained in the ivory book in the sixth case of the Ulpian library,³⁰³ subscribed in the emperor's own hand, is unlikely to deceive the sophisticated.³⁰⁴ *HA* does not really conceal the truth about either Tacitus or Nicomachus. The supposedly vigorous old emperor, defied by the senate³⁰⁵ and surrounded by factions, enfeebled in body and spirit, soon succumbed to disaffected troops or disease.³⁰⁶ Nicomachus, like Ausonius, is gently treated, but his credulous belief that Christianity would end in 394 (365 years from the crucifixion³⁰⁷) is lampooned in the story of the statues of Tacitus and his brother Florianus. Soothsayers foretold that a thousand years after lightning struck these marble statues one of their descendants would drive out the barbarians and restore power to the senate. This, comments *HA*, showed no great skill on the soothsayers' part.³⁰⁸ If they had said a hundred years their powers of prophecy could have been tested. This is a hint, incidentally, that Scriptor was writing more than a hundred years after the events he purports to relate, which belong to a date not earlier than 276.

Scriptor is not as careless of the historical truth as is supposed. He often signposts the parts of his narrative which are not meant to be believed,³⁰⁹ or mentions the true as well as the false opinion³¹⁰ but, if it suits his purpose, attributes the truth to an unreliable writer³¹¹ or hostile source.³¹² He does not hide the cruelty of certain 'principes necessarii magis quam boni', of whom he nevertheless approves.³¹³ But the truth about the present can be told only by indirection. The present has to be located in the past and the past restructured so that it can accommodate both itself and the future. The *Historia Augusta* has been termed a masterpiece of erudition and fraud.³¹⁴ Erudition is correct, fraud not quite fair. Despite outbursts of levity, never far below the surface, in the interstices *HA* is something more significant: the first example of Aesopian history, a genre with a distinguished future. In it Scriptor presents disillusioned yet moving glimpses of a traumatic episode in the decline of the west.

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²⁹⁹ J. Matthews, 'The Historical Setting of the "Carmen contra paganos" (Cod. Par. Lat. 8084)', *Historia* 19 (1970), 464–79.

³⁰⁰ *PLRE* I Flavianus 15.

³⁰¹ *Tac.* 7. 51.

³⁰² *Tac.* 7. 5–7.

³⁰³ *Tac.* 8. 1–2.

³⁰⁴ A reader with a good memory would later note without surprise that Scriptor 'could not find' the *senatus consultum*: *Prob.* 7. 1; Syme, *Ammianus*, 99.

³⁰⁵ *Tac.* 9. 6.

³⁰⁶ *Tac.* 13. 5.

³⁰⁷ Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 18. 5. 3, cf. Sozomen 7. 22. 7–8.

³⁰⁸ *Tac.* 15. 4: 'non magna haec urbanitas haruspicum fuit'.

³⁰⁹ e.g. invented documents: *Aur.* 17. 1 ('fidei causa, immo ut alios annalium scriptores fecisse video').

³¹⁰ *Alex.* 64. 3.

³¹¹ e.g. *Alex.* 57. 2–3.

³¹² e.g. *Alex.* 59. 8, 63. 5–6.

³¹³ *Avid.* 2. 7, 13. 9; *Sev.* 21. 9; *Niger* 3. 5, 10; *Elag.* 35. 2; *Aur.* 11. 10, 36. 2–3, 37. 1, 42. 4; *Car.* 10, 15. 6.

³¹⁴ Syme, *Emperors*, 280. Still more dismissive: T. D. Barnes, *The Sources of the Historia Augusta* (1978), 13: 'begins as something which approximates to history ... but ends as almost unadulterated fiction'.