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Memory and Emulation in Herodian's *Roman History after Marcus*

Herodian's *Roman History after Marcus* is positioned as a contemporary history of the recent past rooted in the collective memory of its readers.[1] This collective memory begins with the figure of Marcus Aurelius, whom Herodian memorializes in his final days as he is about to pass power to his son Commodus. With this scene, Herodian introduces the issues of memory and emulation that will play a significant role in the history.[2] In Herodian's work, Marcus left behind a political world in which he united his constituencies through his own virtuous behavior.[3] By beginning with the collective memory of Marcus Aurelius, Herodian emphasizes Marcus' status as a model ruler.[4] For this turbulent period of Roman history, Herodian also recognizes the importance of the connections that emperors made between themselves and their predecessors, which they used to legitimize their positions and advertise the type of ruler they would be.[5] If we trace the ideas of memory and emulation throughout Herodian's history, however, we observe that Marcus' undying memory from the beginning of the history is employed less frequently and with less faithfulness over time. Marcus' memory is therefore a touchstone for Herodian's readers that anchors the tumultuous events of this period and provides an explanatory rubric for what went wrong. Emperors after Marcus could use his memory to fashion their own personas in order to tap into the tradition that Marcus left behind and bring stability to their own day. But more frequent are instances in which Marcus' memory is replaced with someone else's or is forgotten en-

1 For Herodian's self-presentation as a contemporary historian and his interaction with the tradition, see Alföldy (1971); Sidebottom (1998) 2776–2780; Zimmermann (1999) 17–42; Kuhn-Chen (2002) 253–260; Hidber (2006) 73–100; Kemezis (2014) 229–239; Chrysanthou (2022a) 3–9; Scott (2023c) 193–197. Translations of Greek passages are my own, unless otherwise noted.

2 Chrysanthou (forthcoming): "Paying tribute to one's memory (μνήμη) is another recurrent idea in Herodian's *History* […]" (with further examples from Herodian's history, many of which are discussed in detail below).

3 Davenport/Mallan (2020) 420. Chrysanthou (2022a) 23–24 discusses these changes in models for imperial behavior, stressing the tension between appearance and reality. My concern in this paper is focused more on the issue of how the memory of the past within the history interacts with the collective memory of Herodian's readers and his role as narrator in pulling together the disparate events into a meaningful whole.

4 As many have observed, Herodian's idealized image of Marcus Aurelius can be used to judge the emperors to come, See, for example, Alföldy (1973); Marasco (1998) 2840–2857; Sidebottom (1998) 2804–2805; Hidber (2006) 188–195; Chrysanthou (2002a) 251–256. Laporte and Hekster (2022) use Marcus' death scene in this manner as a point comparison with others throughout the history.

5 These connections can be gleaned, for example, through the use of Marcus' name in official titulature, which stretched from Marcus Aurelius Commodus Antoninus (e.g., *ILS* 392–399) to Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander (e.g., *ILS* 479–483). See also Hekster (2015) 205–221 for this development over the course of the second century and through the Severan period.

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tirely. In these cases, we observe examples of misjudgment, pandering to shifting allegiances, and, finally, the overall oblivion of tradition and the power of memory. This chapter examines the role that the memory of emperors, good and bad, plays in this work, especially with regard to how the memory of emperors changed over time and how Herodian uses this focus as a way of explaining how Rome went from the stability of Marcus' reign to the upheaval of the subsequent decades.

Collective Memory and Herodian's *Roman History after Marcus*

From the very outset of his work, Herodian appeals to collective memory as the basis for his narrative, stating that he has included only material that is found "in the recent memory of his readers" (1.1.3: ὑπὸ νεαρᾷ δὲ τῇ τῶν ἐντευξομένων μνήμῃ). This statement is a claim of accuracy, as it suggests that Herodian will not be able to deviate from the facts of which his audience is already aware.[6] It also emphasizes the knowledge of this period that Herodian and all of his readers shared.[7] Herodian chose to write about this period because it witnessed more disruption than usual. He cites the uniqueness of the successive reigns, changing fortunes in civil and foreign wars, disorder in the provinces, the devastation of cities, earthquakes and plagues, and the incredible lives of tyrants and kings (1.1.4). According to Herodian, similar things "had previously been recorded either rarely or not at all" (1.1.4: ἢ σπανίως ἢ μηδ' ὅλως μνημονευθέντας).[8] With his use of the participial form of μνημονεύω, Herodian draws attention to the commemorative power of historical narrative, through which he will formalize the events that populate his readers' collective memory and provide an understanding of the interconnectivity of those events.

The key component of collective memory that Herodian taps into is the memory of Marcus Aurelius. After enumerating Marcus' virtues, which included his clemency, fairness, respectability, bravery, moderation, and overall excellence (1.2.4–5), Herodian writes that the brave and moderate actions that showcased Marcus' military and political skill had already been recorded "by many wise men" (1.2.5: πολλοῖς καὶ σοφοῖς ἀνδράσι). This short sequence sets up a model for what an ideal emperor could be, and the overall achievement of universal consensus is expressed by Herodian after Marcus' death.[9] There Herodian records the reactions to his passing across the empire: "No one

6 See Hidber (2006) 94–100 for this idea, as well as a broader discussion of Herodian's methodological statement within the tradition. See also Zimmermann (1999) 17–18; Galimberti (2014) 36–37.

7 Hidber (2007) 197: Herodian writes "as a representative of his generation."

8 This entire section in Herodian draws on Thucydides 1.23, which also employs a participial form of this verb to mean "recorded" (Thuc. 1.23.3). See further Hidber (2006) 107–108.

9 See Kemezis (2014) 234–235; Chrysanthou (2022a) 255–256.

within Rome's empire received this message [of his death] without tears" (1.4.8: οὐδέ τις ἦν ἀνθρώπων τῶν ὑπὸ τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν ὃς ἀδακρυτὶ τοιαύτην ἀγγελίαν ἐδέχετο).

This universal consensus is reflected in the way that Herodian discusses Marcus' memory in the death scene proper. There he twice, in quick succession, mentions the emperor's "undying memory." The first comes in a speech that Marcus gives to his advisors about handling the young Commodus, in which the ailing emperor lays out what differentiates the good emperor and the tyrant (1.4.4–5). Money and a bodyguard, he says, are not enough to protect a tyrant; only the ruler's goodwill (εὔνοια) toward his subjects can do that. The goodness of a ruler, he continues, is superior to the fear brought by bad monarchs, and people only become restive if they are treated with violence and arrogance. The references to Marcus' undying memory follow, one placed in the mouth of Marcus himself and another in the narrative itself, both using the same language (ἡ ἀίδιος μνήμη) (1.4.6–7):

> "τοιαῦτα δὴ συμβουλεύοντες αὐτῷ, καὶ ὧν ἀκούει παρὼν ὑπομιμνήσκοντες, ὑμῖν τε αὐτοῖς καὶ πᾶσιν ἄριστον ἀποδείξετε βασιλέα, τῇ τε ἐμῇ μνήμῃ χαριεῖσθε τὰ μέγιστα, οὕτω τε μόνως ἀίδιον αὐτὴν ποιῆσαι δυνήσεσθε." [...] ὃ μὲν οὖν νυκτός τε καὶ ἡμέρας ἐπιβιώσας μιᾶς ἀνεπαύσατο, πόθον τε τοῖς καθ' αὐτὸν ἀνθρώποις ἐγκαταλιπὼν ἀρετῆς τε ἀίδιον μνήμην ἐς τὸν ἐσόμενον αἰῶνα.
>
> "Giving such advice to him, and reminding him of what he is hearing at this moment, you will create for yourselves and all people the best ruler, and you will honor my memory most significantly, as it is only in this way that you can make my memory eternal." [...] He lived one more day and night before passing, leaving behind a longing for him among those of his day and an undying memory of his virtue for the coming ages.

The repeated references to Marcus' memory are striking. The passage strongly associates Marcus' undying memory with virtuous ruling, with examples of such in the speech itself as well as in the preceding passages, seen above. In this sequence, Herodian presents two ideas with which he assumed his audience agreed. First, the good ruler would be in possession of these virtues and rely on them to be an excellent monarch, and that such a ruler would govern with universal consensus.[10] Second, Marcus' memory would hover above the subsequent narrative, remaining in the mind of the reader as a point of comparison and, more frequently, contrast.

Contrary to the chaotic and confusing events that Herodian suggests swirl in the minds of his readers (1.1.4), Marcus' undying memory serves as a mnemonic touchstone that provides a firm footing from which Herodian can launch his subsequent narrative. The stability of Marcus' memory in Herodian's time of writing was made possible by the refinement that it had undergone in the preceding years, which Herodian obliquely references with his comment that many wise men had written of his reign, as noted above. Through this process of refinement, Marcus Aurelius had been dehistoricized

10 My view here aligns with that of Kemezis (2014) 270–271, who argues that Herodian's point is that even a virtuous ruler in the mold of Marcus Aurelius would not be able to bring back the consensus of Marcus' age.

and had become a stereotypical image of an ideal ruler, and Herodian expects his reader to share this idea.[11] In these opening passages, Herodian highlights several ideas, namely how less recent events or figures become part of the collective memory and shape the understanding of the more recent past, and how the writing of history serves as a way to remember the events of the past and to shape them into a cohesive narrative.[12] There is a tension, however, between the consensus-based world of Marcus Aurelius and the chaos of Herodian's contemporary period. Herodian indicates that by tracing the supposedly undying memory of Marcus Aurelius we can understand the causes of the confusion and lack of consensus, and thus form the disparate memories of his readers into an organized narrative.

1 Commodus and the memory of Marcus Aurelius

Soon after his death, we see Marcus' memory play an important role during the reign of his son Commodus. Following Marcus' funeral, Commodus' first act, arranged by his advisors, was to visit the army camp to distribute a donative. There, Commodus makes a speech in which Marcus figures prominently. Commodus cites Marcus as the link between himself and the soldiers, a relationship that began even in his boyhood (1.5.3). Commodus pins his acceptance on his familiarity with the older soldiers and his claim of hereditary succession with the younger soldiers (1.5.4–6). This is an important distinction, as it shows that Marcus' memory and authority are active in the imagination of the younger soldiers and remain a unifying concept. This idea is continued in his following statements, when he encourages the soldiers to finish the war bravely by appealing directly to the memory of his father and what is owed to the late emperor: "This will bring you fame and in this way will pay back the memory of our common father with worthy gratitude" (1.5.6–7: "ὑμῖν τε γὰρ ταῦτα δόξαν οἴσει καὶ τὴν τοῦ κοινοῦ πατρὸς μνήμην χάρισιν ἀξίαις οὕτως ἀμείψεσθε"). Marcus' memory is employed here as a way to unify the soldiers and the newly acclaimed emperor, though Herodian suggests that the power of Marcus' memory is more potent with the older than the younger generation, a distinction that looks ahead to what will happen to Marcus' memory in the years to come.

The distinction between old and young can be seen again in the following episode. In an effort to get the young emperor to resist the urge to return to Rome, Claudius Pompeianus advises Commodus that he need not fear an uprising against him in

11 Zimmermann (1999) 322. See also Bruch and Hermann (2012) for Marcus' reception as an ideal ruler in the subsequent centuries; Rosen (1996) discusses the idea of Marcus as *civilis princeps* through the *Meditations.* Hutton (1993) 6–7 discusses the process of individual memories coalescing into collective memory over time around stereotypical images that are adopted by the larger group. For this process of refinement of Marcus' image in Cassius Dio's *Roman History*, see Scott (2023a) 89–93.

12 Cf. Schulz (2019) 258: "Historiography is an instrument to influence those who share a collective memory."

Rome and warns against inciting the enemy by his absence (1.6.5–6). In a sense, Pompeianus appeals to the *consensus universorum* that developed under Marcus as a reason why Commodus should trust his decision to remain at the frontier.[13] He closes his speech with an appeal to Marcus' undying memory, claiming that it has made all of Commodus' subjects loyal to him: "Your father's undying memory has confirmed the loyalty and goodwill of your subjects" (1.6.6: ἥ τε τοῦ πατρὸς μνήμη αἰώνιόν σοι πίστιν καὶ εὔνοιαν παρὰ τῶν ἀρχομένων ἐβεβαίωσεν). Commodus, however, does not follow Pompeianus' advice and instead sends away his advisors (τοὺς φίλους), preferring the advice of his attendants (τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν θεραπόντων).

While his departure from the frontier causes a great disturbance (κίνησις) among the soldiers, upon his return to Rome the people are excited to see their emperor, who they hope will act like his father (πατρῴζειν) (1.7.1). We can therefore see at the outset of Commodus' reign that the emperor was expected to be a younger Marcus. In this same vein, Herodian reports that Commodus continues to follow his advisors for a few years, but that his powerful prefect Perennis eventually alienates the young emperor from them (1.8.1–2).[14] Still, we find that "thus far, the memory of his father and respect toward his friends held the young man in check" (1.8.3: μέχρι μὲν οὖν τινὸς ἐπεῖχε τὸν νεανίσκον ἥ τε τοῦ πατρὸς μνήμη καὶ ἡ πρὸς τοὺς φίλους αἰδώς). The inhibitive power that Marcus' memory had on Commodus was challenged when Lucilla formed a plot against her brother with Quadratus and other senators. This conspiracy turned the young emperor against the Senate (1.8.7), and it was followed by a series of other plots against his life, which were led by Perennis (1.9), by Maternus (1.10), and by Cleander (1.12–13.6). The result was the increased isolation of Commodus, who lost even the support of the people (1.15.7). His life came to an end in an eventual final plot and assassination (1.13.7–17.12).

For Commodus, Marcus' "undying memory" was intended to guarantee the loyalty of his subjects and to restrain the young emperor within the traditional behaviors of a more mature emperor. By the time of his death, however, the young emperor had lost the loyalty of the soldiers on the frontier and the people of Rome, and Marcus' memory was no longer able to curb his behavior. Yet aspects of Marcus' memory would remain important touchstones, at least for a short while, as we will see in the following episodes.

13 Hekster (2002) 46 notes that, contrary to the presentation in Herodian, it is likely that there were people in Rome who wished to undermine the authority of the new emperor. We should note the irony that, as Pitcher (2012) 273–274 points out, for two subsequent emperors (Pescennius Niger and Macrinus) the "failure to secure Rome" undermines their ability to establish their rule.

14 Some advisors survived this initial period of hostility against them; at 1.17.2, Herodian states that Commodus had the names of the remaining advisors on the list of those he intended to kill (a group that appears to have included Pertinax, 2.1.4).

2 Pertinax as the new Marcus Aurelius

The fall of Commodus initially appears to be a failure of the younger emperor to adhere to the model of his father, rather than a faltering of his father's memory in its ability to unite the empire. This much seems to be confirmed when his murderers, in search of a replacement, look for someone who could recall the memory of Marcus Aurelius. When Laetus attempts to convince the praetorians that Pertinax should be the next emperor, he describes Pertinax, in language reminiscent of that used to described Marcus Aurelius earlier, as "a man respected for his age, moderate in his lifestyle, and acquainted with virtuous action" (2.2.7: ἄνδρα τὴν μὲν ἡλικίαν σεμνόν, τὸν δὲ βίον σώφρονα, ἀρετῆς δὲ τῆς ἐν ἔργοις ἔμπειρον).[15] Laetus goes on to state that the soldiers in the provinces carry the trials of Pertinax's deeds in their memory.[16] Although it is unclear why this would appeal to the praetorians, Laetus' comment has important implications.[17] It hints at the importance of the memory of Pertinax to come, and it also reveals the mixed reception that the successors of Marcus Aurelius would receive among Rome's constituent groups. This mixed reception has immediate consequences, as the praetorians acclaim Pertinax, but not with the same fervor as the people (2.2.9).

Pertinax expects a similarly mixed reception in the Senate, fearing that some might be dissatisfied with his non-noble birth, despite his moderate way of life and military distinction (2.3.1–2). The Senate, however, acclaims him unanimously (2.3.3). A speech of Pertinax follows, in which he urges the Senate to join him in administering an aristocracy and in keeping tyranny at bay (2.3.10).[18] As he reports the reaction to this speech, Herodian draws us back to Pertinax' virtues and makes an explicit reference to Pertinax' emulation of Marcus Aurelius (2.4.1–2):

> ἐπεὶ δὲ διεφοίτησεν ἡ φήμη τῶν τε λεχθέντων ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ συγκλήτῳ καὶ τῶν πρὸς τὸν δῆμον γραφέντων, ὑπερήδοντο πάντες, σεμνὸν καὶ ἥπιον ἄρχοντα καὶ πατέρα, οὐ βασιλέα ἔξειν ἐλπίζοντες. τούς τε γὰρ στρατιώτας ἐκέλευσε παύσασθαι τῆς πρὸς τοὺς δημότας ὕβρεως καὶ μήτε πελέκεις φέρειν μετὰ χεῖρας μήτε παίειν τινὰ τῶν παριόντων, ἔς τε τὸ κόσμιον καὶ εὔτακτον μετάγειν πάντα ἐπειρᾶτο, ἔν τε ταῖς προόδοις καὶ τοῖς δικαστηρίοις πρᾶον καὶ ἥμερον ἦθος ἐπεδείκνυτο. καὶ τῆς Μάρκου ἀρχῆς ζήλῳ τε καὶ μιμήσει τοὺς μὲν πρεσβυτέρους ὑπομιμνήσκων εὔφραινε, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους πάντας ἐξ ὠμῆς καὶ ἐφυβρίστου τυραννίδος ἐς σώφρονα καὶ ἀμέριμνον βίον μεταχθέντας ῥᾷστα ἐς εὔνοιαν ᾠκειώσατο.
>
> When the report of what he had said in the Senate and written to the people became known, all rejoiced, hoping that they would have a venerable and gentle ruler and father, rather than a king. He ordered the soldiers to end their violence against the people, nor could they carry axes in their

15 For Herodian's portrait of Pertinax, see Galimberti in this volume.

16 2.2.8: οἳ τὴν πεῖραν αὐτοῦ τῶν ἔργων φέρουσι διὰ μνήμης ("[they] bear the experience of his deeds in their memory").

17 Kemezis (2014) 257–258 comments on the irrelevance and ineffectiveness of the approach to the praetorians that is taken by both Laetus and Pertinax.

18 For ἀριστοκρατία in Herodian as shared rule between emperor and Senate, see Marasco (1998) 2859–2862; Roques (1990) 44–45. See also Arbo (2022) 127–129.

> hands or strike anyone who happened to be present. He attempted to bring all affairs into a state of decency and good order, and he showed a mild and gentle character in his public appearances and in the courts. In his imitation of Marcus' rule, he pleased the older men by reminding them of him, and he easily brought all the others over to goodwill toward himself by giving them a moderate and carefree way of life after a cruel and violent tyranny.

In his chapters on Pertinax, Herodian repeatedly discusses the emperor's moderation, gentle rule, and turn away from tyranny.[19] In this passage, we see, not surprisingly, that Pertinax emulated Marcus' manner of ruling. This statement shows that, at least for the older generation, Marcus' memory continued to live on, and that Pertinax actively tried to live up to his predecessor's example, as well as to the citizens' expectations (2.3.7). Yet this comment also raises questions about the immortality of Marcus' memory if at this moment soon after his death it is not valuable for the younger generation. Furthermore, the praetorians remained alienated. Herodian reports that they resisted "being called back into discipline and good order" (2.4.1: ἔς τε τὸ εὔτακτον καὶ κόσμιον ἀνακαλούμενοι) and considered the gentleness and civility of Pertinax' rule (2.4.1: τὸ πρᾶον καὶ ἥμερον τῆς ἀρχῆς) to be an insult against them, which constitutes a resistance to the very goals of Pertinax' reign, as outlined in the passage above. The repetition of these terms from the passage above demonstrates that the very things that pleased the Senate and people upset the soldiers. This marks an important break, as the introductory passages on Marcus insinuate that these characteristics helped unite all Romans under him; now those same virtues irritate an important constituent group. Herodian appears to indicate that the praetorians never shared in the positive, undying memory of Marcus and that they rejected the consensus about Marcus' good rule that generally pertained otherwise.

Herodian picks up this theme again when he begins his narration of the praetorian uprising against Pertinax. He notes that Pertinax had established a well-ordered government and that only the praetorians were upset that their bad behavior was being curtailed, a complaint that ultimately led to their plot against him. In his description of the attack on the palace, it is not surprising to see Herodian noting that Pertinax faced his death with a "moderate and noble expression" (2.5.5: ἐν σώφρονι καὶ σεμνῷ σχήματι), a bearing that mirrors the emperor's previously described virtues.[20] His brief speech even persuaded some of the praetorians to turn back, "respecting the old age of the noble emperor" (2.5.8: σεμνοῦ βασιλέως γῆρας αἰδούμενοι). The vocabulary (σώφρων, σεμνός) emphasizes Pertinax' standing and also recalls Marcus' "noble character and moderate way of life" (1.2.4: σεμνῷ δ' ἤθει καὶ σώφρονι βίῳ). Upon Pertinax'

19 In addition to above, see 2.4.4 ("all people rejoiced in common and in private in the orderliness and gentleness of his rule" / οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι πάντες ἄνθρωποι καὶ κοινῇ καὶ ἰδίᾳ τῷ εὐτάκτῳ καὶ ἡμέρῳ τῆς βασιλείας ἔχαιρον) and 2.4.9 ("measured and interested in maintaining equality of privilege" / μέτριος καὶ ἰσότιμος); cf. 2.5.1, 2.5.5, 2.6.2.

20 See Chrysanthou (2022a) 263–264 for Herodian's careful construction of this scene and its resonances with other parts of the history.

death, the city fell into confusion (ταραχή), and the senators considered it a misfortune for all "to lose a gentle father and excellent ruler" (2.6.2: πατέρα τε ἤπιον καὶ χρηστὸν προστάτην ἀποβαλόντες; cf. σεμνὸν καὶ ἤπιον ἄρχοντα καὶ πατέρα at 2.4.1, above). They also feared a return to a tyranny, the soldier's preferred mode of governance (2.6.2), the exact thing that Pertinax and the Senate had united to fight against.

The reign of Pertinax is thus part Marcus Aurelius, part Commodus. Pertinax emulates Marcus, and Herodian describes him in much the same language: older, moderate, gentle, etc. Yet his emulation of Marcus only reveals the inadequacy of Marcus' supposedly undying memory in the face of other pressures: Pertinax dies not in old age at the end of a long reign, but mere months into a brief reign, through an internal conspiracy, similar to the death of Commodus. His emulation of Marcus was able to please most constituencies, including the Senate, people, and soldiers in the provinces, but not the praetorians.

3 From Didius Julianus to Septimius Severus: conflicting models

After the death of Pertinax, Marcus' supposedly undying memory fades and begins to be replaced with the memory of others. Pertinax' assassination introduces Didius Julianus and his unorthodox path to power. Herodian focuses his account of Julianus' rise almost exclusively around the issues of praetorian discontent and the so-called auction of the empire.[21] Bidding was undertaken by Julianus and Flavius Sulpicianus (2.6.8), but the praetorians did not trust the latter because of his ties to Pertinax, his son-in-law (2.6.9). Welcomed by the praetorians, Julianus first promised to rehabilitate Commodus' memory (τήν τε Κομμόδου μνήμην [...] ἀνανεώσεσθαι), as well as his honors and statues, while giving the praetorians the freedom they possessed under Commodus and a lot of money (2.6.10). The soldiers soon acclaimed Julianus emperor and gave him the name Commodus (2.6.11). Herodian goes on to state that Julianus acted with force in leaving the camp because he had gone against the opinion of the people (2.6.12), who cursed him as he passed with his armed guard (2.6.13).[22]

Julianus' surprising and non-traditional rise to power reveals a lack of consensus about who would rule and how, which Herodian expresses through the language of memory and emulation. In this episode, we see that the memory of Commodus, not of Marcus (or especially of Pertinax), carries greater weight, at least among the prae-

21 Appelbaum (2007) 201 is highly critical of Herodian's account of these events, considering Herodian's discussion of an auction as an "embellishment" of the material he found in Dio. See his article generally for a synthesis of the sources and political situation that led to Julianus' accession.

22 On the historiographic elements of this section of Herodian's history, see Laporte in this volume.

torians.[23] The reasons for Julianus' desire, or even need, to rehabilitate Commodus' memory are obvious in relation to his path to power through the influence of the guard. They clash, however, with the repeated praise of Marcus Aurelius and Pertinax that was seen earlier, and they break with the inclination to emulate Marcus.

Julianus' accession was novel in other ways as well, at least in Herodian's view. The praetorians were, according to Herodian, corrupted for the first time, becoming greedy and having no respect for their emperors, a change that for Herodian would last into the future (2.6.14).[24] The immediate problem with the soldiers' newfound love of money was that there was not much of it in the treasury. Ironically, it was Commodus' profligacy that had left Julianus with nothing with which to pay the soldiers the promised rewards (2.7.1–2). The contempt in which the soldiers now began to hold Julianus affected the outlook of the people, who at the circus began to call on Pescennius Niger as their protector (2.7.2–3, 5).

The memory of Pertinax, however, was not yet dead and would soon be employed by Pescennius Niger. Herodian's initial description of Niger matches that of the mature emperors seen earlier. Herodian states that Niger "was somewhat up there in age" (2.7.5: ἦν δὲ αὐτὸς τὴν μὲν ἡλικίαν ἤδη μετρίως προβεβηκώς) and accomplished in various areas. Further, Herodian reports the rumor that Pescennius Niger imitated Pertinax (2.7.5):

> φήμη τε περὶ αὐτοῦ διεφοίτα ὡς ἐπιεικοῦς καὶ δεξιοῦ καὶ τὸν τοῦ Περτίνακος βίον ζηλοῦντος· ὑφ' ὧν μάλιστα οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι ἐπείθοντο.
>
> A story made its rounds about him that he was fair and upright and that he emulated the life of Pertinax; the Romans were especially influenced by these traits.[25]

The language of emulation that Herodian uses recalls the earlier instance of Pertinax, who modeled himself on the behavior of Marcus Aurelius. In his alleged emulation of Pertinax, Pescennius Niger offers to the Roman people the potential return of a mild and fair ruler placed in opposition to the upstart Didius Julianus. The emulation of Pertinax, however also recalls the brevity of his rule and the violent death that he suffered, both symptoms of a lack of consensus around Rome's emperor. It is perhaps noteworthy that Herodian introduces Pertinax and Pescennius Niger similarly. Pertinax "was well regarded for both his many military and political deeds" (2.1.4: ἐν δὲ πολλαῖς στρατιωτικαῖς τε καὶ πολιτικαῖς εὐδοκιμήσας πράξεσι), while Niger "was well re-

23 Cassius Dio (74[73].2.1) notes Commodus' damnation after his death, and also relates the praetorian's calling Julianus "Commodus" (74[73].12.1), though his focus is more on the reaction of the Senate rather than of the people.

24 Chrysanthou (2022a) 84; Mallan (2022) 56. Herodian perhaps means corrupted by money here, since the praetorians had already assassinated Pertinax.

25 There is a textual disagreement here. Stavenhagen (1922) and Lucarini (2005) print ὡς ἐπιεικοῦς καὶ δεξιοῦ **καὶ** τὸν τοῦ Περτίνακος βίον ζηλοῦντος, whereas Whittaker (1969) prints ὡς ἐπιεικοῦς καὶ δεξιοῦ **ὡς** τὸν τοῦ Περτίνακος βίον ζηλοῦντος. In either case, we see Niger as a Pertinax-like figure, whether he actively modeled himself as such or was simply perceived by others in that way.

garded for his great and many deeds" (2.7.5: εὐδοκιμήσας δὲ ἐν πολλαῖς καὶ μεγάλαις πράξεσι). Such an introduction hints that their fates may be similar.[26]

Niger's persona as a mature ruler is strengthened by his following speech, in which he extols his gentleness (2.8.2: τὸ πρᾶον). He presents himself as a champion of people, who have been calling for him to be their emperor (2.8.4). The praetorians, he says, will not protect Julianus, since he has not delivered on his promises to them (2.8.5). The soldiers set him up as emperor (2.8.6), and Herodian reports that Niger rejoiced and believed that he would become emperor through the will of the people and the eagerness that his men showed toward him (2.8.7). The empire seems to support him, but Niger decides to live luxuriously at Antioch and neglects to depart for Rome (2.8.9–10). Niger is also neglectful of the legions in Illyria, "expecting that the soldiers there, if they should ever learn of it, would be of the same mind with the wishes of the Romans and with the opinion of the soldiers in the East" (2.8.10: ἐλπίζων τοὺς ἐκεῖ στρατιώτας, εἴ ποτε καὶ μάθοιεν, ὁμογνώμονας ἔσεσθαι τῇ τε Ῥωμαίων εὐχῇ καὶ τῇ τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀνατολὴν στρατοπέδων γνώμῃ). The potentiality of Niger's rule is key here: he seems to think that playing the part of the good, mature emperor is enough, but he does not realize how Roman politics have shifted from the consensus-based rule of Marcus Aurelius. This lack of understanding is apparent from his emulation not of Marcus but of Pertinax, who ultimately failed in his ability to re-unite all Romans under his rule.

In the face of Niger's failures, Septimius Severus represents an important turning point in his use of a multifaceted approach to appeal to various groups. The memory of Pertinax would remain potent, but only in the right hands. After it was not fully exploited by Niger, Septimius Severus comes on the scene and uses it for his own ends. His use of Pertinax' memory, however, is much more strategic than Niger's. Severus' aim is not to turn himself into the next Pertinax, but rather to exploit his memory among the troops in order to win them to his side. He criticizes the praetorians while in Pannonia and says that Pertinax' death needs to be avenged (2.9.8), as he reflects on what Pertinax meant to these soldiers (2.9.8–10):

> ᾔδει δὲ πάντας τοὺς κατὰ τὸ Ἰλλυρικὸν στρατιώτας μεμνημένους τῆς Περτίνακος ἡγεμονίας [...] ὅθεν αὐτοῦ τὴν μνήμην τιμῶντες ἐπὶ τοῖς οὕτως ὠμῶς κατ' αὐτοῦ τετολμημένοις ἠγανάκτουν. ταύτης δὴ τῆς προφάσεως λαβόμενος ὁ Σεβῆρος εὐμαρῶς αὐτοὺς ἐς ἃ ἐβούλετο ὑπηγάγετο, προσποιούμενος οὐχ οὕτω τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀντιποιεῖσθαι, οὐδ' αὐτῷ τὴν ἐξουσίαν μνᾶσθαι, ὡς θέλειν ἐπεξελθεῖν τοιούτου βασιλέως αἵματι.
>
> He knew that all the soldiers in Illyricum remembered Pertinax' leadership [...] for which reason they honored his memory and were angry at those who dared to act so savagely against him. Taking this as a pretext, Severus easily got them to do what he wanted. He pretended that he was not in this way seeking the empire or to gather power to himself, but that he wished to punish the murder of such a great ruler.

26 For this connection, see also Chrysanthou (2022a) 39.

This passage brings us back to the accession of Pertinax, when Laetus told the praetorians that the soldiers in the provinces remembered Pertinax' earlier ordeals (2.2.8). Herodian reports that it was easy for Severus to win the Pannonian soldiers' support in this way, and he states outright that Severus was using his claim to avenge Pertinax' death as a cover for his desire to gain the empire (2.9.10). The ruse succeeds, as they quickly declare Severus emperor (2.9.11).[27] Severus then moves to win over the troops in Illyria by taking the name Pertinax, which he thought would also help him gain the favor of the Roman people, "through his [Pertinax'] memory" (2.10.1: διὰ τὴν ἐκείνου μνήμην).

The subsequent speech of Septimius Severus accords with the depictions of previous emperors in the history thus far. Like Herodian, Severus cites the death of Marcus as a turning point. Changes occurred under Commodus, who made mistakes because he was young, though they were "covered up by his noble birth and the memory of his father" (2.10.3: τῇ εὐγενείᾳ καὶ τῇ τοῦ πατρὸς μνήμῃ ἐπεσκιάζετο). This point reminds us of the inhibitive power of Marcus' memory that limited Commodus' actions, as we saw earlier. Severus then revises the story that Herodian previously told, claiming that these mistakes were not entirely Commodus' fault, as he was led astray by his advisors. These claims give Severus the opportunity to discuss in positive terms the reign of Pertinax, a "respected older man, the memory of whose courage and excellence is fixed in our minds" (2.10.4: σεμνὸν πρεσβύτην, οὗ τῆς ἀνδρείας τε καὶ χρηστότητος ἔτι ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἡμῶν ἡ μνήμη ἐνέστακται). Severus is saying all the right things about Pertinax to the right audience, but the goal of his speech is not the universal consensus achieved by Marcus Aurelius. Instead, it is civil war, against both the praetorians in Rome and Niger's supporters in Syria (2.10.6–7). After the speech, the soldiers acclaim Severus as Augustus and Pertinax (2.10.9), and civil war becomes a foregone conclusion.

In these scenes, Septimius Severus successfully exploits the memory of Pertinax to win military and popular support. We must note, however, that this is not a matter of emulation, but rather it was a calculated move to become emperor. While claiming to honor the memory of Pertinax, Severus defines his persona by playing the role of *commilito* on the trip to Rome (2.11.2), which further garners the support of the military. In 193 CE, the memories of good emperors were no longer used for emulation, but had become a means of political manipulation.

Severus' return to the capital is a key moment in how he will define his reign. Having already brought the provincial soldiers (at least in Pannonia and Illyria) to his side, Severus must now present himself to the Senate and people of Rome, and he also must deal with the praetorians. Out of fear, the Roman people pretend to support Severus, and they condemn Didius Julianus' cowardice and Niger's delay (2.12.2). The lack of genuine support for Severus undercuts his earlier claims about the memory of Pertinax and their effect on the people. This reflects poorly, however, not on Pertinax and his

27 Cf. Chrysanthou (2022a) 218.

memory, but on Severus' exploitation of it. As for the Senate, when they see Julianus' cowardice, they side with Severus (2.12.3).

Once in Rome, Severus carries out his promise to avenge the death of Pertinax. In a speech to the praetorians, he states, "You killed a good emperor who was noble in his seniority and whom you should have protected and guarded" (2.13.6: σεμνὸν πρεσβύτην καὶ βασιλέα χρηστόν, ὃν ἐχρῆν σώζειν καὶ δορυφορεῖν, ἐφονεύσατε). Severus here employs elements of the vocabulary of the good emperor that we have seen applied to figures like Marcus and Pertinax and thus reactivates the ideal, mature emperor-type. Yet there is no indication that Severus himself will adopt these characteristics, and in fact, it is for other reasons that he finds favor among the Roman people and the Senate. The Roman people, still fearful, later greet Severus and are impressed that he won the empire without bloodshed (ἀναιμωτί) (2.14.1).[28] In a subsequent speech to the Senate, Severus promises that he will "offer to his subjects the greatest prosperity, do all things in emulation of the reign of Marcus, and will take on not only the name but also the mindset of Pertinax" (2.14.3: ἀλλὰ βαρυτάτην εὐδαιμονίαν τοῖς ἀρχομένοις παρέξειν, καὶ πάντα πράξειν ἐς ζῆλον τῆς Μάρκου ἀρχῆς, ἔξειν δὲ τοῦ Περτίνακος οὐ μόνον τοὔνομα ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν γνώμην). It is important to note that these are Severus' own words, not the judgment of the Senate or of Herodian. The older senators, who earlier were said to have remembered Marcus and missed him, knew Severus was a man of deception and did not trust him; Herodian adds that "this very thing in fact was shown later" (2.14.4: ὅπερ καὶ ὕστερον ἔργῳ δέδεικται). For Herodian, Severus claimed that he would rule like Marcus or Pertinax, but in fact, because of his lack of complete hold on power, did not actually do so.

At the time of his reported speech, Severus' domination was not total, as his Caesar, Clodius Albinus, was still a possible rival. Herodian reports that some senators wanted Albinus to come to Rome and become emperor in Severus' absence.[29] The Albinus threat, and possible defection of the Senate, leads Severus to double down on his military support. After a speech of Severus, the army declares Albinus a public enemy (3.6.9), while Severus reprises his role on the march as *commilito*, "so that they endured their toil not only out of fear or expectation, but also in imitation and emulation of their emperor" (3.6.10: ὡς μὴ μόνον αὐτοὺς φόβῳ καὶ νόμῳ ἀντέχειν πρὸς τοὺς καμάτους, ἀλλὰ καὶ μιμήσει καὶ ζήλῳ τοῦ βασιλέως). Herodian also reports that Severus raised troop pay, which, according to Herodian, undermined military discipline (3.8.5) and connects Severus not to predecessors such as Marcus or Pertinax, but to Didius Julianus, whose path to power resulted in the corruption of the praetorians for the first time, as observed above. Herodian further notes that Severus ruled by fear rather than goodwill (3.8.8). These examples show that no longer does emulation make a princeps, but rather fear, expediency, and money are key in holding power.

28 See 2.8.8 for similar sentiment (that Niger would rule without bloodshed); for the term, see also 4.15.9, 5.1.4, 6.1.7, 6.9.8.

29 See 3.5.1–2; Zimmermann (1999) 190–191 sees the favor that some senators show Albinus as evidence of a lack of a previously existing senatorial consensus.

4 Marcus Aurelius and the Later Severans

Despite his behavior to the contrary, Severus was still determined to make connections to Marcus Aurelius, especially through his succession plans. Severus named Caracalla Antoninus "wishing that he have the name of Marcus" (3.10.5: Μάρκου θελήσας αὐτὸν προσηγορίαν φέρειν). Severus' reasons for naming his son after Marcus Aurelius are clear. In the context of Herodian's narrative, however, it strikes an ironic note, as the reader of this history knows that Caracalla would not live up to the figure of Marcus Aurelius, a point made even more powerfully by the fact that Herodian reports in this passage that "his real name was Bassianus, prior to his entering the royal house" (3.10.5: ᾧ γνήσιον μὲν ἦν ὄνομα Βασσιανὸς πρὶν ἐς τὸν βασίλειον οἶκον παρελθεῖν). Perhaps more important, however, is the death scene of Septimius Severus (3.15), which recalls the opening death scene of Marcus and the passage of power to Commodus.[30] In his brief eulogy, Herodian notes that Severus was the most militarily successful Roman emperor, against both civil and foreign foes, and that he was passing to his sons immense wealth and a powerful army (3.15.2–3).

Upon Severus' death, Caracalla seized power and behaved in some ways like a fast-tracked Commodus, killing attendants and advisors immediately and trying to gain the favor of the army with gifts so that they would name him sole ruler (3.15.4–5). This latter act, however, is clearly in the tradition that Didius Julianus and Severus had set. In the face of Caracalla's desire to be acclaimed sole emperor, the soldiers, however, "remembered Severus" (μεμνημένοι δὲ τοῦ Σεβήρου) and instead supported the brothers' joint rule (3.15.6).[31] The memory of Severus initially protects Geta, but it is only a temporary postponement of what is to come and suggests a further attenuation of the power of memory in his work.

Herodian presents Caracalla and Geta as a study in contrasts. We are told that the majority favored Geta, who "exhibited an appearance of uprightness" (φαντασίαν γάρ τινα ἐπιεικείας ἐπεδείκνυτο). He was also moderate and gentle (μέτριόν τε καὶ πρᾶον) and acted with kindness and humanity toward his associates (χρηστός τε ὢν καὶ φιλάνθρωπος τοῖς συνοῦσι); with his excellent reputation and name he brought others into his goodwill and friendship (φήμῃ καὶ δόξῃ ἀρίστῃ πλείους ἐς εὔνοιαν καὶ φιλίαν προυκαλεῖτο) (4.3.2–3). Caracalla, on other hand, "did everything in a violent and vicious manner" (4.3.3: ἐμβριθῶς τἀπάντα καὶ θυμοειδῶς ἔπραττε). In the figure of Geta, we

30 Hekster (2017) 112–114; Chrysanthou (2022a) 274.

31 Commenting on this passage, Chrysanthou (forthcoming) notes the similarities to Commodus' speech to the soldiers upon his accession, in which he calls upon Marcus' memory to win their favor in much the same way that the memory of Septimius Severus compels the soldiers to support Caracalla and Geta, at least initially.

have a young emperor with some of the characteristics of the ideal, mature emperor, though Caracalla represents almost his complete opposite.[32]

Despite the army's support for him, Geta is unable to survive his brother's violent inclinations. After the murder of Geta, Caracalla is faced with the need to win over the Senate, people, and army. He delivers a speech to the Senate, in which he invokes and praises Romulus, Germanicus, Britannicus, Titus, and Marcus Aurelius as examples of those who plotted against family members (4.5.5–6).[33] This list of names from the Roman past resembles Marcus' visions of past tyrants from the opening scene of the history, but the evil emperor Caracalla inverts these examples for ill. It is therefore not surprising to later witness his novel forms of emulation that are not tied to appropriate models of the recent past. Caracalla begins his sole reign by mimicking the actions of his father and stressing his role as fellow soldier (4.7.4–7; cf. 4.12.2; 4.14.4). He soon settles on Alexander the Great as his model (4.8.1):

> ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰ παρὰ τῷ Ἴστρῳ στρατόπεδα διῴκησε, κατῆλθέ τε εἰς Θρᾴκην Μακεδόσι γειτνιῶσαν, εὐθὺς Ἀλέξανδρος ἦν, καὶ τήν τε μνήμην αὐτοῦ παντοίως ἀνενεώσατο [...]
>
> After he brought the camps on the Ister into order, he went down into Thrace where it borders Macedonia. All of a sudden he was Alexander, and he renewed his memory in many ways [...]

This choice is not surprising, coming on the heels of the description of Caracalla as a *commilito*, but Herodian's consistent use of the language of memory and emulation shows that it is aberrant, which is further reinforced by Caracalla's supposed admiration of Sulla and Hannibal (4.8.5).[34] These emulative choices come to a head when Caracalla visits Alexandria, allegedly to honor the memory of Alexander (4.8.7).[35] We learn, however, that the Alexandrians had been jeering Caracalla over the death of Geta, as well as for imitating Alexander and Achilles.[36] The reaction of the Alexandrians to Car-

32 Herodian's depiction of Caracalla and Geta is a little inconsistent. Both are said to have hated and plotted against the other (3.3.1), though, as noted above, Geta is also portrayed as the moral superior of Caracalla (3.3.2–4).

33 See Kemezis (2014) 259–260 on the oddness of this speech and the Senate's inability to do anything about it.

34 See further Zanin (2020) and Chrysanthou (2022b) 58–59, as well as the contributions of Asirvatham and Baron in this volume. Herodian (4.8.4) also says that Caracalla imitated Achilles, though it makes more sense for him to mean that Caracalla imitated Alexander's honoring of Achilles. See Whittaker *ad loc.*, as well as Chrysanthou (2022a) 233–235.

35 See also 4.8.4, in which Caracalla imitates Alexander's emulation of Achilles; see Pownall (2022) 264 and especially Chrysanthou (2022b) 62–64, with many intratextual references.

36 4.9.3: "[...] making fun of him because he, being a small man, was imitating the most noble and mighty heroes Alexander and Achilles" (ἐκεῖνον δὲ χλευαζόντων ὅτι δὴ μικρὸς ὢν Ἀλέξανδρον καὶ Ἀχιλλέα γενναιοτάτους καὶ μεγίστους ἥρωας ἐμιμεῖτο). See Davenport (2017) for the historiographic implications of this rumor. Chrysanthou (2022a) 235–236 takes this example, and of Macrinus' flawed emulation of Marcus Aurelius that follows, as evidence of Herodian's attention to the differences between appearance and reality. While this is certainly true, my emphasis here is on their improper choices

acalla's deeds highlight not only his vicious act of murdering his brother but also bizarre ways that he chose to present himself publicly. With his consistent focus on memory and emulation, Herodian underlines the severe disconnect between the undying memory of Marcus and the modes of emulation deployed by Caracalla.

After the death of Caracalla, we find the equestrian emperor Macrinus pulled in two directions. The first concern can be seen in Macrinus' letter to the Senate, with which Herodian initiates his narrative of this reign. In this letter, Macrinus presents himself as one of the older emperors of the past – not through specific mention of their names, but through the vocabulary that he uses. He notes that Caracalla "often attacked publicly my moderation and goodwill toward his subjects" (5.1.3: δημοσίᾳ πολλάκις τὸ μέτριόν μου καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχομένους φιλάνθρωπον διαβάλλων). He contrasts his good qualities with the shortcomings of inherited succession, asking, "Of what use is nobility, unless an upright and humane manner go along with it?" (5.1.5: τί γὰρ ὄφελος εὐγενείας, εἰ μὴ χρηστὸς καὶ φιλάνθρωπος συνοικεῖ τρόπος;). He further notes that fairness and honesty (ἐπιείκεια δὲ καὶ χρηστότης) are better than wealth and nobility (5.1.5–6) and that the nobility of wellborn emperors descends into disdain for their subjects, while those who come to power from their moderate actions show respect and honor to their subjects (5.1.7). Finally, he promises that they will live in security and freedom, which Marcus and Pertinax had given them (5.1.8). Importantly Macrinus here separates the "wellborn emperors," who were born to the purple and include Commodus and Caracalla, from Marcus and Pertinax, who came to power because of their virtues and in turn allowed their subject to live "in safety and freedom" (5.1.8: ἐν ἀδείᾳ καὶ ἐλευθερίᾳ).[37] Despite these claims about his character and even the promised connection back to Marcus and Pertinax, we learn that Macrinus was acclaimed by the Senate only because the threat of Caracalla had been removed. Herodian notes, however, that Macrinus did deliver on his promise of living in security and semblance of freedom, even if it was only for one year (5.2.2: ἐν ἀδείᾳ πολλῇ καὶ εἰκόνι ἐλευθερίας). This passage employs similar vocabulary to the passage at 5.1.8, though it is notable that the genuine freedom referred to earlier is now just the appearance of it.

Macrinus' second major concern is dictated by the potency of Caracalla's image among the soldiers.[38] In his initial speech to the troops in the East, the upstart equestrian emperor states (4.14.5):

> ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐκείνου μνήμη ἔν τε τοῖς ἡμετέροις στέρνοις ἐγκείσεται, τοῖς τε ἐς ὕστερον παραδοθήσεται [καὶ] δόξαν ἀίδιον φέρουσα μεγάλων τε καὶ γενναίων ἔργων ὧν ἔδρασε, φίλτρων τε καὶ εὐ-

of emulation or they failed attempts at proper emulation – essentially reflecting a lack of proper knowledge of the past and thus an inability to deploy appropriate and effective modes of self-presentation.

37 As Whittaker notes (*ad loc.*), Severus had made a similar promise at 2.14.3.

38 Herodian takes a real problem for Macrinus and filters it through his theme of memory and emulation. Macrinus seems to have tried to present himself as the champion of Caracalla's memory to the soldiers in the East, while courting the senators in different ways; see Scott (2018) 62–63.

> νοίας καμάτων τε κοινωνίας τῆς πρὸς ὑμᾶς. νῦν δὲ καιρός, τιμήσαντας ὡς χρὴ τὴν μνήμην τοῦ τετελευτηκότος, ἀφοσιωσαμένους τε τὰ πρὸς ἐκεῖνον, ἔχεσθαι τῶν ἐπειγόντων.
>
> His memory will endure in our hearts, and it will be handed down to those in the future, carrying with it the undying honor of the great and noble deeds that he performed, as well as of the affection and goodwill from the labors shared with you. But now it is time, having honored as necessary the memory of this dead man and having carried out these matters on his behalf, to take up more urgent affairs.

These words refer not only to the reality of the soldiers' affection for Caracalla but also to the rest of the story that Herodian will tell. The memory of Caracalla is not passed on *per se*, but the figure of the youthful emperor who requires above all support of the military will remain a part of future accessions. This concern also ties into the first aspect of Macrinus' self-presentation. While unable to reject Caracalla's memory completely, he fashions himself as a new Marcus Aurelius, at least according to Herodian. Macrinus' efforts to be another Marcus Aurelius, however, were superficial and suggest that Marcus' memory was being improperly recollected.[39] Herodian writes (5.2.3–4):

> ἐν δὲ τῇ Ἀντιοχείᾳ διέτριβε γένειόν τε ἀσκῶν, βαδίζων τε πλέον τοῦ δέοντος ἡρεμαίως, βραδύτατά τε καὶ μόλις τοῖς προσιοῦσιν ἀποκρινόμενος ὡς μηδ' ἀκούεσθαι πολλάκις διὰ τὸ καθειμένον τῆς φωνῆς. ἐζήλου δὲ ταῦτα ὡς δὴ Μάρκου ἐπιτηδεύματα, τὸν δὲ λοιπὸν βίον οὐκ ἐμιμήσατο.
>
> He wasted time in Antioch growing a beard and going about more quietly than was necessary, and speaking to those who were present very slowly and with difficulty, such that he was often not heard because of the lowering of his voice. He emulated these habits as if they were Marcus', but he did not imitate the rest of his life.

Worse for Macrinus, the soldiers see his luxurious living and dislike him for not being a military man (5.2.5), which was exactly the persona that Caracalla had built for himself.[40] The irony here is thick, as Macrinus' poor attempts at emulating Marcus end up alienating him from the troops, who had been accustomed to the emperor being their fellow soldier, as under Septimius Severus and Caracalla.[41]

This alienation from the troops eventually leads to Macrinus' demise. Herodian reports a rumor that a son of Caracalla had been found (which the soldiers believe) and that Julia Domna's sister was distributing cash (5.4.1). According to Herodian, the soldiers were affected by various inducements (5.4.2):

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39 Chrysanthou (2022a) 105 notes the remarkable comparison that Herodian makes here.

40 4.7.7: "Account of these and similar actions he was beloved by them as a military man and he was held in esteem for his excellence" (διὰ δὴ ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τούτοις ὅμοια ὡς στρατιωτικὸς ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἐφιλεῖτο καὶ ὡς γενναῖος ἐθαυμάζετο). Cf. 4.3.4.

41 Macrinus' connection to the soldiers was never strong; Herodian (4.14.3) notes that upon his accession Macrinus did not win the loyalty of the soldiers but was acclaimed because of the necessity of the moment.

> ἐνῆγε δ' αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀνέπειθεν ἐς πραγμάτων καινοτομίαν τό τε Μακρίνου μῖσος καὶ ⟨τὸ⟩ Ἀντωνίνου τῆς μνήμης πάθος, καὶ πρό γε ἁπάντων ἡ τῶν χρημάτων ἐλπίς, ὡς πολλοὺς καὶ αὐτομολοῦντας φοιτᾶν πρὸς τὸν νέον Ἀντωνῖνον.[42]
>
> Their hatred of Macrinus and their passion for the memory of Antoninus that urged them on and convinced them to revolt, and above all of these things there was the hope of money that resulted in many of them deserting to the new Antoninus.

Thus, the very memory that Macrinus initially exploits ends up bringing about his demise, and he is also overthrown by soldiers who care mostly for money, in an echo of Didius Julianus' rise to power through the praetorians.[43] It is worth noting here that Macrinus' situation witnessed in geographic terms the split between the wishes of the Roman people versus those of the soldiers in the provinces. According to Herodian, it was said that Macrinus hastened to Rome, believing that the people there would be favorable to him (5.4.11), and Herodian himself states that Macrinus died, like Niger, doing what he should have long ago done, which was return to Rome (5.4.12).[44]

5 After Macrinus

Macrinus' attempt to transform himself into a physical manifestation of Marcus Aurelius turns out to be the last mention of Marcus' memory in Herodian's work, and following the overthrow and death of Macrinus, the language of memory and emulation is largely absent in Herodian's text.[45] In the remaining history we glimpse only a few examples of emperors in the mold of Marcus, and both of those are problematic. Alexander Severus was trained in moderation and received an education in Greek and Latin letters (5.7.5; cf. 5.8.1–2), and "he naturally possessed a mild and gentle character that was predisposed toward magnanimity" (6.1.6: ὑπῆρχε δέ τι καὶ φυσικὸν ἦθος πρᾶον καὶ ἥμερον τῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἔς τε τὸ φιλάνθρωπον πάνυ ἐπιρρεπές).[46] There was always, however, the boy's youth, which Herodian stresses (5.8.10), and

42 The variant καὶ ἡ ἀντωνίνου μνήμη καὶ ὁ πόθος from manuscript A (*codex monancensis graecus* 157) is included in the *apparatus criticus* by Mendelssohn (1883) 137 and Whittaker (1970) 26, but is ignored by Stavenhagen (1922) 143 and Lucarini (2005) 112.

43 See also Chrysanthou (2022a) 285.

44 See Cass. Dio 79[78].39.3–4 for a similar sentiment. For the connection between Macrinus and Niger in this regard, see Chrysanthou (2022a) 286.

45 A sampling of similar usages from the remaining text suggests that these instances of memory, imitation, and emulation have no or little connection to the undying memory of Marcus Aurelius or the events and characters in the first five books: 6.1.7: no one could remember a person put to death without a trial; 6.5.10: no one likes to remember Alexander Severus' defeat by the Parthians; 8.7.6: in a speech Maximus says that there will be no remembrance of crimes that were committed under orders; 6.2.4, Alexander Severus' letter to Artaxerxes reminds the king of Parthian victories of Augustus, Trajan, Lucius Verus, and Septimius Severus.

46 Alexander Severus thus shows the same promise as Geta, but, although his reign will be lengthier, he was able to stabilize the empire for only a brief time.

we are reminded of Herodian's earlier statement that only mature, virtuous emperors brought stability in this period (1.1.6).[47] In this instance, the recent memory of the soldiers is what works against Alexander Severus, for when the troops turn against Alexander Severus and toward Maximinus, they recalled Alexander Severus' military failures in Parthia and his lack of bravery (6.8.3). This notice comes on the heels of Herodian's statement that Maximinus taught his soldiers to be emulators and imitators of his bravery (6.8.2), placing him more in the tradition of Septimius Severus and Caracalla with their self-presentations as fellow soldiers and models for their men to follow.

Toward the end of the history, several examples of older, virtuous emperors appear, though the consensus that held under Marcus was not able to be achieved again.[48] Herodian describes Gordian as a man about eighty years old whom the Senate and people would accept as emperor because of his previous experience and noble birth (7.5.2). He came to power, however, during an uprising in Libya led by young men who wanted to overthrow Maximinus' tyranny and who demanded, under threat of death, that Gordian become emperor (7.5.5–6). The Senate eventually did proclaim Gordian emperor (7.7.2), but "there occurred deeds of civil war under the pretense of liberty and freedom from fear" (7.7.4: ἐν προσχήματι ἐλευθερίας ἀδείας τε εἰρηνικῆς ἔργα πολέμου ἐμφυλίου ἐγένετο). The Senate also urged the provinces to rebel against Maximinus (7.7.5–6), and Gordian, facing an uprising against him in Carthage, died by suicide (7.9.4, 9).

As war with Maximinus approached, the Senate decides that they need co-rulers, to be chosen from of men "of the proper age and merit" (7.10.3: ἐν ἡλικίᾳ καὶ ἀξιώματι).[49] They eventually select Maximus and Balbinus, though the people are unhappy with this decision and demand a member of Gordian's family instead, eventually choosing Gordian's grandson, whom Herodian describes as "a mere boy" (ἦν τι παιδίον νήπιον) (7.10.5–8). For a moment, consensus rule is achieved again, with Gordian as Caesar alongside the older emperors, Maximus and Balbinus. Herodian writes that the emperors "from then on ruled the city with great decency and order, and they were applauded by all both privately and publicly" (8.8.1: ἦρχον δὲ τοῦ λοιποῦ τῆς πόλεως μετὰ πάσης εὐκοσμίας τε καὶ εὐταξίας, ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ δημοσίᾳ πανταχοῦ εὐφημούμενοι). Everyone approves them, that is, except for the soldiers, who resented the praise bestowed on them by the people and the fact that they were chosen by the Senate (8.8.1). Furthermore, each man really desired sole rule, which Herodian attributes to their ultimate demise (8.8.5), and the men are soon killed by the praetorians (8.8.7). Herodian closes his work lamenting Maximus and Balbinus, who were "venerable older men worthy of account, both well born and having gained power through

47 See Roberto (2022) for the similar view that in spite of Alexander Severus' good qualities, his demise is evidence on an ongoing decline.

48 See Davenport/Mallan (2020) for an analysis of books 7–8 and the lack of consensus that contributed to the chaotic events of this period.

49 For a possible recalling of Pertinax, see Chrysanthou (2022a) 56, with further references.

their own worth" (8.8.8: σεμνοὶ καὶ λόγου ἄξιοι πρεσβῦται, εὐγενεῖς τε καὶ κατ' ἀξίαν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐληλυθότες). They of course were replaced by the thirteen-year-old Gordian III. The positive nature of the death notice for Maximus and Balbinus is indicative of Herodian's belief about the decline that occurred after the death of Marcus.[50]

6 Conclusion

Despite the fact that Herodian emphasizes the undying memory of Marcus Aurelius at the beginning of the history, his narrative shows how Marcus' successors embraced different models of emulation and also how the memory of other emperors, such as Pertinax, Septimius Severus, and Caracalla, was in turn passed down or needed to be reckoned with. From the reign of Pertinax, we see the shifting preferences of important political groups and the turning away from the consensus-based rule that existed under Marcus. Pertinax' memory is used to create legitimacy among certain groups, while other means, either the memory of bad emperors such as Commodus or the appearance as a fellow soldier, are used to appeal to the military. After the death of Pertinax, we find Septimius Severus drawing on the examples of Marcus, Pertinax, and Didius Julianus in varying ways, deploying their individual models as he saw fit for his own gain. Caracalla, while playing a role similar to Commodus, ultimately rejected the models of the recent past in favor of Alexander, though his use of that traditional model was ultimately unsuccessful. Macrinus attempted to revive the memory of Marcus Aurelius, but his imitation of the ideal emperor was feeble and ineffective. As the history comes to an end, the continuity with the past feels completely broken. The events of the final three books are evidence of the lack of consensus within the empire, which is mirrored by the absence of the language of memory and emulation that was so frequent in books 1–5. By the end of the history, Marcus' memory has become a fossilized notion from the past of what a good emperor was supposed to be, and the attenuation of its power emphasizes the disconnect between past and present in Herodian's work.

As noted above, Herodian writes that the events that he records were part of the collective memory of his readers but had been recorded infrequently or not in their entirety. The goal of his work is therefore to create a cohesive narrative from these disparate and ununified memories. The instability of his age, which Herodian names as his theme, is mirrored in the way that he tracks the preservation of memory and the emulation of emperors throughout his history. Herodian's achievement as the narrator of these events is to take the information shared among his contemporaries and make sense of it through his narrative. Throughout the first five books, his repeated emphasis on memory and emulation draws the reader back, again and again, to the ideal portrait of Marcus Aurelius and his undying memory. The replacement of Mar-

50 Laporte/Hekster (2022) 106.

cus' memory with another is not just a way to make comparisons between Herodian's ideal emperor and his successors. It is an analytical tool that tracks the changes and challenges that emperors faced among Rome's various groups. By tracing the memory of Marcus and others throughout the history, Herodian emphasizes the difficulty of returning to consensus-based rule, an idea that mirrors the uncertainty and volatility with which his history ends.

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