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Longing for a Good Ruler: *pothos* and Echoes of Alexander the Great in Herodian

The first event narrated in Herodian's *History* is the death of the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Herodian first describes how Marcus lived a model life of virtue and responsibility, and the lengths to which he went in order to provide a proper education for his son and heir, Commodus. Nonetheless, as he senses his own death approaching, Herodian's Marcus worries that his still-young son will reject a life of discipline, and that he will behave and rule like a tyrant instead.[1] Thus, the dying emperor assembles the advisors and family members who are with him at the Roman legionary camp on the northern frontier and offers some advice with his final words, represented in direct speech by Herodian. Essentially, Marcus urges his listeners to serve as fathers to the young man and to continue to advise him on the proper way to rule an empire. Marcus offers a general historical evaluation: neither money nor a strong bodyguard can protect a bad ruler; he must instead obtain the goodwill of his subjects. He says:

> μάλιστα δὲ ἐκεῖνοι ἐς ἀρχῆς μῆκος ἀκινδύνως ἤλασαν, ὅσοι μὴ φόβον ἐξ ὠμότητος, πόθον δὲ⟨ἐκ⟩ τῆς αὐτῶν χρηστότητος ταῖς τῶν ἀρχομένων ψυχαῖς ἐνέσταξαν.
>
> Those (rulers) especially went on to a long reign without danger, however many of them instilled in the hearts of their subjects not fear arising from cruelty, but longing arising from their own goodness.[2]

The word *pothos* here – its first appearance in Herodian's work – tends to be translated as "love" or "affection" in English. That is one possible meaning of the word, and it would work in this context: good rulers are loved by their subjects. That usage would also match what we find in many imperial-era Greek prose authors. In archaic and classical Greek (prose and poetry), the usual meaning of *pothos* and the verb *pothein* (ποθεῖν) involves "longing for", a desire for something or someone which is now lost or absent. But a shift seems to have occurred in Greek prose at least by the end of the Hellenistic period; these terms become more common and can be used to express a simple "desire" or "love" for someone or something, whether absent or not.[3]

1 1.2–3. On this passage, see Grosso (1964) 37–38; Zimmerman (1999) 24–41; Hidber (2006) 153–157; Galimberti (2014) 45–60; Chrysanthou (2022) 30–33.

2 1.4.5. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted. The Greek text is taken from Lucarini (2005).

3 See Appendix 1 for a tabulation based on a TLG search. The basic, primary definition provided by LSJ and by Montanari (2015), for the verb ποθέω and the noun πόθος, is a desire for something or someone which is now lost or absent; this applies to authors of the archaic and classical eras. Montanari (2015) 1692, s. v. ποθέω, offers two further definitions which do not require the notion of absence or regret: "to long for, desire ardently, be impatient for" and "to be gripped with amorous desire, love". For each of these definitions, post-classical authors are cited (Theocritus, Philo, Arrian/Epictetus, Lucian).

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However, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, Herodian's usage of *pothos*-terms – the noun, the verb, and the adjective *potheinos* (ποθεινός) – operates within a fairly restricted range as compared to other post-classical authors. Out of 17 instances of these words in his *History*, six require the more classical meaning of "longing for", while another nine occurrences could also be read in this way, that is, as expressing something beyond "love" (Herodian tends to use *epithumia* (ἐπιθυμία) to express "desire").[4] Furthermore, these *pothos*-terms in Herodian's work recur in a striking pattern. Of those 15 occasions on which the words indicate a definite or possible "longing for", all but one has an emperor as the object (11) or subject (4) of that longing. This pattern includes a clustering of *pothos*-terminology in the opening scenes of Book 1: the death of Marcus Aurelius, the attempt by Commodus' advisors to dissuade him from returning to Rome, and the young emperor's journey back to the imperial capital. These first seven chapters alone contain seven instances of *pothos*-related terms.

These elements on their own would call for further investigation of the concept of *pothos* in Herodian's *History*. But there is more. The noun *pothos,* and the conceptual realm to which it refers, already held a marked status in ancient Greek historical texts thanks to its association with the most famous figure in ancient Greek history: Alexander III of Macedon. The most visible extant instantiation of this is provided by the *Anabasis* of Arrian – a text in which *pothos* also operates within a restricted range and undoubtedly contains heavy significance. Scholars agree not only that *pothos* constitutes an essential trait of Arrian's Alexander (though they differ on how exactly it does so), but also that when Arrian uses the term in connection with Alexander – that is, whenever a *pothos* "takes hold of" the Macedonian king – its connotation varies slightly from its classical usage. That is, Arrian's Alexander does not feel a longing for something which he previously experienced and which is now absent. Rather, the longing he feels is for *new* things, whether that might involve conquest, exploration, or knowledge.[5]

Herodian, for his part, never uses *pothos* in quite that same way, nor does he employ Arrian's formula, "a *pothos* seized (him)" (πόθος ἔλαβεν). And, given the prevalence of the word in imperial Greek prose, it is unlikely that the mere mention of *pothos* was enough to evoke Alexander the Great in the mind of Herodian's contemporary audience.[6] Nevertheless, I will argue that *pothos* does have thematic significance for Herodian's *History*, in several ways. In the first section, I will examine the clustering of *pothos*-terms in the opening scenes of Book 1 of the *History* and show how the frequency with which this motif is employed serves to highlight the contrast between Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. The following section will then show how this *pot-*

4 See Appendix 2 for a full list of *pothos* passages; I discuss each of them in the text of this chapter. On *epithumia* in Herodian, see Section 3 below.

5 Important studies of *pothos* and Alexander include Ehrenberg (1938), Montgomery (1965) 191–217, Kraft (1971) 81–118, Guzman Guerra (1984), and Molina Marín (2017).

6 I will refer hereafter to the Macedonian conqueror as "Alexander the Great" in order to avoid any confusion when one of the subjects of Herodian's history, Alexander Severus, enters the picture.

hos-motif works together with other aspects of both the historical situation and Herodian's narrative choices in order to produce echoes of Alexander the Great in the story of Commodus' accession to the throne. Finally, I will examine the remaining occurrences of *pothos*-words in Herodian's *History*, beyond the opening chapters. In nearly half of these instances, a group of people feels a longing for an emperor. The objects of this *pothos* include past, present, and future rulers (or claimants to the throne); six of the emperors in Herodian's *History* appear as the object of *pothos*, and a seventh emperor is associated with *pothos*.[7] This means that, depending on how one counts, roughly half of the rulers of the Roman empire who appear in Herodian's work are "longed for" by their subjects. I will conclude that, given the resonance of the term in the opening chapters and its association with Alexander the Great in Greek historiographical literature, this pattern is unlikely to be a coincidence, and it should be seen as another aspect of the careful attention Herodian paid to the crafting of his historical narrative.[8]

1 From Marcus to Commodus, From the Danube to Rome

We have already seen the first occurrence of *pothos*, in Marcus Aurelius' deathbed speech. The sentiment he expresses about the effect of a good ruler on his subjects is confirmed almost immediately, in the narrator's evaluation of Marcus:

> ὁ μὲν οὖν νυκτός τε καὶ ἡμέρας ἐπιβιώσας μιᾶς ἀνεπαύσατο, πόθον τε τοῖς καθ' αὐτὸν ἀνθρώποις ἐγκαταλιπὼν ἀρετῆς τε ἀίδιον μνήμην ἐς τὸν ἐσόμενον αἰῶνα.
>
> And so he (Marcus) lived through the night and another day before he passed away, having left behind a longing in the people of his own time and an eternal memory of his virtue in the ages to come.[9]

This instance of *pothos* – paired, as it is, with "eternal memory" – brings us closer to the classical meaning of "longing for someone who is now absent" than Marcus' own use of the word in his speech. There, it meant something like love or affection for a living ruler, produced by the quality of his rule. What is noteworthy in this second passage is that no object is stated for this *pothos* which Marcus left behind. The sense re-

7 The six emperors who are direct objects of *pothos* are Marcus, Commodus, Pertinax, Niger, Macrinus, and Alexander Severus; the seventh, associated with the notion, is Gordian I.

8 As recent work on Herodian has clearly shown: Hidber (2006), Kemezis (2014), Pitcher (2018), Davenport/Mallan (2020), and Chrysanthou (2020) and (2022).

9 1.4.7; Chrysanthou (2020) 629.

quires us to understand Marcus (or his rule) as the object, but the resulting phrase is a striking one.[10]

The next occurrence of a *pothos*-term, two chapters later, has Commodus as the subject rather than the object, and what he longs for is home:

> αἰφνιδίως δὲ καλέσας τοὺς φίλους ποθεῖν ἔλεγε τὴν πατρίδα
>
> He suddenly summoned his advisors and said that he longed for home.[11]

Herodian could have just written something like, "Commodus announced that he had decided to return to Rome". Instead, the author's description of the young emperor as "longing for" home creates a noticeable contrast with his father and the advice he offered before his death. So far in Herodian's work the reader has seen imperial subjects feeling *pothos* for a ruler as a result of his virtues; now, quite soon after his accession to the throne, the new emperor has reversed that situation. In the abstract, a longing for one's home is not necessarily a bad thing. But Commodus' desire is stoked by his vile and devious courtiers, who disparage the living conditions at the frontier. Nor does his longing for home sit comfortably next to the bold speech he has just made to the legions about continuing to fight the barbarians across the Danube (1.5.3–8). Moreover, Commodus is ashamed to admit the real reason for his longing, which is the warm climate and the pleasures to be found in the city; therefore, he claims that he is concerned about someone from the nobility attempting to seize power at Rome (1.6.3).

Alarmed at this sudden change of direction, the most senior of his father's advisors, Claudius Pompeianus, attempts to dissuade Commodus from leaving the frontier. In the short direct speech Herodian gives him, Pompeianus uses *pothos* twice: first he repeats Commodus' phrase verbatim (ποθεῖν τὴν πατρίδα), and later he points out that their barbarian foes will interpret such an action not as a "longing to return home", but as a sign of fear on the Romans' part.[12] These repeated occurrences of *pothos*-terms could be explained, at one level, as simple verbal echoes between one character's direct speech and the motive ascribed by the narrator to another character. But in fact, Pompeianus makes longing and desire (*pothos* and *epithumia*) the centerpiece of the first part of his speech. It is natural to have such desires, he says (and, indeed, we all want to return home); but the responsibility to remain on the frontier and finish the war against the barbarians is more pressing. In this way the speaking character manages to imply that Commodus' *pothos* is not appropriate in this context, just as the nar-

10 The only other instance of the noun or verb used absolutely like this in Herodian's *History* is 5.2.3, where the city of Rome feels longing. In that passage as well, there is a strongly implied object (Macrinus – see Section 3 below).

11 1.6.3. Whittaker's translation ("a longing to return home") diminishes the force of the phrase. The direct nature of Commodus' longing can be seen by comparing the different construction employed by Pompeianus later in his speech, where he refers to ἐπανόδου πόθον (1.6.5).

12 1.6.4–5. See Appendix 2 for full text.

rator has already done by means of the contrast with Marcus. Pompeianus' prediction of how the enemy will interpret this *pothos* as fear further reinforces this message.[13]

At first, it appears Pompeianus is successful, since Commodus initially withdraws his proposal out of shame. But he ultimately gets his way and sates his longing for Rome. In Herodian's depiction of the young emperor's journey back to the imperial capital, we find two more instances of *pothos.* First, as Commodus sped along the route from the Danube to Italy, Herodian records that festive crowds in each city greeted him with a royal reception, and all found the sight of him "welcome and longed-for" (ἀσπαστός τε καὶ ποθεινὸς, 1.7.2). Meanwhile, when the news of Commodus' visit had reached the city of Rome itself, the people were overjoyed, thinking that the young emperor would take after his father. As Commodus approached the city, the entire senate and the populace traveled quite far in order to be the first to greet him, since "they longed for him with true, heart-felt affection".[14] Here, Herodian reinforces the basis of this longing – Commodus' upbringing and nobility – by including information on his father's and mother's lineage.

Thus, in the wake of the already numerous references to *pothos* in the opening scenes on the Danube frontier, Herodian twice describes Commodus as "longed-for" by his subjects as he makes his first journey to Rome as emperor. Of course, the contemporary reader knows that this honeymoon will not last long – if not from their own knowledge of the current state of the empire, then from the allusions the narrator has made in the preface and in the characterization of the young emperor as succumbing to the very desires his father had feared. That failure of expectation matches the ironic or disconcerting tone of Herodian's history which has been argued for in recent years.[15] The irony here is reinforced in two ways. First, although Commodus in these initial giddy days appears to fit the mold of the ideal ruler as defined by his father – his subjects do, at this point, long for him – he has done absolutely nothing to deserve that sentiment. It is simply a matter of his having been "born into the purple", a trait which Herodian's Commodus himself has already made quite a big deal of in his speech to the soldiers on the frontier (1.5.5). Second, the only thing that Commodus has longed for, as reported by Herodian so far, is to leave the harsh climate of the frontier and the hard work of fighting barbarians in order to return to the soft and luxurious living which awaits him in the city of Rome. Again, that desire to reach Rome is

13 It is also interesting that Herodian's Pompeianus mentions "enjoyment of things there" (i. e. at Rome), even though the narrator has told us that Commodus kept this real reason for his longing to return home hidden from his advisors: Pompeianus' ἀπολαύσεις (1.6.5) picks up on the phrase used, in brief direct speech, by Commodus' court servants (ἄλλοι δὲ ἀπολαύσουσι […], 1.6.2).

14 1.7.4: ἐπόθουν γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀληθεῖ ψυχῆς διαθέσει. Note that here too, as with Commodus' desire at 1.6.3 (and later Caracalla's for Alexandria), it is not "a longing to X + Y" (see someone/something, go somewhere), but simply "a longing for Y". Whittaker, as before, adds a supplementary verb which is not present in the Greek ("Their desire to see him"); this is understandable as an effort to produce smoother English, but again reduces the direct impact of the Greek verb ποθέω.

15 E. g. Sidebottom (1998) 2817–2819; Kemezis (2014) 227–272; Davenport/Mallan (2020) 428–436.

not in itself a bad thing, but Herodian's account portrays the motives behind Commodus' desire to do so in a clearly negative light. Thus, Herodian's use of *pothos* to describe the young emperor's decision to leave the frontier creates a strong and unflattering contrast with his father: rather than thinking about or doing anything that would actually produce goodwill in his subjects, Commodus simply longs for the city and its pleasures. Overall, Herodian's decision to employ *pothos*-terminology seven times in seven chapters – only one of which could take a less-marked meaning of "love" or "affection" – creates an intratextual web which enhances this stark difference between the only natural father and son to rule the empire in succession.[16]

2 Commodus and Alexander the Great

We have seen how *pothos* works intratextually in Herodian's *History* to set up, and deflate, expectations about Commodus' rule. But, as I noted in the introduction, *pothos* was already a significant term in Greek historical writing. Is there any way, then, in which this cluster of *pothos*-terms surrounding the accession of Commodus might have led the ancient reader to think about Alexander the Great?

For those who knew their Greek history, perhaps the general setting contained some echoes. Consider this scenario: a successful ruler dies just as he sits on the cusp of a military campaign which could lead to a great conquest over barbarian enemies. He leaves behind an 18-year-old son who has already accompanied his father in the field, and who retains experienced advisors from the previous reign. One of the first choices awaiting the young ruler is whether to continue the pursuit of his father's plans. Such a comparison of Marcus and Commodus with the fourth-century BCE Macedonian kings Philip II and Alexander the Great is impressionistic, of course, and differs in numerous details.[17] But the heavy presence of *pothos* in Herodian's opening chapters may have helped to nudge the reader in that direction. In this section, I will suggest a couple other details which might have tipped the scales further: the motif of imperial conquest reaching the ocean, and Commodus' physical appearance.

When Herodian's Commodus addresses the legions for the first time after his father's death, he suggests that they have two goals: to continue prosecuting the war in which they are engaged, and to advance Roman rule up to the ocean.[18] This refer-

16 On the importance and usefulness of an intratextual analysis of Herodian's work, see Chrysanthou (2022) 22–27.

17 Rubin (1980) 221–222 points out that *HA Marc.* 27.11 presents just such an inapt comparison of these pairs in its version of Marcus' death-bed scene. Nonetheless, I believe this strengthens my point that an ancient reader of Herodian might have been led to recall the situation with Philip and Alexander. Laporte (2021) 371 notes echoes of several other "morts connues" in the opening scene of Herodian's work.

18 1.5.6: κατορθοῦν δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ βεβαιοῦν ὑμέτερον ἔργον, εἰ τά τε τοῦ πολέμου λείψανα μετὰ πάσης ἀνδρείας ἀπαλείψαιτε καὶ τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν μέχρις ὠκεανοῦ προαγάγοιτε. "Your task is to set our affairs

ence to the ocean could be designed as a boastful, throw-away line on Commodus' part, given that the wise and brave words he speaks to the soldiers bear little relation to the course his reign will actually take. On the other hand, Pompeianus echoes the sentiment soon thereafter (1.6.6) in his attempt to keep Commodus from returning to Rome; this could indicate that the idea was meant to be taken seriously (at least within the story Herodian tells, whether or not the same was true historically). Other explanations have been put forward, and Alessandro Galimberti has pointed out that the theme of extending Roman power to the ocean goes back at least as far as Augustus (as Pompeianus himself implies).[19] But – in a similar fashion to the presence of the *pothos* motif examined in the previous section – if one were to ask an ancient reader of historical works for the names of conquerors who reached the ocean, Alexander the Great would almost certainly be at or near the top of the list. Diana Spencer has shown how, in the *suasoriae* of the early empire, the *topos* of attempting to reach the edge of the world was associated with Alexander – and usually evaluated negatively.[20] Thus, Commodus' claim operates on multiple levels for Herodian's reader: it associates him, intentionally or unintentionally, with great conquerors and imperial powers; it also raises the specter of overly ambitious or tyrannical rulers; and, for those who are already familiar with, or lived through, the history Herodian is about to recount, it may produce an ironic effect – not just for Commodus' reign but for the empire as a whole, which now (in the author's time) struggles to maintain its frontiers in east and west. Finally, I would suggest a possible intertextual allusion created by Commodus' mention of the ocean. In Herodian's subsequent narrative, Commodus must retreat from the Ister (Danube) River in order to return home. This represents a reversal of Alexander's first daring exploit, when he crosses the Ister in order to attack the barbarians, narrated near the beginning of Arrian's *Anabasis* (1.3–4). Granted, this is more subtle and speculative, but if a reader notices the contrast it is instructive: Herodian's *History* will not be one of glorious imperial conquest across rivers at the edge of the world, but of retreat into the luxuries and decadence of Rome.

The second potential factor linking Commodus with Alexander the Great is Herodian's depiction of the young emperor's physical attributes. As we saw earlier, Herodian uses *pothos*-terminology twice in his account of Commodus' return to Rome. The positive image of Commodus carries through the rest of that chapter (1.7), especially in the rather elaborate picture Herodian paints of his appearance:

> γένους μὲν οὖν ὁ Κόμοδος οὕτως εἶχε, πρὸς δὲ τῇ τῆς ἡλικίας ἀκμῇ καὶ τὴν ὄψιν ἦν ἀξιοθέατος σώματός τε συμμετρίᾳ καὶ κάλλει προσώπου μετ' ἀνδρείας. ὀφθαλμῶν τε γὰρ †ἀρθμίαι† καὶ **πυρώδεις** βολαί, κόμη τε φύσει **ξανθὴ** καὶ οὔλη, ὡς, εἴποτε φοιτῴη δι' ἡλίου, τοσοῦτον

in order and strengthen our position if you want to finish off the rest of this war most bravely and advance the rule of Rome as far as the ocean" (trans. Whittaker [1969–1970] I.27).

19 Galimberti (2014) 68–69.

20 Spencer (2002) 138–147, esp. at 143. Note that Herodian also credits Maximinus with such a plan (7.2.9).

> **ἐκλάμπειν** αὐτῷ πυροειδές τι, ὡς τοὺς μὲν οἴεσθαι ῥίνημα χρυσοῦ προιόντι ἐπιπάσσεσθαι, τοὺς δὲ ἐκθειάζειν, λέγοντας αἴγλην τινὰ οὐράνιον περὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ συγγεγενῆσθαι αὐτῷ· ἴουλοί τε αὐτοῦ κατιόντες ταῖς παρειαῖς ἐπήνθουν.
>
> Besides this ancestry and the fact that he was in the prime of his youth, Commodus was of a striking appearance, with a shapely body and a handsome, manly face; the glances of his eyes were ***? and fiery; his hair was naturally fair and curly, and if he was ever out in the sunlight, it flashed so brightly off him that some thought gold dust was sprinkled on him beforehand, while others regarded it as supernatural, saying that he had a heavenly halo around his head. On his cheeks the first growth of hair was beginning to appear as well.[21]

Herodian reports that Commodus' striking appearance (he is ἀξιοθέατος, "worth seeing") included his body, his face, his eyes, and his hair. The last two features present some intriguing connections with Alexander the Great.[22] For Commodus' eyes, it is unfortunate that we cannot be certain of one of their two qualities, besides "fiery" (πυρώδεις); the manuscript reading ἀρθμίαι ("united", "peaceful") does not make sense, and none of the numerous suggested emendations has gained a consensus.[23] Descriptions of "fiery eyes" may not have been uncommon in antiquity.[24] But Herodian's ascription of a similar quality – Commodus' brightly shining fair hair – shortly thereafter produces a constellation of characteristics which could bring to mind another young ruler in antiquity. The hotness of Alexander's temperament was much remarked upon; Plutarch describes the mix of elements in Alexander's body as πολύθερμος [...] καὶ πυρώδης (*Alex.* 4.1). His eyes were famously "melting" (ὑγρός) rather than fiery, but a manual on physiognomy also includes Alexander among those with shining (λαμπρός) eyes. And in one of the few surviving mentions of the color of Alexander's hair, the imperi-

21 1.7.5, translation adapted from Whittaker (1969–1970) I.41. Zimmerman (1999) 60 comments on how Herodian's depiction of Commodus' *adventus* focuses on "the external effect and reception" (i. e. the expectations of people based on the emperor's origin and outward appearance); he notes a potential comparison with Suetonius' depiction of Caligula (*Cal.* 13).

22 Grosso (1964) 560 notes a coin of Nicaea with Commodus on one side and Alexander on the other, showing that they were linked visually at the time: description at *BMC Pontus* p. 159, no. 46. See also Hekster (2002) 126–128 on the use of copies of statues sculpted by Lysippus for depictions of Hercules in this period; Lysippus was Alexander's "official" portrait sculptor, and Heracles was perhaps the key divine model for Alexander's self-representation.

23 LSJ s. v. ἀρθμίος assigns the meaning "calm" to the usage in this passage, but it is difficult to see how this could be paired with "fiery" by means of a simple καί; the same holds true for the other definitions of the word, *pace* Letta (2012) 696. The suggestion of Giangrande (1957) 263–264, θερμαί (printed by Whittaker, though accompanied by reservations in his notes), would work well for my suggested comparison with Alexander.

24 Answering that question would require sifting through the nearly 200 instances produced by a TLG search of πυρωδ-/πυροειδ- plus οφθαλμ-/ομμα-. Quite a few of these are late (and Christian); those from earlier periods often seem to be philosophical or scientific in some way. There is an early martyrology which refers to "fiery eyes", but Herodian's description may be unique in extant ancient *historical* prose, at least.

al-era author Aelian describes it as ξανθή, the same word Herodian uses for Commodus' hair.[25]

Herodian's depiction of Commodus' appearance could represent a set of stock characteristics, or (as some have suggested) it could be based on Herodian's viewing of a portrait bust or painting of Commodus. But the emphasis on "fieriness", a fundamental quality of the great Macedonian conqueror, remains interesting, especially since it is undercut in two ways. Immediately, Herodian undermines it by reporting (see above) that some people at the time believed the brightness of Commodus' hair was artificial, produced by sprinkling gold dust on it.[26] In the long term, of course, any comparison fails since Commodus turns out to be nothing like Alexander the Great – in fact, he has already given up the opportunity to follow in the Macedonian's footsteps by abandoning the war against the barbarians.[27] If I am correct in identifying these echoes, Herodian's usage of *pothos* in Book 1 performs double duty: it distances Commodus from both Marcus Aurelius and Alexander the Great, the ideal ruler of the Roman empire and the most successful conqueror in Greek history.

3 An Unfulfilled Longing

Beyond the opening chapters of Book 1 which have been my focus so far, there are ten further occurrences of *pothos, pothein*, or *potheinos* in Herodian's *History.* It is noteworthy that in five of these instances, the object of that *pothos* is an emperor (in one case indirectly), while the subject is either the Roman people or some subset of them. The five passages are these (see Appendix 2 for full texts):

- 2.1.9. After the murder of Commodus, Laetus and Eclectus visit Pertinax, who thinks they have come to execute him. Instead, Laetus declares that they have arrived in order to offer him the empire; he explains that, as a result of Pertinax's dignity and age, he is "longed for and honored by the people" (ποθούμενόν τε καὶ τιμώμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου).
- 2.5.1. Unfortunately for Pertinax, it turns out that there is one important group of people who are not pleased with his efforts to restore good order to the government of the empire: the praetorian guard.[28] Upset at the current state of affairs, and "longing for the violence of the previous tyranny" (ποθοῦντες δὲ τὰς ἐπὶ τῆς

25 Ael. *VH* 12.14. Eyes: Adamantius, *Physiognomonika* 1.14 (fourth century CE = Stewart [1993] T20). On Alexander's hair color, see also Julius Valerius, *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis* 1.7 Kübler (fourth century CE = Stewart [1993] T19).

26 Cf. *HA Comm.* 17.3, where it is stated as fact that Commodus' "hair was always dyed and made lustrous by the use of gold dust […]" (*capillo semper fucato et auri ramentis inluminato*, trans. Magie/Rohrbacher).

27 Even Herodian's note about the first growth of a beard on Commodus' cheeks could contribute to this effect, since Alexander had famously set a new trend in being clean-shaven as an adult.

28 Kuhn-Chen (2002) 279–280.

προγεγενημένης τυραννίδος ἁρπαγάς τε καὶ βίας), they form a plot to do away with Pertinax. This is the loosest connection among my examples, since what is longed for is not an emperor (Commodus) but the way of life his cruel and neglectful rule allowed to those around him.

– 2.7.9. As unrest in the empire spreads due to Julianus' dissolute living and unkept promises, the governor of Syria, Pescennius Niger, decides to make a bid for the throne. The people of his province readily support him, Herodian writes, both because of their characteristic Syrian fickleness, but also because they had "a certain longing for Niger" (ἐνῆν δέ τις αὐτοῖς καὶ πόθος τοῦ Νίγρου) as a result of his mild rule and his willingness to celebrate their festivals with them.
– 5.2.3. As with Pertinax, according to Herodian, the empire enjoyed a brief period of happiness and stability during the reign of Macrinus. However, he made two mistakes: he did not immediately disband his army, and he himself did not hurry "to Rome which was longing" (εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην ποθοῦσαν). This is another striking absolute use of *pothein*, similar to that at 1.4.7 where the empire after the death of Marcus Aurelius is described as "longing" with no object explicitly stated.
– 6.4.2. When news of events from the east forces Alexander Severus to lead an army to the Persian frontier, he delivers a speech to the soldiers, conducts the appropriate sacrifices, and sets out from Rome. His procession is accompanied, Herodian says, by the senate and the entire populace, and everyone among the people (as well as Alexander Severus) has tears in their eyes, "for he had implanted in the masses a longing for himself" (πόθον γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ τῷ πλήθει ἐμπεποιήκει) through his mild rule as he grew up amongst them.[29]

There is one further instance which could be placed in this group, where the subject is unstated and the object of the longing is to be rid of the current ruler, Maximinus.[30] Thus, we could say that after 1.7, the effect of *pothos* in Herodian's work is produced not by the frequency of the term, but by this striking pattern of its occurrence, in the company of the emperor or a claimant to the throne.

None of the emperors in Herodian's *History* manage to live up to the ideal established by Marcus Aurelius.[31] But if one did try to arrange a balance sheet of sorts – with the truly wretched rulers on one side, and on the other those whom Herodian

29 This creates an interesting inversion from the scene of Commodus returning to Rome (1.7.4, see Section 1 above), where the senate and people go out from the city to greet him. They too feel *pothos* for Commodus, who had grown up amongst them.

30 7.5.5. The manuscripts read πάθος (*pathos*, "feeling, emotion"); Reiske's emendation to πόθος is accepted by Whittaker and Lucarini (the neuter article at the beginning of the period, and the lack of them thereafter, could easily explain the mistake). But cf. also 5.4.2, where the Aldine edition reads ἡ Ἀντωνίνου μνήμη καὶ ὁ πόθος, others τὸ [...] Ἀντωνίνου τῆς μνήμης πάθος (the subject is the soldiers rejoicing at the acclamation of Elagabalus; "Antoninus" here is Caracalla).

31 Hidber (2006) 188–272.

portrays as having at least had a chance to be a good ruler – it is notable that the objects of *pothos* all find themselves on the positive side of that ledger. Pertinax ruled in an orderly and mild fashion; Niger had a similar reputation and record, before succumbing to the luxuries of Antioch; the empire enjoyed "great security and a semblance of freedom" during Macrinus' reign; and finally, the reign of Alexander Severus rescues Rome from the exotic excesses of Elagabalus.[32] Maximinus' tyranny is something which people long to be rid of. The only exception is Commodus; however, the *pothos* expressed for him by the people occurs before he has installed himself at Rome, while that felt by the praetorians under Pertinax arises from their longing for the former tyranny which allowed them to plunder to their hearts' content. This latter instance of *pothos* – found in a bad group of people (greedy soldiers) and longing for the rule of a bad emperor – thus creates a double-negative, as it were, leaving a net positive.

In any case, rather than interpreting this pattern as one which marks "bad" versus "not as bad" emperors, I suggest that Herodian's use of *pothos* terminology is a way of emphasizing the failed expectations which accompanied every ruler of the empire during this period. This is, as we have seen, one interpretation of the cluster of *pothos* terms in the opening chapters: there, Commodus' failure to live up to his father is further highlighted by reminders of how he chose not to follow in the footsteps of a young conqueror like Alexander the Great. Herodian is not mechanical in the application of the theme, but we might see the lack of an expressed longing for certain emperors – Julianus, Caracalla, Elagabalus, Maximinus – as a sign that there was never really any hope for them to begin with.[33]

One of the remaining uses of *pothos* in Herodian, I would argue, reinforces this theme of failed expectations. It involves an emperor as the subject rather than the object of longing. In Book 4, Herodian narrates Caracalla's blood-soaked visit to Alexandria in Egypt. While still in Antioch, Caracalla writes to the Alexandrians announcing his intention to travel there; Herodian claims that he pretended that he "longed for" the city (πρόφασιν ποιούμενος ποθεῖν τὴν ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ κτισθεῖσαν πόλιν, 4.8.6).[34] This is another striking use of *pothos* – not "a longing to see", but simply the city as object of his desire – and again (as with Commodus) the term occurs in the midst of a passage where Alexander the Great stands in the background, here even more directly and obviously than in Book 1. In addition to the fact that what Caracalla longs for is Alexander the Great's city, the statement occurs not long after a passage in which Herodian discusses Caracalla's overall Alexander-*imitatio* during his eastern sojourn

32 Pertinax, 2.4.4; Niger, 2.7.5 and 2.8.9; Macrinus, 5.2.2. Compare Cassius Dio's report (75[74].6.2a [Exc. Val. 341]) that Niger was pleased with those who called him "a new Alexander".

33 Septimius Severus would remain the only – admittedly notable – exception to this pattern.

34 On Caracalla's pretense and its importance for Herodian's narrative, see Baumann (2022).

(4.8.1–2).[35] Caracalla's "misdirected" longing is made even starker by the fact that he is one of the emperors who is *not* longed for by anyone in Herodian's work.

This passage raises the question of whether Herodian's employment of *pothos*-terminology was influenced by one of his sources, namely, Cassius Dio.[36] Xiphilinus' epitome of Dio's *Roman History* reports, in very similar language, that Caracalla pretended to "long for" the Alexandrians (ποθεῖν αὐτοὺς προσποιούμενος, 78[77].22.1). More broadly, the surviving material from Dio's last ten books reveals five instances of the verb *pothein*, in all of which the object of the longing is an emperor. However, there is an important difference: in four of the five cases, the emperor being longed for is already dead.[37] In Herodian, on the other hand, the emperor as object of *pothos* is always still living, and in most cases early in his reign or not even emperor yet. The one instance of *pothos* for a living emperor in Cassius Dio concerns Septimius Severus, but here too there is a slight difference, in that the crowd at Rome "longs to see and hear" the new ruler (supplementary infinitives, rather than Severus as the direct object of the verb).[38] Finally, Cassius Dio does not use the noun *pothos* with emperors as Herodian does.[39] Thus, while it seems likely that Herodian borrowed the particular phrase concerning Caracalla and Alexandria from Cassius Dio, he created his own framework for the notion of longing for an emperor, one which does not resemble Dio's in the details.

As I alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, imperial-era Greek prose authors use *pothos* and *pothein* to mean simply "desire" or "love" much more often than their classical predecessors. As we have seen, some instances of the word in Herodian's *History* could be understood to operate in this way: Marcus, Commodus, Pertinax, Niger, and Alexander Severus are all objects of *pothos* on the part of the Roman people, and this could mean simply that they "loved" these rulers. But I would argue that the consistency of Herodian's use of *pothos* and *pothein* in connection specifically with the emperors lends these terms a greater and more marked significance. Only

35 For Caracalla's "cultivation of an alignment with Alexander the Great", see Rowan (2012) 152–157; Shayegan (2004) 294–296, both with further references.

36 On Herodian's use of Cassius Dio, see most recently Chrysanthou (2020).

37 74(73).13.4 (the people abuse Julianus and long for Pertinax); 79(78).9.2 (the soldiers, disappointed at Macrinus' failure to distribute money, long for Caracalla); 79(78).15.2 (the masses long for Macrinus, since – Dio adds – he was not emperor long enough to lose their support); 79(78).23.1 (even though she hated him while he lived, Julia Domna longs for Caracalla after his death – according to Dio, because she was vexed at having to return to being a private citizen). The last three of these passages are preserved directly in Cod. Vat. 1288; the first, on Julianus and Pertinax, is cited from Dio by the work *On Syntax* (Petrova [2006] 46).

38 75(74).1.5. This passage, like the Caracalla story, appears in Xiphilinus' epitome.

39 The only preserved instance of the noun *pothos* in Dio's work occurs in fr. 109.12, describing Sulla's introduction of the proscriptions: "a certain longing came over him [ἀλλά τις αὐτῷ πόθος ἐσῄει] to go far beyond all others in the variety also of his murders […]" (trans. Cary). At 59.29.2, it is recorded that Caligula would sometimes mockingly issue the watchword "Pothos" or "Venus" (thus with the meaning "desire").

in two situations does Herodian use *pothos*-terminology to indicate "desire" either for an object other than the emperor, or with someone other than the emperor as its subject. In the first case, the context is the imperial freedman Cleander's plot to gain power while Commodus was outside the city. Cleander's plan was to create a famine, by buying up and hoarding the grain supply, and then by means of bountiful distributions to win over the populace and the soldiers who, as Herodian puts it, will have "been captured by a desire for necessities" (ἁλόντας πόθῳ τοῦ χρειώδους).[40] One wonders if the main purpose of Herodian's somewhat tortured phrasing here is to create a vehicle for clever wordplay, since the idea of *pothos* re-appears a chapter later in the denouement of Cleander's story. His machinations lead to serious civil unrest, including fighting between the imperial cavalry and the urban cohorts. When Commodus is finally informed of what is happening in the city, he summons Cleander and has him executed; Cleander's head is stuck on the end of a long spike and sent out to be viewed, "a pleasing and longed-for spectacle to the people" (τερπνὸν καὶ ποθεινὸν τῷ δήμῳ θέαμα, 1.13.4). Thus Cleander, hoping to produce a certain *pothos* in the people, in the end provides what they really long for – his demise. The attentive reader of Herodian may also recall an earlier "longed-for spectacle", when the senate and people of Rome greeted the young Commodus on his first journey to the city as emperor (1.7.2).

The final occurrence of *pothos* to be accounted for involves a fairly straightforward use of the term in connection with the one successful emperor who does not appear as the object of longing in Herodian's *History*. When Septimius Severus arrived in Rome, he adopted a technique which Commodus had utilized: he seized the children of all the men who occupied any sort of office in the eastern part of the empire, in order to hold them as hostages for good behavior. His aim was that, "out of desire for the safety of their children" (πόθῳ τῆς τῶν παίδων σωτηρίας), their fathers would betray Niger, who had been proclaimed emperor and relied on the East for support.[41] Perhaps it is too much to press this point, but this instance of *pothos* does occur in connection with imperial rule, or the hope of it. What we can conclude, overall, is that it is quite rare for Herodian to use *pothos* as a basic term meaning "desire" in a context which does not involve an emperor as object. Herodian's unmarked term for "desire" is *epithumia* (23 times, plus the verb three more times). In fact, that sort of desire is almost universally negative – for power, riches, or pleasures – and motivates men to take action in their own self-interest.[42]

40 1.12.4. On Herodian's treatment of this episode, see Scott (2018) 441–445.

41 3.2.5 (see Appendix 2 for full text). Herodian delays his report on this action of Severus until the beginning of his campaign against Niger.

42 1.4.6, 1.6.2, 1.6.4, 1.6.5, 1.8.2, 1.9.10, 1.12.3, 1.12.5, 2.6.14, 2.8.2, 2.15.2, 2.15.3, 3.6.3, 3.8.5 (verb), 3.11.2, 3.11.9, 3.12.12, 3.13.6, 4.4.2, 4.10.1 (verb), 6.1.5, 6.2.6, 6.3.5, 6.3.6 (verb), 8.8.4 (2×). The only potential exceptions to the negative connotation of *epithumia* are 6.3.6, where Alexander Severus encourages his soldiers by noting their desire for fame and glory, and 1.6.4 and 5, where Pompeianus refers to the desire to return to Rome (see Section 1 above).

Alexander the Great was obviously still relevant and "in the air" in Herodian's day – Caracalla's own obsession with the Macedonian conqueror is proof enough of that.[43] It is also not necessary for my argument to show that Herodian had any detailed knowledge of Alexander's campaigns.[44] His references to the Successors of Alexander (1.3) and to the Battle of Issus (3.4) certainly do not reveal accurate information about the Macedonian conquest of Asia.[45] The more important question for my purposes is whether Herodian was familiar with the *pothos*-theme which runs through Arrian's *Anabasis.* It is hard to imagine that an author who can weave allusions to Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon throughout his own text was not aware of one of the most well-known Greek historical works of the previous century, on the topic of the most famous man in Greek history.[46] Even if the echoes of Alexander I have argued for were not part of Herodian's design, it remains likely that his employment of *pothos*-terminology almost exclusively in contexts involving the emperor serves to reinforce the sense of loss felt by the inhabitants of the Roman empire after the death of Marcus Aurelius.[47]

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43 See Shayegan (2004) 293 – 302, who opens his discussion by citing Alfred Heuss' description of Alexander as "von einer erregenden Gegenwärtigkeit" during the Severan era.

44 Nevertheless, I find unconvincing the argument of Rubin (1980) 215 – 234, that Herodian shows little to no familiarity with the tradition about Alexander the Great. Essentially, Rubin argues that someone who loved rhetorical comparisons as much as Herodian would have made more use of Alexander-related themes at certain places. This assumes a Herodian incapable of subtlety.

45 In addition to these passages and the material on Caracalla (4.8.1 – 3), there are also passing references to Alexander the Great at 5.7.3 (Elagabalus adopts his cousin, who adopts the name "Alexander" after the Macedonian conqueror), 6.2.2 (the Sasanian ruler Ardashir lays claim to the Persian Empire which Alexander destroyed), and 7.6.1 (Herodian refers to Alexandria as "the city of Alexander in Egypt", cf. 4.8.6).

46 Bekker-Nielsen (2014) shows Herodian's familiarity with Dio of Prusa, at least, among post-classical authors; see also Chrysanthou (2020) 624.

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Appendix 1: *pothos*-related terms in selected Greek prose authors

These numbers are based on a TLG search conducted in 2022. I have included the extant historians as well as a number of prose authors in other genres for comparison.

For Dionysius (*Antiquitates Romanae*), Josephus (*Bellum Judaicum*), and Plutarch (*Lives*), the first number is the result for that specific work/portion of the corpus alone; the numbers in parentheses refer to their entire corpus, if different.

	pothos	***pothein***	***potheinos***
Herodotus	2	4	0
Thucydides	1	0	1
Xenophon	2	4	0
Plato	18	21	2
Polybius	0	0	1
Diodorus Siculus	2	2	3
Dionysius	25 (26)	10 (17)	1
Josephus	7 (18)	4 (24)	1 (5)
Plutarch	28 (49)	65 (130)	9 (17)
Dio of Prusa	5	4	0
Arrian	17	6	0
Appian	8	4	0
Aelius Aristides	1	22	3
Lucian	4	23	7
Cassius Dio	2	20	0
Herodian	8	7	2

Further Notes:
– Xenophon: historical works and *Cyropaedia* (*potheinos* occurs 4× in other works)
– Arrian: *Anabasis* and *Indica*
– Appian and Cassius Dio report on events involving a eunuch by the name of Potheinos; those results are not included in this table.

Appendix 2: *pothos* in Herodian

Translations are those of the author; the text is taken from Lucarini (2005), with diacritical marks corrected as necessary (on which see Letta [2012]).

1. 1.4.5 (Marcus Aurelius speaking)

   μάλιστα δὲ ἐκεῖνοι ἐς ἀρχῆς μῆκος ἀκινδύνως ἤλασαν, ὅσοι μὴ φόβον ἐξ ὠμότητος, **πόθον** δὲ <ἐκ> τῆς αὐτῶν χρηστότητος ταῖς τῶν ἀρχομένων ψυχαῖς ἐνέσταξαν.

   Those (rulers) especially went on to a long reign without danger, however many of them instilled in the hearts of their subjects not fear arising from cruelty, but longing arising from their own goodness.

2. 1.4.7 (death of Marcus Aurelius)

   ὁ μὲν οὖν νυκτός τε καὶ ἡμέρας ἐπιβιώσας μιᾶς ἀνεπαύσατο, **πόθον** τε τοῖς καθ' αὐτὸν ἀνθρώποις ἐγκαταλιπὼν ἀρετῆς τε ἀίδιον μνήμην εἰς τὸν ἐσόμενον αἰῶνα.

   And so he lived through the night and another day before he passed away, having left behind a longing in the people of his own time and an eternal memory of his virtue in the ages to come.

3. 1.6.3 (Commodus corrupted by the imperial servants)

   αἰφνιδίως δὲ καλέσας τοὺς φίλους **ποθεῖν** ἔλεγε τὴν πατρίδα·

   He suddenly summoned his advisors and said that he longed for home.

4. 1.6.4 (Pompeianus speaking to Commodus)

   ποθεῖν μέν σε, ἔφη, τέκνον καὶ δέσποτα, τὴν πατρίδα εἰκός· καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ τῶν οἴκοι ὁμοίᾳ ἐπιθυμίᾳ ἑαλώκαμεν. ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐνταῦθα προυργιαίτερα ὄντα καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπείγοντα ἐπέχει τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν.

   "It is reasonable for you," he said, "my child and master, to long for your homeland; for we, too (οἱ φίλοι) have been gripped by a similar desire for those back home. However, our business here, being more important and more pressing, checks our desire."

5. 1.6.5 (Pompeianus speaking)

   θάρσος γὰρ ἐμβαλοῦμεν τοῖς βαρβάροις, οὐκ ἐπανόδου **πόθον** ἀλλὰ φυγὴν καὶ δέος ἡμῶν καταγνοῦσι.

   For we will instill courage in the barbarians, who will accuse us not of a longing to return (home), but rather of flight and fear.

6. 1.7.2 (Commodus' return to Rome)

   ἀνύσας δὲ τὴν ὁδοιπορίαν ὁ Κόμοδος μετὰ νεανικῆς σπουδῆς καὶ διαδραμὼν τὰς ἐν μέσῳ πόλεις, ὑποδεχθείς τε πανταχοῦ βασιλικῶς καὶ δήμοις ἑορτάζουσιν ἐπιφανείς, ἀσπαστός τε καὶ **ποθεινὸς** πᾶσιν ὤφθη.

   Completing the journey with youthful eagerness and passing through the cities along the way, Commodus was received everywhere with royal fanfare and appeared before festive crowds; all found the sight of him welcome and longed-for.

7. 1.7.4 (Commodus' return to Rome)

ἐπόθουν γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀληθεῖ ψυχῆς διαθέσει ἅτε παρ' αὐτοῖς γεννηθέντα τε καὶ τραφέντα καὶ ἄνωθεν ἐκ τριγονίας βασιλέα τε καὶ εὐπατρίδην ὄντα Ῥωμαίων.

(The senate and the people of Rome) longed for him with true, heart-felt affection, because he had been born and raised in their midst and was an emperor of the fourth generation and a Roman patrician.

8. 1.12.4 (Cleander, plotting to gain power)

ἀθροίζων δὲ χρήματα καὶ πλεῖστον σῖτον συνωνούμενος καὶ ἀποκλείων, ἤλπιζε προσάξεσθαι τόν τε δῆμον καὶ τὸ στρατόπεδον, εἰ πρῶτον ἐν σπάνει τῶν ἐπιτηδείων καταστήσας ἐπιδόσεσι λαμπραῖς ἁλόντας **πόθῳ** τοῦ χρειώδους προσαγάγοιτο.

He gathered money, bought a large amount of grain, and cut off the supply; he hoped that he would bring under his power the people and the soldiers, if first having created a shortage of supplies he could win over with bountiful distributions those who had been captured by a desire for necessities.

9. 1.13.4 (Commodus summons Cleander)

ἐλθόντα δ' αὐτὸν συλληφθῆναι κελεύει καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀποτεμὼν δόρατί τε ἐπιμήκει ἐγκαταπήξας ἐκπέμπει τερπνὸν καὶ**ποθεινὸν** τῷ δήμῳ θέαμα.

When he arrived, he [Commodus] ordered that he be arrested, and having cut off his head and affixed it upon a long spear he sent it out as a pleasing and long-desired spectacle for the people.

10. 2.1.9 (Laetus speaking to Pertinax)

ἡμεῖς δὲ ἥκομέν σοι τὴν βασιλείαν ἐγχειριοῦντες, ὃν ἴσμεν προύχοντα ἐν τῇ συγκλήτῳ βουλῇ σωφροσύνῃ βίου μεγέθει τε ἀξιώματος καὶ ἡλικίας σεμνότητι **ποθούμενόν** τε καὶ τιμώμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου·

We have come in order to entrust the empire to you, whom we know to be foremost in the Senate due to the moderation of your life and, on account of the greatness of your dignity and reverence for your age, longed for and honored by the people.

11. 2.5.1 (praetorians under Pertinax long for Commodus)

τοιαύτης δὲ εὐμοιρίας καὶ εὐταξίας κατεχούσης τὸν βίον μόνοι οἱ δορυφόροι, ἀσχάλλοντες μὲν ἐπὶ τοῖς παροῦσι, **ποθοῦντες** δὲ τὰς ἐπὶ τῆς προγεγενημένης τυραννίδος ἁρπαγάς τε καὶ βίας ἔν τε ἀσωτίαις καὶ κραιπάλαις, ἐβουλεύσαντο ἀποσκευάσασθαι τὸν Περτίνακα [...]

Although the life (of the empire) held such a state of happiness and good order, the praetorians alone – vexed at the current situation and longing for the plundering and violence of the previous tyranny amidst riotous, drunken behavior – plotted to rid themselves of Pertinax [...]

12. 2.7.9 (Niger)

φύσει δὲ κοῦφον τὸ Σύρων ἔθνος, ἐς καινοτομίαν τε τῶν καθεστηκότων ἐπιτήδειον. ἐνῆν δέ τις αὐτοῖς καὶ**πόθος** τοῦ Νίγρου, ἠπίως τε ἄρχοντος ἅπασι, τὰ πλεῖστά τε αὐτοῖς συμπανηγυρίζοντος.

The Syrian race is fickle by nature and ready to overturn established rule. But they also had a certain longing for Niger, who had been a mild governor for everyone, and who had attended most of their festivals with them.

13. 3.2.5 (Septimius Severus)

αὐτὸς δ' ἅμα τῷ τῆς Ῥώμης ἐπιβῆναι συλλαβὼν πάντας τοὺς τῶν ἡγεμόνων ἢ τῶν ὁτιδὴ πραττόντων κατὰ τὴν ἀνατολὴν καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν Ἀσίαν, φρουρᾷ δοὺς εἶχε σὺν αὐτῷ, ὅπως ἢ **πόθῳ** τῆς τῶν παίδων σωτηρίας οἱ ἡγεμόνες τὰ Νίγρου προδιδοῖεν, ἢ μένοντες ἐπὶ τῆς πρὸς ἐκεῖνον εὐνοίας φθάσωσί τι κακὸν παθεῖν διὰ τῆς τῶν παίδων ἀναιρέσεως ἢ δράσωσιν αὐτοί.

Upon his arrival at Rome, he seized all the (children) of the governors and office-holders in the East and throughout Asia, and held them under guard with him, so that either Niger's generals might betray his cause out of desire for the safety of their children, or, if they remained loyal to Niger, they might suffer some harm through the destruction of their children before they themselves might do him (Severus) any harm.

14. 4.8.6 (Caracalla)

ἐκεῖ τε ὑποδεχθεὶς πολυτελῶς καὶ διατρίψας χρόνου τινὸς ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν ἐστέλλετο, πρόφασιν ποιούμενος **ποθεῖν** τὴν ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ κτισθεῖσαν πόλιν, καὶ τῷ θεῷ χρήσασθαι ὃν ἐκεῖνοι σέβουσιν ἐξαιρέτως·

After he had been lavishly received and spent some time there (Antioch), he set out for Alexandria, pretending that he longed for the city founded by Alexander, and to consult the god whom they especially revered.

15. 5.2.3 (Macrinus)

τοσοῦτον δὲ ἥμαρτεν ὅσον μὴ διέλυσεν εὐθέως τὰ στρατόπεδα καὶ ἑκάστους εἰς τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἀπέπεμψεν, αὐτός τε εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην **ποθοῦσαν** ἠπείχθη, τοῦ δήμου ἑκάστοτε καλοῦντος μεγάλαις βοαῖς [...]

He erred only in this – that he did not immediately disband his army and send every man to his own home, and that he himself did not make haste for Rome which was longing (for him), the people continually calling with great shouts [...]

16. 6.4.2 (Alexander Severus leaves Rome for the East)

[...] παραπεμφθείς τε ὑπὸ τῆς συγκλήτου καὶ πάντος τοῦ δήμου, τῆς Ῥώμης ἀπῆρεν, ἐπιστρεφόμενος ἀεὶ πρὸς τὴν πόλιν καὶ δακρύων. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τῶν δημοτῶν ἦν τις ὃς ἀδακρυτὶ παρέπεμπεν αὐτόν· **πόθον** γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ τῷ πλήθει ἐμπεποιήκει ἀνατραφείς τε ὑπ' αὐτῶν καὶ μετρίως ἄρξας τοσούτων ἐτῶν.

[...] and being escorted by the senate and the entire populace, he set out from Rome, constantly turning back toward the city and crying. Nor was there anyone among the people who escorted him without tears; for he had implanted in the masses a longing for himself, having been brought up under them and having ruled mildly for so many years.

17. 7.5.5 (a young man urges Gordian to claim the throne)

εἰ μὲν οὖν τὰ παρόντα ἕλοιο, πολλὰ τὰ ἐφοδία ἐς ἀγαθὰς ἐλπίδας, τό τε Μαξιμίνου παρὰ πᾶσι μῖσος, **πόθος** τε τυραννίδος ὠμῆς ἀπαλλάξεως, καὶ ἐν ταῖς προγενομέναις πράξεσιν εὐδοκίμησις, ἔν τε συγκλήτῳ καὶ τῷ Ῥωμαίων δήμῳ γνῶσις οὐκ ἄσημος καὶ τιμὴ ἔνδοξος ἀεί.

If you choose the current (danger), there are many means of providing good hopes: the universal hatred of Maximinus and desire to be rid of a cruel tyranny; your repute in previous offices, your not unmarked recognition among the senate and people of Rome, and your consistently high level of honor.