

A Study of Representation in AD 193 – 197  
*Is the 'Year of the Five Emperors' a period of crisis?*

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## Introduction

On December 31, AD 192, the Roman Emperor Commodus was murdered. What followed was a difficult period, in which four other rulers would die before a fifth would gain full control over the Empire, filled with unrest and strife. The death of Commodus represented a major threat for the stability of the empire. This sentiment is perhaps most aptly described by Grainger, who writes on the dangers of Roman succession: 'A change of government is the most dangerous time for the stability of any state, apart from a physical invasion'.<sup>1</sup> While Grainger's book mostly talks about Nerva and the succession of AD 96 - 99, it does make an intriguing point in saying that succession following assassination usually ends up in something that we can call a 'crisis'. This happened in 96 - 99, and also after the death of Nero in AD 69, in the 'Year of the Four Emperors'. The question is if such a period of crisis also happened after the death of Commodus.

The aim of this thesis is to determine whether the period of AD 193 - 197 should be a period of crisis, and if it is warranted to state that the Empire was thrown into major instability, which would have disrupted the day to day life of its inhabitants. The main method to achieving this goal is to closely examine the representation of the Emperors between 193 - 197. The issue of representation was very important for any self-respecting Emperor: it served as the communication between the Emperor and all his subjects: the senate, the legions and the general populace of Rome. It was a constant game of trying to please everyone, to reach some sort of consensus about the Emperor, and conveys both how the Emperor would present himself and how he was represented by others.<sup>2</sup> One might think that in times of unrest and civil war, certain ways of representation might be changed, or adapted, to better suit the context in question. This thesis will therefore give a close examination of the representation of the five Emperors in the period of AD 193 to 197: Pertinax, Didius Julianus, Pescennius Niger, Clodius Albinus and Septimius Severus.

The aim is to see if these Emperors were represented in a different way than Emperors in other periods. Before this period, there was one of relative stability and peace; the age of the Antonines, the representations of the five Emperors will be compared to that of some of the Antonine Emperors, to see if there is any difference in the ways they were represented. Since both sides of representation - that is, both how a person represented himself and how he was represented by others - are important to the larger image of an Emperor, both these sides have merit to be examined. This thesis will thus focus on two sides of representation: the representation of the five Emperors by others will be examined through the ancient historiographers that have written about them: Cassius Dio, Herodian and the *Historia Augusta*.<sup>3</sup> The self-representation, on the other hand, will be discussed through coinage, which could be a powerful propaganda tool for an Emperor.<sup>4</sup>

Before this, however, it might be prudent to get a good sense of all the events that happened between the death of Commodus, at the very end of AD 192, and the final victory of Septimius Severus in 197. Therefore, the first chapter will provide a chronological narrative of everything that had occurred, using both historical sources and secondary literature to be as accurate as possible. The second chapter will then focus on representation of the Emperors in the works of Cassius Dio, Herodian and the *Historia Augusta*. The third chapter will detail the numismatic representation of the Emperors, and a concluding chapter will compare these representations to see if they differ both from each other and the way Emperors before them were represented.

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<sup>1</sup> Grainger, J.D., *Nerva and the Roman Succession Crisis of AD 96 - 99*, London, 2003, xxv

<sup>2</sup> Seelentag, G., 'Imperial Representation and Reciprocation: The Case of Trajan', in *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 107, No. 1, 2011, 77.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. chapter 2

<sup>4</sup> Cf. chapter 3.

## The literary tradition

In attempting to examine the representation between 193 – 197, this thesis will also attempt to view the period as its own, independent sequence of events. This has not often happened before. Usually, the period is discussed in the context of Severus' reign, giving little attention to the other rulers. Still, even if there is only a little bit of information on each other Emperor, it might be useful for the narrative in this thesis. Thus, it seems prudent to make an inventory of what kind of literature is available on this both the period and its Emperors.

In the early twentieth century, there was an interesting discussion on the exact dates of the events in the civil wars between Septimius Severus and his opponents, Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus. Platnauer, in 1918, discusses the date of Niger's ultimate defeat by Severus;<sup>5</sup> in the same year, he would also write a biography of Severus.<sup>6</sup> It features separate chapters about Severus' military business and home administration. Harrer, in an article from 1920, contends with Platnauer's view by making his own chronology of Niger's revolt, complementing the historical sources with lots of inscriptions to make a seemingly more accurate timeline.<sup>7</sup> In 1921 a book was published by Hasebroek about the life of Septimius Severus, who uses not only literary sources and inscriptions but also coins to weave a narrative of the emperor from his proclamation to his death.<sup>8</sup> His book is part of the same discussion as the works of Platnauer and Harrer, giving its own representation of the events of the civil wars. In 1928, Van Sickle writes about Clodius Albinus, going through the legal details of his deals with Severus and asserting that the fact that Albinus was made Caesar did not necessarily mean that he had also attained the powers that one would think come with the title.<sup>9</sup> An essay on the iconography of Albinus has been written by Balty, which will probably be useful to keep in mind when talking about legitimation and representation.<sup>10</sup>

In 1951, Woodward examines the coinage of Pertinax, giving an in-depth picture of the Emperor's mints.<sup>11</sup> In 1969, Birley wrote about the events that transpired in the context of a coup, examining the murder of Commodus and what followed from the perspective of the co-conspirators against him. By combining the information from the main literary sources with information from inscriptions, he gives some interesting insights. He asserts, for instance, that the death of Commodus was not some *ad-hoc* action, but rather something that had been planned for months in advance, and that the goal was to put Pertinax on the throne.<sup>12</sup>

In 1977, Zedelius published his research into the coinages of Pertinax, Julianus, Niger and Albinus, in which he gives a good overview on how useful coins could be used for legitimation and propaganda<sup>13</sup>. Bland, Burnett and Bendall, in 1987, discuss the mints of Niger through the finds of

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<sup>5</sup> Platnauer, M., 'On the Date of Defeat of C. Pescennius Niger at Issus', in *Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 8, 1918, 146 - 153

<sup>6</sup> Platnauer, M., *The Life and Reign of the Emperor Lucius Septimius Severus*, Rome, 1918; reprinted in 1965.

<sup>7</sup> Harrer, G.A., 'The Chronology of the Revolt of Pescennius Niger', in *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 10, 1920, 155 - 168

<sup>8</sup> Hasebroek, J., *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Septimius Severus*, Heidelberg, 1921

<sup>9</sup> Sickle, E. van, 'The Legal Status of Clodius Albinus in the Years 193 – 196', in *Classical Philology*, Vol. 23, 1928, 123 - 127

<sup>10</sup> Balty, J., *Essai d'iconographie de l'empereur Clodius Albinus*, Brussels, 1966

<sup>11</sup> Woodward, A.M., 'The Coinage of Pertinax', in *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society*, Sixth Series, Vol. 17, 1957, 84 - 96

<sup>12</sup> Birley, A.R., 'The Coups d'Etat of the Year 193', in *Bonner Jahrbucher des Rheinischen Landesmuseums in Bonn*, Band 169, Cologne, 1969, 247 – 280

<sup>13</sup> Zedelius, V., *Untersuchungen zur Münzprägung von Pertinax bis Clodius Albinus*, Leipzig, 1977

some aurei.<sup>14</sup> Birley would publish his seminal, in-depth biography on Severus in 1988.<sup>15</sup> In 1989, Alföldy writes about the political program of Niger, discussing the validity of literary claims, while also paying attention to his coinage.<sup>16</sup> Also in 1989, Leaning gives new insights on the life of Julianus, rebuking the negative reputation that the Emperor has.<sup>17</sup> Chausson, in 2000, uses the biographies of Julianus to reconstruct a family tree.<sup>18</sup> Appelbaum, in 2001, does something similar as Leaning, reinvestigating the assassination of Pertinax and the accession of Julianus, in an attempt to remove the negative aspects surrounding the controversy of Julianus's accession, and to make the narrative more objective.<sup>19</sup> Taylor, in 2010, incorporates the events in a narrative about usurpation in the Roman Empire, and indeed focuses the attention on Severus, discussing everything around it in the context of his rule.<sup>20</sup> Okoń, writing in 2014, centers her article on the idea that Pertinax did not know about the conspiracy, and also did not wish to ascend to the throne, immediately attempting to abdicate his newfound power to someone else.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Bland, R.F., Burnett, A.M. and Bendall, S., 'The Mints of Pescennius Niger in the Light of Some New Aurei', in *The Numismatic Chronicle*, Vol. 147, 1987, 65 - 83

<sup>15</sup> Birley, A.R., *The African Emperor. Septimius Severus*, London 1988

<sup>16</sup> Alföldy, G., *Die Krise des Römischen Reiches*, Stuttgart, 1989, 128 - 138.

<sup>17</sup> Leaning, J.B., 'Didius Julianus and his Biographer', in *Latomus*, T. 48, 1989, 548 - 565

<sup>18</sup> Chausson, F., 'De Didius Julianus aux Nummii Albini', in *MEFRA: Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, 2000, 1 - 37

<sup>19</sup> Appelbaum, A., 'Another Look at the Assassination of Pertinax and the Accession of Julianus', in *Classical Philology* 102, 2007, 198 - 207

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, T.S., *Usurpation in the Roman Empire*, 68 - 305, Connecticut, 2010

<sup>21</sup> Okoń, D., 'The Succession of Power after the Death of Commodus', Vol. 2, Book 4, in *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University*, 2014, 47 - 51.

## Chapter 1 - Events between 193 and 197.

To get a sense of the actions of each ruler in this narrative, an examination of the political maneuvers that led each of them assuming power might seem prudent. This chapter will entail a reconstruction of the events surrounding the civil wars, from the ascension of Pertinax to the final victories of Septimius Severus. A chronology of the events can serve as a reference for their deeds, which will be important for the rest of this thesis. There is some difficulty in creating a chronology, however. The three authors narrate the events surrounding Pertinax and Julianus in a relatively straightforward way. After the death of Julianus, however, the narrations become unclear; many events start to happen at the same time or in high succession. Certain scholars have attempted in the past to make a clear overview of what happened: the most important are Harrer, Platnauer and Hasebroek.<sup>22</sup> Their works might be dated, but still serve as the basis for most of what is known about this period. Therefore, they are still very useful.

### January 1 – March 28, AD 193: Commodus' death, Pertinax' ascension

On January 1, after the murder of Commodus, Pertinax was brought to the praetorians' camp, where he promised to make a donative to the soldiers, and then assumed power.<sup>23</sup> Afterwards, the Senate officially declared Pertinax Emperor, while Commodus was declared a public enemy.<sup>24</sup> As Emperor, Pertinax gained the customary titles and power. The Senate also styled him *pater patriae* and 'Chief of the Senate'.<sup>25</sup> On January 2, 193, statues of Commodus were overthrown.<sup>26</sup> On January 3, the soldiery attempted to overthrow Pertinax, who was notified by this and prevented it. As a response, he ratified every concession that Commodus had granted to soldiers and veterans, and reformed the praetorian rank. In addition to this, he reformed many decadent measures that Commodus had put in place.<sup>27</sup>

Pertinax did many things to bring order to the Empire, economically managing it and being considerate for the public welfare.<sup>28</sup> While the people loved him, the soldiers did not: he had prevented their first coup and had forbidden them to plunder or do anything else corrupt.

This soldiers' unhappiness with Pertinax probably led to a second attempted coup to remove him from the throne somewhere in 193. They chose the current consul to assume power while Pertinax was out of Rome. Pertinax managed to prevent this as well; the consul was banished. As a response, one of the praetorian guards started to murder many soldiers, acting as if Pertinax told him to do so as acts of punishment. The soldiers, enraged, stormed the imperial palace and slayed Pertinax on March 28.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For their works cf. notes 5 to 8.

<sup>23</sup> CD 74.1.2; HA 8.4.5-6.

<sup>24</sup> CD 74.1.4-5; HA. 8.4.11.

<sup>25</sup> CD 74.5.1; HA 8.5.4-7. Translations of Dio's *Historia Romana* from Cary (1927).

<sup>26</sup> HA 8.4.3-4.

<sup>27</sup> HA. 8.6.6 – 8.8.11.

<sup>28</sup> CD 74.5.1 – 5.

<sup>29</sup> The HA, in 8.15.6-7: 'he ... was killed on the fifth day before the Kalends of April in the consulship of Falco and Clarus'. While Magie (1921), 347 states that he died on March 26, more recent publications – for instance, Franke (2006) and Hornblower and Spawforth (2003), place it on March 28 instead, which seems to be the currently accepted date.

### March 28 – June 1, AD 193: Pertinax' death, Didius Julianus' ascension

After the death of Pertinax, the praetorians wanted to proclaim Titus Flavius Claudius Sulpicianus, his father in law, as emperor. The ceremony was interrupted by the senator Didius Julianus. He offered the soldiers more money than Sulpicianus did, promising to also restore Commodus' honors.<sup>30</sup> These promises, along with the soldier's fears that Sulpicianus might exact vengeance on them for the murder of Pertinax, led to Julianus' proclamation as Emperor. Afterwards, the Senate would also acknowledge him as Emperor.

On March 29, it became clear that the people did not like him. They called him a criminal, assaulted him with rocks,<sup>31</sup> and called for Pescennius Niger, governor of Syria, to free them from Julianus' rule.<sup>32</sup> It was a time filled with unrest in Rome, but in the meantime the news of Pertinax' death spread across the Empire. It led to the proclamation of Septimius Severus as Emperor, probably on April 9, in Pannonia.<sup>33</sup> Backed by his province, he began to send out messages to the surrounding provinces, and to all governors in allied northern regions, convinced all of them to join his side.

Around the same time as the proclamation of Severus as Emperor – probably sometime later –, Niger was also proclaimed Emperor in Syria.<sup>34</sup> For unknown reasons – possibly due to him being decadent and perhaps lazy –,<sup>35</sup> Niger neglected to set out for Rome, instead staying in Antioch. Severus did move towards Rome, however, probably starting around May 1.<sup>36</sup> He eventually crossed the Italian frontier in the Alps.<sup>37</sup>

When the news arrived in Rome, Julianus declared Severus a public enemy, and started to build his defense. While his councilors advised him to march to the Alps and barricade them, Julianus instead locked himself up in Rome, turning it into a military camp,<sup>38</sup> where weapons were produced, and men and animals trained for war. At the same time, he had sent out legates to attempt to convince Severus' army to defect to his side. When this failed, Julianus sent out assassins to murder him. Yet again, this failed.<sup>39</sup> Because the Italians at the frontier had probably opened their gates to welcome Severus, he managed to capture Ravenna without any problem.<sup>40</sup> This most likely took place on May 16.<sup>41</sup> The capture of Ravenna had some large consequences. Firstly, since the Adriatic fleet was stationed there, Severus now had access to ships. Second, he could now reach Rome quickly.

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<sup>30</sup> Her. 2.6.10; HA 9.2.6-7.

<sup>31</sup> CD 74.13.3-4; HA 9.4.2-5.

<sup>32</sup> CD 74.13.5; Her. 2.7.3.

<sup>33</sup> Bersanetti (1949), 79 explains that the *Feriale Durianum* dates that Severus' proclamation on April 9, which has been generally accepted as truth (i.e. Campbell (2005) and Franke (cf.note 29)), refuting the HA reading *idibus Aprilibus*, which would be April 13; cf. Platnauer (1965), 61 n.1.

<sup>34</sup> Hasebroek, 19 – 20 states that Severus was proclaimed Emperor first, and Niger's proclamation must have happened very quickly afterwards. Whittaker (1969), 193 n. 2, however, notes that, based on the speed of news, it must have happened in mid-April. Campbell, 2 states that Niger's proclamation happened late-April. Since Hasebroek is the most detailed in his research, it might seem prudent to prefer his dating.

<sup>35</sup> Her. 2.8.9-10. All translations of Herodian's text from Whittaker (1969).

<sup>36</sup> Hasebroek, 18.

<sup>37</sup> Her. 2.11.3

<sup>38</sup> Yet Platnauer, 63 – 64 states that 'certain authorities' have mentioned a battle at the Milvian bridge, though according to him this is probably fake, since it is not transmitted in more 'accurate' sources, i.e. Dio

<sup>39</sup> CD 74.17.1-2; HA 10.5.5 – 10.5.11

<sup>40</sup> CD 74.16.4 – 74.17.1; Her. 2.11.3 – 2.11.9

<sup>41</sup> Whittaker, 223 n.2.

When news reached Julianus that Severus was near the city and some of his troops were already inside its walls, he probably called the Senate together to devise a plan to let Severus share his throne, which might have happened on May 21.<sup>42</sup> The Senate dropped their support of Julianus when they heard Severus rejected the proposal and had arrived at the gates of Rome. A meeting was led by the consul-suffect, in contempt of Julianus. He was no longer recognized as a valid ruler, and in such a case consuls were to take over the general affairs of the Empire. At this meeting imperial power was granted to Severus, and Julianus was sentenced to death. A delegation was sent out to Severus, to convey the news to him, while at the same time a military tribune was sent to Julianus to kill him.<sup>43</sup> Julianus was murdered on June 1, after which Severus thus held the power in Rome.<sup>44</sup>

### June 1, AD 193 and onward: Septimius Severus proclaimed as Emperor

While in Rome, Severus spoke to the senate to have the fallen Pertinax deified. He would use the reign of Pertinax as a model for his own, took Pertinax' in his imperial title<sup>45</sup> and erected a shrine to him. Severus organized a ceremonial funeral in Pertinax' honor, through which he was made immortal. Severus also made distributions of money to the people and handed over a large donative to the troops.<sup>46</sup> In order to prepare for the war against Niger, Severus started to collect more troops for his army from Italian cities and troops that were left in Pannonia, and gathered a large naval fleet. Severus would need a large army to be able to battle his way through Asia Minor.<sup>47</sup> Troops were sent out to Africa to prevent Niger from holding Libya and Egypt.<sup>48</sup>

### July 1, AD 193 – Spring or Autumn, AD 194: War between Pescennius Niger and Septimius Severus

Around July 1, Severus set out to the east of the Empire.<sup>49</sup> There, Niger had begun preparations after hearing of the events in Rome. His troops consisted of military camps in the east, levies, and many the lower class in Antioch.<sup>50</sup> Niger had the passes in the Taurus Mountains, between Cappadocia and Cilicia, barricaded; they were an important barrier. He also had troops capture Byzantium and Perinthus.<sup>51</sup> As a response to this, Severus' troops marched to Cyzicus. Niger's military commander, Asellius Aemilianus, led a force there as well, comprising of his own locally levied troops and troops of Niger's army. Both armies met and fought at Cyzicus. This battle took place somewhere in

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<sup>42</sup> *HA* 9.6.3; Whittaker states that the news of Ravenna's capture would have reached Rome in about five days.

<sup>43</sup> *Her.* 2.12.6-7.

<sup>44</sup> This seems to be the accepted date, based on Dio's calculations; c.f. Harrer (1920), 165; Hasebroek, 18; Platnauer, 65; Campbell, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Though this might have happened earlier; cf *Her.* 2.10.1.

<sup>46</sup> *CD* 75.4.1 – 74.5.5; *Her.* 2.14.3 – 4.

<sup>47</sup> *Her.* 2.14.6-7.

<sup>48</sup> *HA* 10.8.8.

<sup>49</sup> Platnauer, 84 asserts that Severus stayed in Rome until at least June 27. Most secondary sources state that he left Rome in early July; *HA* 10.8.8-9 states that he left 'within thirty days after his arrival', which would be on July 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Her.* 3.1.3-4

<sup>51</sup> *HA* 10.8.12-13. While *CD* 75.6.3 states that Niger did not capture Perinthus; Platnauer, 81 states this is probably false and that he did capture it, as well as the northern coast of the Propontis.



December 193.<sup>52</sup> Niger's troops suffered heavy casualties; Aemilianus was killed.<sup>53</sup> Niger's forces broke and fled, most of them hoping to cross the Taurus Mountains where they would be safe.

Niger himself probably took most of his army to Chalcedon, marching south towards Nicaea. Severus's army advanced towards Prusa, from there heading out to Cius.<sup>54</sup> A new battle broke out somewhere between the cities, most likely on January 1, 194.<sup>55</sup> In the beginning, Severus' troops, led by his general Tiberius Claudius Candidus, had the upper hand, since they were fighting on the hills and thus had the upper ground. The tide of the battle shifted, when Niger himself appeared on the battlefield. For a short while, he managed to repel Severus' army, but Candidus managed to lead an eventual victory. Niger sent reinforcements to fortify the Taurus Mountains, and went to Antioch himself to rebuild his army. Because he left Asia Minor, however, Severus's troops could conquer it.

Afterwards they probably marched through into Cappadocia to follow Niger's troops.<sup>56</sup> They needed to besiege the guarded passes into Cappadocia, which was difficult, as they were narrow and had natural barricades. While this was happening, some cities that had supported Niger and now favored Severus rebelled. Niger who sent troops to destroy both cities. Severus' troops, still fighting in Cappadocia, could eventually break through because of rain and snow washing away the fortifications. Niger's troops, now undefended, fled, giving Severus' troops passage.<sup>57</sup> Niger, having collected another big army, marched out to meet them. The two armies eventually met near Issus, either in the mountains, or near the bay,<sup>58</sup> most likely somewhere between May and October of 194.<sup>59</sup> Severus' troops overcame those of Niger, who escaped to Antioch. It was captured a short time later, which led to Niger fleeing from there as well. He was caught by Severus' troops and murdered, ending the civil war. Cities, groups and individuals that supported Niger were punished.<sup>60</sup>

After the death of Niger, Severus started to besiege Byzantium. The siege lasted some two years; the city fell somewhere in late 195.<sup>61</sup> In the meantime the Syrian city of Nisibis was attacked by the Osrhoeni, the Adiabeni and the Arabians, who had supported Niger. Severus campaigned into Mesopotamia in the spring of 195, which led to the surrender of the Arabians and Adiabeni shortly after. He annexed the kingdom of the Osrhoeni and installed a governor.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Magie (1950), 1539 states that the battle occurred in late autumn or early winter of 193, since Severus' third acclamation as *Imperator*, gained for the next battle, that of Nicaea, happened somewhere before January 31, 194. Harrer, 161 however mentions that the battle occurred close to that of Nicaea, since the second acclamation of *Imperator*, for the battle of Cyzicus, was also in January, 194. Based on the speed of news between Asia Minor and Rome, Harrer posits that the battle for Nicaea happened around New Year's Day, 194, placing the battle for Cyzicus in late December.

<sup>53</sup> CD 75.6.4; Her. 3.2.2

<sup>54</sup> CD 75.6.4 - 5; Her. 3.2.6 - 10; cf. Platnauer, 86.

<sup>55</sup> See note 38.

<sup>56</sup> CD 75.7.1.; Her. 3.3.1.

<sup>57</sup> Her. 3.3.6 - 8. Harrer, 166 uses information on the weather in the Taurus Mountains to place this somewhere in spring of AD 194. Magie (1950), 1539 seems to accept this.

<sup>58</sup> Her. 3.4.2.

<sup>59</sup> Harrer, 167 - 168 dates it between February and October, based on the dating of certain festivals and on Severus' fourth acclamation of *Imperator* and third of *Tribunicia Potestas*. Magie (1950), 1540 notes, however, that the Taurus passes were usually blocked by snow until April; considering this, he reckons that 'the battle can hardly have taken place before May'.

<sup>60</sup> CD 75.7.1 - 9.4; Her. 3.4.1 - 9.

<sup>61</sup> CD 17.5.12 - 1 - 14.6. Birley, 119 places the date in late 195 based on Severus' eighth acclamation of *Imperator*, for the fall of Byzantium, happening late 195, early 196.

<sup>62</sup> CD 75.15.1 - 17.3; Birley, 115 - 6.

Shortly after having been victorious over the barbarians, Severus styled himself the son of Marcus Aurelius, and renamed his son after Aurelius – he was henceforth known as Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. He also granted his son with the title of Caesar, somewhere in spring of 195.<sup>63</sup> This act conflicted with Severus' earlier proclamation of Clodius Albinus as his Caesar: when Severus was named Emperor in Pannonia, he had probably asked Albinus to be his Caesar.

Severus suspected that Albinus would also march for the throne after the death of Pertinax, and in this way would eliminate him as competition.<sup>64</sup> Severus breaking his pact with Albinus can be seen as him quietly declaring war; Albinus made this declaration official.<sup>65</sup> He had himself proclaimed Emperor, while Severus had declared him a public enemy, most likely at the end of 195, and began to march back towards the west.<sup>66</sup> He returned to Rome somewhere in 196, staying there at least until possibly December of that year, before heading off to Gaul.<sup>67</sup>

### December, AD 196 – February 19, AD 197: War between Clodius Albinus and Septimius Severus

Severus arrived in Gaul most likely in early 197, where his generals had been fighting Albinus' troops and suffering losses.<sup>68</sup> He first met Albinus at Tinurtium, sixty miles north of Lugdunum.<sup>69</sup> His troops managed to push back Albinus' army to the outskirts of Lugdunum, where the final battle took place, probably on February 19.<sup>70</sup> While the left wing of Albinus' army was defeated, the right wing managed to ambush Severus' troops, sending them into disarray.<sup>71</sup> Severus came rushing in with the praetorians to assist his men, but fell off his horse. His men, thinking he had perished, almost proclaimed one of Severus' generals as Emperor, who only came marching in with his troops when he heard Severus had fallen.<sup>72</sup> Severus, was still alive, however, and urged his troops to fight back. He fought back against Albinus' forces, which eventually broke and fled. Severus' army followed and killed them on their way to Lugdunum, which was ravaged and burned to the ground.<sup>73</sup> Albinus had fled to a house near the Rhine and died, either by suicide,<sup>74</sup> or by execution after being taken prisoner.<sup>75</sup> Thus ended the last civil war, leaving Severus as the sole ruler of the Roman Empire.

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<sup>63</sup> *HA* 10.10.3 – 5; Birley, 122.

<sup>64</sup> *CD* 74.15.1 – 2; *Her.* 2.9.12 – 2.10.1.

<sup>65</sup> *Her.* 3.5.4 – 8; *HA* 12.7.1 – 8.4.

<sup>66</sup> *Her.* 3.6.8; Birley, 121 – 22 .

<sup>67</sup> Birley, 123 – 124 states that the last evidence of Severus in Rome were receipts from December 29, and that he must have traveled to Gaul 'when it was still winter', early in 197.

<sup>68</sup> *CD* 76.6.2; *Her.* 3.7.1; *HA* 10.10.7, 12.9.1.

<sup>69</sup> Birley, 125.

<sup>70</sup> *Hist. Aug.* 10.9.2 – 3 for Tinurtium; *Hist. Aug.* 10.11.7 and Birley, 125 for Lugdunum.

<sup>71</sup> *CD* 76.6.2 – 5; *Her.* 3.7.2 – 3.

<sup>72</sup> *CD* 76.6.6 – 8; *Her.* 3.7.3 – 4; *Hist. Aug.* 10.9.2 – 3.

<sup>73</sup> *Her.* 3.7.6 – 7.

<sup>74</sup> *CD* 76.7.3; *HA* 12.9.4.

<sup>75</sup> *Her.* 3.7.7; *HA* 12.9.4.

## Chapter 2 – Textual Representation

In this chapter, the textual representation of the five Emperors will be examined. A successful discussion of how the Emperors in this thesis are represented in the historical texts depends mainly on two matters. The first is the political agenda of the authors that wrote the texts, which heavily influences the way different authors would write about a single person. The second, which is perhaps the most important, is the idea of an ‘ideal’ ruler that had been developed in historiography over the years.

This chapter will examine the textual representation of the five Emperors. Cassius Dio, Herodian and the author of the *Historia Augusta* have all written in the middle to later periods of the Roman Empire, and thus belong to a long tradition of both historiography and biography. With the evolution of this genre, one can think that there must have been some established tropes in the way authors would write about rulers. These tropes are important when discussing why these authors write the way they do about these characters.

One goal of this chapter is to see whether the discussion of these Emperors is different because of the unstable period; a large part of the events between 193 – 197 concerned two civil wars that ended with the sole rule of Septimius Severus. This civil war might have affected the representation of all the players involved. To examine this, a frame of comparison might be useful; how were Emperors represented in more peaceful times (for instance, the Antonine age)? To that end, this chapter will comprise of the following: first, the historical texts that this chapter will use will be discussed.

Afterwards, there will be a study on what makes a good ruler, which will then be used to shortly describe how the Emperors in the Antonine Period were represented in text. The above parts will be used as a background to describe the narratives on the five Emperors of 193 - 197. The two sets of representations will be compared with each other, leading into some concluding thoughts.

### The Ancient Authors

It is a fact that when one attempts to make statements about the lives of past individuals, one is constrained by documents available to him. The issue with finding usable historical documents is that manuscripts from the Roman age are usually not transmitted to us properly. As a result, many historiographical works from the past that have survived to the modern age have done so in an immensely fragmented state.

In my narrative, there are three main historiographical sources that I want to use: the works of Cassius Dio, Herodian and the *Scriptores Historia Augusta* (hereafter the *Historia Augusta*). Dio’s work, the *Historia Romana*, discusses the reigns of Commodus to Severus in some 72 chapters. Herodian’s work, the *History of the Empire from the Death of Marcus*, discusses them in 43 chapters. The *Historia Augusta* finishes in 94 chapters. The works themselves are not without their problems.

### Cassius Dio

Cassius Dio is probably the most important source for 193 - 197. As senator under Commodus, praetor under Pertinax and consul under Septimius Severus, he was witness to a lot of the events of the period. While a lot of his work has survived – books thirty-six to sixty, describing the events from 69 BC – AD 46, as well as the second-to-last book, have been transmitted almost completely –, a large portion of it has been fragmented or lost. The first thirty-five books are fragmented, and

books sixty-one to eighty have been lost. Their contents, however, have survived through epitomes written by the Byzantine *epitomator* Xiphilinos.<sup>76</sup>

Dio is mostly used in modern historiography to prove a very specific statement or fact. In general, non-historiographical literature the opinion on Dio's work is divided. Some question the author's credibility and historical accuracy, and thus advice caution in approaching his text. Others praise the work, as it is considered one of the greatest authorities on the reign of Augustus.<sup>77</sup>

Kemezis calls Dio a 'perspectible' narrator: he does not give made-up stories, nor does he give a single, unproblematic, factual story. He delights in giving different versions of stories, pulling his information from many different – unnamed – sources. Kemezis theorizes that Dio would have made use of public records, oral traditions and witness statements.

When using anecdotes, Dio would only include the one that 'most clearly indicates the character of the person involved of whatever is most significant'. This generally means that only the most spectacular or scandalous stories get told. Kemezis seems to imply that Dio cared more about controversies than in historical accuracy.<sup>78</sup>

This might have something to do with Dio's influences. Fomin explains that he was greatly inspired by the Second Sophistic, which focused on rhetoric and the imitation of important authors of Classical Athens. Historiography in the ancient world generally was indebted to this rhetoric in terms of themes, and the same goes for Dio's work. For this reason, modern historians often attempt to separate the objective facts from subjectivity, rhetorical devices and literary conventions.<sup>79</sup>

Another major influence on Dio is Thucydides. Ward describes how Dio's narrative of the Battle of Naulochus in 36 BC (49.8.5 – 11.1) 'has much in common' with the harbor battle at Syracuse, as depicted in Thucydides. This has led some to question Dio's authenticity. Other battles depicted in Dio, like the battle at Mylae in 260 BC (49.2.1 – 8.4) are also indebted to Thucydides. According to Ward, this is a rhetorical move on Dio's part: he would prefer to be entertaining over being historically accurate.<sup>80</sup>

This would fit with the information that Dio was a fan of controversies; those are often the most entertaining. It might also have something to do with Dio's political bias, which, according to Hekster, is obviously seen in the text. There is a strong dichotomy in the text between the good senators – of which he himself is part – and 'the evil advisors to an incapable emperor'.<sup>81</sup> Any scandalous anecdote about one of Dio's enemies would likely have made it into his text; it was an effective way to slander them.

## Herodian

Herodian, like Cassius Dio, lived during the period he narrates in his own book. According to Hidber, this fact is used as an authority argument – Herodian would have had intimate knowledge of certain events, or would have been able to use first-hand information. He would have been able to narrate the events more accurately, allowing the story, in Herodian's eyes, to be highly

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<sup>76</sup> Kuhn-Chen, B., *Geschichtskonzeptionen griechischer Historiker im 2. Und 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, Frankfurt am Main, 2002, 131-2

<sup>77</sup> Fomin, A., *How Dio wrote history: Dio Cassius' intellectual, historical and literary techniques*, New Jersey, 2015, 2 - 4

<sup>78</sup> Kemezis, A.M., *The Roman past in the age of the Severans: Cassius Dio, Philostratus and Herodian*, Michigan, 2006, 64 - 71

<sup>79</sup> Fomin, 8

<sup>80</sup> Ward, J.S., *Watching History Unfold: The Uses of Viewing in Cassius Dio, Herodian and the Historia Augusta*, New York, 2011, 27 - 28

<sup>81</sup> Hekster, O., *Commodus. An Emperor at the Crossroads*, Nijmegen, 2002, 5

historically accurate. Herodian thus presents himself as a reliable narrator and an objectional author.<sup>82</sup>

Hidber does point out that some modern critics have called the work highly unreliable, even labelling it a novel. Herodian's work does seem to feature a high degree of subjectivity; the narration is highly selective. Hidber gives Herodian's reason for this: he only recalls the most important and conclusive of an emperor's deeds, and will not exaggerate to flatter them, nor will he leave out anything which is worth saying.<sup>83</sup>

Bekker-Nielsen recalls how, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, Herodian was considered one of the best historians, but by the end of the twentieth century, had become seen as an uninspired '*Mann ohne Eigenschaften*'. Herodian is considered a "'historian of last resort", to be consulted only where all the other sources fall silent'.<sup>84</sup>

Herodian has often been compared to Cassius Dio, since some of the literary techniques they use can be compared. Like Dio, Herodian was inspired by the works of Thucydides and the Second Sophistic. Scholars usually prefer Dio over Herodian, but Bekker-Nielsen also ascribes some positive attributes to the latter; where Dio is a better speechwriter, Herodian is more skillful in narrating past events. His narrative builds up suspense and is backed by visual images, leading to 'compact, self-contained' historical scenes. While Herodian is good in showing us how certain events happened, however, he fails in explaining *why* they happened or how they connect to other events.<sup>85</sup>

Kemezis sees Herodian's narrative style as a literary tactic to paint an idealized literary world. Herodian lines up certain oppositions, like 'order against chaos' and 'unity against fragmentation'. He would be playing a literary game; raising expectations and going out of his way to defy them. In this way, he deconstructs literary themes that people in the Antonine age were used to.<sup>86</sup>

### *Historia Augusta*

There has been a lot of discussion on the background of the *Historia Augusta*. Currently scholars think that this work was written by one author, who wrote in the latter half or the last quarter of the fourth century AD.<sup>87</sup> This had been disputed in the past, where the work had been ascribed to six different authors:

This had been accepted as true until the end of the nineteenth century. Hermann Dessau, in 1889 and 1892, was the first to claim that the text was written by a single person. due to the text having similarities in style, theme and method.<sup>88</sup> His main argument was that every author used the same literary mannerisms, like puns, translated Greek verses, oracles and fake documents. Den Hengst, however, argues that the multiple-author theory should not be rejected based on the similarities of each text. Instead, one should examine the differences. One chapter would be very

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<sup>82</sup> Hidber, T., 'Chapter Twelve: Herodian', in Jong, I.J.F. de, Nünlist, R. (eds.), *Time in Ancient Greek Literature*, 2007, 197 – 211.

<sup>83</sup> Hidber, 208 – 209

<sup>84</sup> Bekker-Nielsen, T., 'Herodian on Greek and Roman failings', in Madsen, J.M., Rees, R. (eds.), *Roman Rule in Greek and Latin Writing: Double Vision*, Leiden, 2014, 224

<sup>85</sup> Bekker-Nielsen, 227 - 231

<sup>86</sup> Kemezis, A.M., *Greek Narratives of the Roman Empire under the Severans. Cassius Dio, Philostratus and Herodian*, Cambridge, 2014, 227 – 230

<sup>87</sup> Ward, 9

<sup>88</sup> Gurney, L.W and Gurney, P.J., 'The *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*: History and Controversy', in *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1998, 106 – 107

serious, while the other would be 'frivolous'; it would not make sense to say they were both written by the same person.

Den Hengst also shows that the homogeneity in each text is not as apparent as Dessau says. In Dessau's arguments certain phrases appearing in each chapter would create uniformity in style, but under some authors, these phrases only appear in one chapter and do not appear elsewhere, which would render Dessau's post moot.<sup>89</sup> However, as has been said above, currently scholars agree that the text was written by one author.

The text of the *Historia Augusta* is strange, and perhaps highly unreliable. Ward, in his 2011 book, states that the unreliability is intentional. False information is given only to be disputed later, for instance. In addition to that, the author uses the same literary practices he criticizes, and when he gives an opinion about a ruler, he contradicts it afterwards.<sup>90</sup>

This sentiment is shared by Syme, in a small 1971 work, who states that the *Historia Augusta* uses fake documents and characters, alongside scholars that have not been attested elsewhere.<sup>91</sup>

According to Reekmans in a 1997 article, the nature of the *Historia Augusta* was a consequence of the author's sense of humor. He attributed all kinds of verbal and practical jokes to his characters, and liked making fun of both his readers and whole genre of historiography. His intent might have been to bring the reader into a state of confusion.<sup>92</sup>

Daniels, in a 2013 dissertation, states that the *Historia Augusta's* eccentricities can only mean that it is meant as satire, which it demonstrates traces of. The text is filled with tropes that leave the reader in a state of *aporia*, making the text a 'fundamentally satiric' pastiche'.<sup>93</sup> The *Historia Augusta*, then, seems to be a quite interesting work: its trustworthy questionable, its contents confusing and possibly satiric. But it might still contain some 'correct' historical information, and that makes it vital for the discussion of the period 193 – 197.

## A Good Ruler

In 1981, Wallace-Hadrill would call the Emperor a 'charismatic ruler', whose power depends on the conviction of his subjects that he possesses certain exceptional skills only he could possess. These skills were essential and possibly 'divine'. The spread of the belief that the Emperor had these skills would assure that he stays in power. It could be propagated with 'imperial virtues'. These virtues that a good ruler had to possess ultimately flowed from Greek philosophical thought about kingship, and were 'canonized' in the Golden Shield that was presented to the Emperor Augustus. They were *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia* and *pietas*.

The 'canonization' of the four virtues on the 'Golden Shield' is misleading, however: it does not show the most important 'Greek' virtues, but a variation of them. The Greek virtues would be adapted by Cicero as follows: *fortitudo*, *temperantia* or *continentia*, *iustitia* and *prudencia/sapientia*. There is thus a slight difference. This difference might be due to the opinion of Augustus thought these virtues were the most fitting for a Roman; as such, they were made into a new canon.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Burgersdijk, D.W.P., Waarden, J.A. van, *Emperors and Historiography. Collected Essays on the Literature of the Roman Empire by Daniël den Hengst*, Leiden, 2010, 178 - 179

<sup>90</sup> Ward, J.S., 193

<sup>91</sup> Syme, R., *The Historia Augusta. A Call of Clarity*, Bonn, 1971, 1

<sup>92</sup> Reekmans, T., 'Notes on Verbal Humour in the *Historia Augusta*', in *Ancient Society*, 28, 1997, 176 - 181

<sup>93</sup> Daniels, S.G., *Satire in the Historia Augusta*, Florida, 2013, 11 - 12

<sup>94</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, A., 'The Emperor and His Virtues', in *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 30, H. 3, 1981, 298 - 304

De Blois, in an article on 'traditional virtues' in the third century AD, states that a 'good' ruler needs a combination of virtues and personal accomplishment: the historiographical tradition would note that a ruler is 'good' when he is widely skilled and possesses a wide range of traditional virtues, both Greek and Roman. This was influenced by Greek philosophy and by the Emperors' self-image and representation. A good ruler needed to be many things: mild, loving of mankind, righteous, learned and cultured. In addition to that, he needed to display good governing skills, and be an able military tactician. The ruler was a virtuous and moral example for all his subjects.<sup>95</sup>

According to Lendon, in his 1991 book on prestige in Roman government, a ruler's 'goodness' depended on their social prestige, which was gained by a high ranking in society. The Emperor was not a head of state or government but a 'head of society', thriving through glory of war and the prestige derived from civil and legal accomplishments. While everyone could have prestige, the Emperor was special because he had the most prestige.<sup>96</sup> In contrast with De Blois' theory, Lendon did not think that the idea of a good Emperor was not only be based on his military and civil accomplishments.

Dmitriev, in his 2001 article on 'good Emperors' in the third century, finds that it was purely the *virtuous character* of the ruler that reflects on his 'goodness'. He uses an example of second-century adoptive Emperors who legitimized their position by claiming that his virtues matched those of his predecessor. The development of relying on one's virtues began in the rule of Trajan, who resurrected old Republican philosophical opinions that one could only rule if he was virtuous. Trajan's virtues would later be used as a measurement for other rulers, to define whether they were a 'good' ruler.<sup>97</sup> Noreña, in his 2001 work *The Communication of the Emperor's Virtues*, states that the Emperor's public image reflected a diversity of functions: military leader, philanthropist and mediator between man and god.<sup>98</sup>

If an Emperor wanted to be truly successful, he would have benefited from military support, according to Hekster in 2005. The Emperor served as the highest military leader, and was expected to fight for Rome as a leader; he was most of all expected to have *virtus* and *providentia*.<sup>99</sup>

In 2011, Noreña emphasizes that the main distinction between a 'good' and a 'bad' Emperor was not action and achievement, but personal character. The idealized Roman Emperor is based on his personal virtues. Again, Trajan is used as the prime example of a virtuous ruler, but ascribing virtues to rulers had been done since the fourth century BC.<sup>100</sup> With the rise of Augustus and the advent of the Roman Empire, the 'good' ruler was required to display certain specific qualities; the Golden Shield would cement which of them were the most important. This 'imperial canon' of virtues would have expanded over time.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> De Blois, 'Traditional Virtues and New Spiritual Qualities in Third Century Views of Empire, Emperorship and Practical Politics', in *Mnemosyne*, Vol XLVII, Fasc. 2, 1994, 166 - 167

<sup>96</sup> Lendon, J., *Perceptions of prestige and the working of Roman imperial government*, Ann Arbor, 1991, 128 - 130.

<sup>97</sup> Dmitriev, S., "'Good Emperors" and Emperors of the Third Century', in *Hermes*, 132. Jahrg., H. 2, 2004, 213 - 215

<sup>98</sup> Noreña, C.F., 'The Communication of the Emperor's Virtues', in *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 91, 2001, 146.

<sup>99</sup> Hekster, O.J., 'Fighting for Rome: The Emperor as Military Leader', in De Blois, L. and Lo Cascio, E. (eds.), *The Impact of the Roman Army (200 B.C. - A.D. 476): Economic, Social, Political, Religious and Cultural Aspects. Proceedings of the Sixth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, 200 B.C. - A.D. 476), Capri, Italy, March 29 - April 2, 2005*, Leiden, 2007, 91 - 95.

<sup>100</sup> Noreña, C., *Imperial Ideas in the Roman West. Representation, Circulation, Power*, Cambridge, 2011, 38

<sup>101</sup> Noreña (2011), 50 - 52

An analysis of the above shows that a successful ruler would need to have two things: a virtuous character, and great military capabilities. Virtues were also important in the realm of military representation: without certain military virtues, an Emperor would not have been successful in the act of war. In the next part of this chapter, it will be seen if the texts accurately use these criteria to describe the Emperors of 193 - 197, and how these descriptions differ from those of Emperors in earlier times. These ideas about a 'good ruler' will be applied to the five Emperors this thesis will discuss in the text below, to see how each of them have been represented in the historical texts.

## The Antonines

To see if the narrative about the five Emperors differs from those in more peaceful times, it seems prudent to compare them with some of the Antonine Emperors. Commodus excluded, these Emperors lived in relatively peaceful times. The focus is on differences in terms of character, deeds and military achievements.

Looking at the characterization of Hadrian, some more balanced aspects can be found in Dio and the *Historia Augusta*. Both agree that while he had some bad character traits, these were balanced out by good virtues. In Dio, for instance, Hadrian has prudence and munificence;<sup>102</sup> in the *Historia Augusta* he has munificence and military virtue, but he is also negatively portrayed. He would have gotten rid of people when he did not like them.<sup>103</sup> Marcus Aurelius, one of the most virtuous *exempla* of Emperors, is stated as possessing all good virtues and having excellent ruling capabilities.<sup>104</sup> This is echoed in Herodian, where his virtues like kindness, goodness, moderation and discipline are put on display.<sup>105</sup> On the other hand, Commodus, even before being seen as a tyrant, is described as being inept to be Emperor, as seen for instance in the *Historia Augusta*, where he, 'even from his earliest years', was 'base and dishonorable, and cruel and lewd, defiled of mouth and debauched'.<sup>106</sup> Dio states that Commodus was simple and cowardly, and was led on into lustful and cruel habits, 'which soon became second nature'.<sup>107</sup> In Herodian, Commodus' baselessness started after a plot against his life was enacted.<sup>108</sup> These short summaries of the characters of certain rulers show a certain dichotomy between rulers that are perceived as positive and those that are not.

The description of these Emperors leads to some interesting conclusions: if an Emperor is 'good', he will be discussed in a positive way, and his virtues will be detailed and praised. If an Emperor is 'bad', none of his virtuous character and good deeds will be detailed, but his misdeeds and negative personality traits will be shown and criticized. In the rest of this chapter, the representation of the five Emperors will be examined, to see if the way they are written about stays the same or if it is quite different.

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<sup>102</sup> CD 69.5.1.

<sup>103</sup> HA 1.10.1 – 12.1.

<sup>104</sup> CD 72.34.2.

<sup>105</sup> Her. 1.5.8.

<sup>106</sup> HA 7.1.7 – 8.

<sup>107</sup> CD 73.1.1 – 2.

<sup>108</sup> Her. 1.8.3 – 8.



## Pertinax

λεχθέντων δὲ καὶ ἐπηνουῖμεν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ γνώμης καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἠροῦμεθα· τήν τε γὰρ ψυχὴν ἄριστος ἦν καὶ τῷ σώματι ἔρρωτο...

- Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, 74.1.5.

In this part of the chapter, the textual representation of Pertinax will be discussed. The description of his character by all three sources will be used as a cornerstone, and various questions will be applied to round out the narrative: is he described positively or negatively? What character aspects are highlighted? Does the perception of him change much between authors? With these bases, an overview can be given, and a conclusion might be reached.

Dio's names 'an excellent and upright man',<sup>109</sup> directly implying that Dio thinks highly of Pertinax. One of the ways he characterizes Pertinax is that he 'used to give us banquets marked by moderation'.<sup>110</sup> Moderation, or temperance, reflects on one of the original Greek cardinal virtues: *σωφροσύνη*. Its Latin equivalent would be something like *clementia* or *temperantia*.<sup>111</sup>

In considering what Greek virtue should correspond with which Roman equivalent, however, the period in which Dio wrote must be taken in account. In the third century AD, a few centuries after the rise of Augustus, the ideas about the canonized imperial virtues must have been spread across the whole Empire. When Cassius Dio writes about *σωφροσύνη*, it might have come to mean the same thing as *clementia*. In saying that Pertinax is *σωφρόνως*, Dio might mean that Pertinax has one of the 'imperial' virtues. Pertinax' virtuous character is furthermore complemented by certain claims: he showed 'humaneness' and 'integrity' in the imperial administration, had the most economical administration (*οἰκονομία βελτίστη*), and was overall a good Emperor.<sup>112</sup>

Most of these terms refer in some way to a virtuous aspect: 'humaneness' could refer to *humanitas*, human sympathy for those who were weak and helpless. The term might be connected to *liberalitas*, often propagated by emperors, since both imply the giving of gifts or distributions.<sup>113</sup> *Χρηστότης*, the Greek word for 'integrity', can also simply mean 'goodness'.<sup>114</sup> *οἰκονομία* ('economical administration') is somewhat equivalent to *aequitas*, which Emperors often used to show that they had a fair handling of the Empire's finances.<sup>115</sup>

Dio thus sees Pertinax as virtuous, and Herodian states something similar: here, people expected 'a rule of moderation' from Pertinax,<sup>116</sup> who, like in Dio, was lenient and moderate, and improved the imperial administration. Here, Pertinax is like Marcus Aurelius, a contemporary virtuous example.<sup>117</sup> Herodian's Pertinax thus at least also exhibited moderacy. Herodian portrays him as a

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<sup>109</sup> CD 74.1.1.

<sup>110</sup> CD. 74.3.4

<sup>111</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, 301 - 302.

<sup>112</sup> CD 74.5.1 - 2.

<sup>113</sup> McCann, G.I., *Private Philanthropy and the Alimenta Programs in Imperial Rome*, 2012, 29; Noreña (2001), 153 - 156.

<sup>114</sup> Reumann, J., 'Justification and Justice in the New Testament', in *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, Vol. 21, 1999, 37.

<sup>115</sup> Manders, E., *Coining Images of Power: Patterns in the Representation of Roman Emperors on Imperial Coinage*, A.D. 193 - 284, Leiden, 2012, 182 - 183.

<sup>116</sup> Her. 2.2.5.

<sup>117</sup> Her. 2.4.1 - 2.

mild constitutional ruler, a 'father instead of an Emperor'. This might have been some sort of *topos* through which Herodian portrayed Pertinax as a virtuous antithesis to Commodus.<sup>118</sup>

Pertinax' virtuous character in both Dio and Herodian shows how different he is than Commodus. Both authors show that the senate and people were pleased with the virtuous Pertinax after Commodus' death.<sup>119</sup> While Dio and Herodian agree on these points, the *Historia Augusta* turns the virtues they describe 'upside down', as it were. Instead of living in modesty, here Pertinax is a greedy man,<sup>120</sup> who was very desirous of money.<sup>121</sup> This version of Pertinax is not kind, but 'ungenerous and mean', who was not universally loved.<sup>122</sup> It is something that 'deconstructs' Pertinax' established virtuous character and contradicts it.

The *Historia Augusta's* version of Pertinax is the opposite of that of Dio and Herodian. Its negative view might be because while Herodian and Dio heavily compare Pertinax to Commodus, this happens less in the *Historia Augusta*. Dio, being a senator at the time, profited from negatively portraying Commodus and positively portraying Pertinax. Herodian thought Pertinax to be similar in character to Marcus Aurelius, and thus a better Emperor than Commodus. The author of the *Historia Augusta*, being more detached from that time, would have felt less pressure to compare the two. He could portray Pertinax as an 'independent' character, thus giving a different picture.

It could perhaps also have something to do with the time the authors wrote in: assuming that the *Historia Augusta* was written in the fourth century A.D., it would have been published more than sixty years after Dio and Herodian both published their own works.<sup>123</sup> A shift in opinion on Pertinax might have occurred, which might also be apparent in the work of the fourth-century grammarian Ausonius, who wrote a work called *On the Twelve Caesars Whose Lives Were Written by Suetonius*. Here, he states that Pertinax was 'proclaimed by statute, not by favour'.<sup>124</sup> In AD 362, Julian the Apostate wrote a satiric play in which Pertinax is also condemned; nothing is said about his virtues.<sup>125</sup> A shift in perception certainly seems to have happened, from positive to negative.

## Didius Julianus

*obiecta est etiam superbia, cum ille etiam in imperio fuisset humillimus. fuit autem contra humanissimus ad convivia, benignissimus ad subscriptiones, moderatissimus ad libertatem.*

– *Historia Augusta*, 9.9.1 – 2.

How does the representation of Didius Julianus fare in the grander scheme of things? Dio and Herodian are very negative about Julianus. Dio states that Julianus is both desirous for money and eager to spend it,<sup>126</sup> basing his narration on Julianus' character on the fact that he performed a quite terrible act: he bought the imperial power in an auction.<sup>127</sup> Nothing is said about his virtues, nor about any military accomplishments. Herodian states that Julianus is a man of considerable means,

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<sup>118</sup> Philippides, M., 'Herodian 2.4.1. and Pertinax', in *The Classical World*, Vol. 77, No. 5, 1984, 295 - 297

<sup>119</sup> CD 74.2.3 – 4 and Her. 2.2.9 – 10, for instance.

<sup>120</sup> HA 8.9.4.

<sup>121</sup> HA 8.13.4.

<sup>122</sup> HA 8.12.3 – 8.13.4.

<sup>123</sup> The last event mentioned in Dio's work is his own second consulship in 229, so his work must have been published somewhere after that, while Herodian's work was published somewhere after 240.

<sup>124</sup> Aus. 19.78.

<sup>125</sup> JA- *Caes.* 312C.

<sup>126</sup> CD 74.11.2.

<sup>127</sup> CD 74.11.2 – 3.

who wasted his time feasting and drinking, neglecting the welfare of the public.<sup>128</sup> Herodian too does not note any virtues or military accomplishments of note. According to Whittaker, Herodian's negative portrait of Julianus might have been influenced by negative Severan propaganda.<sup>129</sup>

Cassius Dio, however, does have reasons for his negativity. Firstly, Julianus was being propagated by his soldiers as being a second Commodus, who would return them to their old corrupt ways after the death of Pertinax.<sup>130</sup> Secondly, as noted by Kemezis, Dio saw in Julianus a personal enemy, because of previous conflicts he had had with him:<sup>131</sup> Dio himself notes that he had often quarreled with Julianus.<sup>132</sup> Dio feared that Julianus, as Emperor, would punish him. These sentiments bring forth a bias which might quite probably have led to Dio's negative narrative.

The *Historia Augusta*, in contrast, is more positive about the Emperor. Military exploits leading up to his consulship are explored,<sup>133</sup> and he is described as living very frugally,<sup>134</sup> being 'very affable (*humanissimus*) at banquets', 'very courteous (*benignissimus*) in the manner of petitions' and 'very reasonable (*moderatissimus*) in the matter of granting liberty'. Several virtuous aspects are visible here: *humanitas*, *benignitas* ('courteousness', or perhaps 'kindness')<sup>135</sup> and *moderatio*.

These qualities make the *Historia Augusta's* Julianus a very virtuous man, different than the descriptions of Herodian and Dio. As shown above, both authors could be biased in their writings. This could also apply here; their narrations might be untrustworthy. In a rare case, the *Historia Augusta* could prove to be the more accurate source on Julianus' rule.

Julianus was in a perfect position to rule over the Empire. He was probably one of the leading members of the Senate, with a distinguished ancestry, a successful career, and his endurance of the 'tyranny' of Commodus. He probably had a good reputation, and would have been properly qualified to become Emperor.<sup>136</sup>

This picture of Julianus, and our knowledge on why the other authors were so negative, seem to make statements like those made by Wagner in her 1969 dissertation, that the goal of the chapter on Julianus is an attempt to rehabilitate the picture of the emperor, invalid. Wagner states that all negative rumors about Julianus have a 'very firm basis in fact'. The author of the *Historia Augusta* would only try to improve Julianus' bad reputation.<sup>137</sup> Given the information about Dio and Herodian's subjectivity, this does not seem to be true. Julianus seems to have been a man in the wrong position at the wrong time, who could have been a good ruler, if the situation was different.

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<sup>128</sup> Her. 2.7.1.

<sup>129</sup> Whittaker, 181 n. 3.

<sup>130</sup> CD 74.12.1.

<sup>131</sup> Kemezis, 57, 57 n.81.

<sup>132</sup> CD 74.12.2.

<sup>133</sup> HA 9.1.6 – 2.3.

<sup>134</sup> HA 9.3.0

<sup>135</sup> Morwood, J., 'benignitās', in *Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary: Latin-English (3 ed.)*, Oxford, 2005.

<sup>136</sup> Leaning, 'Didius Julianus and his Biographer', in *Latomus*, T. 48, 1989, 554 – 555.

<sup>137</sup> Wagner, C., *The Biography of Didius Julianus in the 'Historia Augusta'*, Illinois, 1969, 96 – 100.

## Pescennius Niger

φήμη τε περὶ αὐτοῦ διεφοίτα ὡς ἐπιεικοῦς καὶ δεξιῶ ὡς τὸν τοῦ Περτίνακος βίον  
ζηλοῦντος· ὕφ' ὧν μάλιστα οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι ἐπέιθοντο.

– Herodian, τῆς μετὰ Μάρκον βασιλείας ἱστορία, 2.7.5.

A discussion of the representation of Pescennius Niger, as perhaps with Clodius Albinus, might seem somewhat more difficult to present than that of Pertinax and Julianus. The narration now leaps into the civil wars, which mostly diminishes any conversation about their virtues. A full characterization of Pescennius Niger is therefore difficult to make. Still, the authors give many hints about his character. An interesting fact about Niger already appears in the chapter on Julianus: the general populace in Rome detested Julianus and preferred to see Niger in power.<sup>138</sup> A definite reason why is not really given, however. The *Historia Augusta* chapter on Niger comes the closest to an answer, that the people called for him out of hatred for Julianus and out of love for Pertinax.<sup>139</sup>

These explanations do not give a satisfying answer, but the second reason might be merit further exploration. Herodian for instance states that Niger had a distinguished record for ‘a number of important activities’ (εὐδοκιμήσας δὲ ἐν πολλαῖς καὶ μεγάλαις πράξεσι), and that he had a reputation for being virtuous character because he modelled his life on that of Pertinax, and that is why the people liked him.<sup>140</sup> Niger would thus have been called upon because he was the same kind of person that Pertinax was – the version of Pertinax that was propagated by Dio and Herodian, a kind, gentle and virtuous man. While this does not correspond with the *Historia Augusta*’s characterization of Pertinax, the text is known for its discrepancies, so that might not mean anything.

While this might not instantly confirm Niger’s virtuous character, there is some evidence in the *Historia Augusta* chapter on his life that he should, in fact, be considered as such. He favored those of his predecessors who were considered to be virtuous, for example, like Augustus and Trajan.<sup>141</sup> A different picture is presented, however, by negative writings in the narrative of Dio and Herodian. The former thinks of Niger as dumb and puffed up;<sup>142</sup> the latter attributes a seemingly out of place laziness to Niger, with the implication that this trait cost him the war.<sup>143</sup> The laziness might be some sort of fabrication by Herodian, implying that while Niger desires to be as virtuous as Marcus Aurelius, he falls short because of personal faults. The *Historia Augusta* at least is positive about Niger’s military and governmental commitments, stating that he thrived in every post he held, except that of Emperor.<sup>144</sup>

The *Historia Augusta* again seems to give a more positive view about the Emperor, but its reliability has been disputed in the past: it is considered one of the so-called ‘secondary *vitae*’ of the *Historia Augusta*, a category of biographies reserved for the men who are not truly considered ‘Emperor’, but for ‘lesser’ rulers, or pretenders. These chapters are apparently filled with fictional information.<sup>145</sup> The ‘secondary *vitae*’ seem to be less accurate and reliable than the primary ones, which makes this chapter as a source of information somewhat difficult.

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<sup>138</sup> CD 74.13.4; Her. 2.7.3; HA 9.4.7 – 8.

<sup>139</sup> HA 11.2.3 – 4.

<sup>140</sup> Her. 2.7.5.

<sup>141</sup> HA 11.12.1 – 2.

<sup>142</sup> CD 75.6.2a.

<sup>143</sup> Her. 2.7.7 – 2.9.9.

<sup>144</sup> HA 11.6.10.

<sup>145</sup> Burgersdijk and Waarden, 93; Daniels, 14.

Still, some of the positive characterization found in the *Historia Augusta* seems to correspond well with that found in Herodian, for instance, giving a good reason for why the people wanted to have Niger on the throne: he seems to have reminded them of Pertinax in terms of virtues, and he would perhaps have been a good choice for the throne, if he was considered more as just a 'pretender'.

## Clodius Albinus

*Sed ut ad eum redeam, fuit, ut dixi, Albinus Hadrumetinus oriundo, sed nobilis apud suos et originem a Romanis familiis trahens...*

*-Historia Augusta, 12.4.1 – 2.*

As with Pescennius Niger, it might seem a difficult task to describe the characterization of Clodius Albinus, because there is not very much to go on. The most 'accurate' information can probably be found in Herodian; there is no character exploration in Dio (where it is that Albinus wanted to be Emperor),<sup>146</sup> and while useful information could be found in the *Historia Augusta*, the chapter on Albinus, like that of Niger, is one of the 'secondary vitae', meaning it is somewhat unreliable. Herodian and the *Historia Augusta* are still useful to see what kind of picture can be formed, however. Herodian makes some revealing statements about Albinus, when discussing Severus' anxieties about his enemies.

Severus needed to seek Albinus' support, because he had a big claim to the throne. There are several factors that contribute to this: his wealth, genealogy, army his reputation in Rome. The last factor is expanded: he would be preferred as Emperor by Roman nobles for two reasons: his long line of ancestors and his supposed good-naturedness (*ἡροῦντο γὰρ οἱ εὐπατρίδαι ἐκεῖνον μᾶλλον ἄρχοντα, ἅτε ἐκ προγόνων εὖ γεγονότα καὶ χρηστὸν τὸ ἦθος εἶναι λεγόμενον*).<sup>147</sup> Albinus could therefore have a versatile character: the 'good-naturedness' implies a good character, perhaps even a virtuous one, and he might also be a capable military strategist.

The *Historia Augusta*, notes that there are many differing statements about Albinus' character, but notes that a lot of 'bad' characterization that exists about Albinus has been written by Severus during the civil war.<sup>148</sup> Before that, however, Severus considered Albinus as a good person and an 'intimate friend'.<sup>149</sup> This would imply that the negative Severan propaganda – being 'depraved and perfidious, unprincipled and dishonorable, covetous and extravagant',<sup>150</sup> might be exaggerated. Most of these accusations seem to be negative counterparts of virtues.

A good Emperor needs to be honest, modest, mild and kind, and these accusations would show that Albinus was not a virtuous person, and thus not a good ruler. The *Historia Augusta* does note, in fact, that since this was war propaganda, it was less credible, because Severus was attempting to discredit his enemy.<sup>151</sup> Therefore it must be seen as untrustworthy, meaning that Albinus would in fact have had a virtuous character. This idea is illustrated by what follows, namely some anecdotes that account to his skill as a military man, his virtuous character, his loyalty and even some *liberalitas*, where Albinus arranged to have money sent to cities ravaged in Severus' war

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<sup>146</sup> CD 76.1.1 – 2.

<sup>147</sup> Her. 3.5.2 – 3.

<sup>148</sup> HA 12.10.1.

<sup>149</sup> HA 12.10.1 – 3.

<sup>150</sup> Idem.

<sup>151</sup> Idem.

with Niger, which helped him win people to his cause.<sup>152</sup> On the other hand, these virtuous aspects are confusingly counter-acted by the *Historia Augusta's* tendency to place good characteristics directly against contradicting bad characteristics. Thus, according to the biographer Aelius Cordus, Albinus is a gluttonous person who did unjust things in many ways.<sup>153</sup>

Still, Herodian and the *Historia Augusta* state that the people in Rome adored Albinus. His situation might thus have been somewhat similar to Niger's. Though the virtues of his character are not explicitly mentioned – though the *liberalitas* as shown above might be taken into account –, Albinus' situation might have been somewhat similar to that of Niger. In both cases, the current sitting Emperor is detested by the majority, because he is not considered 'good' and 'virtuous' and it is an 'outsider' the majority desires to be in office. Due to his good-naturedness and his long line of ancestors, Albinus might seem to have been a better person than Severus, and perhaps he might have even been a better Emperor.

## Septimius Severus

τῶν δὲ δὴ τριῶν ἡγεμόνων ὧν εἴρηκα δεινότατος ὁ Σεουήρος ὧν...

- Cassius Dio, 74.15.1.

In the four years between the proclamation of Septimius Severus as Emperor and his defeat of Clodius Albinus, Severus has twice attempted to style himself after predecessors that were seen as virtuous in the eyes of many. After arriving at Rome and officially becoming Emperor, he fulfilled what he convinced his soldiery he wanted to do: avenging the murder of Pertinax. To this end he was, 'at his own command', given the name of Pertinax,<sup>154</sup> adding a layer to his character that would suggest he is some sort of second Pertinax, with the same qualities (and thus virtues) that he would have had. It is of course not the first time someone had been compared to Pertinax – both Niger and Albinus were already compared to him –, but Severus takes it a step further by appropriating his name, making a more 'official' connection to him. When starting the war against Albinus, Severus went a step further by connecting his own family line to that of the Antonines – naming his son after Marcus Aurelius, and styling himself as the son of that same Emperor (*aliqui putant idcirco illum Antoninum appellatum, quod Severus ipse in Marci familiam transire voluerit*).<sup>155</sup>

Interestingly, these acts seem to somewhat contradict in Severus' representation, as the various authors seem to imply he is attempting to come across as a virtuous person, while his further characterization seems rather negative. In both Dio and Herodian, for instance, he is described as a highly deceptive man, who would double-cross men and break oaths for his own benefit.<sup>156</sup> When Severus arrived in Rome, the citizens were terrified at his appearance and the army he had taken along with him, and he was blamed by many for bad things that happened in the city at the time. It had become turbulent due to the appearance of many soldiers, Severus had burdened the State by spending money excessively, and he did not place his hope of safety in the hands of his government officials, but rather in that of his army. In addition to that, he corrupted the youth of Italy by changing admittance rules for the army,<sup>157</sup> and his soldiers were plundering Rome and threatening to destroy it, inspiring hate and fear.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> HA 12.10.6 – 11.1.

<sup>153</sup> HA 12.11.2 – 6.

<sup>154</sup> Her. 2.10.9; HA 10.7.8 – 9.

<sup>155</sup> HA 10.10.3 – 6.

<sup>156</sup> CD 75.2.2; Her. 2.14.4.

<sup>157</sup> CD 75.2.2 – 6; HA 10.6.6.

<sup>158</sup> HA 10.7.3 – 4.

While some donations of money to the people and donatives to the soldiers have been recorded,<sup>159</sup> Dio makes a note of it to state that after defeating Albinus, Severus 'showed clearly that he possessed none of the qualities of a good ruler' and alienated the people and the senate by styling himself as a new Commodus. Similarly, he saw 'cruel' people like Sulla as an inspiration.<sup>160</sup>

Herodian says the same things about Severus – here, he is antagonistic towards everyone and taught his soldiers to be corrupt and decadent –,<sup>161</sup> and in the *Historia Augusta*, Severus praised Commodus in a eulogy and executed a large amount of people, only to attempt to get back into the good graces of the general people again.<sup>162</sup>

It thus seems that while Severus is attempting to cement his character as a virtuous ruler, the text shows that he is actually anything but. All three sources seem to be in various sorts of agreement that Severus is not exactly a virtuous person: he shows signs of being a ruthless tyrant, praising the likes of Sulla and Commodus, and nothing is spoken about his virtues. Thus, while Dio states it outright, the other sources strongly imply it: in not being a virtuous person, Severus is not a good ruler. Therefore, there seem to be two levels of irony in this situation: first, that he propagates a virtuous character that does not seem to exist; second, that while Severus does not seem to have the characteristics of a good ruler, he ended up sitting on the throne for a long time, and starting a new dynasty.

## Conclusions

Like with the Antonine Emperors, here the positive rulers are described by their virtues and deeds, and the negative rulers by only their negative aspects. It does not seem to matter how *successful* a ruler, but more how the writers thought about them. Dio and Herodian, being more contemporary writers in relation to 193 - 197, seem to reflect the more general opinions on the Emperors; usually their positions about certain Emperors are reflected in their texts by 'the people' thinking the same way. This can be seen in their texts narrating the last years of Commodus (negative), but also the reigns of Pertinax (positive), Didius Julianus and Severus (negative). Whether or not they actually reflect the ideas of the people – the *Historia Augusta* Pertinax and Julianus seemingly contradicts that idea –, what they write is seen as the most truthful.

Thus, Pertinax is mostly a good ruler, and Didius Julianus mostly a terrible ruler, despite the efforts of the *Historia Augusta* to balance out the narrative. The clear distinction between a 'good', virtuous ruler and a 'bad' ruler that was seen with Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, Pertinax and Julianus seems to vanish with Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus, as they are not directly characterized as having virtues. This is somewhat logical: they are considered to be pretenders, not worthy of full narratives.

Their two characters can still be made up through indirect references, for instance being 'similar in character to Pertinax', implying that they had virtuous characters. Albinus also has the added interest of being of noble descent and beloved by both people and senate, which speaks about his character. Niger is desired by 'the people' to assume power instead of Julianus, which also indirectly says something about him. It is another dichotomy which exists between 'official' Emperors and 'non-official' Emperors, where the latter are mostly ignored in history. Both Niger and Albinus, for instance, do not appear as Emperors in the narration of Ausonius: it jumps from

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<sup>159</sup> Her. 2.14.5.

<sup>160</sup> CD 76.7.4 – 8.2.

<sup>161</sup> Her. 3.8.5 – 6.

<sup>162</sup> HA 10.12.8 – 14.2.

Julianus straight to Severus.<sup>163</sup> Severus is an example of an Emperor being successful, yet being considered as a bad personality by the historical texts. In the end, these narrations do not seem to be any different than those that came before: 'good' and 'bad' Emperors are still discussed in the same manner.

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<sup>163</sup> Aus. 81 – 88.



## Chapter 3 – Numismatic Representation

This chapter will discuss self-representation: how the Emperors' government represented them via the medium of coinage. Coins could contain a large variety of images, through which an Emperor was able to create political programs or even propaganda, which could spread topical 'news' throughout the Empire, summarizing what the Emperor had done for the people.<sup>164</sup> There has been quite a lot of discussion in the past on who was responsible for deciding what was to be featured on imperial coinage. If it was the Emperor himself who chose the types on his coins, or some sort of official under his command, the coins could be quite 'personalized' and perhaps more representative of the Emperor. More contemporarily, however, Ando has made a good case, stating that ultimately the question of responsibility does not matter. Rather, the idea that the people believes that the Emperor is responsible for the coin types is more important: they could consciously identify coins as carriers of ideological meaning. The iconography on coinage was more intelligible to people than Greek or Latin, which made them more useful as propaganda than texts or inscriptions. Images were meant to evoke universal feelings that could be applicable anywhere in the Empire. The rapid diffusion of imperial imagery could thus create a simple visual language which was almost universally intelligible and uniquely flexible.<sup>165</sup>

This chapter will examine the following things: how was each Emperor represented through his coinage? Did this differ greatly from the representation of the other Emperors? In what ways did each Emperor bring innovations into their coinage? An analysis of the coin types of each Emperor will make the similarities and differences clear. In addition to these questions, another important one is how the representation in this period differs from that of more peaceful periods. By comparing the data from these Emperors to Emperors from other times, for instance those from the Antonine age, a complete picture will appear in the end, through which a clear narrative about the Emperors in 193 – 197 will be available. In the past, certain frameworks have been developed which would make classifying coinage easier. The *RIC*, for instance, alludes to the existence of 'themes' that appeared most in the coinage of Pescennius Niger: deities, virtues, a golden age and military themes.<sup>166</sup> Later, in his *The Communication of the Emperor's Virtues*, Noreña would give five 'broad categories' for determining coinage: (1) personifications or virtues; (2) gods, goddesses, and minor deities; (3) inanimate objects and miscellaneous scenes; (4) depictions of the emperor and various members of the imperial family; and (5) provinces, cities, and rivers'.<sup>167</sup> Lastly, a much more detailed categorization system appears in Manders' *Coining Images of Power*, which boasts *thirteen* 'representational categories', with the four 'most common representational forms' being military representation, divine association (types featuring deities), virtues or personifications and golden age types.<sup>168</sup> Both systems overlap quite well with the 'themes' given by the *RIC*, yet Manders' system goes into much more detail, giving many more categories for determining coin types.<sup>169</sup> No one system is preferable to the other. These categories are static, while the combination of legends and images on a coin is what makes it dynamic: a coin depicting a virtue or

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<sup>164</sup> Beckman, M., 'The Significance of Roman Imperial Coin Types', in *KLIO* 91, 2009, 144 – 154; Howgego, C., *Ancient History from Coins*, London, 1995, 71 – 72.

<sup>165</sup> Ando, C., *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*, California, 2000, 212 - 214.

<sup>166</sup> *RIC* 4A, 20.

<sup>167</sup> Noreña (2001), 153 – 154.

<sup>168</sup> Manders, 2.

<sup>169</sup> Manders, 41 – 48.

a deity can also end up having military connotations, for example. However, because Manders' system is more extensive than that of Noreña, it will be used in this chapter to display the categories used in the coinage minted by each Emperor.

### Antonine coinage

In order to put the coinage of 193 – 197 in larger context, to see if it is in any way different from coinage from other times, – it will be compared with that of some of the Antonine Emperors: Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. Both have ruled for a long time and have minted a veritable amount of coinage that can be compared. The goal of the comparison to see if the five Emperors of 193 – 197 is fundamentally different in terms of categories and types. Table 1 shows the categories used by Antoninus Pius. It was made by counting all of Pius' types and categorizing every type into one of the categories used by Manders.<sup>170</sup>

Categories	Percentage
Divine	8.30%
Military	12.89%
Golden Age	21.19%
Dynastic	0.88%
Elevation	12.99%
Euergesia	6.35%
Geographic	10.25%
Paradeigmata	3.22%
Unica	7.62%
Virtues	15.04

*Table 1 - Antoninus Pius' categories.*

Focusing purely on Pius' categories, it becomes apparent that four categories are the most frequently used: golden age, virtues, 'elevation' (where the Emperor put himself above his subjects), and military. They are used far more often than the other categories, like dynastic representation, euergesia (promoting the Emperor's good deeds) or 'unica' (a miscellaneous category consisting of types that do not fit anywhere else). Three of these belong to Manders' most common used categories. Something similar can be seen in the types of Marcus Aurelius (table 2). Only the types minted for Aurelius specifically were used for this table; the coins also featuring Lucius Verus have not been taken into account. In his coinage, the top four categories are military, golden age, virtues and geographic. While these categories only represent three of Manders' most common types, these categories might have more in common with the five broad themes given by Noreña, whose categories then seem to correspond quite well with the 'four most common' themes in Manders' framework. Given both frameworks, and the information about the Emperors' coinage, it seems that three themes are truly the most important: military, golden age and virtues. These should thus warrant the most attention in a comparison of the Antonine coinage with that of the five Emperors in 193 – 197.

<sup>170</sup> As this is done according to the opinion of the author of this thesis, it is subjective.

Categories	Percentage
Divine	12.80%
Military	23.80%
Golden Age	16.15%
Dynastic	4.47%
Elevation	6.01%
Euergesia	3.01%
Geographic	13.49%
Unica	1.20%
Virtues	18.56%
Aeternitas	0.52%

Table 2: Marcus Aurelius's categories.

## Pertinax

Because he ruled for three months, Pertinax does not have a large variety of coin types. The *RIC* lists 39 different coin types; the four mostly used categories (table 3) are those of virtues, divine representation, golden age and representation. The absence of military types might have something to do with Pertinax being in Rome for his whole rule and military actions not having been needed in that time.

Categories	Percentage
Divine	27.59%
Golden Age	15.52%
Elevation	13.79%
Geographic	1.72%
Virtues	39.66%
Aeternitas	1.72%

Table 3: Pertinax's categories.

The shortness of Pertinax' mint did not mean that it lacked creativity; the *RIC* notes that 'there is an originality in the selection both of types and accompanying legends that seem to depend on individual choice'.<sup>171</sup> Some types seem to be quite personal; a good example of this is a type featuring Janus *Conservator* (fig. 1).<sup>172</sup> Janus does not appear often on Imperial coinage; this type only appears here, celebrating Pertinax' ascension on New Year's Day. The same personality can perhaps be seen in a new Fortuna type picturing her as a protective deity.<sup>173</sup> It refers to the Emperor's private cult, under which, starting from Antoninus Pius, the Emperor had a golden statue of Fortuna in his bedroom.<sup>174</sup> Under Antoninus Pius it was a dynastic



1 – Janus

<sup>171</sup> *RIC* 4A, 3.

<sup>172</sup> *RIC* 4A Pertinax 3.

<sup>173</sup> *RIC* 4A Pertinax 2, 15.

<sup>174</sup> Arya, D.A., *The goddess Fortuna in imperial Rome: Cult, art, text*, 2002, Austin, 364 – 65; *RIC* 4A, 4; Woodward, A.M., 'The Coinage of Pertinax', in *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society, Sixth Series, Vol. 17*, 1957, 85.

symbol, yet here it might only highlight Fortuna's protection of Pertinax, since it seems he had no dynastic wishes.<sup>175</sup>

While most of Pertinax' types are virtues, there are only a few virtues he minted: *providentia*,<sup>176</sup> *liberalitas* (fig. 2)<sup>177</sup> and *aequitas*<sup>178</sup> are attested. It shows that virtue-wise, Pertinax is mostly concerned with promoting his financial achievements as Emperor. *Aequitas* has been discussed before,<sup>179</sup> while *liberalitas* had been connected with distributions of money since Hadrian.<sup>180</sup> The type also has liberty connotations, with one legend stating that the people have been freed; Commodus no longer was Emperor, and under Pertinax things were better.<sup>181</sup> Yet again this type might prove Pertinax' penchant for original and personal types, as the specific legend only appeared under Pertinax' rule. The *providentia deorum*, the 'foresight of the gods', had been appearing in this form since Marcus Aurelius. The gods had chosen Pertinax to rule over the world in their place.<sup>182</sup>



2 - Liberalitas / Libertas

Pertinax' new legends continue with a type featuring the *laetitia temporum* (fig. 3).<sup>183</sup> It is a concept which originated in Pertinax' coinage, and is part of a larger range of types showing the prosperous state of the Empire.<sup>184</sup> A type featuring Mens *Laudanda*<sup>185</sup> is both the first and last appearance of the deity on Roman coinage. It possibly depicts a version of the deity Bona Mens dedicated to fertility, suggesting this deity will make the ground more fertile, leading to better times.<sup>186</sup> This type could work in conjunction with a *saeculum frugiferum* type,<sup>187</sup> implying that with the help of Bona Mens, a fruitful age will arrive. Types representing the *saeculum frugiferum* seem to mostly appear within 193 - 197; they are attested outside of this period only once, on a type minted for the Gallic Emperor Postumus.<sup>188</sup> This is an interesting fact: not considering the Postumus type, this legend might have some sort of personal significance for everyone in this period.



3 - Laetitia

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<sup>175</sup> Langford-Johnson, J., *Mater Augustorum, Mater Senatus, Mater Patriae: Succession and Consensus in Severan Ideology*, Indiana, 2005, 99 - 100.

<sup>176</sup> *RIC IV* Pertinax 10(a), (b), 11(a), (b).

<sup>177</sup> *RIC 4A* Pertinax 5

<sup>178</sup> *RIC 4A* Pertinax 1(a), (b)

<sup>179</sup> Cf. chapter 2.

<sup>180</sup> Rowan, C., 'Imaging the Golden Age: The Coinage of Antoninus Pius', in *Papers of the British School at Rome* 81, 2013, 229 - 230.

<sup>181</sup> Manders, 89.

<sup>182</sup> Manders, 162 - 163; Noreña, 159; Sutherland, C.H.V., 'The Historical Evidence from Greek and Roman Coins', in *Greece and Rome, Vol. IX, No. 26*, 1940, 75.

<sup>183</sup> *RIC 4A* Pertinax 4(a), (b), 4A, 17, 33.

<sup>184</sup> Manders, 188 - 9.

<sup>185</sup> *RIC 4A* Pertinax 7.

<sup>186</sup> Woodward, 85 - 86.

<sup>187</sup> *RIC 4A* Pertinax 12.

<sup>188</sup> *RIC 5B* Postumus 84.

A 'new conception' of *Ops Divina* (fig. 4)<sup>189</sup> is noted as somewhat confusing. In coinage of Antoninus Pius, the rare type is associated with imperial wealth.<sup>190</sup> This would make it similar to an *aequitas* type. With Pertinax, however the *RIC* notes that 'the epithet "divine" forbids us to make Ops directly the goddess here'<sup>191</sup>; here it seems to be a "'divine Help" on which Pertinax declares his dependence, [...] the goddess Ops, with whom she [the *Ops Divina*] is naturally associated, was herself the goddess of the Harvest'.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, this type should be more associated with the *saeculum frugiferum* and Mens types, in propagating some kind of harvest-based golden age.



4 - Ops

Pertinax seems to represent himself as chosen by the gods, guided by Fortune. He has liberated the people and under his rule times will be better. He also has a good grip on the imperial finances. The *RIC*'s notion that Pertinax' coinage was relatively original<sup>193</sup> seems to be somewhat truthful. There are many new types to consider, like the Janus type, the Fortuna type and the Laetitia type, which might indicate a high amount of creativity and personality in Pertinax' coinage. Woodward clarifies, however, that the more original types, while reflecting a 'highly individual choice and outlook', are also very rare. According to him, they represent a 'brief and restricted issue' in comparison with Pertinax' later issues. According to him, 'one might almost believe that they were withdrawn because the Emperor was brought to realize that they were too recondite in their message for effective publicity'.<sup>194</sup> Whether or not this theory is something that needs to be taken into account seriously, Pertinax' next issue brought in some 'familiar types' in addition to more new ones: types of *Aequitas* and the *vota decennialia*<sup>195</sup> have appeared often in imperial coinage, but are issued alongside new versions of *Ops Divina* and *Providentia*.<sup>196</sup> It shows that even in such a short rule as that of Pertinax, one can still be creative in the creation of coin types. Quite some of Pertinax' types thus seem to be innovative in one way or another. Some types would be picked up by later rulers, while other types were only used during Pertinax' reign. This does not mean that there is no continuity with earlier rulers, however: there are still familiar types that have often appeared earlier, like the aforementioned *Aequitas* type, for instance. The variety of 'innovations' in Pertinax' coinage does represent something potentially quite interesting. Scholars often state that the rise of Severus led to a new age for the Empire. This might not be entirely true when speaking about coinage, where quite a lot of inspiration for third century types seem to stem from the mint of Pertinax.

## Didius Julianus

The *RIC* notes 21 distinct types minted under Didius Julianus' rule, which includes types not minted for him, but also for his wife and daughter, both *Augusta*. In practice, this means that Julianus has four specific coin types, and both Manlia Scantilla and Didia Clara have two. As a consequence of the brevity, Julianus' coinage features only five categories, of which golden age is the most used (since

<sup>189</sup> *RIC* 4A Pertinax 20.

<sup>190</sup> *RIC* 3, 7.

<sup>191</sup> *RIC* 4A, 4 n. 1.

<sup>192</sup> *RIC* 4A, 4.

<sup>193</sup> cf. note 187.

<sup>194</sup> Woodward, 86.

<sup>195</sup> Woodward also names *laetitia* as a 'familiar type', but fails to mention that the LAETITIA TEMPOR legend had not appeared in coinage before.

<sup>196</sup> *Idem*.

the coinage of his family is counted alongside his own), followed by elevation, virtues and divine representation.

Categories	Percentage
Divine	20.00%
Military	13.33%
Golden Age	33.33%
Elevation	16.67%
Virtues	16.67%

Table 4 - Didius Julianus' categories.

It seems like Julianus' coinage is all about attempting to legitimize his rule. This is perhaps most applicable to the new *rector orbis* (fig. 5) type.<sup>197</sup> Later Emperors minted the type when they could not legitimate their rule by connecting it to their predecessors, making this an alternative way for an Emperor to legitimate his place as ruler of the world.<sup>198</sup> Usually, having military backing could help with forcing acceptance of one's rule, yet Julianus seems to have had trouble with his troops, given the often appearing types featuring *concordia* in a military sense (fig. 6).<sup>199</sup> This specific legend debuts here as well, although the idea of a military *Concordia* had already appeared in the coinage of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius and Commodus.<sup>200</sup> The type is supposed to give a strong emphasis on the loyalty of the armed troops, which after AD 193 – 197, became ever more important for an Emperor to affirm his power. This loyalty was not always easy to guarantee.<sup>201</sup> The trouble surrounding Julianus' ascension to power make it seem like he must have been quite fortunate to become Emperor in the first place.



5 – *Rector orbis*

This context might explain an appearance of Fortuna on Julianus' coinage.<sup>202</sup> It displays the role the deity played in Julianus' ascension, but it might also be a prayer, to keep supporting Julianus as Emperor.<sup>203</sup> The *RIC* also states that it would refer to the protector of the Emperor's private cult.<sup>204</sup> This might be connected to a *securitas* type, which is deemed 'very interesting'. According to the *RIC*, this type has one precedent: during the reign of Otho. A parallel seems to exist between the reign of Otho and that of Julianus; Otho had been in almost the same position during the crisis surrounding the death of Nero. The *RIC* thinks that the choice of this type was deliberate: 'It would look as if Julianus was already conscious that history was repeating herself'.<sup>205</sup> This is improbable – the two emperors lived more than one hundred years apart, and it is unlikely that Julianus would have remembered this one specific coin type for this specific situation –, but nonetheless something interesting to ponder.

<sup>197</sup> *RIC 4A* Didius Julianus 3.

<sup>198</sup> Dmitriev, S., "'Good Emperors" and Emperors of the Third Century', in *Hermes*, 2004, 214 n. 20; Wagner, 132; Woodward, 71.

<sup>199</sup> *RIC 4A* Didius Julianus 1.

<sup>200</sup> i.e. *RIC 3* Hadrian 581A; *RIC 3* Antoninus Pius 600a; *RIC 3* Marcus Aurelius 987; *RIC 3* Commodus 465d.

<sup>201</sup> Manders, 90 – 91.

<sup>202</sup> *RIC 4A* Didius Julianus 2.

<sup>203</sup> Wagner, 131 – 2.

<sup>204</sup> *RIC 4A*, 13.

<sup>205</sup> *idem*.

Lastly, there are the types that have been minted for Julianus' wife and daughter. Manlia Scantilla firstly has a 'queenly' type featuring Juno *Regina*,<sup>206</sup> an 'Empress type "par excellence"'.<sup>207</sup> A second type is representing her piety.<sup>208</sup> Didia Clara has a type featuring Fortuna,<sup>209</sup> and one featuring Hilaritas.<sup>210</sup> The latter could refer to the 'Hilaria', a festival associated with *Magna Mater*, which was celebrated just when Julianus started his reign.<sup>211</sup> This type could thus be a celebration of Julianus' Emperorship. It might seem strange for Julianus to immediately advertise his wife and daughter on his coinage. Trajan's wife and sister-in-law, for instance, would receive that honor in AD 105, while Trajan had ruled since AD 98. According to Langford-Johnson, this is because he was 'anxious to found his own dynasty', and intended to flow his dynastic line through them.<sup>212</sup> Given the theory of the *RIC* that Julianus' Fortuna types would represent the *fortuna aurea*, which under Antoninus Pius stood for dynastical wishes, this theory might be plausible, but one cannot be entirely certain.



6 – Concordia

Julianus' types are used out of a need to legitimize his ascent to power. Given the context in which he became Emperor, he would have had to make an impossibly big impression on his subjects to convince them that he was the *rector orbis*, and on his troops that there was *concordia* between them and their new Emperor. This led to Julianus' coinage being very one-sided, which, combined with its brevity, did not leave his government much room for constructing a complete picture. There was some more freedom in the types for his family, with one type of Julianus' daughter possibly referring to his own ascension. Still, with his mint being even more limited than that of Pertinax, it is incredible Julianus' government still managed to develop the completely new *concordia* and *rector orbis* types. The latter's importance in Julianus' coinage is especially ignored when it is discussed; usually scholars consider it to be a 'standard type'.<sup>213</sup> While this would be true in the third century, where the Emperors Caracalla and Elagabalus used these types often,<sup>214</sup> scholars fail to mention that the type originated in Julian's coinage. The observation that Julianus' coinage is insignificant is therefore quite unfair, and the coinage should be elevated from the ranks of footnotes in the general discourse about AD 193 – 197 and this period's effect on third century coinage. It deserves better.

## Pescennius Niger

After the death of Julianus, the civil wars over the throne of Rome began. In this part of the chapter, the coinage of one of the first contenders, Pescennius Niger, will be discussed. An examination of how he presented himself and how this compared to the other rulers will follow. Looking at his categories (table 5), it becomes apparent that the *RIC* is correct in stating Niger mostly uses military, golden age, divine and virtue types. Zedelius states that most Niger's types are military themed.<sup>215</sup> This would seem logical, given the context of the civil war in which Niger was proclaimed Emperor.

<sup>206</sup> *RIC 4A* Didius Julianus 7(a), (b).

<sup>207</sup> *RIC 4A*, 14.

<sup>208</sup> *RIC 4A* Didius Julianus 8.

<sup>209</sup> *RIC 4A* Didius Julianus 9.

<sup>210</sup> *RIC 4A* Didius Julianus 10.

<sup>211</sup> *RIC 4A*, 14.

<sup>212</sup> Langford-Johnson, 74, 100.

<sup>213</sup> i.e. Wagner, 132.

<sup>214</sup> i.e. *RIC 4A* Caracalla 39B; *RIC 4B* Elagabalus 193.

<sup>215</sup> Zedelius, 50.

Categories	Percentage
Divine	13.79%
Military	32.02%
Golden Age	25.09%
Euergesia	5.42%
Geographic	3.94%
Virtues	13.30%
Aeternitas	4.43%

Table 5 - Pescennius Niger's categories.

An examination of Niger's coinage reveals that there are some interesting themes connecting his categories. There are two intersections where these themes mostly connect: between Niger's military and divine coinage, and his virtue and golden age coinage. Sometimes, the same sort of legend appears on different kinds of types. At other times, the connection is purely thematical, the types promoting the same sort of message.

The most obvious example of the former in military and divine coinage is Niger's representation of the war deity Mars. There are three Mars types, linked to the Emperor's virtue,<sup>216</sup> invincibility<sup>217</sup> and victory.<sup>218</sup> The first two types are innovations by Niger, only appearing in Niger's coinage. The virtuous Mars can be connected to a type promoting Niger's own military virtue.<sup>219</sup> The invincible Mars, legend MARTI INVI[CTO], is very similar to two military types promoting Niger's own invincibility, one with legend INVICTO IMP (fig. 7),<sup>220</sup> which debuted either here or in Severus' coinage,<sup>221</sup> and another with the same legend and a trophy, debuting under Severus but used by Niger as well.<sup>222</sup> It was only used by them, so it might have a personal significance for them. The nearly identical use of INVICTO on the coinage means that this is probably not a coincidence, and that these coins need to be seen as one group of types showing Niger's military strength.

Similarly, the victorious Mars can be connected foremost to Niger's military coinage depicting victory,<sup>223</sup> but also to a type depicting Minerva *Victrix*,<sup>224</sup> and types of Jupiter *Capitolinus* and *Conservator*, which both feature the Olympian with *victoria* beside him.<sup>225</sup> Both had already appeared on coinage earlier, for instance in the post-Neronian civil wars,<sup>226</sup> but they, alongside the other *victoria* related coins, were all meant to depict the victories Niger has gained in his war. One Victory type features a trophy,<sup>227</sup> thus also referring back to one of Niger's invincibility types. It is a very strong message: all these gods support Niger, granting him invincibility and thus victory. These



7 - Invicto



8 - Fides

<sup>216</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 52.

<sup>217</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 53.

<sup>218</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 54.

<sup>219</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 90.

<sup>220</sup> RIC 4A 31(a), (b).

<sup>221</sup> Storch, R.H., *Tropea on the Coinage of Ancient Rome*, Ohio, 1967, 50.

<sup>222</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 37; RIC 4A Septimius Severus 391; Storch, 50.

<sup>223</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 81(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f); Bland, Burnett and Bendall, 71.

<sup>224</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 60.

<sup>225</sup> Jupiter Capitolinus: Bland, Burnett and Bendall, 68; Jupiter Conservator: RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 42.

<sup>226</sup> Jupiter Conservator: RIC I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars 40; Jupiter Capitolinus: RIC I<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars 42.

<sup>227</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 80.



underlying connections between the military and deity coinage strengthen the message about Niger's military capabilities. It would be weaker if the types did not play into each other so much. Another connection, between military and virtue, appears through a *fides* type propagating harmony with his soldiers (fig. 8),<sup>228</sup> perhaps comparable to Julianus' *concordia* type. Evoking the soldiers' *fides* had happened under Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius,<sup>229</sup> so it was relatively common. Still, it serves as an interesting way to combine the military with virtues in one type. Through the combination of all these themes, Niger attempts to legitimize his power.<sup>230</sup>

The foremost way Niger's coinage combines virtues with a golden age is with *fides*.<sup>231</sup> It appears on coinage representing a *boni eventus*, which might have expressed gratification felt by Niger's supporters;<sup>232</sup> the same goes for coins with *salus*,<sup>233</sup> *spes*<sup>234</sup> and *hilaritas*.<sup>235</sup> All three types have often appeared on coinage.<sup>236</sup> While *fides* only appears with *boni eventus*, the fact that this can be connection to the other golden age themes might automatically connect *fides* to them as well. Through *fides*, there will be *salus*, *spes* and *hilaritas*. It brings forth the idea that things will be better if one is virtuous. This is perhaps also visible in another type featuring the bond between Niger and his supporters or subjects: *concordia*, a 'central theme of ideology'.<sup>237</sup> In this context, *fides* and *concordia* are perhaps somewhat similar types.

The golden age types are also connected to deities through Ceres *Frugifer*, the 'fruit-bearing' deity probably aiding Niger in bringing about a *saeculi felicitas*<sup>238</sup> and *felicia tempora*.<sup>239</sup> Ceres *Frugifer* appears on coinage only three times: twice on Niger's coinage, and once on Severus' coinage.<sup>240</sup> The Severus type dates to AD 196 – 197; this means the type debuts here.

Fortuna Redux (fig. 9) promotes the persona and well-being of the Emperor.<sup>241</sup> It was associated with military triumph in Rome, and had appeared frequently since the rule of Vespasian.<sup>242</sup> This type is then another connection supporting Niger as military champion, while being protected by a deity.

Perhaps there is another virtuous connection in Niger's *pietas* type.<sup>243</sup> His piety can perhaps support all his deity types; he is pious, and thus supported by the gods. This would connect his virtuous character even more to his military character, strengthening both. His other virtues are



9 – Fortuna Redux

<sup>228</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 19

<sup>229</sup> i.e. RIC 3 Antoninus Pius 965; RIC 3 Marcus Aurelius 997.

<sup>230</sup> Manders, 246.

<sup>231</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 4.

<sup>232</sup> Sydenham, E.A., *Historical References on Coins of the Roman Empire from Augustus to Gallienus*, Chicago, 1968, 119.

<sup>233</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 75(a), (b).

<sup>234</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 79.

<sup>235</sup> RIC 4A Pertinax 30A.

<sup>236</sup> Manders, 188.

<sup>237</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 12; Wallace-Hadrill, 322.

<sup>238</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 73(a), (b), (c).

<sup>239</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 13(a), (b).

<sup>240</sup> RIC 4A Septimius Severus 476.

<sup>241</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 22.

<sup>242</sup> i.e. RIC 1<sup>2</sup> Vespasian 11.

<sup>243</sup> RIC 4A Pescennius Niger 68.

represented by *aequitas*<sup>244</sup> and *moneta*.<sup>245</sup> They, like they did with Pertinax, probably refer to the quality of Niger’s coinage.

While Niger uses a lot of well-established tropes to represent himself, there are many interesting ways he uses interplay in his different categories; his divine and military themes are combined to strengthen his military persona, and there are also strong connections between his virtues and golden age coinage. These connections help to make his perceived messages much more believable, because the types themselves are somewhat limited in scope; there is not much variety in the military and divine coinage, for instance. The variety seems to happen more in his virtues: while Pertinax, for instance, only seemed to highlight his financial promises, Niger also boasts of *fides*, *concordia* and *pietas*. This broadening of scope then in turn helps to strengthen his golden age coinage.

On top of that, there are also some innovations. Niger’s coinage displays new ways to represent Mars and gives Ceres new golden age connotations. Though it is uncertain whether the military type denoting invincibility actually debuted with Niger, it is still a new type that appeared while he was ruling, one that he used himself. With this type, along with the ‘trophy’ type, it seems like the Emperors were aware of each other’s types; Mattingly, in a 1932 article, calls it a ‘war of types’ that was waged between the moneymen of both parties.<sup>246</sup> It must not have been easy to still make innovations in one’s coinage, even if the ruler was only busy preparing for or fighting in a war. The fact that this still happened, and that Niger did not resort to only using commonly used types, shows that his coinage should not be ignored; statements like one made by Sydenham, that Niger’s coins ‘have little importance’, are therefore undeserved.<sup>247</sup>

### Clodius Albinus

With one civil war finished, another loomed large; Clodius Albinus, betrayed by Severus, proclaims himself as Emperor and takes up arms against his former leader. His coinage has two issues: firstly, a ‘Roman’ issue, while he was Caesar, and a ‘Lugdunum’ issue, after his proclamation of Augustus. An examination of his categories (table 6) shows that his four most used themes are golden age, military, virtues and divine.

Categories	Percentage
Divine	12.24%
Military	25.51%
Golden Age	34.69%
Euergesia	2.0%
Geographic	4.08%
Virtues	21.43%

Table 6 - Clodius Albinus’ categories.

<sup>244</sup> Bland, Burnett and Bendall, 70.

<sup>245</sup> *RIC 4A* Pescennius Niger 62.

<sup>246</sup> Mattingly, H., ‘The Coinage of Septimius Severus and his Times. Mints and Chronology’, in *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society, Fifth Series, Vol. 12, No. 74*, 1932, 184.

<sup>247</sup> Sydenham, 119.

Mostly, the Roman coinage seems logically designed by Severus' government to promote Albinus as a *Caesar*. This is mostly done through coins that have some kind of geographical significance for Albinus. One innovative, new type in Albinus' Roman coinage evokes *Minerva Pacifer*.<sup>248</sup> It appears on both his Roman and Lugdunum coinage,<sup>249</sup> possibly representing Spain; a similar type also appeared under Hadrian.<sup>250</sup> a type of Aesculapius (fig. 10),<sup>251</sup> appearing on coinage since Galba,<sup>252</sup> could represent Gaul through Apollo Grannus,<sup>253</sup> while *saeculum frugiferum* types (fig. 11)<sup>254</sup> could represent Albinus' birthplace of Hadrumetum because the Punic iconography of the type.<sup>255</sup>



10 - Aesculapius

Not all coins are geographic, however, though the remaining coins still seem to celebrate Albinus. The *providentia Augusti* (fig. 12),<sup>256</sup> a virtue type, already appeared under Commodus,<sup>257</sup> and *Fortuna*<sup>258</sup> and *felicitas* types are golden age types that have both already appeared before.<sup>259</sup> An *Annona* type<sup>260</sup> shows that Albinus is capable of providing his people with grain.

The mint of Lugdunum started after Albinus' break with Severus in 195. While some of the types are similar to the Roman mints, there are many differences. One type seems to continue the Roman's coinage penchant to mint personal geographic types. It features the *Genius of Lugdunum*.<sup>261</sup> According to the *RIC*, the type is 'the one provincial note in a coinage that rings true Roman'.<sup>262</sup> It represents Albinus' new base of operations, and only appears in his coinage. The rest of the coinage mostly breaks with the Roman coinage.



11 - Saeculum frugiferum

Like with Niger's coinage, Albinus has quite some military types. Here as well, there is some interplay between categories, but Albinus' coinage uses somewhat different categories to play with. The interplay between the divine and military coinage occurs in a type for *Jupiter Victor*,<sup>263</sup> which should of course connect to his *victoria* types.<sup>264</sup> Vitellius had earlier used *Jupiter Victor* on his coinage.<sup>265</sup> Military connotations and virtues are brought together foremost in an innovative type evoking Albinus' *fortitudo* and invincibility, featuring an image of *Hercules*.<sup>266</sup>

<sup>248</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 7.

<sup>249</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 30.

<sup>250</sup> *RIC 4A*, 41.

<sup>251</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 2.

<sup>252</sup> i.e. *RIC I<sup>2</sup>* Galba 486.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. note 280.

<sup>254</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 8.

<sup>255</sup> Cadotte, A., *Las romanization des dieux. L'interpretatio romana en Afrique du Nord sous le Haut-Empire*, Leiden, 2006, 315 – 316; *RIC 4A*, 42.

<sup>256</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 1(a), (b), (c).

<sup>257</sup> i.e. *RIC 3* Commodus 487a, b.

<sup>258</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 3.

<sup>259</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 12A.

<sup>260</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 51.

<sup>261</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 23.

<sup>262</sup> *RIC 4A*, 42.

<sup>263</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 25.

<sup>264</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 43, 44, 45, 46, 47.

<sup>265</sup> i.e. *RIC I<sup>2</sup>* Vitellius 68.

<sup>266</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 21.

This is the first, and possibly only, attestation of this coin; the *RIC* states that this type is ‘very doubtful’, stating that it might be based on a coin carrying a title of Augustus.<sup>267</sup> It is unknown whether this type is fake; if it were real, it would have been a highly original type for Albinus. Secondly, military and virtues come together in another case of military *fides*.<sup>268</sup>



12 - Providentia

A specific type, with the legend FIDES LEGION. COS. II.,<sup>269</sup> debuted with Severus, and was shortly after used by Albinus for his own purposes. It was probably made only to be used in this period; it would later only be reused by the Emperor Gallienus in the third century.<sup>270</sup> There is also explicit reference to Albinus’ military *virtus*.<sup>271</sup>

Unlike Mars’ appearances on Niger’s coinage, here the deity cannot be connected to other types through other categories, but he still appears in two distinct ways: as Mars Ultor<sup>272</sup> and Mars Pater.<sup>273</sup> The latter type is another case that had not appeared earlier, but debuts here around the same time that it would have debuted on the coinage of Severus.<sup>274</sup>

A strong connection exists between divine types and golden age types through Minerva *Pacifera* (fig. 13),<sup>275</sup> which can be seen in the same context as a *Pax* type.<sup>276</sup> *Pax* is one of the most enduring types, having appeared in one way or another since the rule of Augustus.<sup>277</sup> It did not appear on Niger’s coinage, so it would have debuted in this period either on Albinus’ coinage or on that of Severus.



13 - Minerva

Connecting Minerva with the statement of *Pax* gives out a strong message that the gods support Albinus as bringer of peace. While this type could thus be connected to Albinus’ other golden age types of *salus*,<sup>278</sup> *spes*<sup>279</sup> and *felicitas*,<sup>280</sup> through iconography it could also be connected to his military coinage; Minerva is also holding a spear on the coin, and thus this divine type links golden age connotations with military connotations. It perhaps denotes that ‘peace is the goal of the hateful civil war’,<sup>281</sup> which would suggest that Albinus desires peace above all. Logically, military power begets peace; *imperium* had long been connected to peace.<sup>282</sup>

Like Niger, Albinus also has some virtues, which do not necessarily use interplay, but paint an interesting picture of his character in their own right. Most of the virtues have been seen before,

<sup>267</sup> *RIC* 4A, 47 n. 21.

<sup>268</sup> *RIC* 4A Clodius Albinus 18.

<sup>269</sup> *RIC* 4A Clodius Albinus 19, 20(a,b), (c).

<sup>270</sup> i.e. *RIC* 5A Gallienus 479.

<sup>271</sup> *RIC* 4A Clodius Albinus 48(a), (b).

<sup>272</sup> *RIC* 4A Clodius Albinus 28.

<sup>273</sup> *RIC* 4A Clodius Albinus 29.

<sup>274</sup> The Albinus type is dated 195 – 197, while the first Severus Mars Pater type (an *aes*; cf. *RIC* 4A Severus 683) first appeared in AD 194.

<sup>275</sup> *RIC* 4A Clodius Albinus 30.

<sup>276</sup> *RIC* 4A Clodius Albinus 32(a), (b).

<sup>277</sup> i.e. *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 252.

<sup>278</sup> *RIC* 4A Clodius Albinus 39.

<sup>279</sup> *RIC* 4A Clodius Albinus 42(a), (b).

<sup>280</sup> *RIC* 4A Clodius Albinus 15.

<sup>281</sup> *RIC* 4A, 42.

<sup>282</sup> Manders, 200.

like *aequitas*,<sup>283</sup> *providentia*,<sup>284</sup> *concordia*<sup>285</sup> and *fides*,<sup>286</sup> but Albinus, as the first of the Emperors in this period, also mints *clementia*.<sup>287</sup> Though *clementia* is one of the four virtues on the 'golden shield', it was rarely used on coinage.<sup>288</sup> It meant that one was mild or lenient, which some would say was one of the best virtuous qualities one could have.<sup>289</sup> Perhaps Albinus wanted to set himself above Severus, in terms of character.

Mattingly would refer to Albinus' coinage as 'quite isolated historically',<sup>290</sup> but in reality, Albinus' Lugdunum coinage is quite similar to that of Niger. Both Emperors use various amounts of interplay in their coinage and portray themselves somewhat similarly as virtuous. Albinus' interplay is different than that of Niger however; here military and virtue types have connections, as well as divine and golden age types. Though the Minerva *Pacifera* type manages to combine the divine and golden age connotations with military connotations, thus giving even more interplay and delivering an even stronger message.

The 'war of types', as attested by Mattingly between Niger and Severus, also appears here, in the *fides legionum* type. These occurrences of copying each other's coin typed naturally only occur within the military coinage. It is perhaps a sign that at this point in the wars, the military propaganda on coinage in this period would start to become somewhat standardized, with every party using the same amount of coin types.

It is striking that there would, then, still be some kind of innovation, especially in a mint such as that of Albinus, which is considered 'little' by someone like Mattingly.<sup>291</sup> The Minerva *Pacifera* type is a military type that only appeared in Albinus' coinage, and while the veracity of the *fortitudo* Hercules type is doubtful, it might still be counted as a military type, referring to Albinus' strength. In all, Albinus' coinage is not necessarily 'isolated' or unimportant; the few innovations, the interplay in themes in his coinage, and the interplay with the coinages of Niger and Severus actually make it interesting.

## Septimius Severus

The final coinage on discussion is that of the victor of the civil wars, Septimius Severus. Like the other rulers, how Severus presented himself will be examined, and his coinage will be compared with that of the other Emperors. Severus started his reign fighting civil wars; during that time, there was some overlap between his coinage and that of both Niger and Albinus. The focus will therefore be on Severus' Roman coinage between his ascension to power in June, AD 193 and his defeat of Albinus in February, AD 197.

For that period under discussion, the *RIC* lists 208 different minted types.<sup>292</sup> The four most represented categories (table 7) are military, divine, golden age and virtues. Two things are of note: Severus has used the most categories in his representation, and military types severely dominate his coinage.

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<sup>283</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 13(a), (b).

<sup>284</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 36(a, b), (c).

<sup>285</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 62.

<sup>286</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 18.

<sup>287</sup> *RIC 4A* Clodius Albinus 14.

<sup>288</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, 320.

<sup>289</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>290</sup> Mattingly (1932), 197.

<sup>291</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>292</sup> The types considered in Severus' representation are the silver and gold coins and the *aes* coinage minted in Rome; the *aes* were similar to the *denarii* and *aurei* (cf. Mattingly (1932), 195).

Categories	Percentage
Divine	17.28%
Military	35.55%
Golden Age	13.62%
Dynastic	1.00%
Elevation	6.98%
Euergesia	2.66%
Geographic	7.64%
Paradeigmata	2.66%
Unica	2.33%
Virtues	9.30%
Aeternitas	1.00%

Table 7 - Septimius Severus' categories.

Like the two men he fought and beat in the civil wars, Severus' a large amount of military types. There is no large variety in types, however: a lot of minted types are the same. Most innovations in his military types seem to be in his first year in office. Officially Emperor, he had access to nearly all the imperial legions to form his army.<sup>293</sup> His first year's types are devoted to building up trust with these legions. Thus, he promotes the military *fides*<sup>294</sup> in a type debuting here, which was soon after used by Albinus.<sup>295</sup> Most other first year types represent Severus' legions (fig. 14); there are seventeen types in total.<sup>296</sup> this had been done in the past by Clodius Macer and Marcus Aurelius,<sup>297</sup> but all these legion types are new. The rest of the military types are not new at all. Severus also displays his military *virtus*,<sup>298</sup> for instance, and there are of course many types representing victory.<sup>299</sup> Mars appears as Mars Pater,<sup>300</sup> also appearing under Albinus, and Mars Pacator,<sup>301</sup> previously under Commodus.<sup>302</sup> While Jupiter and Minerva also appear, they do not have their own legends.<sup>303</sup>



14 - Legion I

It is in Severus' virtues that seemingly new types are minted: *indulgentia* (fig. 15)<sup>304</sup> and *munificentia*.<sup>305</sup> They are quite rare on imperial coinage, mostly appearing with the Antonine Emperors.<sup>306</sup> These types, similar to *liberalitas*,<sup>307</sup> stand out due to their rarity. They represent some form of benefaction, and promote Severus' role as a philanthropist.<sup>308</sup>

<sup>293</sup> Albinus held some legions in the west and Niger in the east.

<sup>294</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 1.

<sup>295</sup> Cf. the part on Albinus' coinage above.

<sup>296</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 2 to 17; 652.

<sup>297</sup> i.e. *RIC I<sup>2</sup>* Clodius Macer 5; *RIC 3* Marcus Aurelius 443.

<sup>298</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 39.

<sup>299</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 21.

<sup>300</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 46

<sup>301</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 33, 45.

<sup>302</sup> i.e. *RIC III* Commodus 188.

<sup>303</sup> Jupiter: *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 34; Minerva on *RIC 4A* 49.

<sup>304</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 80.

<sup>305</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 82.

<sup>306</sup> *Indulgentia*: i.e. *RIC 2* Hadrian 726; *RIC 3* Antoninus Pius 907; *RIC 3* Marcus Aurelius 1493. *Munificentia* i.e. *RIC 3* Antoninus Pius 863; *RIC 3* Commodus 397.

<sup>307</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 18.

<sup>308</sup> Mattingly (1932), 185.

Severus appears to share Albinus' desire to promote peace through war. This is shown mostly through the Pax type,<sup>309</sup> in a combination with the Mars Pacator type mentioned earlier. Once again it can be said that this is a 'war of types' in which both Emperors mint the same sort of types to see who is the most convincing. Like Albinus, through using combinations of golden age, divine and military types (Pax and a pacifying deity), Severus would also justify peace through war. This is also a way of combining themes to deliver greater messages, which, of course, was also used by both Albinus and Niger. Peace themes continue through *saeculum frugiferum*,<sup>310</sup> an innovative *felicitas* type<sup>311</sup> which only appears here and under Caracalla, and a type representing 'public security'<sup>312</sup> has first appeared under Antoninus Pius and which is can very much be equated to peace.<sup>313</sup>



15- *Indulgentia*

Conflicting messages appear in two types consecrating and honoring some of Severus' predecessors: Pertinax and Commodus.<sup>314</sup> Severus used both of these Emperors' image for his own benefits; that of Pertinax to gain good will from the people of Rome after he was murdered; and that of Commodus to anchor his own dynasty to that of the Antonines. Like with Albinus, Severus has some personal types to represent his background, with types representing Liber<sup>315</sup> and Hercules,<sup>316</sup> the patron deities of Lepnis Magna, where Severus hailed from.<sup>317</sup> They both also appear on one type as *di auspices* (fig. 16),<sup>318</sup> a personal legend which had never appeared before. Some geographical types might also have some personal significance, for instance one showing the province Africa.<sup>319</sup>

One very specific and also personal type stands out the most: a coin depicting Sol on its reverse (fig. 17).<sup>320</sup> The design of Sol on this coin carries a great importance for the typological development of the deity's further appearances on coinage in general. The pose the deity is featured in would become 'one of the classic poses for Sol on the coinage of the third century', and would thus inspire many other Emperors who would use Sol on their coinage. As the 'origin' of later Sol types, it can thus be considered to be very important. The type could symbolize victory and also carries significance for Severus himself: Sol acted as the patron deity of the Severans in his capacity as Sol *Invictus*, which would later appear on Severan coinage.<sup>321</sup> The correlation of Sol with Apollo might also explain an Apollo type<sup>322</sup> appearing once in Severus' coinage.<sup>323</sup>

<sup>309</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 54.

<sup>310</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 19.

<sup>311</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 98.

<sup>312</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 93.

<sup>313</sup> i.e. *RIC 3* Antoninus Pius 641.

<sup>314</sup> Pertinax: *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 24A, 24B; Commodus: *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 72A.

<sup>315</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 32, 44.

<sup>316</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 79, 97.

<sup>317</sup> Abdy, R., 'The Severans', in Metcalf, W.E., *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage*, Oxford, 2012, 506.

<sup>318</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 25.

<sup>319</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 668.

<sup>320</sup> Williams, J.H.C., 'Septimius Severus and Sol, Carausius and Oceanus: two new Roman acquisitions at the British Museum', in *The Numismatic Chronicle Vol. 159*, 1999, 307.

<sup>321</sup> Williams, 308 – 9.

<sup>322</sup> *RIC 4A* Septimius Severus 40.

<sup>323</sup> Williams, 309.

Severus' military themes, with the exceptions of types that have been minted in the 'type war' between him and both Niger and Albinus, and the mints for his individual legions, have mostly appeared before and are therefore rather standard. Though, with the large amount of types it is clear that Severus thinks highly of himself in terms of military capabilities. In terms of virtues, Severus' types are quite different than those of his predecessors.



16 - *Di auspices*

Some of his virtues, however, make him stand out from the other Emperors. While focusing on the financial side on one's rule through virtues had already been done by Pertinax, Severus takes it in another direction: through *munificentia* and *indulgentia* he stands out from the other Emperors, promoting his generosity above anything else.

The 'type war' can be seen foremost in his personal geographical types, through which he portrays his background. This is most clear in new types minted for the deities of his homeland, and it is also apparent in the Africa type. Like the other Emperors, Severus does not shy away from making innovations in his coinage; a good example of this is the *imperii Felicitas*, but the most important personal and innovative type is the Sol coin, which itself serves as an important interplay between various categories; while it is a divine type, it could be seen as a military type and perhaps even as a golden age type.

After the military coinage, the divine representation and golden age categories are the most used by Severus in representing himself, and they still stand above the rest. One can wonder why his government chose to make these innovations, and not simply come up with more new military types, since that seems like it would have been important in the context of the civil wars; it might have helped him stand out more from his opponents in terms of military representation. While the Sol type was a good step forwards, Severus could have benefited from more new types. The type also represents a clean break with the coinage of the Antonines, for instance, as it represented something that would become a new 'standard' type later on.



17 - *Sol*

## Conclusions

When purely looking at the representational categories, the five Emperors of 193 - 197 seem to represent themselves in quite similar ways. Barring Pertinax' lack of military themes, and Didius Julianus' preference of 'elevation' coinage above military themes, in general all five Emperors seem to be, in general, using the same top four 'most common' categories: golden age, divine representation, virtues and military. It is no coincidence that these correspond to both Manders' 'four most common used themes' and Noreña's 'broad' categories.

The real difference between the Emperors' representation then lays within two things: their most used category, and the kind of types they used, which could differ between one Emperor and another, based on how they - or their government - wanted to represent them. On Pertinax' coinage, for instance, the *providentia*, *liberalitas* and *aequitas* were advertised. Julianus' coinage presents him as someone having (or needing) power. Niger, Albinus and Severus all represented themselves as military men who would each bring about a golden age if they would be victorious, but each of them highlighted various aspects of themselves. Niger is the only one to show that he has *pietas*, while Albinus is the only one who showcases *clementia*. Severus brings attention to his *indulgentia*, and *munificentia*, which alongside his *liberalitas* might mean that he would want the world to know he was a philanthropist.



The fact that most of these types had been used before, does not mean that there were no innovations in the coinage of these Emperors. Each Emperor had their own original coins minted, and it is interesting to see that, even after almost two-hundred years of 'standardized' Imperial coinage, there can still be some originality. These innovations also play into the question of whether or not the Emperor himself was responsible for his own coin types. While Ando, introduced in the beginning of this chapter, might say that this question does not matter, there does seem to be some importance to it, as the chapter on coinage has shown that some types can be very personal.

According to Woodward on the coinage of both Pertinax and Julianus: 'their reigns were both short, and each marks a reaction against the preceding one; thus the choice of reverse types is likely to be individual and not dictated by tradition; if we find some traditional types they also are due to personal choice.'<sup>324</sup> While some innovations or personal types could have been chosen personally by the Emperor or at least run by him, it does not make sense to state that even traditional types were chosen personally, considering the fact that most types used by these Emperors had been used many times before. It is hard to imagine that every Emperor would have hand-picked every type in his coinage that had been used before.

These innovations do not dominate over the 'standardized' types however: most of the types used have been used before, and with the exception of Severus' Sol type, most coin types do not really change and stay the same.

This is also the case in 193 – 197, compared to the coinage of the Antonines. Looking at the categories, there do not seem to be any big shifts in representation. While Marcus Aurelius would prefer geographic themes over divine themes, and Antoninus Pius would prefer 'elevation' types over divine types, the rest of their top four categories correspond quite well with Manders' and Noreña's frameworks. While these Antonines might have minted somewhat different types than the five Emperors – which is logical; no one Emperor would mint exactly the same types –, broadly speaking, there are no real changes in representation.

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<sup>324</sup> Woodward, 85.

## Concluding

The aim of this thesis was to determine whether or not AD 193 – 197 could be seen as a ‘crisis’. The period was examined through the lens of representation. The textual and numismatic representation of the Emperors in this period have been examined, and subsequently compared with representation of some of the Antonine Emperors. This was done to deduce the following: whether or not the ways in which these Emperors were represented by later authors, and the ways in which these Emperors – or their governments – represented themselves and their own reigns, were fundamentally different than what came before.

In general, there is a continuity in the ways these Emperors were represented. Both the textual and numismatic representation in this time seem to be anchored in larger ‘standard’ traditions that had been set in place in earlier times. In the case of the textual representation, the instability of the period does not appear to be of such a magnitude that the authors might have considered to write differently about both the period itself and the Emperors that have ruled within it.

The narrations about these Emperors are the same as those about the Antonine Emperors: the consensus on the ‘goodness’ of an Emperor depended on a successful combination of two factors: a virtuous character and military prowess, although being virtuous might be the more important factor of the two. In the texts, if an author considered an Emperor to be ‘good’, the ruler was praised, and his virtues and military accomplishments extolled. If an Emperor was considered ‘bad’, however, he would be discussed quite negatively. This did not necessarily mean that an author’s statements on an Emperor were completely objective: most authors seemed to be less concerned about accuracy than about spectacle and controversy in determining how to characterize a ruler, or they could be influenced by the writings of other authors or by external propaganda.

The subjectivity of this can be clearly seen in the first two of the five Emperors. The virtuous extolling of Pertinax by Dio and Herodian does not necessarily have to be fact, as the *Historia Augusta*’s version of Pertinax portrays him more of a man of vices. The reverse is the case for Julianus. Dio and Herodian describe him as morally corrupt; the *Historia Augusta* denies this and even ascribes virtues to him. Both Emperors are thus narrated in increasingly subjective ways: Pertinax being greatly lauded, and Julianus greatly hated.

These specific acts of subjectivity have been revealed by modern scholars: Birley, for instance, has said that Pertinax, alongside some senators, might have been implicit in the murder of Commodus (as also hinted at by the *Historia Augusta*),<sup>325</sup> which would make him a less virtuous person, and Appelbaum and Leaning have shown that Julianus could in fact have been a good Emperor, but the authors ruined his reputation. More can probably be done to fully reverse the current *communis opinio* on these Emperors, as the reputations they have gained are still the prevalent ones today, while the (perhaps) more grounded opinions of the *Historia Augusta* are mostly ignored, since it is seen as ‘untrustworthy’.

In either case, Dio and Herodian’s Pertinax is apparently meant to be the virtuous example for the Emperors in the period; the ‘good’ Emperors, Niger and Albinus, were said to be ‘similar to Pertinax’ in character. This could be seen as well as something quite subjective; does the ‘popular’ opinion of Pertinax have to be taken as fact, or the ‘less’ popular opinion of the *Historia Augusta*?

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<sup>325</sup> Birley (1969), 247 – 252; *HA* 8.5.2 – 3.

Since the *Historia Augusta* on Niger has little factual truth, that is a hard question to ask. However, its chapter on Albinus corresponds somewhat well with for instance Herodian's take on the Emperor. There might be some truth to his virtuous character after all, then. The fact that virtues are somewhat more important than military skills is perhaps proven by the narratives of all authors on Severus, who, while being an excellent military leader, is put down as a 'bad' Emperor by all three historical sources, because he is not virtuous.

While the ways in which coinage in Rome could be used as a tool for representation had been developing since the Republic, and perhaps perfected by Augustus, by the time of the Antonine age numismatic representation had grown into a standardized system of displaying one's virtues, hopes military accomplishments and other deeds. Each Emperor would have at least some of the standard available types minted on his coinage.

An examination of the types used in the coinage of both the Antonine Emperors and the five Emperors of 193 – 197 reveal that almost all of them adhere to the four 'most common' used categories by Manders. While the types under each Emperor might be slightly different – the Antonines, for instance, having ruled for a long time, might have minted a larger variety of coin types than any of the five Emperors – broadly speaking there is a lot of continuity. Every Emperor makes use of types that have been used before, and in the case of the last three Emperors, the coinage they mint are largely the same: a large amount of military coinage, with the same kind of types and the same mechanisms through which types were combined to improve their message, for instance with images of war-deities combined with images of peace.

Although the similarity of the Emperors' types stretches beyond the military types. There are several virtues, for instance, that appear with multiple Emperors, like *aequitas* and *providentia*. Strangely enough, even though Hekster stated that an Emperor needed to have *virtus* and *providentia* the most,<sup>326</sup> not all Emperors minted these virtues. While these virtues might have been important overall, it is likely that not every government thought it important enough to be represented on coinage.

What is more interesting about the Emperors in this period, is that even with their short reigns, they mint innovations on their coinage. Old themes or images are given new life with new legends and meanings, serving as an inspiration to be used by later Emperors, just like these Emperors use images that have been used before. The most salient example of this is Severus' Sol type, which would be reused a lot in the third century.

While these innovations serve as interesting looks in the circumstances for these Emperors, and thus elevate the importance of their coinage, they do not dominate over the 'standard' types. Thus, in the unrest of this period, the five Emperors did not necessarily change their patterns of propaganda when it comes to coinage.

In some cases, the textual and numismatic representations overlap in interesting ways. In the case of Pertinax, Dio often says that he is busy with restoring the finances of the Emperor. This corresponds quite well with his coinage, for instance, where most of his virtues represent his financial handling of the Empire.<sup>327</sup> In a certain way, Julianus' coinage echoes what the texts say, namely that he was very dependent on the strength of his soldiers; when his soldiers abandoned him, he lost all power and was dethroned. The coinage of Niger and Albinus does not really correspond with the texts, since the texts did not go into detail with describing their character. Their military coinage does accurately reflect the context of their situation, namely the civil wars. One interesting thing of note, however, is that Albinus is the only one who has minted *clementia*, while in the texts it is only ascribed to Pertinax. Since Albinus is described as 'similar' to Pertinax in

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<sup>326</sup> Cf. introduction.

<sup>327</sup> CD 74.5.1 – 5.

character, this might say something about Pertinax as well, though it is strange that he does not have the virtue on his coinage.

With Severus as well, his military coinage does reflect the military narrations in the text somewhat, but there is also the case of his virtuous coinage, where he is portrayed as a philanthropist. This is reflected in the text when Severus is in Rome, and gives large donations to both soldiers and people.<sup>328</sup> Both the textual and numismatic representation of these Emperors are similar to the ways in which the Antonine Emperors before this period were represented; in terms of representation, there seems to be a continuity of sorts.

This continuity shows that the instability of this period did not necessarily send the Empire into disarray. It is shown in the texts that the Senate would temporarily make decisions when an Emperor would be declared unfit to rule (in the case of Didius Julianus), and when Severus was made Emperor and set out to battle his civil wars, the situation in Rome would have been relatively stable. This is attested for instance by the fact that before Severus headed out to the west to battle with Albinus, he stayed in Rome for some time to handle official business.

Barring the fact that some cities – Byzantium for instance, which supported Niger and was besieged and captured by force – would have been affected negatively by the civil wars, most of the Empire probably did not see any negative repercussions. At some point, they would have received a message that there was a new Emperor. All these facts lead to one conclusion: while the period AD 193 – 197 serves as an important bridge between two dynasties, an important set-up for the third century, its relative stableness means that this succession of Emperors cannot be considered a ‘crisis’, but merely an inconvenience for the city of Rome.

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<sup>328</sup> i.e. Her. 2.14.4.

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*Figures:*

Tables 1 to 7 made by the author, based on information found in part four of Mattingly and Sydenham's *Roman Imperial Coinage* and Manders' *Coining Images of Power*. See above for both sources.

Figures 1 to 16 from *Online Coins of the Roman Empire*: <http://numismatics.org/ocre/>.  
Figure 17 from Williams, plate 27, A.