The Public Image of the Later Severans: Caracalla to Alexander Severus

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Abstract

This thesis examines the public image of the later members of the Severan dynasty (Caracalla, Geta, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus) in order to identify and analyse the underlying motivations behind the actions undertaken to promote their public image by each of these emperors at a time of great change in the third century AD. This was achieved through a chronological examination of the coins, inscriptions, portraiture and public building programmes of the later Severans. The first chapter examines the public image of Caracalla and Geta under Septimius Severus; the second chapter analyses Caracalla’s sole rule; and the final chapter investigates Elagabalus and Alexander Severus in order to establish how they, or those acting on their behalf, wished to portray themselves to the public. The literary works of Cassius Dio, Herodian, and the Historia Augusta supplemented this archaeological evidence.

Chapter One shows the public image of Caracalla and Geta under Septimius Severus was largely centred around family and the creation of the new Severan dynasty as a way for Septimius to legitimise his rule. Under Septimius, distinct imagery of ‘the heir’ arose, as well as the introduction of the honorific epithet nobilissimus for Geta, which became synonymous with the Caesar after this period. Chapter Two demonstrates that after Septimius Severus died and Caracalla had his brother killed, the public image of the emperor overall shifted significantly. Although the concept of the domus divina was still widely received in the provinces, the emphasis on family ceased to be a concern of Caracalla’s. Instead, the emperor heavily advertised his liberalitas and divine support through coinage and his military role through his portraits. Finally, in Chapter Three, the reigns of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus saw the return of familial ideals and the concept of a dynasty to their public image, which was largely in response to the brief rule of the usurper Macrinus. Both the emperors also had a large focus on the support of the gods and heavily publicised their virtues on coinage. Alexander Severus, in his thirteen-year rule, enacted a large public building programme across the Empire and this also featured strongly as an aspect of his public image.

Overall, this thesis shows that the public image of the later Severans was highly receptive to political, economic and social events in the first half of the third century AD. The ways in which the Severans reacted to these events were formed by both pre-existing responses established by earlier emperors, as well as new approaches. These new approaches in turn influenced the public image of emperors in the later third and into the early fourth centuries AD. As each of the later Severan emperors faced different challenges during their reigns, distinct changes can be seen in their public image. As such, there is no single consistent theme which can be ascribed to the
Severan dynasty. However, in examining the public image of Caracalla, Geta, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, it can be seen that each emperor adhered to the general themes of legitimisation, security (of their rule, and thus of the empire) and public benefaction. The public actions taken by each of the emperors, and the image they projected to the empire through these, meant that noticeable variations could be seen in the reception of these ideas throughout the empire.
Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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CIL- Mommsen, T. et al., 1862 – present, Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin.

CNG- Classical Numismatic Group


Introduction

The Problem

The third century AD was a time of great change in the Roman Empire, often referred to by scholars as ‘the crisis of the third century.’\(^1\) The second half of the third century saw a rapid succession of emperors and usurpers, political uncertainty, and social and economic upheaval. The Severan rule preceded this so-called crisis, lasting from AD 193- 235 and containing the reigns of five members of the Severan family. This thesis will examine the public image of the later Severans: Caracalla, Geta, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. By studying the reigns of these four emperors in the context of the events before, during and after their reigns, we can gain a greater understanding of imperial ideology and public image in the third century AD. This understanding can be used to examine influences on the later Severans from a pre-existing ideology, how they in turn influenced later emperors and why certain aspects of an emperor’s public image continued whilst others were halted. By understanding the way the later Severans attempted to cope with and respond to various changes, it will provide us with a greater appreciation of trends in imperial ideology. The public image, which this thesis aims to examine, is of course quite different to the accounts of their lives as told by the ancient historians and writers. In this thesis, public image is the way in which the emperors themselves (or at least those acting on their behalf) wished to convey their rule to the empire at large.\(^2\)

Whilst a considerable amount of scholarship exits on Septimius Severus, Julia Domna and the other Severan women,\(^3\) the public image of the later Severan men as a group has been somewhat neglected. It is for this reason that the public image of Septimius Severus and the Severan women, although influential and therefore discussed where relevant, is not the focus of this thesis. Additionally, the brief rule of Macrinus has also been omitted from this thesis.\(^4\) Although the rule of Macrinus was a significant one (as a novus homo he was the first emperor hailing from the equestrian class), this thesis concentrates on members of the Severan family and therefore his reign falls outside the scope of what this study aims to achieve. This thesis, therefore, aims to fill a lacuna in modern scholarship surrounding the public image of the later Severans and its creation.

In order to examine the public image of the later Severans, the coins, inscriptions, portraiture and public building programmes in Rome and in the provinces will be examined, supplemented by

\(^1\) Alföldy 1989; Manders 2006. However this term has been more recently called into question by de Blois 2002.
\(^4\) Scott 2008 provides a comprehensive look at the rule of Macrinus.
historical texts. It will be argued that through these means, the later Severans responded to their political climate, and social and economic events. The Severans were highly responsive to particular events, but adhered to the general themes of legitimisation, including security, and public benefaction.

**Methodology**

The public image of the Severans will be analysed by primarily examining those objects or materials which contained messages about the emperor and which were readily available all across the empire. These include the kinds of materials that people came into contract with regularly, or would have seen quite frequently. In particular, this thesis will examine the coins and portraiture of the later Severans, inscriptions dedicated to the emperors, either issued officially or privately, as well as the public buildings constructed under or for these emperors. A large part of this is based on Clifford Ando’s work *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty* and is concerned with the ‘conversation’ between the emperor and the government with those in the provinces, whether they be in administrative roles or not. It was this ‘conversation’ which helped define the emperor’s rule during his own time. Whereas today an emperor’s rule is often judged by what is recorded in the written word, this was not necessarily the way in which he was perceived during his lifetime. The way he was perceived was largely determined by his imperial ideology, influencing the image he presented to the Empire (at times called ‘propaganda’ - a term which will not be employed in this study). It is the tangible elements of this ‘conversation’ (the coins, portraits, inscriptions and buildings of the Severans) which will be used to establish their public image.

Other scholars in their examination of emperors as well as the imperial family have used this same approach to explore public image. One such notable example is Roche’s ‘The Public Image of Trajan’s Family’, which aimed to isolate and define the public image of Trajan’s family as it was presented to his contemporaries in Roman Italy. Roche breaks his work up into different sections: Trajan’s family in the *Panegyricus*, and the family in visual propaganda (numismatics; portrait types; inscriptions, statues and architectural propaganda). Whilst Roche addresses the public image of Trajan’s family thematically and then by each person or group of people, this thesis primarily takes a chronological view and then a thematic approach within the reigns of each emperor. Additionally, Roche takes the approach of relying first and foremost on the *Panegyricus* and relates all other information from additional sources back to this. Kosmetatou’s work on the

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2 2000.
6 Roche 2002: 42.
7 Roche 2002: 41-60.
public image of Julia Mamaea is also of particular importance. Kosmetatou uses literary sources to set the scene and context of the empress as well as to highlight major events occurring in her lifetime, and then goes on to examine inscriptions, coins and figural representations used to confirm aspects of Mamaea’s personality and power that arise and become evident in the literary sources.

It is this approach which this thesis uses in respect to the literary sources. Other key works which this thesis draws its methodology from include Noreña’s study of material sources as part of greater imperial ideology. Noreña draws upon the coins, inscriptions, reliefs as well as literary evidence of the emperor Hadrian in order to study an aspect of his personality, or his demonstration of pudicitia. As with Roche’s work above, this thesis draws on a similar methodology in order to understand elements of the Severan rule. Futhermore, numerous studies on the public image of the Severan women have been conducted through the study of coins and portraits of the empresses, with notable works carried out by Rowan, Levick, Lusnia, and Baharal. These are particularly significant to this thesis as they analyse the reasons behind the public image of the Severan women in the third century AD and why they were portrayed in a certain way. Of particular interest is the analysis and interpretation behind the images minted on coins. Additional works by Gorrie, Lusnia, and Barnes also examine other aspects of the public image of Septimius Severus and the Severan women and this thesis draws heavily upon aspects of the methodology of these authors, particularly in examining the politics behind public building programmes. Each of these studies has examined particular aspects of the public image of prominent members of the imperial family in relation to propaganda or publicity campaign, but they generally do not consider more than one of two aspects of this, such as coins or portraiture. Looking at only one aspect of public image will only provide a narrow view of the desired imperial image, therefore a more holistic approach is needed to examine the public image and what this was trying to achieve. Because so many different sources of evidence are used in this thesis, a greater picture can be gained of the overall public image of the later Severans and what they considered to be important. Of course, some of these materials would have been more readily available and seen by a greater audience than others. Coins, for example, were circulated around the entire empire, whereas those who were only in the immediate area would have seen buildings. Considerable debate surrounds the use of some of these sources (both material and written) and how effective

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8 Kosmetatou 2002: 398-414
9 Kosmetatou 2002: 400-413.
11 2011.
12 2007.
13 1995.
16 2004.
17 1967.
they were at conveying messages and whether or not these messages were understood. These will be discussed below.

**Ancient Sources**

As discussed above, this thesis relies primarily on coins, inscriptions, portraiture and public buildings to examine the public image of the later Severans. This is supplemented with the written works of Cassius Dio, Herodian and the *Historia Augusta*. Each of these sources must be examined and discussed to understand how they are used and some of the problems and benefits of using them in relation to public image.

**Written Sources**

There are three major surviving works that discuss the lives of the later Severans. These are Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*, Herodian’s *History of the Empire from the Death of Marcus* and the *Historia Augusta*. Cassius Dio was writing contemporaneously with the Severans, while Herodian was composing his work in the 240s or very early 250s AD, and although the date of the composition of the *Historia Augusta* is heavily disputed, it is generally thought to be in the fourth century AD. These three works provide the basic historical framework within which this thesis is situated. In terms of the public image of the Severans, these ancient sources are somewhat limited given that they reflect how the emperors were perceived by one person or at best, one person representing one group of people. In considering the portrayal of the Severans in these works, we need to be attuned to the moral and political agendas of the authors and their background.

Cassius Dio was born in AD 163/164 and died in AD 235, the same year as Alexander Severus.18 Dio was a Roman Senator who came from Bithynia in Asia Minor and wrote in Greek.19 Dio wrote his *Roman History* in 80 books, which covered roughly 1400 years of history. The preparation of his work began in AD 197, under the reign of Septimius Severus, and he spent ten years collecting notes before taking twelve years to complete writing his history, finishing in AD 219 during the reign Elagabalus.20 The work of Cassius Dio has been the subject of significant scholarly research, and this thesis uses this research as the foundation from which to view his work in relation to the Severan emperors.21 Dio’s work is extremely critical of the reigns of Caracalla and Elagabalus in particular. His account of the reign of Alexander Severus is brief and fragmentary, but it is

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19 Millar 1964: 5.
20 Dio *Roman History* 72.3.5; Barnes 1984: 241; Millar 1964: 30. There were also subsequent additions to this.
generally more favourable towards Alexander.\textsuperscript{22} In Dio’s work, Caracalla is portrayed as an emperor shunning and even killing members of the Senate.\textsuperscript{23} This, however, is not so straightforward. Davenport has examined the relationship between Cassius Dio and Caracalla and other members of the Senate and found that Dio’s work is not representative of the Senate as a whole but reflects his own personal relationship and feelings towards Caracalla.\textsuperscript{24} It is for this reason that we should be particularly wary of Dio’s account of Caracalla as his writing is heavily influenced by his own rejection by the emperor and attitudes towards Caracalla.\textsuperscript{25} This will be explored further in Chapter Two. Dio is also particularly critical of Elagabalus, referring to him as ‘the false Antoninus.’\textsuperscript{26} Dio’s account of the reign of Elagabalus is particularly unflattering, but, as will be seen in Chapter Three, his own personal views do not represent the views of the Empire. The epigraphic evidence, at least, attests to the emperor’s popularity around the empire. It is not the purpose of this thesis to prove or disprove the literary accounts of the later Severans, but, in the case of Cassius Dio’s work in particular, it is important to remember it is representative of the views of just one man, which is separate to the public image that the later Severans were trying to present.

Herodian was writing after the death of Alexander Severus, during the 240s or early 250s.\textsuperscript{27} Herodian, who also wrote in Greek, produced a Roman history written in eight books, which covers the period from the death of Marcus Aurelius and ends with the beginning of Gordian III’s reign, using the work of Cassius Dio amongst other sources including contemporary art and classical literature.\textsuperscript{28} Herodian came from a lower class, but wrote for the Greek elite, often treating Rome as something foreign and in need of explanation.\textsuperscript{29} Herodian’s work too has come under fire from scholars, Barnes and Syme in particular have criticised the quality of his work.\textsuperscript{30} However, Herodian’s work is also seen as an alternative to Dio, providing information independently from the Roman History as well as the Historia Augusta.\textsuperscript{31} Bowersock in particular has written briefly on the merits of using Herodian in particular as a source for Elagabalus.\textsuperscript{32} There is a significant difference between the accounts of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus with those provided by Cassius Dio as a result of the differing personal views of the two authors. Icks argues that Cassius Dio set out to make Elagabalus look bad so that Alexander Severus (whom he favoured and was favoured by the

\textsuperscript{22} Dio Roman History 80.5.1 Cassius Dio mentioned that he was honoured by Alexander Severus by being appointed to consul for the second time and by the emperor personally meeting the expenditures of his office.

\textsuperscript{23} Dio Roman History 78.1.1-3; 78.17.1-4.

\textsuperscript{24} Davenport 2012a: 796-815; Sillar 2001a.

\textsuperscript{25} Davenport 2012a: 796-815.

\textsuperscript{26} Dio Roman History 80.1.1.

\textsuperscript{27} Sidebottom: 1997: 271-276.


\textsuperscript{29} Sidebottom 1998: 2827.

\textsuperscript{30} Barnes 1978; Syme 1971, Syme 1983.

\textsuperscript{31} Bowersock 1975: 234; Sidebottom 1997; Sidebottom 1998: 2787.

\textsuperscript{32} Bowersock 1975: 230-234.
emperor in return) looked better in comparison. Alföldy has suggested that Herodian realised the so-called ‘crisis’ of the third century was occurring and was attempting to analyse it, however this view has been refuted by Sidebottom who argues that the ‘crisis’ may not have actually existed and is generally a construct used by modern scholars to label the events occurring during the third century. Instead, he argues that Herodian was more concerned with the character of the ruler (whether or not he possessed the Greek paideia), which in turn determined the ‘political stability of the empire and the morality of its subjects.’ Historical accuracy seems to have been sacrificed at times in order to explore the emperor’s character. Sidebottom best describes the work of Herodian as ‘like a good modern historical novelist, and thus we should consider him, as the ancients did, a skilled exponent of a valid and enjoyable type of historical discourse.’

The Historia Augusta is quite a contentious source, and can be quite problematic. It presents itself as a collection of biographies of Roman emperors and usurpers in thirty books from AD 117 to 284 and claims to be written by six different authors (Spartianus, Capitolinus, Lampridius, Gallicanus, Pollio and Vopiscus), composed during the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine I, evidenced by dedications to the emperors. However, the prevailing scholarly view is that one author wrote it in the fourth century AD, sometime after 395. Thomson suggests that because the Historia Augusta is written as a series of biographies, it influenced the ‘literary culture of the Roman elite in the last decades of the fourth century,’ of whom its target audience was. Syme identifies some of the many problems associated with this particular work, labelling it as ‘dishonest.’ A Latin source is used in the earlier biographies and the work up to the end of the reign of Caracalla has been described as accurate. It is with the reign of Macrinus that the quality of the work changes, using Herodian as a source (although he is not mentioned by name) for a few facts, but it is believed that the reigns of later emperors including the Life of Alexander Severus is almost purely fictitious. The Historia Augusta, therefore, is primarily used earlier in this thesis, but with caution.

Each of the ancient sources has merits and flaws. Because of the nature of this thesis, these sources are used as an historical framework rather than as an indicator of the public image of the emperor or

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33 Icks 2011: 79-81.
34 de Blois 2002.
38 Benario 1961; Syme 1971a, 1971b; Thomson 2012.
39 Dessau 1889; Thomson 2012: 53.
42 Barnes 1978: 38; Syme 1983: 15.
being representative of the general opinion of the Severans at the time. It is not the purpose of this thesis to either prove or disprove any of these literary accounts, but to use them as a guide to events occurring in the third century AD.

Material Sources

The major source of information for this thesis comes from the material remains of the Severan period, in particular the coins, inscriptions, portraiture and buildings of the later Severan emperors. These materials have long been used in research into the imperial image of emperors, as discussed under Methodology, but the problems and benefits of these sources will be discussed now.

Coins are used quite heavily in this thesis as they provide a wealth of information into the imperial ideology of the later Severans and convey messages about how they wished to be seen. However, coins as a source have also been the subject of much debate. This thesis makes use in large part of the Roman Imperial Coinage to examine coin types. The work of Mattingly and Sydenham in the *Roman Imperial Coinage*\(^44\) is invaluable, if somewhat dated at this point in time, providing a description and date (if known) of coins minted in Rome. The RIC here is used to examine the portrait types on the coins, but perhaps more importantly, the images and messages minted on the reverse side. The use of the RIC in this thesis is purely qualitative. In addition to this, more recent quantitative studies and coin hoards have been used to determine the frequency of coin types outlined in the RIC. Of importance to this thesis is the quantitative work undertaken by Noreña,\(^45\) and Rowan\(^46\) from coin hoards, as well as Manders,\(^47\) who generates data from the *Roman Imperial Coinage*. This thesis also examines provincial coinage of the later Severans, and the University of South Florida's online database ‘Severan Provincial Coinage’\(^48\) and the Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum\(^49\) and ‘Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum Volume V: Pertinax to Elagabalus’\(^50\) are excellent resources for later Severan coins minted in the provinces. There are of course problems with using coins as a source, particularly, the fact that we are limited by what has been found to date. Quantitative and even qualitative studies can be hampered by the fact that we have not uncovered 100% of the coins minted, plus some of them were melted down and re-cast, further limiting the evidence available to us now.

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\(^{44}\) 1936.
\(^{45}\) 2011b.
\(^{46}\) 2012.
\(^{47}\) 2012.
\(^{48}\) 2012.
\(^{49}\) Poole 1964-65.
\(^{50}\) 1962.
Despite the large number of studies into Roman coinage and their prominence as a source in many publications, there are still many questions that have been raised in regards to the usefulness of these as evidence. Concerns in using imperial coinage as a source (especially in terms of public image) relate to the uncertainty in knowing who decided on the images to be minted on coins, whether or not the general public could read, interpret and understand the images and writing on the coins, and whether or not they even paid any attention to or cared what was minted on the coins and by whom. Historians have carried out significant research on the messages on Roman imperial coins, particularly the intelligibility of these messages and their use by emperors.\(^{51}\) Whilst it is important to be aware of and acknowledge the debates surrounding these issues, this thesis aims to examine the public image transmitted by the emperor himself or those acting on his behalf, and despite the debate surrounding coinage in general, we can say with certainty that these coins fall within that scope. Although this thesis will reveal that the reception of these coins demonstrates a level of understanding by some in the empire, the general intelligibility of these coins is not the focus of this topic.

Considerable work has also been carried out on who was in charge of choosing the images minted on coins.\(^{52}\) As this thesis will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, there is a considerable amount of evidence that the emperor did indeed have some input as to what was minted on his coins. However, even if this was not the case, those overseeing the Imperial mint were at a very basic level adhering to the imperial ideology as established by the emperor and his family.\(^{53}\) This fact is even more apparent when significant shifts are clearly seen between the public image of each of the Severan emperors on coins during this period. Levick argues that “types were intended to appeal, not to the public, but to the man whose portrait as a rule occupied the obverse of the coins: they were a public tribute to a great individual.”\(^{54}\) Furthermore, she believes that those in charge of the mint (the servants or paid officials of the Princeps) “were concerned with past achievements, not with future destiny,” showing the emperor what he had already achieved.\(^{55}\) In this sense, the coin types were chosen in order to flatter the emperor, whether he noticed or not. This view is supported by Cheung, who suggests that, following on from the Republican system of minting coins, it was the Princeps who appointed the monetales. These monetales, it seems, would usually rise to consulship roughly ten years later, rapidly moving up the cursus honorum. These men would then


\(^{52}\) Paul & Ierardi 1999.


\(^{54}\) Levick 1982: 107.

use their position to select coin types which would be pleasing to the emperor.\textsuperscript{56} Sutherland is of the opinion that “the ceaseless propagation of…types was intended to conciliate opinion or that…choice directly reflects official mentality.”\textsuperscript{57} It would therefore appear that even if the emperor were not in direct control of the coin types being minted, they would have been selected in order to appeal to the Princeps himself as well as complement his official imperial ideology.

Epigraphic evidence is another major source used in this thesis to determine the public image of the emperor and also how this image was received. Primarily this thesis uses works such as the \textit{L’Année épigraphique}, \textit{Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum} and the \textit{Roman Inscriptions of Britain}. These sources include inscriptions from a multitude of different monuments from a variety of provinces as well as Rome itself. Because of this variety of inscriptions dedicated to or in honour of the emperor, both official and unofficial inscriptions are examined here to determine the reception of the emperor and how this aligns with their official public image. Inscriptions here come from milestones, letters, statue bases, temples and other buildings, arches and other monuments. The works of Bodel\textsuperscript{58} and Cooley\textsuperscript{59} provide a base from which to understand and study Imperial epigraphy, while Alföldy\textsuperscript{60} and Chaniotis\textsuperscript{61} discuss inscriptions as representations of imperial power.

Portraiture is perhaps the biggest source we have as to the emperors’ physical public image, if not entirely accurate of their features, they at least tell us the way in which the emperor wished his appearance to be viewed by the empire.\textsuperscript{62} Official portraits were made in Rome and were used as the basis for the portraits on the obverse of the emperor’s coinage. Surviving portraits of the emperor are mostly marble statues, but there are a number of other smaller items (such as intaglios) depicting the emperor, often with his family, which will be examined in this thesis. Local artists in the provinces also copied these official portraits, and for many these images would have been the only reference those in the empire had to the emperor’s physical appearance. These portraits do not have to be completely realistic to be of use, as they nevertheless comprised quite a large and important component of the emperor’s public image. Different styles of the time, as well as influences from previous emperors can help us to determine why the emperor chose to style himself in a particular way. Fittschen\textsuperscript{63} and Ando\textsuperscript{64} have discussed the circulation of imperial portraiture

\begin{itemize}
\item Cheung 1998: 59.
\item Sutherland 1959: 55.
\item 2001.
\item 2012.
\item 2003.
\item 2003.
\item Stewart 2003: 79.
\item 2010.
\end{itemize}
and its role in supporting imperial ideology - particularly that it was these images which were primarily seen by the people both of Rome and further afield in the provinces.\textsuperscript{65}

The last category of archaeological evidence to be examined in this thesis is the public buildings constructed, restored or repaired by the later Severans. It was not only expected that the emperor would carry out a building programme, but it is also representative of the emperors’ public benefaction.\textsuperscript{66} These buildings were located both in Rome as well as throughout the provinces, and would therefore have been used by a huge quantity of people across the Empire. The extent of the public building programme under a particular emperor, as well as the types of buildings constructed or restored, is demonstrative of his priorities and the way he indirectly interacted with the population of the Empire.\textsuperscript{67}

This archaeological evidence is the primary source of information into the public image of the emperor, providing us with a direct link to the way the emperor portrayed himself during his reign without the bias which imposed in written historical works. These written sources are, however, important as a historical grounding to the Severan period.

**Modern Scholarship**

As discussed above, recent academic scholarship concerning the Severans has tended to have a focus on the Severan women\textsuperscript{68} and Septimius Severus himself\textsuperscript{69} whilst on the whole, the later Severan men have been comparatively neglected. Works such as those by Icks,\textsuperscript{70} De Arrizabalaga Y Prado,\textsuperscript{71} Hopkins,\textsuperscript{72} and Thompson\textsuperscript{73} do cover the individual lives of the some of the later Severans, but do not incorporate or examine their public image to the same degree that it has been dealt with in studies of the Severan women and Septimius Severus, and it is this gap in current scholarship that my thesis aims to fill, focussing on a systematic study of all the later Severan men together. The exception to this is Baharal’s 1996 monograph on the literary and archaeological evidence of Severan propaganda. This work is, at the outset, very similar to what this thesis aims to achieve. However, this is a problematic work in many ways and has therefore been omitted

\textsuperscript{64} 2000: 206-274.
\textsuperscript{65} As well as the images of the emperor on coin types, which were, of course, based on portraits of the emperor.
\textsuperscript{66} Veyne 1990; Ando 2000.
\textsuperscript{67} Veyne 1990.
\textsuperscript{68} Baharal 1992; Keltanen 2002; Kosmetatou 2002; Levick 2007; Lusnia 1995; Rowan 2011.
\textsuperscript{69} Barnes, 1967; Bingham & Simonson, 2005; Birley, 1999; Brilliant, 1967; Grant 1996; Lusnia 1989; Lusnia, 2004; Rubin 1980.
\textsuperscript{70} 2012.
\textsuperscript{71} 2010.
\textsuperscript{72} 1907.
\textsuperscript{73} 1982.
from this study as a key reference. Baharal’s work, although apparently aiming to discuss the propaganda regime (which she spends some time defining in the introduction) of the Severan period, in reality argue for just one aspect of this reign (the gens Aurelia) and overlooks the rules of Caracalla and Geta. In theory, Barahal’s methodology is sound, but her execution is lacking. This is particularly evident in her numismatic analysis, which could have been helped greatly with the aid of quantitative data. A number of important modern studies have been carried out on the later Severans, on public image and imperial ideology in general and it is around these works that my thesis is situated, which I will discuss below.

To date, one aspect of the later Severans in which many studies have been conducted is the examination of imperial coinage. These works provide an excellent starting point from which to take the study of Severan coinage in terms of public image further. Works by Noreña, Rowan and Manders are particularly notable, and to a lesser extent, Rowan, Icks and more generally Duncan-Jones. Rowan’s book entitled *Under Divine Auspices: Divine Ideology and the Visualisation of Imperial Power in the Severan Period* explores religious iconography on Severan coinage and how deities were used to communicate and negotiate imperial power. Using data from coin hoards, Rowan provides a thorough examination of the religious aspect of coinage under the later Severans, but excludes a comprehensive analysis of other aspects of public imagery. The work of Carlos Noreña primarily examines imperial ideals as displayed on coinage from data obtained from coin hoards. This quantitative approach provides measurable changes in the period AD 69-235 -- something not evident from simply examining the *Roman Imperial Coinage*. Manders takes a similar approach, utilising coin hoards to examine patterns in iconography on Roman coins from the third century AD in a general sense before investigating case studies of Caracalla, Decius and Gallienus. Both the general patterns as well as the case study of Caracalla provide useful information, but her study is somewhat lacking in terms of her analysis. Manders draws certain interpretations that are not backed up by her figures, which come from the *RIC* only, however she does provide some interesting and useful data. Rowan has written in depth on the coinage of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus and their respective religious iconography. Whilst this is a considerable aspect of imperial coins and those of the later Severans,
this can again be taken further by comparing those coins minted centrally in Rome with those minted further abroad in the provinces. Provincial coins have also been overlooked in studies to an extent, however the University of South Florida’s online database ‘Severan Provincial Coinage’ and the Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum\textsuperscript{83} are excellent resources for later Severan coins minted in the provinces. Additionally, Howgego \textit{et al.}\textsuperscript{84} and Lonfellow’s\textsuperscript{85} work on coinage and identity in the provinces, Hill’s work on monuments on coins,\textsuperscript{86} and more generally Ando’s\textsuperscript{87} study into imperial ideology and provincial loyalty have provided a good background to the study of provincial coins in the Roman Empire.

In terms of portraits, the work by Wiggers and Wegner\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Caracalla, Geta, Plautilla, Macrinus bis Balbinus} provides an excellent catalogue of the portraits of Caracalla and Geta, including a description of the portrait, date if known, inscriptions located with the portrait, provenance and where it is currently located. However, the works of Varner,\textsuperscript{89} Wood,\textsuperscript{90} Hannestad\textsuperscript{91} and Kleiner\textsuperscript{92} position the sculpture of the later Severans within a broader context of Imperial portraiture, examining stylistic differences and in the case of Varner, how portraits were altered or mutilated. It is here that the \textit{damnatio memoriae} carried out after the deaths of Geta and Elagabalus is particularly evident. These works have been heavily used in this thesis, providing analysis of the portrait types of the later Severans and how they are situated within the wider field of imperial portraiture. Bonanno\textsuperscript{93} too examines portraits up until the age of Septimius Severus, providing a good history of portraiture and reliefs prior to the later Severans. Hijmans,\textsuperscript{94} Pollini,\textsuperscript{95} Leander Touati\textsuperscript{96} and Askew\textsuperscript{97} focus more explicitly on specific portraits of Caracalla and are fairly comprehensive, providing detailed descriptions and discussion concerning the influences on these portraits. What is lacking in these works and more generally, however, is how these portraits fit in with other aspects of the imperial image and the spread of portraiture across the Empire. These studies do not examine where these statues were located and for what purpose. Højte\textsuperscript{98} has

\textsuperscript{83} Poole 1964-65.
\textsuperscript{84} 2005.
\textsuperscript{85} 2011.
\textsuperscript{86} 1989.
\textsuperscript{87} 2000.
\textsuperscript{88} 1971.
\textsuperscript{89} 2004.
\textsuperscript{90} 1986.
\textsuperscript{91} 1986.
\textsuperscript{92} 1992.
\textsuperscript{93} 1976.
\textsuperscript{94} 1994.
\textsuperscript{95} 2005.
\textsuperscript{96} 1991.
\textsuperscript{97} 1931.
\textsuperscript{98} 2005.
identified statue bases with surviving inscriptions from Augustus to Commodus and mapped out their geographical as well as temporal distribution. This methodology in linking inscriptions with statue bases can be applied to some extent to my work in the later Severan period.

In terms of the Severan building programme, the Severan dynasty was responsible for extensive changes to the city of Rome. The later Severans commissioned new constructions as well as restorations, and the allocation of funds to public buildings and restorations by the emperor for the people forms an integral part of my thesis. Benario’s\(^99\) work concerning the public building programme and restorations covers most of the restorations and buildings in Rome by Septimius Severus and the later Severans. Benario provides a table of the year, the monument and a brief discussion of the work on that monument attributed to one of the Severan emperors. Although useful, this work is somewhat limited in that it only relates to restorations and constructions within Rome, and not in the greater Empire. It also relies heavily on the *Historia Augusta* and the work of Platner & Ashby,\(^100\) which is also somewhat out of date and incomplete. Inscriptions and coins will provide additional evidence of the building programme within Rome and throughout the Empire. In addition to these, the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*\(^101\) provides discussions of up to date archaeological discoveries, which is used primarily in the third chapter of this thesis in order to determine the accuracy of accounts provided in the literary sources concerning the Severan building programme. Wilson\(^102\) too presents an overview of urban development in the Severan empire. Wallace-Hadrill\(^103\) examines the streets of Rome as a representation of imperial power and the ideas in this study form the basis of why the construction or restoration of public monuments was an important part of the emperor’s public image. General works such as those by Coarelli,\(^104\) Richardson\(^105\) and Claridge\(^106\) provide useful guides in which to situate the buildings of the later Severans in the archaeology of buildings in Rome and have also been used heavily in regard to the buildings of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus in Rome. More specifically, work related to the constructions undertaken by later Severans is Janet DeLaine’s work on the Baths of Caracalla.\(^107\) As the largest construction undertaken in the later Severan period, DeLaine’s work on the construction and economics of this project, as well as the design and decoration, is invaluable to this thesis.

\(^{99}\) 1958.
\(^{100}\) 1929.
\(^{101}\) Steinby 1993.
\(^{102}\) 2007.
\(^{103}\) 2003.
\(^{104}\) 2007.
\(^{105}\) 1992.
\(^{106}\) 1998.
\(^{107}\) 1987; 1997
Very little work has been done directly regarding inscriptions relating to the Severans, although they are often used to support modern studies. Sources such as the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, *L’Année Épigraphique* and *Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae* catalogue the majority of inscriptions in Rome as well as the Empire. As discussed earlier, Bodel\textsuperscript{108} and Cooley\textsuperscript{109} provide an excellent overview of epigraphic evidence and the use of such evidence in modern studies and Flower examines the notion of *damnatio memoriae* in epigraphy.\textsuperscript{110} Inscriptions are particularly important for studying how the emperor was represented to the public through titulature and achievements, but also by looking at the reception of the emperor from inscriptions dedicated by the people. The distribution and context of these inscriptions is equally important as the content of the inscriptions themselves, and Noreña\textsuperscript{111} has examined the ideological unification of Roman imperial ideals through inscriptions across communities in the Roman West. Additionally, works by Manders and Hekster\textsuperscript{112} have examined the position and reception of the emperor across the Empire in the third century AD through inscriptions and various studies of theirs feature prominently throughout this thesis. The reception of the later Severan emperors across the provinces can be determined to some extent through the use of this epigraphic evidence. Højte\textsuperscript{113} provides information on the identification of statue base inscriptions and the way in which they shape the imperial image in the provinces and his methodology will be valuable to this thesis in terms of imperial authority and provincial reception.

Finally, a number of important works on imperial ideology are useful in placing the Severan’s public image in context with previous and later emperors. Of note, Fergus Millar’s *The Emperor in the Roman World*\textsuperscript{114} and Ando’s *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*\textsuperscript{115} provide the very basic foundations in examining imperial ideology and the role of the Emperor. From here, more specific works into previous and later emperors have been used to more specifically pinpoint both the influence on and by the Severans.\textsuperscript{116} In particular, a number of works into the Antonine dynasty have been key in identifying major changes from the second century AD and into the third.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{108} 2001.
\textsuperscript{109} 2012.
\textsuperscript{110} 2001.
\textsuperscript{111} 2011b.
\textsuperscript{112} 2011.
\textsuperscript{113} 2005.
\textsuperscript{114} 1997.
\textsuperscript{115} 2000.
\textsuperscript{116} Harries 2012; Horster 2006; Manders 2006; Shaw 2010.
These major studies provide the basis for my thesis and provide a framework within which to conduct an examination of the public image of the later Severans.

Thesis Outline
This thesis will examine the public image of the later Severans in three generally chronological sections. Chapter One examines Caracalla and Geta under Septimius Severus; Chapter Two discusses Caracalla’s sole rule; and Chapter Three analyses the public images of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. The reigns of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus are examined together, as they share many of the same themes and the same forces drive their imperial ideology. The public image of the later Severans can overall be seen to be one of change and continuity, focusing on legitimisation, security and public benefaction. This is achieved by using long established methods of communicating traditional imperial ideals and virtues, but with certain elements of these emphasised as reactions to changes occurring at the end of the second century and beginning of the third century AD. In many ways, the public image of the later Severans was quite traditional, drawing on elements used by emperors for the past two centuries. In other ways, they were quite innovative, creating new ways of achieving their desired image, which was highly influential on the public image of later emperors.

Chapter One will examine the public image of Caracalla and Geta under Septimius Severus, from AD 195 to AD 211. It primarily examines the main influences on the public image of the two young emperors. Throughout this period, both Caracalla and Geta were Caesars, and then eventually co-Augusti with their father. During this period, their public image was largely controlled by Septimius Severus and was a reaction to the way in which he came into power and Septimius’ own background. Because of this, it was largely focussed on the legitimisation of Septimius Severus’ rule and the establishment of his two sons as future emperors. During the reign of Septimius with his sons, the iconography of ‘the heir’ became more pronounced, influencing the public image of later Caesars both in the Severan period and afterwards. This concept was achieved through the title, honours and imagery associated with the princeps iuventutis, the imagery of the jug and the lituus on coins of the two young men, and also the portraits of the two as Caesars. Finally, the honorific epithet nobilissimus given to Geta will be examined. This was first given to the emperor Commodus, but after the time of Geta the term nobilissimus Caesar became standard terminology for the Caesar later into the third century AD.

Chapter Two will explore the public image of Caracalla’s sole rule from AD 212 to his murder in AD 217. Caracalla’s public image during this period was a response to the political and dynastic
situation he found himself in following the deaths of his father and brother. This image will be considered through an examination of the idea of Caracalla as a soldier emperor; analysis of the religious iconography or ‘divine support’ on Caracalla’s coinage; the interpretation of the domus divina by those in the provinces; and an examination of the emphasis placed on Liberalitas during his reign. During his sole rule, Caracalla’s public image diverged significantly from that under his father. In many ways, Caracalla relied on standard methods to promote himself and his rule, but the way he achieved this was somewhat original and Caracalla’s portraiture remained the most influential part of his public image for soldier-emperors later in the third century.

Lastly, Chapter Three of this thesis looks at the public image of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, from AD 218 to AD 235, following the brief rule of Macrinus. Family and dynasty saw a re-emergence under both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus and was a conscious effort on the part of the two emperors to bring this image back from the time of Septimius Severus after it had ceased to be a major part of Caracalla’s rule. This decision was a direct result of Macrinus becoming emperor after Caracalla and can be viewed as a public response to his actions. Later emperors would also use this strategy in order to give stability to their rule in a time of great unrest. The gods and virtues favoured and emphasised by the two emperors will then be examined as this played quite a large aspect of their public image. Although divine support and the promotion of the emperor’s virtues was standard for any emperor, both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus displayed their own personal choices in doing so. Finally, this chapter will examine major actions taken by these two emperors throughout their reigns, and the reception across the empire. In particular, this will focus on the building programme under both emperors. These programmes will be examined and how the people in Rome used these buildings will be considered. Inscriptions examined from across the empire indicate that both emperors were favourably received and that aspects of their public image put forth were received and replicated by those both in Rome and in the provinces. These programmes are representative of both emperors public benefaction, used for winning the support of the public.
Chapter One: Caracalla and Geta under Septimius Severus

Introduction
This chapter aims to examine the public image of Caracalla and Geta both as Caesars and Augusti under Septimius Severus in the period AD 195-211. It will be argued that the public image of Caracalla and Geta under their father was largely focussed on the legitimisation of Septimius Severus’ rule and the establishment of the imperial family as a new dynasty. This image was achieved through an emphasis on Septimius’ two sons as future emperors as part of a larger family unit. During this time, the iconography of the imperial heirs bearing the title Caesar became more pronounced, influencing the public image of later Caesars both in the Severan period and later into the third century AD. This public image permeated the empire through the use of coins, inscriptions, portraits and public architecture, both centrally controlled in Rome as well as received and transmitted by those in the provinces.

Firstly, the idea of a new dynasty created under Septimius Severus, dominated by the legacy of the Antonine dynasty, will be examined. Septimius Severus was heavily influenced by the Antonine dynasty: adopting himself as the son of Marcus Aurelius, employing similar portrait types (as seen in Figure 1.) and emphasising the imperial family and the dynastic concept. This is particularly seen in references to Antonine portrait types, and an emphasis on family through public monuments and inscriptions such as the Arches of Septimius Severus in Rome and Leptis Magna, the Arch of the Argentarii in Rome and a relief on a theatre in Hierapolis. Furthermore, this new dynasty and its focus on family was also articulated through the minting of coins and appearances of the imperial family on smaller, miscellaneous objects such as cameos, intaglios and even a bread mould. Scholars have long recognised the importance of the Antonine legacy in shaping the public image of Septimius Severus and his sons, Caracalla and Geta. This chapter will also demonstrate how this continued to influence emperors later in the third century AD who sought to emulate and associate themselves with the last relatively stable imperial dynasty.
Figure 1. Portrait of Septimius Severus from the British Museum.\textsuperscript{118}

Secondly, this chapter will examine the public image of Caracalla and Geta as ‘the heir’ to the imperial throne— that is, the way in which Septimius Severus began a visual framework to establish and promote his sons as the next Caesars and Augusti. This concept will be investigated through the title, honours and imagery associated with the \textit{princeps iuventutis}; the imagery of the jug and the \textit{lituus} on the coins of the two young men; and also the portraits of the two as ‘Caesars’. During the reign of Septimius Severus with Caracalla and Geta, the significance and meaning of the title \textit{princeps iuventutis} evolved from the time of Augustus, moving from signifying the leader of the equestrian order with associated privileges and responsibilities to be representative of the \textit{Caesar}, devoid of any of its previous duties and honours. The change in this title to be synonymous with the \textit{Caesar} and the imagery associated with this during the period of Caracalla and Geta, remained in use in the post-Severan period of the third century. Similarly, under Septimius Severus the imagery of the priestly symbols of the jug and \textit{lituus} on coins transformed from initially being representative of religious offices to represent the emperor’s heir, who bore the title of Caesar. Furthermore, the portraits of Augustus’ heirs Gaius and Lucius Caesar heavily influenced the portraits of Caracalla and Geta as Caesars, and it will be seen that these in turn positively influenced later emperors.

Lastly, this chapter will examine the honorific epithet \textit{nobilissimus Caesar} given to Geta. This epithet was first given to Commodus under his father, Marcus Aurelius. Although this honorific

\textsuperscript{118} Photo by author 2013.
epithet was never given to Caracalla, it was heavily used in inscriptions to Geta, particularly in the provinces. Following Geta’s time as Caesar, the term *nobilissimus Caesar* was frequently bestowed upon future emperors. This section will examine why the honorific epithet was given to Geta but not Caracalla and also why it continued to be used by later Caesars. The minting of coins bearing the legend *nobilitas*, the use of *nobilissimus* in official inscriptions, and also the reception of this term in the provinces will be analysed.

In order to understand the reasoning behind Septimius Severus’ decision to publicise his rule and that of his sons in this particular way, the circumstances behind Septimius’ rise to power must first be explained briefly. It is primarily this background which caused Septimius to emphasise his family as a new dynasty and to rely on the public image of the Antonines for much of this.

Septimius Severus was born during the reign of Antoninus Pius in AD 145 in Leptis Magna, Tripolitania— a wealthy Roman province in modern-day Libya.\textsuperscript{119} Septimius came from one of the leading equestrian families in the town, the son of Publius Septimius Geta and Fulvia Pia, however his father did not hold a particularly distinguished public office in Leptis Magna.\textsuperscript{120} After the death of his first wife, Septimius Severus married Julia Domna in 185, a woman from a prominent family in Syria. They had their first child, Lucius Septimius Bassianus (later known as Caracalla), in 188 and Publius Septimius Geta, the second son of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna, was born in 189, just one year later.\textsuperscript{121} In AD 193, twelve days after the murder of Pertinax, Septimius was proclaimed emperor at Carnuntum as the ‘avenger’ of Pertinax, whose name he had then assumed.\textsuperscript{122} It was at this point that Septimius began to legitimise his claim to be emperor. Didius Julianus had ‘bought’ the throne, whilst Clodius Albinus too had been proclaimed emperor by the army in the West and Pescennius Niger was proclaimed emperor in Syria. With the support of all sixteen Rhine and Danube legions he marched on Rome, securing the support of Clodius Albinus by granting him the title *Caesar*. By the first of June, 60 miles north of Rome, Septimius Severus was recognised as emperor by the Senate, Pertinax’s successor Didius Julianus was murdered, and Septimius Severus entered Rome without opposition on the ninth of June 193. Severus then moved against Pescennius Niger, and he was defeated by Severan generals by the end of the same year. In 195, Septimius declared himself the son of the deified Marcus and brother of the deified Commodus.\textsuperscript{123} At this point, Septimius also renamed his eldest son Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and made him Caesar, replacing Clodius Albinus. He also gave his wife Julia Domna the title *mater*

\textsuperscript{119} Birley 1999: 1.  
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{121} Birley 1999: 76-77.  
\textsuperscript{122} Cassius Dio *Roman History* 74.17.3-5.  
\textsuperscript{123} Cassius Dio *Roman History* 76.7.
castrorum (mother of the camp), a title previously only ever given to Faustina the Younger and seen quite prominently minted on coins.\textsuperscript{124} This clearly dynastic move by Septimius led his ally Albinus to rebel and cross to Gaul with the British Army, but was defeated by Severus at Lugdunum in February 197. During his reign, Septimius Severus spent all but 4 of his 18 years of power away from Rome.\textsuperscript{125} Having fought for the position of emperor, it was then necessary for Septimius Severus to legitimise and consolidate his power and claim to the throne continually from the time of Pertinax’s murder.\textsuperscript{126} Initially, this was achieved through claiming himself to be the avenger of Pertinax, but then shifted with the support of the army as well as adopting himself into the Antonine Dynasty, and it was this final dynastic move which characterised his rule. In 198, Caracalla was named Augustus, and ruled jointly with Septimius Severus until 211. Geta was appointed Caesar in 198 and Augustus in 209 before he was killed by his own brother in December 211.

**Family and Dynasty**

Since the Augustan period, the imperial family had been shown publically with the emperor in many different forms as a way of promoting heirs and reinforcing the notion of a dynasty. Claiming an imperial family helped with claims of legitimacy for an emperor, whether he was adopted or the natural son of the previous emperor. From the Republican times to the imperial period, the importance of adoption versus having a natural heir varied. Legally, there was almost no distinction between adopted children and those born within a marriage.\textsuperscript{127} Early in the imperial period, adopted emperors were seen as being superior as it was seen as choosing the best person to succeed. Hekster views this as a ‘self-imposed usurpation’ which brought stability to the Empire.\textsuperscript{128} However, later into the second and third centuries, the notion of dynasty and family became stronger, especially with the introduction of child emperors.\textsuperscript{129} By the time of the Severan period, ‘the necessity to form part of an older tradition, to find dynastic popularity with the people and the armies, must surely have been of greater importance.’\textsuperscript{130} Septimius Severus, therefore, placed himself and his family within a dynastic framework. When a dynasty came to an end, a new dynasty would begin and often claim non-existent links to their predecessor and take the title ‘Caesar’ or ‘Augustus’.\textsuperscript{131} Septimius Severus was no exception to this, claiming himself to be the son of Marcus Aurelius and the brother of Commodus, a fact which was joked about by Auspex, recorded by Dio as saying ‘I congratulate

\textsuperscript{124} RIC IV Septimius Severus 567, RIC IV Septimius Severus 568, RIC IV Septimius Severus 860.
\textsuperscript{125} For a full background to Septimius Severus and his reign, see Birley 1999, for Julia Domna, see Langford 2013 and Levick 2007.
\textsuperscript{126} Hannestad 1986: 250.
\textsuperscript{127} Hekster 2014: 381.
\textsuperscript{128} Hekster 2001: 38.
\textsuperscript{129} Hekster 2001: 44.
\textsuperscript{130} Hekster 2001: 49.
\textsuperscript{131} Hekster 2014: 381.
you, Caesar, upon finding a father.'

Appearing through statue groups, monumental architecture, on coins, through inscriptions, as well as on smaller items such as cameos, intaglios and other objects, the imperial family would thus appear in one form or another to people of different status and from different regions across the empire. Displaying the imperial family and their heritage in such a prominent way was one method of legitimising the emperor’s rule. Furthermore, displaying the emperor alongside his sons and future emperors to empire communicated the security of the emperor’s rule and therefore the Empire itself. This idea was also displayed through Concordia, or harmony amongst the family. The appearance of the imperial family in public ways, therefore, is neither new nor unprecedented. However, the extent to which the notion of a dynasty is emphasised under Septimius Severus is certainly greater than previous emperors. Septimius Severus relentlessly promoted his two sons along with Julia Domna as a family unity. Appearing through a range of different media, the imperial family was important to the rule of Septimius Severus and his sons as a way of legitimising their rule and also conveying a sense of security to the Empire. This influenced later emperors of the third century AD who were attempting to give the public a sense of security in a time of great upheaval.

Of course, by the Severan period the depiction of the imperial family in public was a long held and recognised tradition. In his speech, the second century orator Aelius Aristides, identified that ‘one city, the first and greatest, has the whole world under one authority and rule, and one family gives the laws, and governors come to us year by year.’ Here, rather than Aristides naming the emperor, he speaks of the oikos, meaning house or family, being the centre of power. At this stage, therefore, the power of the imperial family, and not just the emperor, is recognised. This power and recognition of power is seen through physical manifestations across the empire in many different forms.

This power of the imperial family figured prominently in state art from the time of Augustus. At this point Augustus was not aiming to create a dynasty, but rather he was using his family as a resource in order to consolidate his position. Therefore, the family of Augustus, particularly the

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132 Cassius Dio Roman History 77.9.4.
133 For example the now lost statuary group of the domus Augusta thought to commemorate Tiberius, Livia, Germanicus and Drusus the Younger in the Circus Flaminius (Flory 1996: 287-303).
136 Gruen identifies that despite the fact that Augustus was princeps, he did not hold a principatus. Although he wished his grandsons to succeed him, there was, at that stage, no official or institutionalized position for them to inherit (Gruen 2005: 35).
men, took on quite a public role.\textsuperscript{137} However the women too were beginning to take on more prominent and important roles in the public sphere. Women in the imperial period were emerging as benefactors and patrons in newfound positions not previously seen during the Republic and slowly gaining more power.\textsuperscript{138} When the Ara Pacis was commissioned by the Senate, Augustus was depicted with members of the imperial family and household. Similarly, coins were commonly minted showing members of the emperor’s family.\textsuperscript{139} However, many public monuments primarily showed scenes of the emperor’s victories, highlighting his military strength. The column of Trajan primarily advertised Trajan’s victory against the Parthians and similarly the Arch of Titus and the Column of Marcus Aurelius advertised the emperors’ victories. Funerary monuments were also dedicated to the emperor, and during the Augustan period, the Senate even produced guidelines as to how the young princes or heirs were to be memorialised.\textsuperscript{140} Statues of the imperial family were common, however, and were well spread across the empire, appearing not only in Rome but also local artists replicating these works in the provinces. At a time when portraits and statues were displayed in public places like a forum, or in private collections, it is unsurprising that portraits of the imperial family appeared scattered across the empire.\textsuperscript{141} When Septimius Severus started displaying his two sons through public means he was not simply depicting the imperial family but his heirs and the future emperors of the Roman Empire. The Antonines heavily influenced this emphasis on family and creation of a new ‘dynasty’. The Antonine influence on the Severans can clearly be seen in the way they are depicted on public monuments, on coins, through portraiture and in inscriptions. Under the Antonines, there was a concerted effort to show the imperial family as a dynasty and to emphasise certain virtues of the family.\textsuperscript{142} The similarities in the situations of the Antonines and the Severans (particularly with respect to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus compared with Septimius Severus and Caracalla) meant that the Severans repeated the family depictions of the Antonines and the virtues represented. This is seen particularly in the artistic style of the earlier Severan portraits, as well as the imperial coinage, as will be examined further in this chapter. This continuity in displaying the heir alongside the emperor can be seen later into the third century.

Monuments

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{137} Severy 1993: 96.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Milnor 2008: 4; Purcell 1986: 78-105.
\item \textsuperscript{139} For example, reference to Julius Caesar \textit{RIC} I Augustus 338; Livia \textit{RIC} I Augustus 219; Tiberius \textit{RIC} I Tiberius 221; Julia and Gaius and Lucius \textit{RIC} I Augustus 404.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Davies 2004; Lott 2012: 1-4.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Stewart 2003: 157-183.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Bunn 2004 provides a comprehensive overview of the representations of the imperial family with respect to the Antonine emperors.
\end{itemize}
Perhaps the most obvious form of publicising family and the new Severan dynasty was the prominence of the imperial family on public monuments, not only in Rome but in the provinces as well. The most notable of these monuments are the Arch of Septimius Severus in the forum Romanum, the Arch of the Argentarii in the forum Boarium at Rome, the Arch of Septimius Severus in Leptis Magna and a theatre in Hierapolis. These monuments not only displayed reliefs of the imperial family as a unit, but also featured inscriptions dedicated not just to the emperor alone, but to the domus divina. These monuments were situated in very public places with the imperial family displayed quite clearly. The result of this meant that all who encountered these buildings would be aware of the imperial family and future emperors. Certainly the people in the Roman empire took notice of statues and reliefs of the imperial family. This is most clearly demonstrated by the destruction of statues and the erasure of images of emperors after their death by those displeased with the emperor, official damnatio memoriae or not.143 The Severan family appeared both on monuments issued centrally, as well as those built privately with imperial subject matter, highlighting the reception of the Severan family by those in Rome and in the provinces.

The arch of Septimius Severus in the forum Romanum was erected in AD 203, a date deriving from his tribunician power. The arch itself was constructed in the Roman Forum between the imperial rostra and the Curia, in front of the Temple of Concord.144 At 23 metres high, the arch primarily commemorates the emperor’s victory over the Parthians and to stress the battles in which he was successful.145 However, although the arch records their victories and the imagery asserts the benefits of these victories to Rome as a whole, the arch is still dedicated to Severus and his sons and the entire Severan family is prominently displayed. The inscription on the top of the arch today reads:

To the Emperor Septimius Severus, Son of Marcus, Pius, Pertinax Augustus. Pater Patriae, Parthicus Arabicus, Parthicus Adiabenicus, Pontifex Maximus, having held the tribunician power 11 times; acclaimed emperor 11 times, Consul 3 times, Proconsul, and to Emperor Marcus Aurelius, Son of Lucius, Antoninus, Augustus Pius, Felix; having held the tribunician power 6 times, Consul, Proconsul, Pater Patriae, [and to Publius Septimius Geta, most noble Caesar] to the best and bravest princes on account of having restored the State and enlarged the Empire of the Roman people, by their outstanding virtues at home and abroad, the Senate and People of Rome [made this].146

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143 Stewart 2003: 261-299.
146 CIL 6.1033 Imper(eratori) Caes(arii) Lucio Septimio M(arci) fil(io) Severo Pio Pertinaci Aug(usto) patri patriae Parthicus Arabico et / Parchicus Adiabenico pontific(i) maximo tribunic(ia) potest(ate) XI imp(eratori) XI co(n)s(uli)III proco(n)s(uli) et / Imper(eratori) Caes(arii) M(arco) Aurelio L(uci) fil(io) Antonino Aug(usto) Pio Felici tribunic(ia) potest(ate) VI co(n)s(uli)proco(n)s(uli) p(atrici) p(atriae) et / [[[P(ublio) Septimio Getae nobiliss(imo) Caesari]]] /
Originally, this inscription did have Geta’s name as well (P(ublio) Septimio Getae nobiliss(imo) Caesari), but this was removed following his murder. This arch was erected for two purposes: first for the celebration of the Parthian victory under Septimius, and second, for the proclamation of the new Severan dynasty. This was achieved through the inscription above dedicated to the emperor, his sons and the implications of their success in the extension of the empire. A denarius of Septimius Severus depicting the arch shows bronze statuary groups placed on top of the arch. A central chariot group flanked by two equestrian groups probably would have shown Septimius Severus between Caracalla and Geta, again demonstrating Septimius’ dynastic ambitions. The emperor is shown on one of the reliefs addressing the soldiers, and at one stage Plautianus also featured in the upper right hand corner of the north-west panel depicting the attack and surrender of Seleucia, but his image was subsequently removed as were images of Geta. The arch is traditional in design with some evidence of the Antonine style. The lasting influence of this particular monument can be seen in the construction of the Arch of Constantine, which drew upon the style of the Arch of Septimius Severus.

The Severan family appeared not only on state art, but on privately funded monuments as well. The Arch of the Argentarii, located in the forum Boarium in Rome was dedicated between AD 203 and 204 and was paid for by cattle merchants and money lenders to the cattle trade. Here, the wider Severan family appear on reliefs on the arch. Septimius Severus is depicted pouring a libation onto an altar with Julia Domna standing next to him holding a caduceus, identifying her as mater castrorum, or mother of the camp. Elsner has identified the sacrificial narrative occurring on the motifs around the arch. Originally, Geta would have accompanied his parents in this scene, however after the damnatio memoriae his image has been removed. Opposite this relief is Caracalla, again shown making a sacrifice. Next to Caracalla were his wife Plautilla and her father Plautianus. These two figures were also removed following a damnatio memoriae but nonetheless originally demonstrated the depiction of not only the immediate imperial family, but the wider

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146 CIL 3.13689 Imp(erator) Caesar L(ucius) Sep[timius] Severus Pius / Pertinax Aug(ustus) pon[t(ifex)] max(imus) / trib(unicia) pot(estate) / VIII imp(erator) XII p(ater) p(atriae) co(n)s(ul) II et Imp(erator) Caesar M(arcus) / Aureli(anus) Antoninus Pius Aug(ustus) pont(ifex) max(imus) / [[et P(ublius) Septimius Geta nobiliss(imus) Caesar]] et / Iulia Domna Au[g(usta)] mater castrorum.
147 Newby 2007: 203.
150 Brilliant 1967: 30-32.
family as well-presenting a scene of family unity. All these figures were originally named in the inscription but were also later erased.\footnote{CIL 6.1035.} The bulk of the decoration is dedicated towards honouring the imperial family, however the military underpinnings of Severan power are indicated by the presentation on the western pier of two Roman soldiers with barbarian captives, Parthians.\footnote{Newby 2007: 218-222.} In this sense, the arch represents the new Severan dynasty as well as the Severan military power together, rather than each in isolation. That this arch was erected by private citizens also demonstrates the reception of the dynastic message within Rome. By AD 203 the message of the imperial family and dynasty had successfully been noticed by people and they were starting to replicate it themselves. This shows just how prominently this family message had been pushed by Septimius Severus. It was not simply the emperor and his military victories being shown, but his own immediate family, his daughter-in-law and her father.

The Severan family is also depicted on the arch at Leptis Magna, and unlike the Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome, it is first and foremost a celebration of the Severan imperial family and their links to the emperor’s home city of Leptis.\footnote{Hannestad 1986: 273.} Due to a lack of any known inscription for the arch, the date of dedication is unclear but is thought to coincide with a visit from the emperor in AD 203.\footnote{Other scholars, however, argue for a date between AD 205-209 based on an analysis of the portrait types on the arch as well as the possibility of an imperial visit at this time (McCann 1968: 74-78; Bonnano 1976: 155).} Although the inscription has not survived, it was normal for honorific arches in the provinces to be paid for and set up by towns or individuals and it is most likely that the arch was erected by the town council from civic funds.\footnote{Wilson 2007: 295-297.} Here again we have responses to Roman rule, but this time in the provinces. This quadrifrons arch spanned the junction of the two main roads into the city and was therefore in a very prominent position, where it would be seen by all who were entering or leaving the city.

The central scene on this arch shows \textit{Concordia} within the imperial family. Septimius Severus is shown shaking hands with Caracalla and Geta, and to the left Julia Domna is represented as Roma to the right, Plautianus is depicted alongside Septimius Severus’s brother, Publius Septimius Geta. Additional scenes represent Septimius, Caracalla and Geta in a triumphal chariot with Parthian captives at its head and followed by a litter of more captives and the spoils of war. In another panel, Septimius Severus is seen presiding over a sacrifice with the family in the upper register. Like the Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome, the arch in Leptis also shows the Severan military victories in conjunction with the imperial family. It is not surprising that military victories were
shown with the imperial family. Military victories brought peace, which was then guaranteed by the imperial family and its harmony.

Newby identifies frontality as an important element on this arch, and this is traced in particular to the Column of Marcus Aurelius where it is used to single out the figure of the emperor in otherwise crowded scenes.\textsuperscript{159} The similarity in the Antonine monuments and portraits can be seen not only in the creation of the new dynasty, but even in how this dynasty was architecturally and artistically presented. That this was received and replicated by those in the provinces is telling of how strongly this dynastic message was promoted and how successfully it was received. Ward-Perkins argues that the importance in the Arch of Septimius Severus at Leptis Magna is that it is a link in the chain of developing imperial art, influencing the construction of buildings in the neighbouring city of Sabrata in the third or fourth centuries.\textsuperscript{160}

There are a number of significant buildings set up around the provinces which celebrate the Severan family. The inclusion of the imperial family in dedicatory inscriptions was a common feature of buildings set up by individual benefactors and continued into the Severan age as a nod to the power held by the \textit{domus divina} throughout the Empire.\textsuperscript{161} In a number of buildings, however, the imperial family are also included as symbolic figures, overseeing and legitimising aspects of civic culture. This can be seen on reliefs of the theatre at Hierapolis in Phrygia, dedicated to Septimius Severus and his family, along with the city’s patron god Apollo in AD 206-208. The reliefs of the \textit{scaenae frons} included a number of mythological scenes and also celebrated Apollo and his sister Artemis. The emperor and his family appear in the very centre of the relief, flanked by personifications celebrating the city and its festival, which can be seen in the images here. The emperor is also shown seated with the figure of Nike flying above him, flanked by his sons and with his wife standing nearby. The relief emphasises the emperor’s patronage of the city and its festival.\textsuperscript{162}

These four examples of monuments displaying the imperial family and the new Severan dynasty (on state commissioned monuments in Rome, and on privately commissioned monuments across the empire) are an example of the dynastic message being received and propagated throughout the empire.\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{159} Newby 2007: 206-207.
\textsuperscript{160} Ward-Perkins 1948:59-80.
\textsuperscript{161} Newby 2007: 213.
\textsuperscript{163} Ando 2000: 175-205.
Inscriptions

The idea of the Severan dynasty continuing back to the Antonines and even further back to Nerva can be seen through inscriptions both in Rome as well as across the provinces. These inscriptions appear in a wide range of settings and are both centrally issued, such as the inscription on the Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome discussed above, and were received and replicated by others in inscriptions throughout the empire.

Septimius Severus traced his descent back to Nerva in a number of inscriptions, naming himself the son of Marcus Aurelius, the grandson of Antonius Pius, the great grandson of Hadrian, the great-great grandson of Trajan and the great-great-great grandson of Nerva. By adopting himself into the Antonine family, Septimius Severus was able to legitimise his rule (and that of his son). In Mauretania Caesarensis, a similar inscription is found, this time including both Caracalla and Geta. And in a building dedication from Lauriacum dating to AD 202, Septimius’ and his family’s heritage is listed as recognised by Iuventius Proculus, a man of senatorial order.

What do these inscriptions tell us about the public image of Caracalla and Geta in the Severan regime? Firstly, they demonstrate that Septimius Severus wanted his family to be seen to be directly related not only to the Antonines but also back through the imperial line all the way back to Nerva. Septimius Severus is explicitly stated as being the brother of the deified Commodus and the son of the deified Marcus Aurelius. As his blood heirs, these relationships are then extended on to Caracalla and Geta. Similarities between the two dynasties can also be noted in the name change of Caracalla from Lucius Septimius Bassianus to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus in AD 195, a sign that Septimius clearly wanted to emphasise the Antonine connection. It is likely at this point that Septimius Severus encouraged the Antonine connection and his idea of a new dynasty as a way of legitimising his rule. As seen above, the method in which Septimius Severus came to be emperor was not entirely straightforward so it was important for him to legitimise his right to rule and establish some sense of security for those in the empire. The fact that Septimius lists his family as being the descendants of emperors reaching back to Nerva was a way to demonstrate his right to rule. The abundance of these inscriptions and the fact that they appear on a range of different

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165 AE 1954, 143b.

166 AE 1909, 248.
means and in different provinces meant that this message was reaching those across the Empire, that it was being understood, and that it was then being replicated by others. This was probably because the titulature was included in official letters and edicts sent out from the emperor.¹⁶⁷

Coins, Cameos and Miscellaneous Objects

Similarly, coins and smaller objects featuring the Severan family reached a wide range of people across the empire and were another effective way of articulating imperial authority as both state art and a reflection of imperial values.¹⁶⁸ Coins minted in Rome as well as provincial coins will be examined as well as the messages in association with images of the imperial family. In addition to coins, a number of smaller items such as cameos, intaglias and even a bread maker’s mould will be analysed. It will be argued that the production of such items is evidence that privately commissioned objects were made in response to the appearance of an abundance of reliefs, coins and inscriptions showing the imperial family in one way or another and promoting Caracalla and Geta as Caesars and Augusti.

Coins heavily publicised the imperial family and Severan dynasty due to their wide circulation and presence on both centrally minted and provincial coinage. On the coins of Septimius Severus, just under 15% of his silver reverse types featured the emperor/imperial family.¹⁶⁹ This is comparatively lower than previous emperors.¹⁷⁰ Manders identifies several types of dynastic representation on coins during the third century. These include coin types with standard imperial titulature (often dated) including images of members of the imperial family or successors and images of the emperor together with a member of the imperial family/successor/joint emperors(s). Alternatively, the coins can be types with a different legend (often undated) and can include names of members of the imperial family/successors; FECVNDITAS AVG; NOBILITAS; PROPAGO IMPERI; PRINCEPS IVVENTUTIS; IVVENTA IMPERII; CONCORDIA FELIX; CONCORDIA AVGG; CONCORDIA AVG; DE PIA MATRE PIVS MTRI; AVG PATRI AVG MTRI; SEVERI PII AVG FIL; IMP ET CAESAR AVG FILI COS; DIVI M PII F P M TR P III COS II P P; and AVGVSTI COS.¹⁷¹ These legends show that there was almost a set list which advertised the imperial family/dynasty and would have been recognised as such by those coming into contact with the coins on a regular basis over the years, exemplifying Noreña’s argument that images and/or legends displayed continuously (more generic images and legends) were more effective at

¹⁶⁷ Ando 2000: 175-205.
¹⁶⁸ Marsden 1997: 1-16.
¹⁶⁹ Noreña 2011b: 339.
¹⁷⁰ Manders 2012: 41.
¹⁷¹ Manders 2012: 41.
conveying certain messages.\textsuperscript{172} Here, they were emphasising either specific family members, the idea of *Concordia*, or representing the idea of descent and successors. From the third century,\textsuperscript{173} however, the overall proportion of coin types of dynastic representation is quite low.\textsuperscript{174} Under Septimius Severus, Concordia accounted for 6\% of silver benefit types.\textsuperscript{175} Family on coins more generally, however, has been seen by modern scholars as ideology of stability in times of unrest. Septimius Severus’ focus on family not only relates back to the Antonine dynasty but is also a message of stability, presenting a strong imperial family unit after much political upheaval and unrest in 193 to 197. This was achieved through both visual and verbal codes. Marietta Horster has identified that from the late first to third century dynastic themes have been displayed on coins in two different ways: either with a reference to ancestors in commemorative issues, achieved in the second and third centuries mainly by *consecratio*-types, or through a reference to living family members.\textsuperscript{176} The latter can refer to both women of the imperial household and children, especially the Caesars.\textsuperscript{177} Portraits of family members featured on the obverse of coins, or the reverse with either alone or with other members of the imperial family or even with the emperor himself.\textsuperscript{178} Other than family members, the standard reverse images established in the second century and used throughout the entire third century were *Pudicitia*, *Fecunditas*, *Concordia*, *Venus Genetrix*, *Iuno Regina* and *Vesta* legends on the reverses of the empresses and the *Princeps Iuventutis* (military dress, holding spear and sceptre/spear), *Felicitas Publica* and/or *Spes Publica* (personification of *Spes/Felicitas*) legends on the reverses of the Caesar’s coins.

Such messages of family and dynasty not only occurred on coins minted in Rome, but also on those minted in the provinces, although not to the same extent. Caracalla features on the reverse of coins minted during the reign of Septimius Severus in the provinces- either alone, with his father, or with Artemis Ephesia. Such coins were minted in places such as Ephesus,\textsuperscript{179} Pergamum,\textsuperscript{180} Berytos,\textsuperscript{181} Mopus,\textsuperscript{182} Odessos\textsuperscript{183} and Thyateira.\textsuperscript{184} Interestingly, Geta never features solo on coins with his

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{172} Noreña 2011b: 197.
\bibitem{173} Manders 2012: 49.
\bibitem{174} It should be noted that this comes from a total of 8227 types is does not represent a true or entirely accurate quantitative analysis.
\bibitem{175} Noreña 2011b: 352. Of course not all types of Concordia are dynastic, for example Concordia exercitvm, which refers to the concord of the army. Because the different types of Concordia are not identified by Noreña, the overall presence of Concordia, or lack thereof, should not be taken as a definitive signpost to familial or dynastic themes on the coins of Caracalla and Geta at this time.
\bibitem{176} Horster 2013: 243-261.
\bibitem{177} Coins minted under Septimius Severus depict Clodius Albinus on the reverse as his Caesar *RIC* IV 11, Varbanov 4866.
\bibitem{178} Horster 2013: 243-261.
\bibitem{179} SPC 3168, 4135. The coins featuring Artemis were only minted in Ephesus.
\bibitem{180} SPC 3530.
\bibitem{181} BMC 120.
\bibitem{182} SNG Fr1986.
\bibitem{183} Moushmov 1602.
\end{thebibliography}
father where Caracalla does. The two heirs appear together on horses, standing face to face clasping hands, and also together with Artemis. As the coins minted in the provinces were chosen by local authorities (rather than being issued from an official imperial authority), it can be seen that the messages emphasised by Septimius of his two sons were clearly received and replicated in some way throughout the provinces during this time. This evidence of provincial loyalty would tend to indicate that Septimius’ message of family and dynasty was successful and also demonstrates that minting family on coins was such a common place thing to do that it happened all over the empire, showing further loyalty not only to the emperor but to the imperial family as well.

However the imperial family also featured on a number of smaller, more innocuous items. A Roman pastry cook’s mould from Silchester, thought to be from when Caracalla and Geta were co-Augusti, depicts the brothers as being bearded. Caracalla and Geta are also shown as the Dioscuri on either side of Septimius Severus wearing the modius of Serapis. Caracalla is depicted as Hercules on an intaglio found near Lincoln and on a portrait cameo of Caracalla as Hercules from South Shields. Both thought to date between 208-211 during the Severan campaigns. These smaller, privately made items are particularly informative as to Septimius’ imperial messages at this time. That the imperial family was appearing on a range of such innocuous items again demonstrates the reception of the imperial family and of the dynastic claims.

Portraits

Finally, portraits of Caracalla and Geta must be examined as a part of the ‘dynasty’ begun and so widely publicised by Septimius Severus. Portraits appeared of all members of the imperial family, and new portrait types were made for Caracalla and Geta upon their elevation to Augustus and Caesar. It is these portraits and their Antonine influences that will be examined here.

The first of Caracalla’s portraits was created in 198 when Caracalla was raised to the rank of Augustus, corresponding with his numismatic portraits of 198-204 and to his image on the Arch of the Argentarii. This type has curly locks, a round, slightly chubby face and large eyes. This portrait type is similar in style and looks to the young portraits of Commodus and Marcus

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184 BMC 91.
185 SPC 3905, 4106, 4547, 4608, 4679.
187 Marsden 1996: 4. The depiction of Caracalla and Geta as the Dioscuri is also significant in their image as the heir, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The reception of this in the provinces is indicative of the prevalence of Septimius Severus’ sons as their heir and also their connection with the Equestrian order and the title princeps iuuentutis.
188 Marsden & Henig 2002: 419.
Aurelius. Here the artists are identifying not only an heir to Septimius Severus but to the Antonine legacy. This image is strengthened when combined with Caracalla’s titulature, adopting the name Antoninus and becoming the grandson of Marcus Aurelius. This notion is continued into the reign of Elagabalus, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. It presented a recognisable representation of power to the Roman Empire. An additional portrait of Caracalla from the 190s depicts him as the infant Hercules strangling two snakes, shows him as an Antonine prince, heir to the Antonine dynasty’s legacy. The highly polished surface of the stone is typical of Antonine art, as was mythological conceit. Even more so, there is a similar portrait of a kneeling Antonine prince (either Annius Verus or Commodus) grasping two snakes. Caracalla’s later types (2-4) under Septimius Severus slowly begin to drift from such strong visual Antonine references. Caracalla’s hair becomes shorter and he adopts a more serious expression with occasional facial hair. By his type 4 portraiture (sometime between 206 and 211), Caracalla has a square face and a cleft chin, lined forehead and a v-shaped crease between his eyebrows and across his forehead and an inverted ‘V’ from his nostrils to his mouth. Despite this move away from the ‘philosophical emperor’ image of the Antonines, Kleiner argues that the Antonine portraiture, especially that of Marcus Aurelius, continues to exert a profound impact on the portraiture of its Severan followers.

As the second male heir, only slightly younger than Caracalla, Geta was crucial to the Severan dynastic stability. It was not common for an emperor to have two sons in heir to the throne. With the exception of Commodus (who outlived his two brothers to become sole emperor), this had not been the case since Vespasian with his sons Titus and Domitian in the Flavian dynasty in the first century AD. In this sense, Septimius Severus was in a fairly unusual situation to advertise both his sons as Caesars and Augusti. Geta’s first portrait type, celebrates his elevation to the rank of Caesar in 198 and is easy to distinguish from Caracalla’s contemporary type 1 portraits. Geta’s earliest official likenesses in marble and on coins depict him as an almost identical likeness of Caracalla, to the point where it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the two youths. It deliberately emphasises Geta’s resemblance to his brother, reinforcing the recognisable representation of power and giving a sense of comfort and security. In AD 209 when Geta was elevated to Augustus, a new portrait type was created, similar to his earlier portraits but with a heavier face and deep facial lines. The young Augustus is presented in more intense and muscular fashion, but are still very

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190 Ando 2000: 228-239.
192 The change in this portraiture will be discussed in Chapter Two.
similar to Caracalla’s portraits. In this respect, the familial representation of power is continued through the portraits of the two brothers.

Portraits of Caracalla and Geta as Caesars and Augusti under Septimius Severus not only seem to have influenced the portraiture of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, but also those of later emperors in the third century AD. In the cases of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, artists seem to have relied on a very old tradition in imperial portraiture of representing boys who were designated as heirs to power in an elegantly classicising style. Wood suggests that the ‘calmness and simplicity’ is reminiscent of the portraits of a young Marcus Aurelius from the second century AD, exhibiting aristocratic birth. This tradition of portraying ‘crown princes’ in a calm, aristocratic manner can be traced from the portraits of Gallienus, Gordian III, Maximinus and Alexander Severus back to Antonine times. The arrangement of the locks of hair in Gallienus’s earlier portrait and its seeming reference to Augustus is another example of such a visual association. This necessity for reliance on tradition creates a strong visual code for the young Caesars, one which would have been recognised by those who saw the many portraits of the Antonines, the Severans and later emperors in their many forms: coins, statues, reliefs.

Septimius Severus’ position of having two heirs ready to be emperor put him in quite a unique situation to promote his family. In linking his own heritage back to the Antonine dynasty, and publicising his sons as future emperors, Septimius was able to heavily emphasise family and the creation of a new dynasty to indicate security of the Empire both now and into the future. This also solidified his role as emperor and his right to rule, as well as the right of both his sons.

‘The Heir’
Under the rule of Septimius Severus, Caracalla was Caesar for three years (AD 195-198) and Geta was Caesar for eleven years (198-209). As such, the imagery of the Caesar and the heir was quite prominent during this time. In particular, the princeps iuuentutis and the imagery of the jug and the lituus as symbols of the Caesar deserve consideration because of their representation during the Severan period. When Septimius Severus named his two sons Caracalla and Geta as his heirs, it

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196 The similarity in portraits of Caracalla, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus was no doubt intended in some part to help solidify the idea that Elagabalus and Alexander Severus were in fact the illegitimate sons of Caracalla himself. However, there are also similarities in the portraits of Diadumenianus, who was just 10 years old at his appointment of Caesar. See Wood 1987.
197 Wood 1986: 49.
198 Wood 1986:120.
was a somewhat unprecedented move. Only Vespasian with his sons, and Marcus Aurelius before him had named his natural born son Commodus as Caesar who then became emperor. Because of this, there was no well established, existing precedent for Septimius to follow. Additionally, both of his sons were still very young when he appointed them as Caesars and then later Augusti. Although the title of *princeps iuuentutis* had existed since Augustan times, under the Severans the imagery of the jug and *lituus* from Republican Rome as the symbols of the *pontifices*, came to represent the Caesar and became standard iconography for use under later emperors and Caesars.

The history of the *princeps iuuentutis* will be discussed and the development in the title up until the Severan dynasty. Continuation of the title after the Severans will be examined and why later emperors opted to adopt the same title. Additionally, the reception of Caesars and the title in the provinces will be examined.

During the reigns of Caracalla and Geta as Caesars, the term *princeps iuuentutis* came to be synonymous with the Caesar and the heir of the Augustus. The phrase *princeps iuementutis*, or prince of the youth, first appeared in republican times in Cicero’s *Against Vatinius*. However, in 5BC and 2BC, the title was given a different meaning when Augustus’ grandsons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, were given the title *princepes iuuentutis* and given silver shields (*parmae*) and spears (*hastae*) by the equestrian order.

Augustus’ *Res Gestae* records the honours:

> ‘When my sons Gaius and Lucius Caesar, whom fortune stole from me as youths, were fourteen, the senate and Roman people made them consuls-designate on behalf of my honor, so that they would enter that magistracy after five years, and the senate decreed that on that day when they were led into the forum they would be included in public councils. Moreover the Roman knights together named each of them first of the youth and gave them shields and spears.’

In addition to the *Res Gestae*, the *principes iuuentutis* appeared on coins minted under Augustus. The first features an obverse with the head of Augustus and the legend *Augustus Divi F Pater*.

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199 It should be noted at this point, that although it was unusual for the emperor to appoint two natural sons as his heirs, the way in which natural versus adopted sons were portrayed in the imperial family were not that different.

200 He also named Annius Verus Caesar as the same time as Commodus, but he died before becoming Augustus.

201 Cic. Vat. 24.

Patriae and the reverse portrays Gaius and Lucius Caesar standing, each togate, resting hand on shield, spears behind with a simplum and lituus behind and the legend C(aius) L(ucius) Caesares in exergue and Augusti F(ilio) Co(n)s(ul) Desig(ate) Princ(ipes) Iuuent(utis). This identifies Gaius and Lucius as the sons of the emperor and accorded them the title princeps iuuentutis. A later minting of this coin is almost identical but with the addition of Caesar to the legend on the obverse.

Figure 2. Coin of Augustus with Gaius and Lucius RIC I Augustus 206

Figure 3. Coin of Augustus with Gaius and Lucius RIC I Augustus 210

Cassius Dio too records the honours awards to Gaius and Lucius, stating that in the year of Augustus’ twelfth consulship, Gaius was placed amongst youths of military age, was introduced to the senate and was declared princeps iuuentutis by Augustus, permitting him to become a sevir equitum, commanding a contingent in the transvectio equitum and other ceremonies. Lucius later gained these same honours given to Gaius. The title princeps iuuentutis was representative of a promising young man, a heir to the throne, who showed off his military virtues and his leadership skills, being the most noble and the first of all aristocratic adolescents. This coin legend was introduced on a family member’s own coin by Domitian Caesar, whereas the princes of the early Principate, who had taken over the honour, received no official imperial coins of their own. It is

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204 Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.
205 Cassius Dio Roman History. 55.9.9-10.
206 Horster 2011: 299.
interesting to note here that Domitian was one of two heirs (and Caesars) to Vespasian and that he too has the title of *princeps iuuentutis*, potentially influencing the later Severans to solidify this as being representative of and associated with the heir in the third century.

The portrait types of Gaius and Lucius at this time also reflected their status as *principes iuuentutis*. In Gaius’ second portrait type, the arrangement of locks on the forehead of Type II of Lucius shows a greater resemblance than does that of Type I to the hairstyle of the Prima Porta type of Augustus, which is associated primarily with Augustus in his role as *princeps*. The reason for this closer imitation in hair style would presumably also be related to Lucius’ new status as *princeps iuuentutis*, foreshadowing- (like Type II of Gaius) his possible future role in the Roman state.\(^{207}\) This is best observed in the Vatican head. At the age of 14/15, it is associated with his assuming of the *toga uirilis* and becoming *Consul Designatus, princeps iuuentutis* and *pontifex*.\(^{208}\) This was also seen in the portraits of Lucius on his designation of *princeps iuuentutis* in 2 BC.\(^{209}\)

Later on, the same honour was paid informally to Germanicus Julius Caesar and Drusus Julius Caesar, the sons of Tiberius.\(^{210}\) Rowe has identified that various groups (the Senate,\(^{211}\) *equites*,\(^{212}\) *plebs*,\(^{213}\) *urbana*, Italian communities,\(^{214}\) Greek cities\(^{215}\) and the army\(^{216}\) ) all proclaimed honours for members of the imperial family (as collective\(^ {217}\) ) in order to receive imperial favour. This was done informally.\(^{218}\) The title *princeps iuuentutis* and the associated honours were certainly not given to the sons of every emperor, but they were given to Drusus’ son Tiberius Iulius Caesar Nero ‘Gemellus’, adopted son of Gaius in AD 37; to Nero in 51 When Claudius’ stepson Nero supplanted Britannicus as the primary heir in the year 50, he was not an infant: the 13 year old was represented on Claudius’ coins (gold and silver) as *princeps iuuentutis*.\(^{219}\) It was also given to Vespasian’s sons Titus and Domitian, and to Commodus. On the 7th July Commodus became the *princeps iuuentutis* and a multitude of coins from various mints celebrated the event. At the same time he was proclaimed the *spes publica*.\(^{220}\) The title was sometimes retained when the holder was no longer a

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\(^{207}\) Pollini 1987: 83.  
\(^{208}\) Pollini 1987: 90.  
\(^{209}\) Pollini 1987: 92.  
\(^{210}\) Ovid. *Pont*. 2.5.41 *Te iuuenum princeps, cui dat Germania nomen, participem studii Caesar habere solet.*  
\(^{211}\) Rowe 2002: 41-66.  
\(^{212}\) Rowe 2002: 67-84.  
\(^{214}\) Rowe 2002: 102-123.  
\(^{216}\) Rowe 2002: 154-172.  
\(^{217}\) Severy 2003.  
\(^{218}\) Rowe 2002.  
\(^{219}\) Rawson 2003: 37; Rowe 2002.  
\(^{220}\) Manders & Hekster 2011.
iuuenis, and had something of the significance of ‘crown prince’. In the third century reigning Augusti also used the title; its connection with the equestrian order had disappeared then and it became a strong verbal code in a dynastic context. In AD 247 the emperor Philip became Augustus at age 10 and coins were minted still with the title princeps iuuentutis. Indeed in the third century AD, the title princeps iuuentutis was awarded to Diadumenianus, Alexander Severus, Maximinus Thrax, Gordinian III, Philip the Arab, amongst others.

Caracalla was still a child (seven years old) when in AD 195 he received the name Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and the title Caesar. His image was then minted on the reverse of his father’s early coins in a clear move to advertise dynastic hopes. He became princeps iuuentutis, and reverse types on the coinage were issued for him, proclaiming ongoing hope and confidence and public good fortune. The title princeps iuuentutis under Augustus was designed for the emperor to distinguish and single out his adopted sons, but was also to reform and strengthen the Roman knights as an order, signifying the strength of men and was also closely associated with the Dioscuri- Castor and Pollux. Following Caracalla and Geta’s time as Caesars, the princeps iuuentutis and the Dioscuri were both closely linked with the Caesar.

Poulsen identifies that during the imperial period, the term princeps iuuentutis was used solely for heirs of the emperor, thus not only distinguishing the imperial family from other nobles families, but also promoting the imperial family. Easily noticeable as Castor and Pollux, the princeps iuuentutis lead the procession of the transvectio equitum, wore purple robes, olive wreaths, carried silver shields and spears and rode on white horses. The imagery of this can be seen through coins of the Caesar, as discussed below.

The title is not only found on coins of the two sons of Septimius Severus, but in inscriptions also. A building inscription from Tunisia too names Geta as princeps iuuentutis and another also awards

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221 Ovid. Ars am. 1.194 Nunc iuvenum princeps, deinde future senum.
222 Glare 1210-1211; Horster 2011.
223 Horster 2011: 73-103.
224 OCD 1210-1211 s.v. Princeps Iuuentutis; Beringer 1954. Also Herennius Etruscus, Hostilian, Trebonianus Gallus, Volusianus, Gallienus, Valerian, Saloninus, Tetricus I, Tetricus II, Aurelian, Florianus, Probus, Carus, Carinus, Numerianus, Diocletian, Constantius Chlorus, Galerius, Carausius, Maximinus II, Maxentius, Licinius, Constantine I, Crispus, Dalmatius, Constantine II, Constantius II, Constans, Decentius, Julian the Apostate, Valentinian II.
225 Rawson 2003: 68.
227 This has been called into question by Champlin (2011: 73-99).
228 Poulsen 1991: 123.
229 CIL 8.14395.
Caracalla the title.\textsuperscript{230} The following two coins show the imagery associated with the \textit{princeps iuuentitis} for Caracalla and Geta.

![Image of Caracalla's coin]

\textbf{Figure 4.} Coin of Caracalla as Caesar- \textit{RIC} IV Caracalla 13a, AD196-198.\textsuperscript{231}

![Image of Geta's coin]

\textbf{Figure 5.} Coin of Geta as Caesar \textit{RIC} IV Geta 37, AD 205.\textsuperscript{232}

The image of the jug and the \textit{lituus} was an especially significant part of the heirs’ image, appearing on the coins of the Caracalla and Geta. In the Roman Republic, the jug and \textit{lituus} first appeared on a coin of Sulla, from 84-83 BC.\textsuperscript{233} These symbols are on the reverse of the coin with military trophies and the inscription reads \textit{imper(ator) iterum}. The last issue of these coins was on the coins Marcus Antoninus in 39 BC.\textsuperscript{234} Stewart identifies the use of these symbols during this time as a response to Roman commander’s authority being attacked. These symbols, he argues, lent authority to tribunicial laws for empowerment. The symbols invoked the traditional religious sanctions of

\textsuperscript{230} \textit{AE} 2003, 1986 .  
\textsuperscript{231} Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.  
\textsuperscript{232} Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.  
\textsuperscript{233} \textit{RRC} I Sulla 359.  
\textsuperscript{234} \textit{RSC} 82.
political power and represented the commander’s right to rule.²³⁵ In this way, rather than strictly being representative of religious offices or the augury, the combined imagery of the jug and the lituus held some political weight and was used as a symbol of legitimization in the Roman Republic.²³⁶ By the time of Septimius Severus, this imagery had evolved somewhat and came to be representative of the Caesar, or of the emperor’s heir. The use of jug and lituus appeared under Antoninus Pius²³⁷ as Caesar, on the coins of Marcus Aurelius as Caesar²³⁸ and Commodus as Caesar.²³⁹ This imagery representing the heir was used throughout the Severan period (with the exception of Elagabalus), the following coins representing those of Caracalla and Geta under Septimius Severus.

Figure 6. Coin of Caracalla as Caesar RIC IV Caracalla 3, AD 196.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ For example RIC III Antoninus Pius 28; RIC III Antoninus Pius 31; RIC III Antoninus Pius 45; RIC III Antoninus Pius 46.
²³⁸ RIC III Marcus Aurelius 1240.
²³⁹ RIC III Commodus 613.
²⁴⁰ Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.
This continued to be used on coins of the Caesars for a short time after the Severan period as well. For example on the coins of Gordian III\textsuperscript{242} and Herennius Etruscus.\textsuperscript{243} However, from the time of Caracalla, they ceased to be used once a Caesar became Augustus and were therefore strongly associated with just the Caesar and not the Augustus. Rowan has identified that there were certain dies used in the mint at Rome for particular events or at particular times.\textsuperscript{244} It is not improbable then, that such dies featuring the jug and \textit{lituus} were reserved for coins of the Caesar in the third century.\textsuperscript{245}

The combination of the title \textit{princeps iuuentutis} and the imagery of the jug and \textit{lituus} during the Severan period, therefore, came to be representative of the heir. These associations were built on from the Antonine period and were particularly strong during the Severans. Although the title of \textit{princeps iuuentutis} remained strong in the third century AD and even into the fourth, the visual code of the jug and the \textit{lituus} only remained for a short period, not appearing on coins of all the heirs later into the third century. As the Severans were the last stable dynasty and later emperors in the third century faced massive political and social unrest, it is unsurprising that they should wish to make use of the image associated with not just the heir and with security, but also with the Severans as a group.

\textsuperscript{241} Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.  
\textsuperscript{242} RIC IV Gordian III 1.  
\textsuperscript{243} RIC IV Herennius Etruscus 143.  
\textsuperscript{244} Rowan 2012: 63.  
\textsuperscript{245} Certainly the imagery of the jug and \textit{lituus} were used purely to be representative of the Caesar in the third century, however in the absence of a die study it is unknown whether the same die was reused from reign to reign.
The verbal and visual codes during the Severan period worked together to identify and promote the designate heir, not only through the title of *princeps iuuentutis* and the imagery of the jug and *lituus* on coins, but also through the emphasis on family discussed above, particularly through portraits and titulature. These aspects of the public image of Caracalla and Geta under Septimius Severus worked in harmony to promote a particular image and message. This was further helped by the honorific epithet *nobilissimus Caesar*.

**Nobilissimus Caesar**

The last aspect of the public image to be examined is the use of the title of *nobilissimus* (‘most noble’). This honorific epithet was given to Geta and subsequently came to be a title representative of the imperial sons bearing the title of Caesar. First given to the emperor Commodus, it was never awarded to Caracalla but appeared frequently in the titulature of his younger brother recorded in inscriptions both in Rome and in the provinces. This section will aim to examine why Geta was awarded this epithet, how it was received in the provinces, and its lasting impact in terms of public image of emperors in the later third and early fourth centuries AD.

In order to understand what the title *nobilissimus* meant and what the *nobilitas* coin types represented, *nobiles* and *nobilis* must first be understood. Cicero, in his *Pro Sestio*, first writes about the changing ranks of the plebeians, who during the Republic gained legal rights, which placed them in a position to become magistrates.\(^{246}\) The first plebeian in his family elected to the position of consul was known as a *novus homo*, and after this the family names recurring in positions such as consuls or priests henceforth came to be known as *nobiles*, or known men. *Nobilis* came to mean belonging to consular families in the first century BC.\(^{247}\) Sallust writes at this point ‘no "new man" was so famous or so illustrious for his deeds, that he was not considered unworthy of that honour, and the office, so to speak, sullied by such an incumbency.’\(^{248}\) At the end of the Republic and during the start of Imperial Rome, however, the term *nobilitas* came to be more of a “social label” and mostly applied to those who were descended from Republican consuls.\(^{249}\) By the Severan period, the term *nobilitas* (and by extension *nobilissimus*) had therefore changed into a much broader term that was often applied to members of the aristocracy.

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246 Cic. *Sest.* 137.
248 Sal. *Iug.* 63.7.
249 OCD 1018 s.v. Nobilitas.
Commodus was the first to have the epithet given to him in an official capacity on a milestone *nobilissimus omnium et felicissimus princeps.*\(^{250}\) The first to be called *nobilissimus*, Commodus was given this title because he was the son of an emperor by birth.\(^{251}\) From the time of Septimius Severus, *nobilissimus Caesar* was used as an official title of the Caesar.\(^{252}\) The term *nobilissimus* was given to other members of the imperial family however. Indeed Fulvius Plautianus, Caracalla’s father in law and the father of Plautilla was called *nobilissimus praefectus praetorio necessarius Augustorum.*\(^{253}\) Caracalla too was hailed as *nobilissimus* in a number of inscriptions.\(^{254}\) Here, the term *Nobilissimus* is used as a link with the imperial house and Gelzer argues that this is also the main force in the titulature of the Caesar, and that at this point no other nobility any longer existed.

As the first emperor ‘born to the purple,’ to ascend to the throne, Commodus was named Caesar under Marcus Aurelius. The superlative *nobilissimus* was first given to the young Caesar on a milestone from Numidia in 186.\(^{255}\) Herodian too describes Commodus as ‘most nobly born of all emperors.’\(^{256}\) Many inscriptions dedicated to Commodus after AD 186 name him as *nobilissimus.* An example from Benacum (modern day Toscolano) is shown below, with the statue base dedicated to Commodus from AD 188/189 identifying him as ‘most noble princeps’:

‘To Imperator Caesar, son of Marcus Antonius Pius Germanicus Sarmaticus, grandson of the deified Pius, great-grandson of the deified Hadrian, great-great-grandson of the deified Trajan Parthicus, great-great-grandson of Nerva, Marcus Aurelius Commodus Antoninus Pius Felix Augustus Sarmaticus Germanicus Maximus Britannicus, pontifex maximus, holding tribunician power for the fourteenth time, acclaimed imperator eight times, consul for the fifth time, father of the fatherland, most noble princeps, the Benacenses (dedicated this).’\(^{257}\)

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\(^{250}\) *ILS* 397.

\(^{251}\) Gelzer 1969: 157. Hill does argue that the ancient evidence suggests that three Emperors (Otho, Vitellius and Titus, and a number of others, including Silius Italicus and Barea Soranus) acquired nobilitas after 4 A.D. and that writers of the imperial period were familiar with the process of ennoblement. Consulship seems to have conferred the *nobilitas*, which suggests that the Republican practice continued in the imperial period. There is also strong evidence, especially in their application to non-Romans, that the terms *nobilis/nobilitas* were used in a wider sense, as general words for the aristocracy (Hill 1969: 250). For more on *nobilitas* see Brunt 1982, Shakleton Bailey 1986, and Mitthof 1993.

\(^{252}\) *ILS* 457. This was followed by unofficial inscriptions *AE* 1987, 470.

\(^{253}\) *ILS* 456.

\(^{254}\) Noreña 2001a: 158-159.

\(^{255}\) CIL 8.10307 = *ILS* 397; Noreña 2011b: 232, 254-255.

\(^{256}\) Herodian *History*, 1.5.5-6.

\(^{257}\) CIL 5.4867 *Imperatori* Caes(ar) M(arci) Antonini Pii Germ(anici) Sar(matici) / fil(io) divi Pii nep(otii) divi Ha/driani pronep(otii) divi Tra/ian(i) Parth(ici) abnep(otii) divi / Nervae abnep(otii) M(arco) Aurel(i) Commodo Antonino Pio Fel(ici) / Aug(usto) Sar(matico) Germ(anico) max(imo) Brit(tanico) / p(ontifici) m(aximo) trib(unicia) pot(estate) XIII imp(eratori) / VIII co(n)s(uli) V p(atri) p(atriae) nobi/lissimo principi / Benacenses.
The appearance of *nobilissimus* in inscriptions dedicated to Commodus can surely be seen as a provincial reaction to the minting of *nobilitas* types on centrally issued coins of the emperor during 186. Although *Nobilitas* was not one of the most prominent virtues emphasised during the imperial period, it appear quite frequently under Commodus. It first appeared under Commodus in AD 186 when he was Augustus, but also appeared in the superlative in an inscription erected in Numidia the same year. See Figures 7 and 8 for Commodus *nobilitas* types minted in Rome.

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258 Noreña 2011b: 232; *RIC* III Commodus 139 Denarius of Commodus with the reverse NOBIL. AVG. Nobilitas standing right, holding sceptre and statuette of Minerva.
259 *RIC* III Commodus 139; *RIC* III Commodus 489; *RIC* III Commodus 509; *RIC* III Commodus 501; *RIC* III Commodus 155; *RIC* III Commodus 485.
261 Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.
Septimius Severus too had one nobilitas type minted\textsuperscript{262} as did Caracalla, seen below. Geta, however, had the most nobilitas types minted.\textsuperscript{263} It is important to note here that the nobilitas types were never minted in the provinces but only occurred in the central mint of Rome. Given the history of the terms nobiles and nobilitas, it is not surprising that it was not an ideal received in the provinces.\textsuperscript{264} Even within the central mint, these nobilitas types were not at all common. The concept of nobilitas had little bearing on the ideology of the principate during the high empire, and it is not surprising that the nobilitas type was never prominent on the imperial coinage.\textsuperscript{265} What is somewhat surprising then is the frequency at which the term nobilissimus is found on inscriptions of all types in the provinces, as will be seen below.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure10.png}
\caption{Coin of Caracalla’s nobilitas type, RIC IV Caracalla 162 minted AD 206-210.\textsuperscript{266}}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure11.png}
\caption{Coin of Geta’s nobilitas type with the personification of Nobilitas holding the sceptre and palladium, RIC IV Geta 13a.\textsuperscript{267}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{262} RIC IV Septimius Severus 320 minted between AD 202-210.
\textsuperscript{263} RIC IV Geta 13a and RIC IV Geta 13b minted in AD200-202; RIC IV Geta 32 minted AD 203-208; RIC IV Geta 48a and RIC IV Geta 48b, RIC IV Geta 49 minted AD 203-208; RIC IV Geta 120 minted AD 200-202.
\textsuperscript{264} Indeed Roman virtues very rarely appeared on provincial coins at all.
\textsuperscript{265} Noreña 2001a: 80-81.
\textsuperscript{266} Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.
\textsuperscript{267} Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.
Figure 12. Coin of Geta’s *nobilitas* type, RIC IV Geta 49 dated AD 203-208.\(^{268}\)

But why was Geta given the honorific epithet *nobilissimus Caesar*? Why was it never given to Caracalla as Caesar on inscriptions? As seen above, the Antonine dynasty and the links created between Septimius Severus and his family with that of the Antonines was a theme running throughout almost all of the public imagery of the Severans under Septimius. This is also true for the epithet *nobilissimus*. Named Caesar in AD 198, Geta possessed the ideal *nobilitas* and was also marked out as ‘the most noble’. With Caracalla being the first born son to Septimius Severus and older than Geta, he naturally had the right to the title of Caesar. By giving Geta the title *nobilissimus*, it was emphasising that Geta too was the son of the reigning emperor in the same way Commodus was and that he too had the right to be Caesar. This was potentially an attempt to justify Septimius Severus’ decision to name *both* his sons as Caesar, marking out a hierarchy of Septimius Severus as Augustus, Caracalla Augustus and then Geta as *nobilissimus Caesar*. However, the importance of this epithet goes beyond the legitimisation of Geta. Throughout Geta’s time as Caesar (until 209 when he was named Augustus), *nobilissimus Caesar* became synonymous with the Caesar in general: a fact which continued far beyond the Severan period.

The prominence of the title *nobilissimus* can be demonstrated most noticeably on inscriptions found across the empire in addition to *nobilitas* type coins discussed above. A handful of these inscriptions come from Rome itself, but the majority recording Geta’s titulature as *nobilissimus* or *nobilissimus Caesar* come from provinces. This successfully demonstrates the reception of imperial messages by those outside Rome. The message was firstly received and secondly disseminated throughout the provinces and by the inhabitants rather than being imposed. This also demonstrates the outward appearance of provincial loyalty to the emperor and his two sons, and more importantly, the acceptance of Septimius Severus naming Caracalla and Geta as his Caesars and later Augusti.\(^{269}\) It demonstrates an awareness of the title *nobilissimus Caesar* in that it was

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\(^{268}\) Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.

\(^{269}\) Ando 2000: 175-205.
only ever given to Geta, and not Caracalla. As an honorific epithet it could have been given to either, but as an unofficial title it was only ever given to Geta.

A wealth of inscriptions attesting Geta as *nobilissimus Caesar* remain. The majority of these (over 150) come from the provinces with just 14 being found in Rome itself, the most notable here being the Arch of Septimius Severus. Inscriptions to Geta as *nobilissimus Caesar* in the provinces are varied and include both ‘official’ and unofficial and come from all regions of the empire. Most notable are the number of milestones. These are, by definition, official inscriptions however as discussed by Noreña, it is more likely that these milestones and the language employed on them were from provincial governors or similar officials in the provinces rather than coming from Rome and the imperial family itself. In addition to these league stones, a number of inscriptions are votive or honorific inscriptions as well as building dedicatory inscriptions. These inscriptions come from a wide variety of locations from across the empire: Thamugadi, Numidia; Thibari, Africa Proconsularis; Sitifis, Mauretania Caesariensis; Tomi, Moesia Inferior; Giufi, Africa Proconsularis; Velidena, Raetia; Magnesia, Asia; Bainbridge, Britainia and; Uchi Maius, Africa Proconsularis as an example. As these inscriptions are used in different ways and for different purposes, the wording, dedicators and meaning behind each inscription differs as well—however they all employ the epithet *nobilissimus* for Geta.

The Arch of Septimius Severus located in the *forum Romanum* was built by the Senate and dedicated to Septimius Severus (and his sons) in recognition of his victories in Parthia. It was dedicated in AD 203 with a very prominent inscription at the top of the arch naming Geta as *nobilissimus Caesar*. Of course this was destroyed upon Geta’s death, but from 203 to 211 it could have been seen by those in the forum. The inscription read:

To the Emperor Septimius Severus, Son of Marcus, Pius, Pertinax Augustus. Pater Patriae, Parthicus Arabicus, Parthicus Adiabeticus, Pontifex Maximus, having held the tribuniciam power 11 times; acclaimed emperor 11 times, Consul 3 times,

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270 CIL 6.1033; 6.1075; 6.2837; 6.36941.
271 Noreña 2001b: 221.
274 AE 1993, 1777.
275 CIL 3.7540; AE 1997, 1325.
277 CIL 3.5981.
278 AE 1896, 78 = CIL 3.13689.
279 AE 1962, 250 = RIB 3215.
280 AE 2000, 1733; CIL 8.15449.
281 For further information on the Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum, see above section on ‘Dynasty’. University of Virginia 2008.
Proconsul, and to Emperor Marcus Aurelius, Son of Lucius, Antoninus, Augustus Pius, Felix; having held the tribunician power 6 times, Consul, Proconsul, Pater Patriae, [and to Publius Septimius Geta, most noble Caesar] to the best and bravest princes on account of having restored the State and enlarged the Empire of the Roman people, by their outstanding virtues at home and abroad, the Senate and People of Rome [made this].

A milestone at Dermendschik in Asia is fairly perfunctory in listing the titles of the imperial family: Emperor Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, tribunician power for the ninth time, proclaimed imperator for the twelfth time, pater patriae and consul for the second time and Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius Augustus Pontifex Maximus and Publius Septimius Geta most noble Caesar and to Julia Domna Augusta mother of the camp.

Another, a building/dedicatory inscription on a tabula from Mursa in Pannonia Inferior states: For the safety of the emperors Lucius Septimius Severus Pertinax and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus and Publius Septimius Geta most noble Caesar and Julia Augusta mother of the camp, [---]ndus [restored] the Jewish meeting place [which had collapsed from] old age from the ground up.

Another type still, a building inscription from Thamugadi in Numidia, set up by two men of the senatorial order, is longer again and traces the Severan family back to the emperor Nerva:

For the safety of the emperor the son of the deified Marcus Antoninus Pius Sarmaticus Germanicus, the brother of the divine Commodus, the grandson of the divine Antoninus, the great-great grandson of the divine Trajan Parthicus, the great-great-great grandson of the divine Hadrian, the great-great-great-great grandson of the divine Nerva, Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax Augustus Arabicus Adiabenicus, bravest, most blessed prince, Pontifex Maximus, tribunician power for the seventh time, proclaimed emperor for the eleventh time, consul twice, father of the fatherland, proconsul, and to Emperor Caesar Marcus

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282 CIL 6.1033 (trans. University of Virginia 2008). Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) Lucio Septimio M(arci) fil(io) Severo Pio Pertinaci Aug(usto) patri patriae Parthico Arabico et / Parthico Adiabenico pontific(i) maximo tribunic(ia) potest(ate) XI imp(eratori) XI co(n)s(uli) III proco(n)s(uli) et / Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) M(arci) Aurelio L(uci) fil(io) Antonino Aug(usto) Pio Felici tribunic(ia) potest(ate) VI co(n)s(uli) proco(n)s(uli) p(atr(i) p(atriae) et / [(P)ublio] Septimio Getae nobiliss(imo) Caesari]] / "<optimis fortissimisque principibus> / ob rem publicam restitutam imperiumque populi Romani propagatum / insignibus virtutibus eorum domi forisque s(enatus) p(opulus)q(ue) R(omanus).

283 CIL 3.13689 Imp(erator) Caesar L(ucius) Sep[t(imus) Severus Pius / Pertinax Aug(ustus) pon[tif(ice)] max(imus) / tribunic(iea) pot(estato) / VIII Imp(erator) XII p(atr(i) p(atriae) co(n)s(uli) II et Imp(erator) Caesar M(arcus) / Aurelius Antoninus Pius Aug(ustus) pontif(ice) max(imus) / [(et P(ublius) Septimius Getae nobilissimus) Caesar]] et / Julia Domna Au[g(usta)] mater castrorum.

Aurelius Antoninus Augustus and his brother Publius Septimius Geta most noble Caesar, dedicated by Quintus Anicius Faustus of the legate of the emperor, most distinguishing man and greatest patron of the colony and by Saevinius Proculus, tribunus laticlavii, curator rei publicae, by decree of the decurions, paid with public money. It is interesting that the title nobilissimus Caesar should survive and be used by later emperors. Geta’s time as Caesar was lengthy, with eleven years in total before he was named Augustus. This means that nobilissimus Caesar had the chance to appear in a multitude of inscriptions and numismatic evidence both in Rome and the provinces, making it quite prominent in the public eye (even after Caracalla imposed the damnatio memoriae following his brother’s murder). The use of nobilissimus Caesar is continually used as a title by Caesars all across the empire and well into the fourth century AD. The son of Maximinus Thrax, Verus Maximus, is named nobilissimus Caesar in a dedicatory inscription from Etruria, modern day Grosseto. Similarly, it is also used by Phillip II, son of Philip the Arab, on a milestone in Moesia Inferior, by Galerius again on a milestone in Hispania citerior, in an honorific inscription on an altar to both Constantine and Maximianus. A building dedicatory inscription to Julian in Turkey names him as nobilissimus Caesar, demonstrating how widespread the use of this epithet was.

This was used later in the Severan period by Alexander Severus to continue the idea of a Severan dynasty both to legitimise and strengthen their rule. Following the end of the Severan dynasty with the death of Alexander Severus, later emperors used the title as a way of linking themselves back to the last stable period. The remainder of the third century AD was one of turmoil and instability. By various emperors naming a Caesar and using the same title made prominent under Geta and then


286 AE 1982, 325.
288 CIL 2.6345c.
290 AE 1974, 644.
291 See Chapter Three.
used by Elagabalus with Alexander Severus, it was a tactic used in an attempt to bring back that same strength and sense of permanency that came under the Severans.

In this sense, the prominence of *nobilissimus* under Geta could be seen as being successful. It was a message well received and replicated in the provinces and its importance and influence can be seen in the continuation of this message by later emperors. Following Noreña, it is clear that the emperor’s public image in this case as a complex and dynamic process in which both center and periphery could participate.\(^{292}\)

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the public image of Caracalla and Geta as Caesars and Augusti under Septimius Severus from AD 196-211. The appointment of Septimius’ two young sons as heirs meant that their public image was largely a continuation of Septimius’ legitimisation of his rule and his sons’ future reigns. This was seen through a continuation in the emphasis on ‘dynasty’ and links to the Antonines, which Septimius publicised so heavily; the use of the titles *princeps iuventutis, nobilissimus Caesar* and use of the jug and *lituus* imagery. These last aspects are particularly noteworthy. Even though the imagery or titles have been in use at various stages throughout the imperial period, after use by Caracalla and Geta, they became standard iconography for a Caesar and were adopted by many emperors in the third century AD.

The focus on family and the creation of a new dynasty was heavily publicised through the inclusion of the imperial family on public monuments, inscriptions, portraits, coins and other smaller items. These were issued both centrally by the state and were also received and transmitted by private individuals in the provinces. This was seen through private citizens (bankers) paying for the construction of the Arch of the *Argentarii*, the Arch of Septimius Severus in Leptis Magna and the inclusion of the imperial family at the theatre in Hierapolis. The way these images and messages were made was heavily influenced by the Antonine Dynasty. After Septimius adopted himself as the son of Marcus Aurelius, parallels were made between the Antonines and the newly formed Severan Dynasty as a way of legitimising the Severans rule.

Under Septimius Severus, the public image of Caracalla and Geta was also strongly focused on ‘the heir’- primarily through the use of the title *princeps iuventutis* both on inscriptions and in coins, as well as the imagery of the jug and the *lituus*. It was during the Severan period that this

\(^{292}\) Noreña 2001a: 174.
message was particularly strong, creating the idea of an heir to succeed Septimius Severus and it continued to an extent into the later third century.

The same is true for the honorific epithet *nobilissimus Caesar*, which was given to Geta and also represented in the *nobilitas* type coins. This epithet continued to be used by Caesars well after the Severan period.

The public image of Caracalla and Geta, therefore, is heavily influenced by their father during his reign. An emphasis on Antonine heritage, on the Severan family, and of a visible hierarchy within the Severan family epitomises the way the two brothers were portrayed to the empire. This was an important message for the imperial family to articulate to the inhabitants of the empire at this time. Following the political unrest of the late second century, Septimius Severus had to reassure people that his reign was going to be one of stability, as demonstrated by his connections to the Antonine dynasty and through strength and permanency of his own family. The hierarchy seen within the Severan family, the visual language used and the titles commonly given at this time were also carried on into the third and fourth century by emperors wishing to make links with the last long-lasting dynasty in Imperial Rome- influencing the way in which future emperors would operate and would portray themselves to the public.
Chapter Two: Caracalla’s Sole Rule AD 212-217

Introduction
Caracalla’s sole rule as emperor commenced in December AD 211 with the murder of his brother Geta. Over the next five and a half years his public image shifted quite significantly from what it had been under Septimius Severus. This change can be seen, first of all, as a direct response to the emperor’s own actions, most notably the murder of his brother Geta, whom Caracalla claimed had been conspiring to kill him. Caracalla now had to win over the army, which had previously shown strong support for Geta. He adopted the military lifestyle, including the soldiers’ dress, and increased their pay by half. After Geta’s murder, Caracalla issued the Constitutio Antoniniana, bestowing citizenship on all free inhabitants of the empire, as an act of gratitude towards the gods. These developments manifested themselves in his public image through a significant emphasis on imperial liberalitas during Caracalla’s reign. But the ideological messages of his regime were also shaped by the typical concerns of Roman emperors, who characteristically wanted to show that they had the support of both the people and the gods. There is clear evidence that these messages were not recycled wholesale from previous emperors, but adapted to reflect the emperor’s own personality, for example, through the choice of gods which appeared on coins. However, it is interesting that Caracalla’s public image does not appear to have been more overtly military than that of his predecessors, which stands in stark contrast to the picture of the emperor in Cassius Dio, Herodian, and the Historia Augusta. This shows that there was a significant gulf between the emperor’s behaviour and the public image circulated through various means to the inhabitants of the empire.

After Geta’s death, damnatio memoriae was carried out on his images and inscriptions and Caracalla persecuted and executed most of Geta’s supporters. Ancient literary sources record the five and a half year period that followed as one of cruelty, with many of Caracalla’s more commendable acts dismissed or brushed over, in particular the Constitutio Antoniniana. Throughout his reign, some of Caracalla’s more notable policy decisions included devaluing the Roman currency; introducing the antoninianus (a double denarius); constructing the baths of Caracalla; giving the Roman army a pay increase; and granting citizenship to all free inhabitants of the empire in the Constitutio Antoniniana. In his sole rule, Caracalla spent the majority of his time travelling across the Empire, spending very little time in the capital itself. In his short rule he visited more than twenty provinces including Britain, Egypt, Asia Minor and he also led campaigns against

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293 As explored in Chapter 1.
294 Herodian History 4.6.1; Cassius Dio. Roman History 78.2.6.
the Germanic tribes and Parthians. Since he had previously exiled and killed his wife, Plautilla, and had no children of his own the emphasis on family and succession (as discussed in Chapter One) could not be a primary focus of Caracalla’s public image. This chapter will examine the shift in Caracalla’s public image from that under Septimius Severus. I will argue that this was a response to the political and dynastic situation he found himself in following the deaths of his father and brother. This image will be discussed through:

i) An examination of the idea of Caracalla as a soldier emperor;
ii) Analysis of the religious iconography or ‘divine support’ on Caracalla’s coinage;
iii) Reception of the domus divina in the provinces; and
iv) Examination of the emphasis placed on Liberalitas during his reign.

Contemporaneous literary accounts from Cassius Dio and Herodian and the later Historia Augusta certainly describe Caracalla as a soldier emperor. They claim that he preferred to live and work as a soldier and spent much of his reign travelling instead of remaining in the capital. This literary description of Caracalla can certainly be seen in his physical appearance, since his portraiture depicts him dressed in military attire and sporting the cropped hair and short beard common to the soldiers. However, this chapter will firstly argue that despite the prominence of Caracalla’s military lifestyle in the ancient sources and portraits, it did not feature any more prominently on coins and inscriptions than any previous emperors. Secondly, this chapter will examine the religious iconography of Caracalla. It will argue that the religious images associated with Caracalla largely followed the precedent set by previous emperors as a way of legitimising their rule and demonstrating divine support. The increase in foreign gods displayed on Caracalla’s coinage was a result of the emperor’s extensive travels and his own personal affection for Aesculapius Serapis as well as the more local Apollo. This is demonstrative of the emperor’s own influence into the images minted onto his coins. Additionally, the coins of Caracalla show a movement away from gods such as Liber Pater and the dynastic focus that Septimius Severus created as part of his own public image. Thirdly, the continued reception and awareness of the imperial family by those in the provinces will be analysed. Despite the fact that only Caracalla and his mother, Julia Domna, were still living during the period AD212-217, there continued to be widespread recognition of the Severan dynasty as an imperial family throughout the provinces. A number of inscriptions referring to the domus divina provide evidence to the reaction and reception of imperial events by those in

296 SHA M. Ant. 2.3-5; Cassius Dio, Roman History 77.15.2; 78.9.1.
the empire. Finally, it will be argued that *Liberalitas*, as represented on Caracalla’s coinage reflected his public beneficence and generosity to the empire. This was achieved through the construction of the Baths of Caracalla, the granting of citizenship in the Empire through the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in AD 212, and the pay rise given to the soldiers in the same year. This chapter will contend that Caracalla’s public image differs greatly from his personal life as portrayed though the literary sources, and that it is characterised by both a combination of traditional longterm messages circulated through the empire (as identified by Noreña), as well as aspects unique to Caracalla.

The Soldier Emperor?
As sole ruler from AD 212-217, the literary record presents Caracalla as a ‘soldier-emperor’. Later in the third century (during the so-called ‘crisis’) a soldier-emperor would come to mean a Roman emperor coming to power through military force and the use of his army. At this stage, the term soldier-emperor more simply refers to an emperor personally involved in the day-to-day aspects of the military rather than commanding from a distance. Surviving portraiture of the emperor during this time certainly depicts him in a very militaristic fashion. But was this reflected in other media? Did Caracalla present himself any more militaristically than his predecessors? In order to gauge the extent to which Caracalla did or did not publicise his image as that of a ‘soldier emperor’, public forms of communication through imperial coinage, inscriptions and portraiture of Caracalla will be examined.

Firstly, however, the idea of an emperor as fellow-soldier must be examined. The concept of an emperor or leader as a ‘fellow-soldier’ dates back to the time of Julius Caesar, who would call his men *commilitones* rather than *milites*. Augustus, however, refused to call his soldiers *commilitones* in a speech or edict and forbade any member of his family with *imperium* to do so as well. This reluctance to openly acknowledge the soldiers as *commilitones* by the emperor has largely been seen as a façade: inside an apparently respectable framework of constitutional government, it prevented the troops from finding out that the emperor was in fact dependant on their support, and assured the upper classes that the emperor was capable of maintaining a stable regime. Augustus did, however, use the term in private conversation. By AD 68 the term

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300 Noreña 2011b: 197.
305 Quint. *Inst. Or.* 6.3.95.
commilitones was commonly in use. Caligula reportedly adopted such titles as ‘Son of the Camp’ and ‘Father of the Forces’, in addition to taking personal command of an army (the first time it had happened in fifty years). By representing an imperial speech to the army on coinage (see Figure 12), Caligula was emphasising his identification with the armies.

Figure 13. Caligula standing on a platform addressing five soldiers, each with a legionary eagle RIC I Caligula 32.

Claudius also minted coins proclaiming his comradely spirit with the soldiers and he specifically uses the term commilitones in addressing the troops. At that stage, it was important for those seeking the emperorship to identify themselves closely with the troops who supported them. By the second century AD, it was common for emperors to show certain military characteristics. Hadrian dressed in military attire (as seen in his portraiture) and dined with the soldiers and Lucius Verus was often seen at the head of the army and personally inspected the troops. This was a topos of what the expectation was as to how a good emperor was supposed to behave. Commodus was supposedly called ‘fellow-soldier’ by his own father, Marcus Aurelius, as he believed that the title of son was one simply conferred by nature, whereas ‘soldier’ showed a share in the emperor’s own excellence. Under Septimius Severus, the emperor’s active role as commilito developed (at least according to the literary sources) during three foreign wars and two civil wars, with the emperor sharing the work of his men, using a cheap tent, eating and drinking only what was available to everyone and avoiding any display of imperial luxury. This resulted in respect and popularity amongst his fellow soldiers. Therefore, by the time Caracalla came to power, the idea of an emperor as fellow soldier was quite common, and indeed was necessary for

306 Suet. Cal. 22.1.
308 Suet. Claud. 10.
309 Campbell 1984: 37.
310 SHA Hadr. 10.3-6; 23.1; Cassius Dio. Roman History 69.9.2-5; Fronto Principa Historiae 14.
311 Fronto Principia Historiae 13; SHA Marc. 21.9.
312 Herodian History 1.5.3-4.
313 Cassius Dio. Roman History 74.15.3; Herodian History 2.11.2; 3.6.10.
the success of an emperor. The literary sources indicate, however, that Caracalla took the notion of a soldier emperor further from what was previously expected.

**Literary Sources**

Ancient literary sources record that Geta was more highly favoured by the soldiers than Caracalla during the reign of Septimius Severus. The *Historia Augusta* tells us that the army situated at Alba were outraged at the news of Geta’s death, stating that they had sworn allegiance to both the sons of Septimius Severus.\(^{314}\) The loyalty felt by the army towards Geta is evident in both Dio and Herodian, who state that the soldiers felt great good will towards Geta, especially as he so closely resembled Septimius.\(^{315}\) Indeed when both Caracalla and Geta tried to win favour and support from the army, the majority supported Geta who seemed to have a better reputation than Caracalla.\(^{316}\) From the outset of Caracalla’s sole rule, it would have been essential to his success to win over the army and gain their support. This, the sources tell us, was done primarily through cash hand-outs, but also by bringing charges against Geta.\(^{317}\)

Despite the army’s initial backing of Geta over Caracalla, Caracalla is certainly criticised by contemporary historians for showing such support to the troops rather than the senate.\(^{318}\) Caracalla certainly seems to be following the last wishes of his father (at least in terms of elevating the army) to ‘be harmonious, enrich the soldiers, and scorn all other men.’\(^{319}\) Caracalla’s desire to embrace the soldiers is demonstrated by this passage:

> On entering the camp he exclaimed: Rejoice, fellow-soldiers, for now I am in a position to do you favours. And before they heard the whole story he had stopped their mouths with so many and so great promises that they could neither think of nor say anything to show proper respect for the dead. I am one of you, he said, and it is because of you alone that I care to live, in order that I may confer upon you many favours; for all the treasuries are yours. And he further said: I pray to live with you, if possible, but if not, at any rate to die with you. For I do not fear death in any form, and it is my desire to end my days in warfare. There should a man die, or nowhere.\(^{320}\)

Furthermore, Herodian explicitly tells us as a reward for his safety and gaining the sole rule

\(^{314}\) SHA. *M. Ant.* 2.5.3-4.
\(^{315}\) Cassius Dio. *Roman History* 78.1.3.
\(^{316}\) Herodian. *History* 4.3.2.
\(^{317}\) SHA. *M. Ant.* 2.3-5.
\(^{318}\) Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 78.9.1.
\(^{319}\) Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 77.15.2.
\(^{320}\) Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 78.3.1-3.
Caracalla promised to give each soldier a donative of two thousand five hundred *sestertii* and increase his normal pay by a half.\(^{321}\) This pay rise is thought to have come in around AD 212, after the death of Geta, and around the same time as the Edict of Caracalla. This represents only the second pay rise given to the army since Domitian, but it comes a short fifteen years after the raise given to the soldiers by Septimius Severus in AD 197, as seen in Figure 13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emperor</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caesar/Augustus</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domitian (AD 84)</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Septimius Severus (AD 197)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caracalla (AD 212)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14. Increase in pay given to the Roman Army\(^{322}\)

There is, however, some dispute over the annual pay of soldiers at this time. Speidel suggests that under Caracalla, the basic pay of a legionary footsoldier in *sestertii* rose to 3600,\(^{323}\) however Alston has provided alternatives to this figure.\(^{324}\) Regardless of the exact amount, the percentage increase in pay at this time is still important. Given that less than 20 years prior the army had received a 100%\(^{325}\) pay increase, it seems unusual that Caracalla should increase it by 50% so soon. This, therefore, can be seen as a clear measure from Caracalla to win the army’s support.

After successfully gaining the support of the army, Caracalla continued to live and work as a soldier: he enjoyed being called comrade over emperor, further recommending himself to them.\(^{326}\) It was this fact (in addition to the donatives) which made the soldiers adore him. Caracalla reportedly shared in all their duties, eating with the soldiers and not indulging in any extravagance and using only the cheapest items available to the poorest of his men.\(^{327}\) Dio, however, is critical of Caracalla for leading such a lifestyle, stating that ‘the duties of a commander, however, in which he ought to have been particularly well versed, he performed in a very unsatisfactory manner, as if he thought that victory lay in the performance of the humble duties mentioned rather than in good

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\(^{322}\) Adapted from Speidel 1992: 88.  
\(^{324}\) Alston (1994: 115) proposes that Caracalla’s pay rise would have increased each *stipenda* to either 562.5, 675, 787.5 or 900 *denarii* with 675 or 900 being the most likely. Develin (1971) also provides estimates for the pay rises from Septimius Severus and Caracalla.  
\(^{325}\) Here there is some discrepancy over this figure and whether or not Septimius Severus did indeed double the pay. See Alston 1994: 114 who suggests it could have been an increase of 25%, 50%, 75% or 100% and Brunt 1950:56-58.  
\(^{326}\) Herodian. *History*. 4.7.4-7.  
\(^{327}\) Herodian. *History*. 4.7.3-7.
From the literary sources then, it is apparent that Caracalla increased his expenditure towards the soldiers; he preferred to live as one of them; and initially at least, his actions seemed to be the result of a conscious decision to win over the support of the army. Although it is likely that Caracalla certainly did behave in this fashion (living as a soldier might), it is important here to briefly discuss the perspective from which the ancient sources are writing, particularly that of Cassius Dio. Dio appears not to have been favoured by Caracalla during his reign and certainly did not possess an intimate relationship with the emperor. Dio’s personal feelings towards Caracalla and his opinion that the emperor favoured the soldiers over senators can best be seen in the following incident occurring in Nicomedia in AD 214/215:

He held court rarely or never, but devoted most of his leisure to gratifying his curiosity as much as anything. For people brought him word from everywhere of everything, even the most insignificant things; and he accordingly ordered that the soldiers who kept their ears and eyes open for these details should not be punished by anyone but himself. Nothing good came of this order, but rather another set of tyrants to terrorize us, — even these soldiers. And — what was in the last degree disgraceful and unworthy of both the senate and of the Roman people — we had a eunuch to domineer over us…As for Antoninus himself, he would send us word that he was going to hold court or transact some other public business directly after dawn, but he would keep us waiting until noon and often until evening, and would not even admit us to the vestibule, so that we had to stand round outside somewhere; and usually at some late hour he decided that he would not even exchange greetings with us that day. Meanwhile he was engaged in gratifying his curiosity in various ways, as I have said, or was driving chariots, slaying wild beasts, fighting as a gladiator, drinking, nursing the resultant headaches, mixing great bowls of wine — in addition to all their other food — for the soldiers that guarded him inside the palace, and passing it round in cups, in our presence and before our eyes; and after this he would now and then hold court.

Because of Cassius Dio’s views on of the emperor and his own experience of how senators were treated in comparison to soldiers, some of the details of Caracalla’s relationship with the army may be somewhat exaggerated. However, Herodian and the author of the *Historia Augusta* also devote

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329 Davenport 2012a; Millar 1964: 153.
considerable attention to Caracalla’s military lifestyle so we cannot discount the views behind Caracalla’s militaristic side. It should be noted here that similar passages are be found in the literary sources regarding earlier emperors as well. As mentioned earlier, Hadrian is portrayed as a military emperor as well as Lucius Verus, Trajan and Septimius Severus.\textsuperscript{331} It must again be emphasised that it was \textit{necessary} for the Roman emperor to display their military strength and have a strong relationship with the army.\textsuperscript{332} The sentiments shown towards Caracalla as a fellow soldier, therefore, are certainly not restricted to the emperor, but could certainly negatively emphasised because of Dio’s personal perspective.

\textbf{Portraiture}

The extent to which Caracalla’s love of the soldier’s life might be reflected in his public image can firstly be analysed through portraiture and statues. Certainly the portraiture of Caracalla is very is militaristic in style,\textsuperscript{333} but did this demonstrate a significant shift in the imperial image? If so, to what extent could this have been merely a reflection on current trends? The fifth and final type of Caracalla’s portraits was produced when he became sole ruler at the end of AD 211 and did not change throughout his rule. Initially, as exemplified through his portraiture, Caracalla does appear to portray himself as a soldier emperor, a feat achieved through his style of dress, his hair style, short facial hair and most notably his expression. It is unknown just how accurately these portraits reflect Caracalla’s features, but if we believe that Caracalla did indeed live as a soldier it is likely that at least the hair was faithful to his appearance, as such styles were common to those in the army.\textsuperscript{334} However, accuracy aside, these portraits did at the very least represent the way Caracalla wished to portray himself, and developed his image in a new and distinct fashion that was different to his father, Septimius Severus. Caracalla lost the luxuriant hair and long beards common to the Antonines and Septimius by keeping his hair and beard cropped short in the military style. However, other portraits from the same time period depict the same short hair and cropped beard, so the question arises: was Caracalla was simply following the fashion of the time?\textsuperscript{335} In order to determine if this is the case, other portraits from the late second and early third century must also be examined in order to view the wider stylistic changes at work during this period.\textsuperscript{336} Similar portrait types exist in the early third century from Rome, Thera and Ephesus (see Figures 14-16) to name a few, featuring the short hair and close cropped curly beard. One portrait even features the same scowl so prominent on Caracalla’s portraits (Figure 14). However, since these portraits are all dated

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{331} SHA. Hadr. 10.3-6; 23.1; Cassius Dio. Roman History 69.9.2-5.  
\textsuperscript{332} Campbell 1984: 59-61.  
\textsuperscript{334} Parlasca 1966: 84-85.  
\textsuperscript{335} Wood 1986: 27-48.  
\textsuperscript{336} Stewart 2003.}
to the early third century A.D., it cannot be determined whether this was simply a style emerging at the time, which Caracalla emulated, or if Caracalla chose this distinctive look for himself, which others then happened to copy.\textsuperscript{337} Regardless, the portraits of Caracalla are still indicative of the way in which Caracalla wished to portray himself to the public both through sculpture and portraits on his coinage and they certainly represent quite a shift in terms of imperial portraiture. This trend was no doubt influential in the portraiture of later soldier emperors, as will be discussed shortly.

Figures 15-17. Three portraits from the British Museum dating to the Severan period From left: portrait of a man from Rome, early third century AD (British Museum Catalogue 1973,0327.18); portrait of a man, early third century AD from Thera (British Museum Catalogue 1897,0730.1); bearded portrait head dating to the Severan period from the Sanctuary of Artemis, Ephesus (British Museum Catalogue 1962,0301.1).\textsuperscript{338}

This final portrait type of Caracalla is characterised by the emperor glancing over his shoulder, usually left (see Figure 17). Two possible explanations have been put forth to explain this distinctive look. The first is that Caracalla was attempting to imitate Alexander the Great, whom he greatly admired and emulated.\textsuperscript{339} Given Caracalla’s admiration for Alexander the Great, which emerges from the literary sources, it has been accepted that this admiration\textsuperscript{340} formed part of his public image.\textsuperscript{341} Baharal, however, has suggested that these claims may in fact have little substance to them. The author of the \textit{Epitome de Caesaribus} writes that when Caracalla visited the body of

\begin{itemize}
\item British Museum 2014.
\item Cassius Dio, \textit{Roman History} 78.9.1; Herodian, \textit{History}. 4.8.1-2.
\item Manders and Rowan identify the influence of Alexander the Great on some of Caracalla’s coinage (Manders 2012: 250; Rowan 2012: 152-157) whilst other authors have noted the inspiration on Caracalla’s portraiture (Baharal 1994: 535; Kleiner 1992: 324-325).
\item Cassius Dio, \textit{Roman History} 78.7-8. Additionally, images of Alexander the Great are also recalled during the reign of Alexander Severus as part of a resurgence of an emphasis on the Severan family (Vermeule 1982: 61-72).
\end{itemize}
Alexander, the neck of the corpse was turned towards his left shoulder and Alexander’s face preserved an expression of brutality, similar to what Caracalla felt was his own expression and that which was so prominent on his portraiture.\textsuperscript{342} However, as Baharal points out, to date no archaeological evidence exists to suggest that embalmed bodies have ever been seen to have either the head turned to one side or any kind of facial expression.\textsuperscript{343} Furthermore, the reliability of this statement has been called into question based on the sources used.\textsuperscript{344} Additionally, when one compares the portraits of Caracalla to Alexander (as Barahal has done in detail) it can be seen that very few similarities exist at all. Both portraits have the head turned to the side, but whereas those of Alexander tilt upwards, Caracalla’s face downwards. Alexander’s larger eyes also look upwards whilst Caracalla’s small, narrow eyes look at the viewer straight on. Alexander’s hair has long, wavy curls whereas Caracalla’s sole ruler portraits have short, tightly curled hair. Alexander’s hairline is characterised by the \textit{άναστολή}, whilst Caracalla’s is set in a curve on his forehead. Alexander’s lips are parted and his cheeks smooth, while Caracalla’s lips are pursed and he has a short beard. Even the lines on the faces of Alexander and Caracalla cannot be used as a similarity between the two. Alexander’s suggest a contemplative expression whereas Caracalla’s present a stern and somewhat cruel expression.\textsuperscript{345}

![Figure 18. Caracalla’s Type 5 Portrait. From Rome, 212-217 currently in the Altes Museum, Berlin.\textsuperscript{346}](image)

\textsuperscript{343} Baharal 1994: 535.
\textsuperscript{344} Baharal 1994: 535.
\textsuperscript{345} Baharal 1994: 543-544. Baharal also goes on further to examine the coins and inscriptions as evidence of Caracalla’s public links to Alexander and refutes those claims as well. The influence of Alexander of Caracalla’s coinage will be discussed below.
\textsuperscript{346} Photo by author 2013.
The second interpretation of Caracalla’s pose is that it was intended to give the impression that the emperor was caught in the act of suddenly turning around to look behind him. This additionally lent immediacy to the facial expression, which at this point was largely recognisable by the pronounced scowl and ‘v’ between his eyebrows.\textsuperscript{347} The sharp turn in the head gives the impression that the artist has captured the sitter in a momentary action. The spontaneous twist of the head accentuates the power and energy of the subject, but its transitory pose also captures the essence of a cruel and suspicious man who glances over his shoulder as if to catch would be assassins off guard.\textsuperscript{348} Provincial portraits of Caracalla, such as that from the Temple of Isis at Koptos (see Figure 18), represent the same facial expression and essence of Caracalla, clearly based on metropolitan models, but executed by local artists. Nodelman claims that this final type, more ‘blocky’ than previous types, produces an expression of ‘brutal energy’ and perhaps even ferocity.\textsuperscript{349} This is in stark contrast to the Antonines, whom Septimius Severus so carefully emulated to legitimise his claim to the throne. The fifth type was one of the most widely diffused in the entire Roman imperial iconography and that for such a short period, these portraits of Caracalla were certainly circulated extensively.\textsuperscript{350}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{caracalla_head.jpg}
\caption{Head of Caracalla from Koptos}\textsuperscript{351}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{347} Wood 1986: 33 Kleiner (1992: 324) has also compared this with a statue of Diomedes, turning on Odysseus who was to betray him.
\textsuperscript{348} Kleiner 2004: 324.
\textsuperscript{349} Nodelman 1965: 159-161.
\textsuperscript{350} Nodelman 1965: 161.
\textsuperscript{351} Stevenson 1895: 350.
One notable exception to the type 5 portraits of Caracalla is a portrait found at Pergamon near the holy spring. Although worn, it depicts Caracalla with the same curly hair and beard and stern expression, but with a toga and his head covered, representing the emperor’s religious duties (see Figure 19). The portrait is clearly made locally and was perhaps erected for his visit that year or to commemorate the occasion. This, however, is the only such remaining portrait of Caracalla not in his typical military dress with harsh facial expression.

Figure 20. Portrait of Caracalla, from Pergamon

These portraits (and therefore the obverse of coins on which they appeared) play a crucial part in determining the public image of Caracalla. For many in the provinces, they were the only representation of the emperor that they would have seen, so the way in which Caracalla chose to be represented by this means in his sole rule is extremely important. That Caracalla chose this militaristic style indicates how he wished to be seen in what would have been a troubling time for the imperial family- Septimius Severus was dead, Geta had been murdered, and his wife Plautilla exiled and executed. His portraiture represents a young, strong man, capable of leading and earning the respect of an army. Caracalla’s portraiture represented a distinct shift in imperial style to be more militaristic, and later emperors certainly seem to have been influenced by Caracalla’s style, adopting some of the features unique to the emperor at that time. The portraits of Gordian III, for example, inherit the same V in the upper face with the contracted forehead muscle and a pursed,

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354 It was these portraits that the image of the emperor on coinage was modeled from.
taut mouth similar to that of Caracalla’s.\textsuperscript{356} Similarly, Macrinus and Maximinus Thrax likewise feature elements of Caracalla’s portraiture in their own during their reigns following Caracalla and Alexander Severus respectively.

**Inscriptions and Other Sources**

Caracalla’s generosity and benevolence towards the troops as well as privileges accorded by the emperor are recorded through a number of inscriptions as well as the legal compilation, the *Codex Justinianus*, displaying his affinity for the Roman army. Generally, soldiers were distinguished by special privileges and treatment in court,\textsuperscript{357} and petitioning the emperor was available to all Roman citizens. As discussed above, the emperor’s position was crucial; he needed to keep the troops content, but his decisions also influenced the development of the law, which affected all citizens.\textsuperscript{358} One inscription from Oescus in Moesia Inferior details the honours bestowed by Caracalla on a chief centurion as a reward for his bravery.\textsuperscript{359} Other inscriptions from Anagnia,\textsuperscript{360} Narbonensis,\textsuperscript{361} Rome\textsuperscript{362} and Augusta Rauricorum\textsuperscript{363} in Germania Superior give Caracalla the unofficial honorific epithets *fortissimus* and *felicissimus*. The use of these superlatives celebrating the military values of the emperor became common during the reign of Septimius Severus (particularly in Africa) and continued in inscriptions dedicated to his son.\textsuperscript{364} Furthermore, the *Codex Justinianus* records that in AD 213 Caracalla rather benevolently and obviously brushed legal technicalities aside to help a soldier who had changed his mind about a gift made to his mistress.\textsuperscript{365}

The same Emperor (Antoninus) to Marcus, soldier. If you prove to the governor of the province that the female slave was bought with your money and that the receipt of the purchase was written in the name of your concubine in order to make her a gift, he will order that she be returned to you. For although a gift may be valid where there is not a formal marriage, nevertheless I do not wish my soldiers to be robbed in this way by their concubines through deceitful displays of affection. Published on 18 February in the consulship of Antoninus Augustus for the fourth time, and Balbinus.\textsuperscript{366}

\textsuperscript{356} Wood 1981: 65.  
\textsuperscript{357} Campbell 1994: 170.  
\textsuperscript{358} Campbell 1994: 160.  
\textsuperscript{359} ILS 7178 = AE 1961, 208.  
\textsuperscript{360} CIL 10.5909.  
\textsuperscript{361} CIL 12.1851.  
\textsuperscript{362} CIL 6.1069.  
\textsuperscript{363} AE 1996, 1141.  
\textsuperscript{364} Noreña 2011b: 260-263.  
\textsuperscript{365} Campbell 1994: 169.  
\textsuperscript{366} CJ 5.16.2 (trans Campbell 1994: 169).
However, one instance, where Caracalla grants an exception to a Roman soldier to make his own defence after failing to make representations, is not so complimentary towards the soldier in both tone and language:

Emperor Antoninus Augustus to Maximus, soldier. Although when you were conducting your case, through ignorance of the law on account of the simple-minded ignorance of those in military service, you omitted to make appropriate representations, nevertheless if you have not yet made reparation, I grant that you may use the evidence for your defence, if an action is now being brought against you in accordance with the judgement. Given on 25 April, in the consulship of Asper and Asper.  

Despite the epigraphic evidence and other literary sources of Caracalla’s kindness towards the soldiers, such inscriptions similar to those above demonstrating benevolence from the emperor towards the army are not restricted to Caracalla’s reign. An inscription at Viminacium in Moesia Superior refers to the restoration of the canabae of Legion VII Claudia Antoniniana under Septimius Severus and Caracalla; a letter from Pliny to the emperor Trajan concedes a privilege normally granted to auxiliary soldiers after 25 years service; Gaius writes of a measure introduced (most likely) by Trajan which relaxes the legal formalities in drawing up wills for soldiers; and a letter from Hadrian shows a move towards the recognition of military marriages, with its tone emphasising his personal responsibility and good will towards his soldiers.

Therefore, the treatment shown by Caracalla and subsequently recorded in inscriptions and other sources is no more or less than what was expected from emperors from the first century AD onwards. The need for emperors to maintain the support and loyalty of the army ensured that such benevolence towards the soldiers was always necessary. That there is no apparent increase in such inscriptions or other forms of written evidence in Caracalla’s reign suggests that with the exception of the pay rise discussed earlier, Caracalla was no more lenient or generous to his troops than what was expected.

Coins

Finally, in order to analyse Caracalla as a soldier emperor, we must conduct an examination of military themes on his coins. Coins were an important method of communication in the Roman

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368 CIL 3.14509 = ILS 9105.  
371 BGU 140 = NH 333 Egypt 119.
and if Caracalla had indeed wished to emphasise the military aspect of his reign, coinage would be an ideal way to do so. Previous emperors had certainly utilised such means to display their military prowess and victories. The military type coins were usually minted in relatively smaller numbers, punctuated by sharp peaks under Trajan and Septimius Severus and whenever there were longer periods of warfare within the Empire. Military type coins could include a vast array of images and legends. References to various personifications such as Victoria, Pax and Fortuna, specific gods such as Jupiter and Mars associated with warfare, images of certain victory over conquered peoples, or indeed any scene depicting troops were common on the reverse of coins. The emperor’s titles, such as Parthicus Maximus, could also include reference to military victories. Because of the large scope of military themes on coins, quantitative studies into military types as a category can be somewhat limiting, as will be discussed in reference to three major studies into imperial coinage by Noreña, Manders and Rowan. These three studies examine the prevalence of military coin types on Caracalla’s coins, however, because of their different methods, they each yield vastly different results. This is due, in large part, to each author taking a different definition of what ‘military representation’ might include. For this reason, each author and their results must be looked at individually before it can be determined whether or not Caracalla particularly wished to emphasise his militaristic side to an unprecedented extent.

Manders examines the reverses of coin types from Caracalla’s sole rule using the RIC. From this, she found that 14.8% of the total 815 coin types included some military representation, equating to roughly 121 types. This is a sharp reduction from 30.5% of 933 coin types (approximately 285 types) for the period AD 198-210 where he ruled jointly with Septimius Severus. In this study, Manders interprets military representation as ‘all forms of representation emphasising the armed forces, military victories, and the role of the emperor as general.’ However, this seems to be a misreading of Caracalla’s coinage as it views virtues and personifications in isolation rather than being representative of broader themes. Rowan and Noreña use a different methodology, both using coin hoards, but again each yield vastly different results. By examining 4893 coins from various hoards, Rowan found that Caracalla’s Victory types represented only approximately 2% of his coinage (down from 23% under/with Septimius Severus). In the coins from the Reka Devina hoard (from the Danube region), it was found that only 1% contained ‘military themes’ compared with 25% under Septimius Severus. Here however, Rowan appears to disregard gods and

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374 Manders 2012: 2.
personifications and virtues as military themes.\(^{375}\) Rowan concludes that ‘the focus is clearly on divine support instead of military prowess; the public image of the emperor and the justification of his power were reshaped.’\(^{376}\) Taking a quantitative approach and examining the reverses from a sample of coin hoards, Noreña found that in AD 212, 17% of Caracalla’s silver reverses are military types, dropping down to 13% in 217.\(^{377}\) This drop is not entirely surprising given that it has already been established that Caracalla was making a concerted effort at the start of his reign to win over the support of soldiers and the army. Military types in this study include only military personification types of Victoria and Virtus. Noreña does note that Concordia, Fides, and Pax for example, blur the line between military types and civilian types and have therefore not been included.\(^{378}\) The somewhat limited scope of what represents ‘military themes’ can be problematic, and there are a number of issues that must be addressed with the results from all three studies.

Firstly, each author provides a different definition as to what military themes include, with each providing a variation of military victories, personifications, virtues and images of the emperor as general. The vast array of military representations, either explicitly stated (such as displaying captives) or implied (such as any of the gods associated with the military) makes it difficult to identify all those images which do relate to military themes. For example, military strength could be displayed though many different forms, not simply just through images of Victoria or images of captives.\(^{379}\) The vastly different results yielded by the authors demonstrate just how much a difference in definitions can change the figures. Based on Noreña’s study, Caracalla’s coins on the whole generally represent either the same proportion or smaller than that of previous emperors from AD 69.\(^{380}\) This is a slightly surprising result if we are to believe that Caracalla identified so strongly as a soldier emperor. It would appear, then, that the coinage of Caracalla does not display an overwhelming proportion of military types, which one might expect to see if Caracalla were appealing to the army through coinage or representing himself as a soldier emperor. This perhaps unexpected result therefore requires further discussion. In considering the start of Caracalla’s rule, it was certainly one of his primary aims to gain the support of the army. This was achieved through his own personal relationship with the soldiers and his generosity in terms of donatives and the pay rise given in AD 212. Once this support was gained, it would not have been necessary for Caracalla

\(^{375}\) Rowan 2012: 256 This is even more problematic when in a different section military themes are taken to include Victoria, Pax, the emperor’s virtus, trophies and captives and images of victory, virtues and personifications (Rowan 2012: 44).

\(^{376}\) Rowan 2012: 112.

\(^{377}\) Noreña 2011b: 241.

\(^{378}\) Noreña 2011b: 241.

\(^{379}\) Noreña 2011b: 127.

\(^{380}\) Peaks in these types occurred under Trajan, Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus with a notable drop under Antoninus Pius (Noreña 2011b: 241).
to then publicise this on his coins: certainly he had the favour of the army and that in itself was enough. His efforts in maintaining their support can be seen in other ways and do not necessarily have to be represented on his coins to a greater degree than was necessary.

Once again it is important to note the difference between the personal actions and behaviours of Caracalla and the aspects of him as emperor which he chose to make publically known. According to the ancient sources at least, Caracalla certainly chose to live and work as a common soldier might. It is very plausible that this lifestyle influenced his portraiture, and his iconic busts in military attire with cropped hair and beard were certainly emulated by later soldier emperors in the third and fourth centuries.\(^{381}\) Certainly these could be construed as being public actions, or an image presented to the public, but not to the extent that as other media. This was not an aspect emphasised on his coinage or inscriptions (media which reached a much greater and wider audience) to a greater extent than his predecessors. Caracalla seems not to have needed to use these means to either gain or maintain military support, but rather he utilised the generally traditional types on his coinage with no more military themes than what could be expected of an emperor up to the time of his reign.

**Caracalla’s Religion**

From the time of Augustus onwards, it was essential that each emperor seek divine support to legitimise his rule. By this time a tradition was already in place of victorious leaders being chosen by the gods.\(^{382}\) As Augustus already held the status as *divi filius*, the emperor then employed the mechanics of Hellenistic diplomacy, appealing to those in the empire to gain support and informing provincials of his accomplishments and family affairs.\(^{383}\) The divine support shown by emperors is most often seen through the dedication of temples and the minting of deities on coinage as well as from literary sources.\(^ {384}\) Deities such as Diana, Venus, Vesta and Mars appear frequently on the coins of emperors,\(^ {385}\) however, some emperors held a certain affinity for particular deities. For example, Minerva was particularly favoured by Domitian, who claimed she protected him in all things\(^ {386}\) and the goddess appeared on his coins more than under any other emperor.\(^ {387}\) In AD 83, four standard Minerva reverse types (including two unrecorded types) were issued together as a

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\(^{381}\) This coincides with the point made by Millar that the position of the emperor was always civil and military, but that from the middle of the second century AD until the end of the fourth century, it was assumed that all major campaigns had the direct command of the Emperor in person (Millar 1982: 22).

\(^{382}\) Fears 1977: 121.

\(^{383}\) Ando 2000: 134.

\(^{384}\) Fears 1977: 121-125.

\(^{385}\) Noreña 2011b: 336-337.

\(^{386}\) Suet. Dom. 15.

\(^{387}\) However Domitian never claimed to rule by the election of Minerva, unlike Hadrian who officially celebrated his election by Jupiter (Fears 1977: 14).
series. As other reverse designs were abandoned this series came to dominate typology on both denarii and aurei by the end of the period AD 82-85. Between AD 85-96 the silver coinage was almost entirely devoted to the emperor’s patron deity. In fact, Minerva represented 1877 out of 2146 silver reverse types on Domitian’s coinage. Augustus too held a certain affiliation with the god Apollo. The emperor reportedly arrived at a banquet dressed as Apollo and had a statue made of himself as Apollo placed inside the Temple of Apollo.

This section will examine the deities represented on Caracalla’s coinage in terms of both a continuation of some of the traditional religious themes and iconography common to imperial ideology. It will also discuss some of the less common gods shown as divine support. During Caracalla’s sole rule, Venus, Vesta, Apollo, Diana, Pluto, Isis and Serapis appeared quite prominently on his coins. Venus, Vesta, Apollo and Diana were all common deities on coinage prior to the Severan dynasty, so it is unremarkable that they should reappear at this point. Apollo, Serapis and Aesculapius do, however, feature quite prominently on the coins of Caracalla, more so than on the coins of other emperors and the importance of this will be discussed below.

Continuity in religious iconography from the reign of Septimius Severus (as discussed in Chapter One) is represented by Jupiter, Hercules, Mars, Sol and Aesculapius, who are all quite noticeable during both periods. The large percentage of deities on Caracalla’s coinage in general represents divine support as legitimisation for his rule. Despite the fact that like Commodus the previous century, Caracalla was born to the purple, both emperors still maintained the tradition of demonstrating divine support from the gods. In AD 186 Commodus minted the first nobilitas coin type and the epithet nobilissimus appeared on a milestone in Numidia. At this stage, he had inherited the throne from his father Marcus Aurelius and was unpopular with the senate. His right of birth did not automatically ensure support as an emperor. Caracalla found himself in a

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388 Carradice 1983: 142.
389 Carradice 1983: 144.
391 Suet. Aug. 70.
392 Miller 2009: 16.
393 Rowan (2012: 138-140) rejects the claim that this figure is Pluto, however interpretations of this type will still be provided.
394 Manders 2012: 233; 235.
395 166 silver coin types (as tabulated from the RIC) featured Aesculapius, 311 Apollo, and Serapis featured on 514 silver types- the greatest of any deity on Caracalla’s coinage (Noreña 2011b: 336-337).
396 Manders 2012: 234-235; Rowan 2012: 111.
397 Rowan (2012: 112) attributes 59% of Caracalla’s silver coinage as including gods.
398 Commodus sought to win over the army when he became emperor by identifying himself as the only emperor born in the palace (Herodian History 1.5.5-6).
399 Rowan 2012: 162-163.
400 RIC III Commodus 3; Noreña 2011b: 232.
similar position: inheriting power through his father, he murdered Geta at the beginning of his reign and faced antagonism from the senate, as well as the army. Caracalla did not emphasise his nobilitas the same way Commodus did, and so largely legitimised his rule through divine support.

One interpretation of the high proportion of Apollo, Serapis and Aesculapius types is that the coins are representative of Caracalla’s ‘medical tourism’. Rowan argues that he travelled to various sites across the empire and sought improved health at temples and shrines to these gods, which were then displayed on his coinage. Certainly Dio draws attention to Caracalla’s supposed poor health and his reliance on the gods:

But to Antoninus no one even of the gods gave any response that conduced to healing either his body or his mind, although he paid homage to all the more prominent ones. This showed most clearly that they regarded, not his votive offerings or his sacrifices, but only his purposes and his deeds. He received no help from Apollo Grannus, nor yet from Aesculapius or Serapis, in spite of his many supplications and his unwearying persistence. For even while abroad he sent to them prayers, sacrifices and votive offerings, and many couriers ran hither and thither every day carrying something of this kind; and he also went to them himself, hoping to prevail by appearing in person, and did all that devotees are wont to do; but he obtained nothing that contributed to health.

This may in part explain why the emperor entertained such an affinity for these particular gods, but it does not entirely follow that the presence of these deities on Caracalla’s coinage are solely a vow for his good health. The suggestion has also been made that Caracalla’s travels were following in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, Caracalla’s idol, rather than going on a pilgrimage for his health. The higher proportion of coins minted with Serapis could also be related to his father’s associations with Serapis, with the god appearing on coins as well as the emperor appearing in the guise of Serapis himself. Indeed the author of the Historia Augusta states that “in after years Severus himself continually avowed that he had found this journey very enjoyable, because he had taken part in the worship of the god Serapis, had learned something of antiquity, and had seen

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403 In fact the epithet nobilissimus is largely given to Geta, as discussed in Chapter 1.
404 Rowan 2012: 112-163.
405 Cassius Dio. Roman History 78.15.5-7.
406 Levick 1969: 426-446.
unfamiliar animals and strange places. It is possible, therefore, that Caracalla’s own links to the god could be related to his father.

Regardless, these foreign deities forming part of Caracalla’s public image appear to be a result of his extensive travels. Dio even states that at the attack in Alexandria, the emperor ‘issued orders to others from the temple of Serapis; for he lived in this god’s precinct even during the very nights and days of bloodshed.’

Figure 21. Portrait of Septimius Severus from the Louvre.

Hercules also features quite prominently on Caracalla’s coins in the first two years of his sole reign. These coins could connect the emperor’s rule with that of Septimius Severus (as Hercules featured quite prominently during Septimius’ reign) or also back to Commodus and the Antonines in general. The emperor Commodus had strong associations with Hercules, most notably appearing in the guise of the demi-god in one of his portraits as well as featuring on the reverse side of his coinage. So well known was this affinity that it was even recorded by Cassius Dio. Hekster identifies Commodus’ identification with Hercules as “a coherent ideological message that he wanted to have broadcast in order to legitimate his government…supported by an extensive

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408 SHA Sept. Sev. 17.4.
409 Dio claims that upon hearing that he was ill-spoken of and ridiculed by the population in Alexandria (particularly for having his brother murdered), Caracalla set out to attack the city (Cassius Dio Roman History. 78.22.1)
410 Cassius Dio Roman History. 78.23.2.
411 Photo by author 2013.
412 However provincial coins with Hercules date up to AD 214 (BMC 93).
413 Hercules features on 294 out of 4893 coins (Rowan 2012: 112).
415 Cassius Dio Roman History. 73.7.2-3.
iconographical programme of self-representation. Caracalla certainly employed Hercules on his coin types, and included a statue of Hercules in his Baths, seen below. In his youth too, Caracalla was represented as a young Hercules strangling serpents.

Figure 22. Farnese Hercules from the Baths of Caracalla- Naples Archaeological Museum.

Alternatively, the appearance of Hercules in these first two years could also be representative of Caracalla’s interest in Alexander the Great, as discussed previously. The Aboukir Medallions feature two versions of three obvers of Caracalla (as he appeared between AD 198 to 217) being associated with Alexander the Great. These medallions, however, are thought to date to the reign of Alexander Severus rather than being minted during Caracalla’s rule. As such, they cannot act as evidence for Alexander the Great featuring as part of the public image of Caracalla during his sole reign. However, the medallions do demonstrate that Caracalla’s fondness for Alexander was great enough that it was remembered by Alexander Severus some thirteen years after his death.

The last aspect of religious iconography to be discussed is the appearance of Pluto on Caracalla’s coins. These coins account for only seventeen types minted under Caracalla, and as noted above,
there is still some debate as to whether the images do indeed represent Pluto. Given the relatively small number of Pluto types (and the question surrounding this interpretation), the emergence and significance of this particular deity should not be overstated. The iconography of these Pluto types is quite similar to the Serapis coins minted under Caracalla during his sole rule: both men appear bearded, extending their hand, and wearing a polos. A number of the Pluto types also feature Cerberus, who is often featured as part of Serapis’ general iconography. The apparent assimilation of these two deities is not entirely unexpected, as Serapis possessed a syncretic nature. However the sudden appearance of Pluto is still unexplained. Manders presents a number of theories as to what these types could represent. The first is that they could refer to grain from Egypt, which had a strong connection to the Constitutio Antoniniana, since the taxes from new citizens were paid through grain. This interpretation follows on from the observation that Serapis appeared for the first time as an independent type on Roman coins in AD 212 (the year of the Edict of Caracalla). The Pluto types could possibly have promoted the increased import of corn as a form of tax from Egypt as a result of the Edict. However, the viability of this theory must be called into question, as no further evidence exists to support this argument. The comprehensibility of such a message, therefore, is questionable. It is unlikely that those in the empire would have understood such a message, and it certainly seems a very indirect and convoluted way of displaying the benefits of the Constitutio Antoniniana. Three alternate theories have been put forward in regards to the Pluto type. The first, that Pluto (as god of the underworld) was a reference to Geta’s death; the second, that the types were an association between Pluto, the ruler of the underworld, and Caracalla, the ruler of the world; and the third, that it simply represents a predilection for Egypt and Egyptian deities. It is this last option which seems the most likely, especially given the other gods appearing as divine support for Caracalla in his public image. Since it is uncertain whether these coins even represent Pluto and they were minted in relatively small numbers, these coins did not constitute an important part of Caracalla’s public image.

Religious themes on Caracalla’s coinage, therefore, are representative of a continuation of the tradition of emperors using divine support as a way of legitimising their rule. What differs,

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421 Noreña, however, identified 22 types, also from tabulating the *RIC* (Noreña 2011b: 337); Manders does not utilize coin hoards in her study, but rather examines the number of individual coin types. The extent to which these Pluto types were minted, therefore, is unknown.
422 Manders 2012: 236.
423 Manders 2012: 236-237.
424 L’Orange 1947: 82.
425 Serapis was a god favoured by Septimius Severus during his rule (as seen above), but he never appeared on coinage until the sole rule of Caracalla.
426 The only other argument to be used in conjunction with this theory is that the Edict of Caracalla impacted on the daily life of inhabitants in the empire with new citizens adopting the *nomen gentile* of Aurelius.
427 Manders 2012: 240.
however, is the gods which Caracalla chose to emphasise through his coins. A distinct shift can be seen away from the gods favoured by Septimius Severus (as discussed in Chapter One) to the gods personally favoured by Caracalla. Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Vesta and Diana all reappear on the coins of Caracalla during his sole rule, but Aesculapius, Apollo and Serapis all appear more frequently than had been seen before. This is consistent with previous emperors such as Augustus and Domitian who also emphasised their personal affiliation for Apollo and Minerva respectively. The appearance of gods somewhat unique to Caracalla’s rule should not be overanalysed in this respect, but simply be seen as being the result of Caracalla’s extensive travels and his own personal preferences, demonstrating that the emperor did at times dictate what was minted on his coins.  

**Dynasty**

As seen in the previous chapter, the Severan family featured prominently as part of the public image under Septimius Severus, particularly on coins minted under the emperor. Following the death of Septimius, the murder of Geta, the exile and subsequent murder of Plautilla, and the absence of any children, the strength of imperial family was not a message which Caracalla could emphasise. Dynastic themes or imagery on media, such as coinage, ceased to emanate from the central administration. Indeed given the delicate situation with the army following Geta’s murder, it would not have been particularly wise for Caracalla to stress this point, although Baharal suggests that for Caracalla, ‘in the soldiers’ eyes the dynastic aspect was one of the most important in determining legitimacy in a claim to the throne.’ The imperial family and dynasty was not something which Caracalla himself emphasised, however Julia Domna travelled with Caracalla throughout the provinces and still had her image minted on coins. Because of this, those in the provinces still perceived the notion of the *domus divina* and continued to spread this interpretation. This is particularly evident in a number of inscriptions and dedications to the emperor.

Julia Domna is the only family member who appeared on coins during Caracalla’s sole rule, although the two do not feature on coins together or indeed the same coin at all in the mint at Rome. In the provinces, however, a number of coins minted contain images of the two, such as those from Markianopolis, Epiphania and Emesa, indicating that although this family dynasty

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428 Or, as Levick suggests, that those in charge of the mint selected the image in order to show the emperor what he wanted, perhaps even approved by the Princeps (Levick 1982: 108).
429 Very few types of Plautilla’s coins were ever minted and mostly reference *Pietas* (*RIC* IV Caracalla 367), *Concordia* (*RIC* IV Caracalla 360) and *Venus* (*RIC* IV Caracalla 368).
430 Although it seems likely that Caracalla would have continued with the emphasis on family and dynasty if he had a son.
431 Baharal 1994: 549 As seen above, it was certainly this dynastic approach Commodus took in attempting to gain the support of the army after the death of Marcus Aurelius (Herodian *History* 1.5.5-6).
432 *BMC* 21; AMNG 684.
created by Septimius was not emphasised by the central administration, this image was certainly still alive in the provinces. After her exile, Plautilla did not appear on any of Caracalla’s coins and *Divo Severo* types of Septimius Severus were only minted in AD 211, presumably during Caracalla’s brief co-rule with his brother. Under Septimius Severus, Liber Pater and Hercules also served to represent the new Severan dynasty. However, under Caracalla, coin types with Liber Pater and Hercules either decrease rapidly or indeed cease to be minted entirely, as in the case of Liber Pater. Coins featuring Hercules only appear in AD 212 and 213. These Hercules types may have functioned as a point of continuity from the reign of Septimius Severus, serving as a link to Caracalla’s deified father. However, although only two types were minted, they still represent a staggering 6% of Caracalla’s sole rule coins demonstrating some continued link to the image created under Septimius and to his hometown of Leptis Magna.

Monuments throughout the empire continue to be dedicated to Caracalla and Julia Domna, demonstrating the ongoing importance of the *domus divina* to those in the provinces. One such instance is an inscription on a temple located in Thugga in Africa Proconsularis dated to AD 214, which is dedicated to Caracalla and lists his lineage back to the emperor Nerva (in much the same manner as Septimius Severus on many of his inscriptions):

> ‘For the safety of the emperor, son of the deified Septimius Severus Pius Arabicus Adiabenicus Parthicus Maximus Britannicus Maximus, grandson of the deified Marcus Antoninus Pius Germanicus Sarmaticus, great-grandson of the deified Antoninus Pius, great-great-grandson of the deified Hadrian, great-great-great-grandson of the deified Traianus Parthicus and the deified Nerva, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius Felix Augustus, Parthicus Maximus Britannicus Maximus Germanicus Maximus, Pontifex Maximus holding tribunician power for the seventeenth time, hailed *imperator* three times, consul four times, father of the fatherland and proconsul, and for Julia Domna Pia Felix Augusta, mother of our emperor and the mother of the camp and the senate and their whole divine household. The Temple of [German?] Victory of our lord, which Gabinia Hermiona ordered to be constructed with 100,000 sesterces from her will, was

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433 SNGLev 1821.
434 CNG 64785.
435 *RIC* IV Caracalla 191A-F.
436 As discussed in Chapter 1.
437 Provincial coins containing Hercules date up to AD 214 (*BMC* 93).
438 *RIC* IV Caracalla 192 and *RIC* IV Caracalla 206.
439 Based on coin hoards, Hercules features on approximately 294 of Caracalla’s 4893 coins in hoards (Rowan 2012: 111). *RIC* IV Caracalla 239 also features Hercules but is not included in Rowan’s work.
440 Hercules and Liber Pater were closely associated with the city of Leptis Magna and were therefore seen as a reference to Septimius’ home town (Rowan 2012: 41).
completed and dedicated. In this will she instructed that on the day of the temple’s dedication and in the years thereafter, there should be a public feast for the decurions put on by her heirs. She likewise gave a field, which was called the circus, for the enjoyment of the people of the community.\textsuperscript{441}

This inscription commemorates the construction of a temple of ‘Augustan Victory’. It was paid for by a woman named Gabinia Hermiona, who came from a very wealthy and prominent family in Thugga.\textsuperscript{442} The temple itself cost 100 000 \textit{sestertii} and the inscription records that Hermiona also paid for an annual feast to be held for the \textit{ordo decurionum} to be on the anniversary of the dedication of the temple. The inscription specifies the connection of the temple and Victoria to the emperor’s Germanic campaigns. It also hopes for the welfare of Caracalla and his mother Julia Domna, envisioning a \textit{domus divina}.

Furthermore, an arch was erected at Theveste in honour of Caracalla, with the dedication dated to AD 214. Three inscriptions exist on the arch, one for each of the deified Septimius,\textsuperscript{443} Julia Domna,\textsuperscript{444} and for Caracalla.\textsuperscript{445} Once again, the Severan dynasty and imperial line figure prominently on this monument. Caracalla remains associated with Septimius Severus and the Severan dynasty. Another two arches were constructed to Caracalla in Volubilis and Cuicul. The arch erected in Cuicul in Numidia (modern day Djemila, Algeria) was constructed in AD 216 and this time was dedicated to Caracalla and \textit{both} his parents: Septimius Severus and Julia Domna.\textsuperscript{446} The second arch, dedicated between December AD 216 and April AD 217 in Volubilis in the province of Mauritanica Tingatana (modern day Ksar Faraoun, Morocco) was dedicated to Caracalla as well to his mother, Julia Domna.\textsuperscript{447} The inscription reads as follows:

\begin{quote}
‘To the Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius Felix Augustus Parthicus Maximus, Britanicus Maximus, Germanicus Maximus, \textit{pontifex maximus}, holding
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{442} Leydier-Bareil 2006: 514, 519.

\textsuperscript{443} CIL 8.1855.

\textsuperscript{444} CIL 8.1856.

\textsuperscript{445} CIL 8.1857.

\textsuperscript{446} CIL 8.8321/CIL 8.20137.

\textsuperscript{447} Leydier-Bareil 2006: 508.
tribunician power for the twentieth time, acclaimed *imperator* for the fourth time, *consul* for the fourth time, *pater patriae*, *proconsul*, and to Julia Augusta Pia Felix, *mother of the Emperor, camps, senate and fatherland*, the *res publica* of Volubilitanus, on account of his extraordinary indulgentia towards them, surpassing that of all previous emperors, an arch with a six-horse chariot and all the decoration, assisted by Marcus Aurelius Sebastenus, procurator Augusti, most devoted to his *numen*, who initiated and dedicated (the work), (while the *res publica*) itself administered the construction.\textsuperscript{448}

Further away from Africa, a similar inscription to Caracalla and Julia Domna was found on a stone at Habitancum Fort in Northumberland in Britain, dating to AD 213:

‘For the Emperor Caesar, son of the deified Septimius Severus Pius Arabicus Adiabicenus Parthicus Maximus Britannicus Maximus, grandson of the deified Antoninus Pius Germanicus Sarmaticus, great-grandson of the deified Antoninus Pius, great-great grandson of the deified Traianus Parthicus, and of the deified Nerva, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius Felix Augustus Parthicus Maximus Britannicus Maximus Germanicus Maximus, pontifex maximus, in his sixteenth tribunician power, consul four times, twice acclaimed Imperator, father of the fatherland, proconsul, and for Julia Domna, Pia Felix Augusta, mother of our Emperor, likewise of the camps, of the senate and of the fatherland, out of their common duty and devotion, under the charge of Gaius Julius Marcus, procurator Augusti, devoted to his numen, who initiated and dedicated (the work), while the *res publica* itself administered the construction.

In addition to these inscriptions on monuments erected by those in the provinces, Cassius Dio provides evidence of Julia Domna’s involvement in her son’s reign. He records that Caracalla’s mother gave the emperor advice, had charge of his correspondence in both Latin and Greek and

indeed her name even appeared in letters to the senate.  In a letter from Julia Domna to the Ephesians in AD 214/215, it can be seen that not only did Julia Domna accompany Caracalla to Nicomedia, but that the Ephesians were writing to her in order that she might use her influence with Caracalla to help Ephesus achieve a third neocorate. In the letter below, she promises nothing but it is demonstrative of the Ephesians’ awareness of Domna’s influence with her son.

‘Julia Augusta to the Ephesians. I join in the prayer of all cities and all peoples to receive [benefactions] from my dear son, the emperor, especially in the case of your city on account of [its magnificence] and beauty and the rest of its endowment and because of the fact that it is a school for those who come from anywhere to its seat of learning.

These inscriptions and letter above demonstrate that those in the provinces were showing an awareness of the family unit. This is representative of the consensus model established by Ando, demonstrating the complex ‘conversation’ between Rome and her provinces: the message sent out by Septimius Severus during his reign was received and understood in the provinces and continued to manifest itself through provincials. These inscriptions are evidence that the public image of the new Severan dynasty created by Septimius Severus was successful. Additionally, that it was received and replicated in the provinces even after the deaths of Septimius and Geta. These inscriptions came from across the empire, erected by wealthy individuals, soldiers and others, showing that this awareness of the imperial family and dynasty was not restricted to one area or one particular group of people but was quite widespread. No doubt Caracalla’s own extensive travels, often accompanied by his mother, helped to reinforce this image in some parts of the provinces. Therefore, although this image was not a concentrated effort on the part of Caracalla by any means, it arose as a response from the inhabitants of the empire.

The Liberalitas of Caracalla

Despite the fact that contemporary ancient authors such as Cassius Dio and Herodian as well as the author of the Historia Augusta described Caracalla in such a negative light, documentary and archaeological evidence has increased our overall knowledge of the emperor. One aspect of

450 Cassius Dio. Roman History 78.18.2-3.
452 Epistle 265 (in Oliver, Greek Constitutions).
454 Indeed Cassius Dio proclaimed that Caracalla ‘belonged to three races; and he possessed none of their virtues at all but combined in himself all their vices; the fickleness, cowardice, and recklessness of Gaul were his, the harshness and cruelty of Africa, and the craftiness of Syria’ (Dio. Roman History 78.6.1) and the Historia Augusta almost reads as a list of all the bad deeds of the emperor.
Caracalla’s character not extensively examined in the literary sources, but one that features prominently as part of his public image, is that of liberalitas. Liberalitas can be defined as ‘generosity, nobility, kindness, magnamity; munificence, open-handedness, liberality; or an instance of generosity, a gift donation, contribution.’ This virtue appeared extensively on coins minted under Caracalla, on inscriptions dedicated to the emperor, and was demonstrated through several acts early in his reign: through the construction of the Baths of Caracalla, the Constitutio Antoniniana, and the pay rise given to the soldiers in the Roman army. This prominence of Liberalitas so early on in Caracalla’s reign, it will be argued, was as a reaction to the death of his father and the murder of his brother. The emperor aimed to win the support of those in Rome through the construction of the Baths, those in the provinces with the granting of citizenship and those in the army with the pay rise and donatives. Liberalitas was therefore a major defining feature of Caracalla’s public image.

Cicero, in his De Officiis, identified two types of liberalitas. The first is the giving of a beneficium, and the second, the returning of it. This primarily referred to material goods given privately as well as publicly. An important part of the emperor’s role was not only dispersing a constant outflow of gifts, but also giving them in a ‘magnanimous and dignified’ manner. Liberalitas was most commonly represented as either a female personification, holding an abacus or coin counter and cornucopiae, or as the emperor sitting on a platform, extending his hand to a citizen to give a gift. This visualisation of the emperor issuing gifts or handouts most often represented the congiarium distributed by the emperor to Roman citizens. The congiarium was a payment normally made by a dispensator at large events such as festivals, games or at times of celebration. They were generally handouts of money or other small gifts, but occasionally larger distributions such as land. Despite the importance of acts of liberalitas and distributions of congiaria to consolidating the position of the emperor, some emperors such as Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Domitian and Trajan gave out very few congiaria, between only one and three in relatively long reigns. Generally, distribution of congiaria and acts of liberalitas can be seen to increase quite substantially from the second century, with Hadrian doubling the imperial expenditure on congiaria. Duncan-Jones associates this with a willingness to spend heavily on the public alongside

455 Cassius Dio briefly dismisses the Constitutio Antoniniana as a way to increase taxes (Cassius Dio. Roman History. 78.9.5).
456 Oxford Latin Dictionary s.v. Liberalitas 1, 2, 3.
457 Metcalf states that ‘there is no comparable personification with which specific events or expressions can be so closely linked’ (1993: 337).
460 Millar 1977: 135-139.
an increase in public buildings and an overall larger budget, which was achieved through an increase in revenue from conquests and taxes.\textsuperscript{463} Expenditure through \textit{congiaria}, games and other forms of entertainment and public buildings was one way to maintain the support of the Roman plebs. In addition to the general importance of benefaction, an emperor needed to present his acts in such a way that he outstripped his predecessors in generosity, taking his benefactions above and beyond what was expected of him.\textsuperscript{464}

During Caracalla’s period as Augustus, there were nine instances of public distributions between 196 and 213, with four of those belonging to the period of his sole rule.\textsuperscript{465} Although it was an aspect evident in the reign of every emperor,\textsuperscript{466} Caracalla seems to have demonstrated \textit{liberalitas} more than was usual. It is particularly revealing, therefore, that Noreña has identified the relatively high abundance of \textit{liberalitas} on coins of Caracalla (see Figure 20). This represents a staggering 43\% of all silver virtue types in his reign, with the remainder being split amongst \textit{indulgentia} (28\%), \textit{providentia} (26\%) and \textit{pudicitia} (3\%).\textsuperscript{467} It is likely that this high percentage of \textit{liberalitas} of the virtue types of Caracalla shows that this was an integral part of his public image. This probably reflects acts under his reign such as the construction of the baths of Caracalla, the \textit{Constitutio Antoniniana} and the pay rise given to the soldiers.

Figure 23. Relative frequency of \textit{Liberalitas} types on denarii, expressed as a percentage of all virtue types by reign\textsuperscript{468}

\textsuperscript{463} Under the Julio-Claudians, increased expenditure was the result of a number of large gifts received from Parthia, Commagene and Armenia. Under the Flavians, Vespasian achieved a 20\% increase in revenue from provinces in Egypt, Gaul, Pannonia, Cappadocia, Mauretania and Britain. The Trajanic building explosion, meanwhile, was primarily funded by the gold mines of Dacia following the invasion, and the construction of Colosseum under Vespasian by the spoils of the Jewish War in Judaea (Bodel 2001: 47; Duncan-Jones 1994: 45-46).
\textsuperscript{464} Veyne 1990:347.
\textsuperscript{465} Kienast 2004: 164.
\textsuperscript{466} Metcalf 1993: 337.
\textsuperscript{467} Noreña 2011b: 347.
\textsuperscript{468} Noreña 2011b: 91.
The Baths of Caracalla

The construction of buildings for public enjoyment is one of the most prominent forms of imperial liberalitas, showing the emperor as builder and public patron.469 The Baths of Caracalla, constructed approximately from 212 to 216,470 can be seen as being representative of this, a public beneficium by the emperor. Public architecture such as temples, fora and roads for example, were associated with virtue. Buildings like taverns and brothels, however, were symbolic of vice.471 Public baths occupied a space in between. The question must be asked, therefore, why baths? Claims of concern for the general welfare of the public exist, and in Caracalla’s case, it has been thought that he built the baths to win over the lower classes. At the base of it, however, it seems to be a simple answer of it was simply what the emperor did and was expected to do.472

Coins minted under the Flavians demonstrate that imperial building projects were seen as a public beneficium. The monuments constructed in the area previously occupied by Nero’s Golden House (the Colosseum with the porticus of the Baths of Titus473 visible to the side, and the Temple of Deified Claudius) were commemorated on coinage. This further communicates the emperor’s generosity to the people of Rome.474 Similarly, the Baths of Caracalla served as the monumental embodiment of the generosity of the emperor to the people of Rome. These baths were extravagant, spanning an area of 223 by 116 metres, and they could hold approximately 1600 people. The full implications of this imperial patronage can be appreciated only in economic terms, both from the point of view of the emperor who had to pay, and from that of the work force, which received payment. Public building projects provided employment to the people of Rome.475 Janet DeLaine has estimated total cost of the Baths of Caracalla as approximately 12 million kastrenses modii of wheat over 6 years as a minimum.476 53% of this was spent on construction (including materials), 29% on decoration, and 18% on amenities including road and aqueduct.477 To put this in perspective, the maintenance of the army was between 45- 150 million kastrenses modii and the annual corn dole for Rome was estimated to be 7 million kastrenses modii.478 Payment for a building project such as this benefitted different levels of society. DeLaine argues that ‘not only

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470 SHA. M. Ant. 9.4; 216 is given as the date of dedication at the end of construction of the central baths, however the outer precinct was still undergoing construction into the reign of Alexander Severus (DeLaine 1997: 16).
471 Fagan 1999: 106.
473 Initially it was identified as being part of Nero’s Golden House, but has since been reinterpreted as belonging to the Baths of Titus.
476 DeLaine 1997: 219. Duncan-Jones has identified that in AD 215, buildings only accounted for between 20 and 30 million sesterces out of a budget of between 1462 and 1613 million sesterces, with the majority of the budget allocated towards the army (Duncan-Jones 1994: 45).
was the construction programme a form of largesse on the same scale as imperial congiaria, but the finished building was a permanent reminder of the power to command resources wielded by the emperor, and the emperor alone.\textsuperscript{479} Evidence of this can be found, for example, in inscriptions from Leptis Magna and Sabratha for the use of marble in Rome\textsuperscript{480} and in Nicomedia.\textsuperscript{481} DeLaine goes on further to suggest that ‘the larger, more sumptuous, and more technically difficult and/or elaborate the building, i.e. the more resources expended in the undertaking, the greater the impact and kudos required.’\textsuperscript{482}

Caracalla never displayed the Baths themselves on his coins. However, this is probably because the Baths were not completed during his reign. Although the date of construction (or dedication) is given as AD 216, the outer precinct of the Baths was not completed by this time.\textsuperscript{483} The Baths were probably not finished before the reign of Alexander Severus, so they would not have been able to be displayed on coins in their final form. Additionally, the Baths of Trajan and those reportedly built by Commodus and Septimius Severus were never displayed on coins (nor were subsequent baths constructed under later emperors). It is therefore not entirely unusual that Caracalla never displayed his baths either, especially given that those in or close to Rome would only have appreciated the baths themselves. Using the baths as a reverse design would not have been particularly meaningful to those in the provinces. Indeed, Noreña has argued that more generic coin types that have been in circulation for many years are far more effective at displaying a message than rare types showing specific monuments.\textsuperscript{484} In this case, the quantity of liberalitas types circulated under Caracalla would be more effective than coins bearing an image of his baths. They did however communicate the same message of imperial generosity, but did so in different ways to different audiences.

\textbf{The Constitutio Antoniniana}

There is considerable debate surrounding the form and context of the \textit{Constitutio Antoniniana} (also known as the Edict of Caracalla) of 212 and what impact this had on the Empire. A papyrus fragment provides the majority of the text of the edict and the intent behind it, which is discussed briefly by Cassius Dio and Ulpian in their works. Given that the Edict of Caracalla granted citizenship to all free inhabitants in the Roman Empire, it seems slightly unusual that it warrants so small a mention in the ancient sources. Indeed Ando states that ‘if an empire is to be an empire and rule over someone, then the Roman empire must have become some other sort of state at that moment when Caracalla erased

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{479} DeLaine 1997: 224.
\bibitem{480} Ward-Perkins 1951: 89-104.
\bibitem{481} Ward-Perkins 1980: 23-69.
\bibitem{482} DeLaine 1997: 11.
\bibitem{483} DeLaine 1997: 13.
\bibitem{484} Noreña 2011b: 197.
\end{thebibliography}
the most important legal distinction between conquerors and those once conquered.\textsuperscript{485} At the time, the *Constitutio Antoniniana* must have been one of Caracalla’s greatest actions as emperor, impacting on every person in the empire in one way or another.

The fragmentary remains of the Edict state:

Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Augustus Antoninus Pius proclaims: […] rather […] the causes and the reasons […] that I render thanks to the immortal gods for preserving me [when that conspiracy occurred], in that way I believe that I should be able [magnificently and reverently] to appropriately respond to their majesty, [if] I were able to leave [all who are now my people] with all others who should join my people [to the temples] of the gods. I give to all of those [who are under my rule throughout] my whole empire, Roman citizenship, [though the just claims of communities] should remain, with the exception of the \textit{ded}icitii. Because it is suitable that the [whole populace] ought not only […] already to share in the victory […] my edict will expand the majesty of the Roman [people…]\textsuperscript{486}

At the beginning of the third century AD, there were more citizens than ever before and their numbers were continually on the rise, however they were still a minority in terms of the total population.\textsuperscript{487} Citizenship was necessary for promotion to equestrian and senatorial status, carried a certain value and prestige, and also gave men and women access to Roman private law.\textsuperscript{488} Early scholarship into Roman law on the provinces interpreted it as a means of oppressing the ‘conquered’, however more recently a new interpretation has been put forward.\textsuperscript{489} More recent analyses of papyri and inscriptions show an understanding of Roman law from those in the provinces. Before the Edict of Caracalla, different systems of law existed side-by-side, incorporating both local laws and Roman laws for each political community, and at other times communities had exclusively local law. Gaius the jurist identifies that:

All peoples who are governed by statutes and customs observe partly their own particular law and partly the common law of all human beings. The law that a people established for itself is peculiar to it, and is called civil law, being, as it were, the special law of the \textit{civitas}, that community of citizens, while the law that natural reason establishes among all human beings is followed by all peoples alike, and is called \textit{ius gentium}, being, as it were, the law

\textsuperscript{485} Ando 2012: 77.
\textsuperscript{486} \textit{P. Giss.}, 40, col. 1.1-12 (trans Hekster 2008: 123).
\textsuperscript{487} Garnsey 2006: 135.
\textsuperscript{488} Sherwin-White 1973.
\textsuperscript{489} Ando 2012: 76.
observed by all peoples. Thus the Roman people observe partly its own peculiar law and partly the common law of human kind.490

Similarly, the *lex Rupilia*, the Rupilian law on the administration of Roman Sicily outlines that the landscape of Roman Sicily is separated into jurisdictions, each with a different local law.491 A clear distinction was made between local law and Roman law, with communities retaining some level of independence through their own laws whilst still having access to Roman law. Ando argues that in this way a community could lose its independence but retain the use of its laws. Those granted citizenship before 212 would therefore have to obey both local laws or customs as well as Roman ones, as seen by a grant of citizenship by Marcus Aurelius in northern Africa to Aurelius Julianus and his family ‘with local law preserved’.492

Following the Edict of Caracalla, citizenship was now more or less universal,493 and many modern authors have seen it as being responsible for the loss of any residual value that it formerly possessed.494 Cassius Dio is particularly critical of Caracalla’s act:

Then there were the provisions that we were required to furnish in great quantities on all occasions, and this without receiving any remuneration and sometimes actually at additional cost to ourselves all of which supplies he either bestowed upon the soldiers or else peddled out; and there were the gifts which he demanded from the wealthy citizens and from the various communities; and the taxes, but the new ones which he promulgated and the ten per cent tax that he instituted in place of the five per cent tax applying to the emancipation of slaves, to bequests, and to all legacies; for he abolished the right of succession and exemption from taxes which had been granted in such cases to those who were closely related to the deceased. This was the reason why he made all the people in his empire Roman citizens; nominally he was honouring them, but his real purpose was to increase his revenues by this means, inasmuch as aliens did not have to pay most of these taxes.495

Ulpian merely states ‘those who are in the Roman world, are made Roman citizens by the

490 Gai. *Inst.*. 1.1.
491 Ando 2012: 76-80.
492 Ando 2012: 85.
493 Despite the identification of the *dediticii* as being exempt from the Edict, Benario (1954: 188) suggests that if a significant number of the population had been excluded, Dio would most likely have mentioned it given his apparent dislike for the emperor.
495 Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 78.9.3-6
constitution of Emperor Antoninus.\textsuperscript{496} The real reasons behind the \textit{Constitutio Antoniniana} remain unknown, although the fragmentary remains identifies it as an offering of thanks to the gods.\textsuperscript{497} However, despite Dio’s criticisms, this edict from the emperor would have been welcomed by the majority of the Empire\textsuperscript{498} and be regarded as an act of great generosity on his part.\textsuperscript{499} In fact, a number of inscriptions from across the Empire attest to Caracalla’s \textit{indulgentia}. \textit{Indulgentia} here refers to ‘a want of strictness, leniency, mildness, indulgence; kindness, especially on the part of a superior; or the action of giving way to or indulging.’\textsuperscript{500} Indeed Noreña identifies that inscriptions featuring the honorific epithet \textit{indulgentissimus} increased significantly under Caracalla.\textsuperscript{501} Such inscriptions can be found in Italy,\textsuperscript{502} Gaul,\textsuperscript{503} Numidia,\textsuperscript{504} the Rhine frontier,\textsuperscript{505} the Balkans,\textsuperscript{506} and Dacia.\textsuperscript{507} \textit{Indulgentissimus} was an unofficial honorific epithet incorporated into inscriptions on statue bases and other monuments as a way of honouring Caracalla. It can therefore be regarded as a presponse by the inhabitants of the empire to his rule. Furthermore, the term \textit{super omnes retro principes} became quite widespread on inscriptions under Caracalla.\textsuperscript{508} This is evidence that those in the Roman provinces who benefitted from the Constitutio Antoniniana at least understood and were appreciative of the Edict as a gesture of imperial \textit{liberalitas}.

\textbf{Pay Rise to the Army}

Caracalla additionally demonstrated his generosity towards they army by increasing their pay. Herodian explicitly tells us ‘as a reward for his safety and gaining the sole rule he promised to give each soldier two thousand five hundred \textit{sestertii} and he increased their normal pay by a half.’\textsuperscript{509} Additionally, Dio tells us that the emperor kept spending money on the soldiers:

\begin{quote}
Now this great admirer of Alexander, Antoninus, was fond of spending money upon the soldiers, great numbers of whom he kept in attendance upon him, alleging one excuse after another and one war after another.\textsuperscript{510}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{496} \textit{Dig.} 1.5.17 (Ulpian).
\textsuperscript{497} \textit{P. Giss.} 40, col. 1.1-12 (trans Hekster 2008 123).
\textsuperscript{498} Those already citizens may not have as pleased about the decision as those gaining citizenship, however as they represented the minority it is fair to say that the majority of people would have welcomed it.
\textsuperscript{499} Keresztes (1970) has dismissed previous notions that the \textit{Constitutio Antoniniana} may have been responsible for the persecutions of Christians in Africa.
\textsuperscript{500} Oxford Latin Dictionary s.v. \textit{Indulgentia}.
\textsuperscript{501} Noreña 2011b: 277-279.
\textsuperscript{502} \textit{ILS} 6597.
\textsuperscript{503} \textit{CIL} 12.1851.
\textsuperscript{504} \textit{CIL} 8.7094-98/\textit{ILS} 2933; \textit{CIL} 8.2194.
\textsuperscript{505} \textit{CIL} 13.6531.
\textsuperscript{506} \textit{CIL} 3.5745.
\textsuperscript{507} \textit{AE} 1979, 492.
\textsuperscript{508} Noreña 2011b: 282-283.
\textsuperscript{509} Herodian. \textit{History}. 4.4.7.
\textsuperscript{510} Cassius Dio, \textit{Roman History} 78.9.1.
Here the generosity of Caracalla is demonstrated, this time towards the army. As discussed above, it seems it would not have been necessary for Caracalla to increase the pay at the point in time. The emperor’s actions at this point ensure the goodwill and protection of the army, which was necessary for the safety and success of Caracalla. Military capability and success was a message transmitted by the Roman emperor, if not in reality, than at least in the public perception. By Caracalla supposedly living and working as a soldier, by generating the support of the army by identifying as ‘one of them’ and by giving them a (perhaps unwarranted) pay rise, Caracalla certainly gave the impression of an emperor with military interests and capabilities.

Acts such as these, publicised through imperial coinage either under orders from the emperor himself or at least officials acting on the emperor’s behalf, presents an image of a generous emperor to the Roman public. The fact that *liberalitas* was displayed to such an extent on coins in comparison with previous emperors is particularly noteworthy and is somewhat representative of either the emperor’s relationship with the people, or at the very least the relationship he wished to be seen to have. It also provides a different image to the one given by Cassius Dio and Herodian in their works, as the ancient authors do not necessarily write of the public image which was publicised to the empire. To many in the empire, the acts of generosity displayed by Caracalla must surely have been well received and the emperor’s *liberalitas* understood. This is in part supported by the inscriptions seen across the empire advertising Caracalla as *indulgentissimus* following the year 212. The acts of generosity or *liberalitas* of Caracalla were regarded as benefitting a wide range of people: those in the army, those in Rome, and those in the provinces. Despite the scepticism shown towards Caracalla through these policy decisions by the ancient authors (based on their own relationship with the emperor, personal views and status), the acts themselves display the importance of generosity by the emperor and the communication of this virtue to the public during his reign.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated the varied public image of Caracalla as sole ruler from December 211 until his death in April 217. The emperor took a multi-faceted approach in articulating his public image to the empire through coins, inscriptions, public buildings and portraiture. In many ways, Caracalla followed the traditions set by previous emperors in terms of the images and messages distributed to the Empire, but with some noticeable differences. The portraiture of Caracalla was quite different to earlier imperial images, representing the militaristic side of the emperor rather than following on from the portrait types seen under his father and during the

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Antonine dynasty. Meanwhile, the increase in representations of Serapis, Apollo and Aesculapius and the introduction of what could be interpreted as Pluto on Caracalla’s coinage was unique to his reign in terms of religious themes. The continued reception of the imperial family and the idea of the Severan ‘dynasty’ (although not explicitly publicised by Caracalla himself) was still noticeable in the provinces; and the emphasis on Liberalitas during Caracalla’s sole rule was much greater than that of previous emperors.

The extent to which Caracalla could be considered as a ‘soldier emperor’ has been examined through his portraiture, inscriptions favouring the army, militaristic themes minted on his coins, and the way the emperor is portrayed by authors such as Cassius Dio, Herodian, and in the Historia Augusta. As we have seen, the portraits of Caracalla certainly represented the emperor in a military style with dress, cropped hair and short beard common to those in the army, as well as a distinctive scowl. Although different to his immediate predecessors in terms of hairstyle, facial hair and expression, earlier emperors had also been represented in military dress in their public portraiture, and private portraits of men from the early third century were also displayed with the same short hair and beard. This raises the question whether it was Caracalla who began this trend, or if he was influenced by it himself. What is not debated, however, was that these portraits did influence later soldier emperors of the third century AD and that they are representative of the image Caracalla wished to have circulated. Additionally, although military themes did not feature so prominently on the coinage of Caracalla, they were more or less consistent with the iconography used on previous emperors and were displayed to the same extent. Furthermore, inscriptions and various written accounts from across the empire attesting to the benevolence shown by Caracalla to the soldiers and the Roman army do exist, but similar inscriptions and accounts are also evident for previous and subsequent emperors and they do not appear to be any more frequent under Caracalla.

Similarly, Caracalla’s coins reflect a fairly standard religious iconography with the exception of the reintroduction of Apollo, Aesculapius and Serapis after Septimius Severus’ reign and the addition of Pluto. This seems likely to be representative of Caracalla’s extensive travels throughout the provinces and affiliation for foreign (especially Egyptian) deities and as a means of emphatic divine support, rather than medical tourism or a public promotion of the Edict of Caracalla, as has been suggested by some scholars. Caracalla’s divine support as represented on his coins, however, does demonstrate that the emperor, like those before him, had input into the images and messages being minted on his coins.
During the reign of Septimius Severus, the imperial family was heavily publicised throughout the empire by the provincials themselves. Although this was not an aspect Caracalla himself emphasised during his sole rule, the notion of the *domus divina* is heavily represented in the provinces. Inscriptions on monuments and public buildings appear in Africa and Britain honouring Caracalla and his mother in particular, and listing the emperor’s lineage back to Nerva. This is a demonstration of the ongoing recognition of the new Severan dynasty and the imperial line by those in the provinces, despite the fact that Caracalla was unmarried and had no children to carry on the dynasty.

One somewhat unexpected aspect of Caracalla’s public image that stands out is that of generosity, or the imperial virtue of *liberalitas*. This appeared more frequently on Caracalla’s coinage than any other emperor until the death of Alexander Severus. Caracalla had many examples of *congiaria*, but the massive increase in display of *liberalitas* on the coins of Caracalla can be explained by the construction of the Baths of Caracalla, the granting of almost universal citizenship across the Empire in the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, and the pay rise given to soldiers in the year AD 212.

These different aspects of Caracalla’s public image can be seen as both a reaction to the political climate he was operating in as well as a response to events brought about by the emperor himself. These responses have been seen to be both traditional (for example, gaining the support of the military and demonstrating divine support), as well as unique to his reign, such as the focus on *Liberalitas*, the decision to represent himself in a militaristic style in his portraiture, and the reintroduction of Aesculapius, Serapis and Apollo so prominently on his coins. This public image, therefore, shows the continuation of past imperial ideologies as well as introduction of new aspects particular to the reign of Caracalla.
Chapter Three- The Public Image of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus AD 218-235

‘Be he boy, buffoon, or philosopher…’

Introduction

The works of Cassius Dio, Herodian, and the author of the Historia Augusta have generally presented the lives of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus in opposition to one another. Whilst Elagabalus is portrayed as the quintessentially bad child emperor, the ancient authors have written more favourable accounts of Alexander Severus. However, when the public image of the two young emperors is examined, it is apparent that there are many significant similarities in the public image of both these men. Both emperors legitimised their rule through an emphasis on family and on the re-establishment of the Severan dynasty along with the support of the gods and displays of traditional virtues. The similarities in the underlying themes in their public image are additionally demonstrated by their public reception, most notably through inscriptions across the empire. This chapter will examine the public image of these emperors in three sections: the emphasis on family and dynasty; focus on divine support and virtues; and finally the public actions that the two undertook through their respective building programmes and the reception of this. Because of the similarities in the emperors’ public image, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus will be examined together, rather than separately. Modern and ancient scholarship has often viewed the two emperors in separation, emphasising the differences and creating a dichotomy between the two. This chapter will argue that despite their very different private lives and characters as written in the ancient sources, the public image of the two shared many of the same themes.

In AD 217 Caracalla was murdered by one of his own soldiers, Martialis, outside Carrhae whilst visiting the Temple of the Moon. Martialis was acting under the orders of Macrinus, who upon hearing of Caracalla’s death pretended to mourn over the emperor. The soldiers, grieving for

512 Syme 1971: 146.
513 It is important to note that many modern scholars have highlighted the biases in these two authors when writing about Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. In particular, it has been well documented that Alexander Severus favoured Cassius Dio when he was emperor, no doubt resulting in a certain partiality on Dio’s side and perhaps an even greater dislike of Elagabalus in order to stress the difference between a ‘good’ emperor and a ‘bad’ emperor. Although this chapter aims to examine the public presentation of these emperors through portraits, inscriptions, coins and public buildings rather than the private lives as told by the ancient historians, these biases should be remembered when dealing with the written accounts. (Millar 1964; Bowerstock: 1975; de Blois 2003; Davenport 2011; Barnes 1974; Syme 1971; Sidebottom 1997a, 1997b, 2007).
514 Contrasting account of Elagabalus in Cassius Dio Roman History 80.9.104 and Herodian History 5.6.1-4 with that of Alexander Severus Herodian History 6.1.6.
516 It should be noted that it is not the purpose of this chapter to argue that Elagabalus and Alexander Severus were similar as emperors, but the way in which they presented themselves to the empire shared certain themes.
517 Herodian History 4.13.3.
Caracalla, initially decided to offer the role of emperor to the praetorian prefect Adventus, who declined, before settling on Macrinus. Herodian describes the event that “Macrinus thus received the office of emperor not so much because of the soldiers' affection and loyalty as from necessity and the urgency of the impending crisis.” Macrinus had previously held appointments under both Septimius Severus, and it had been predicted by a seer from Africa that Macrinus and his son Diadumenianus were “destined to hold imperial power.” Cassius Dio describes the background of the new emperor:

Macrinus was a Moor by birth, from Caesarea, and the son of most obscure parents, so that he was very appropriately likened to the ass that was led up to the palace by the spirit; in particular, one of his ears had been bored in accordance with the custom followed by most of the Moors. But his integrity threw even this drawback into the shade. As for his attitude toward law and precedent, his knowledge of them was not so accurate as his observance of them was faithful. It was thanks to this latter quality, as displayed in his advocacy of a friend's cause, that he had become known to Plautianus, whose steward he then became for a time. Later he came near perishing with his patron, but was unexpectedly saved by the intercession of Cilo, and was appointed by Severus as superintendent of traffic along the Flaminian Way. From Antoninus he first received some brief appointments as procurator, than was made prefect, and discharged the duties of this office in a most satisfactory and just manner, in so far as he was free to follow his own judgment.

Macrinus’s reign, however, was short lived, lasting from just 217 to 218 after losing the support of the army and after a plot to put Elagabalus on the throne was put in motion. Under the instruction of Eutychianus, both Elagabalus’ mother, Julia Soaemias, and his grandmother, Julia Maesa, plotted to make Elagabalus emperor and to bring down Macrinus. After gaining the support of the army and following the murder of Macrinus in AD 218, Elagabalus was named emperor. As the son of the cousin of Caracalla, he was a blood relative of the earlier Severans. Elagabalus was only fourteen when he came to the throne and ruled for a short 4 years before he was murdered, his body dragged through the streets of Rome and finally thrown in the Tiber, earning him the posthumous nickname of Tiberianus. Cassius Dio, Herodian and the author of the Historia Augusta are generally critical of Elagabalus and his reign, often referring to him as the False Antoninus and Syrianus, drawing on his foreign status and his attempts to identify as Caracalla’s son. Alexander Severus was named as Elagabalus’ Caesar, but quickly became an enemy of the

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518 Herodian History 4.14.3.
519 Cassius Dio Roman History 79.4.
520 Cassius Dio Roman History 79.11-12
521 Cassius Dio Roman History 79.
522 Herodian History 5.5.1.
523 Cassius Dio Roman History 80.1.1.
524 Cassius Dio Roman History 80.1.1, 80.2.1-4; Herodian History 5.5.3-10; The author of the Historia Augusta even laments writing the history of Elagabalus, hoping that it might not be known he was emperor of the Romans SHA Heliogabal. 1.1.
young emperor as he gained popularity with the army and threatened to overtake Elagabalus as Augustus.\footnote{Herodian \textit{History} 5.8.1-4.} Alexander Severus too was very young when he did eventually become Augustus after the death of Elagabalus: just thirteen years of age. However, under the guidance of Julia Mammaea, he reigned for thirteen years from AD 222 to 235 before he was assassinated at the age of 26, heralding the beginning of the crisis of the third century AD. The circumstances and actions of others prior to the commencement of Elagabalus’ reign and up until the end of Alexander Severus’ rule dictated the way both emperors publicised their respective images to the empire in a time of great change.\footnote{Ando 2012. It is impossible to know the extent to which the imperial women participated or guided Elagabalus and Alexander Severus as emperors during the end of the Severan period. Certainly the influence of the imperial women has been discussed by the ancient sources in regards to the emperor’s position, and various modern scholars have similarly assessed this notion (particularly Lusnia 1995, Rowan2011 and Kosmetatou 2002). Whilst there is no doubt that the role of the imperial women behind the scenes is an important one, their specific actions will not come into play in this thesis. As it will be discussed, the imperial family as a whole becomes quite prominent once more under Elagabalus and Alexander Severus and therefore the imperial women feature quite significantly in this. The extent to which this (and the rest of the public image of the last two Severan emperors) is the result of the imperial women cannot be determined. Cassius Dio \textit{Roman History}. 80.1.2-3; Herodian \textit{History} 5.7.3.}

As established in Chapter One of this thesis, Septimius Severus heavily emphasised family and the establishment of the new Severan dynasty throughout his public image. Although this is an aspect that did not feature prominently in Caracalla’s sole reign (as demonstrated in Chapter Two of this thesis), family and dynasty saw a re-emergence under both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. Primarily this was articulated through an emphasis on the imperial family on the coinage of both emperors. Both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus also claimed to be the illegitimate son of Caracalla,\footnote{Davenport 2012b: 200.} demonstrating not only how important it was to have or be a blood heir, but it is also an indicator of the lasting popularity of Caracalla with the army, especially when compared with the unpopularity of Macrinus with the soldiers.\footnote{Finally, the importance of family and dynasty can also be seen through similarities in portrait types of the two young emperors, through inscriptions, and also even in incorporating some of the Antonine names into their official titles. Elagabalus, who was born Varius Avitus Bassianus, became Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and Alexander Severus (born Marcus Julius Gessius Bassianus Alexianus) became Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander. This aspect of the public image, however, was not simply a continuation of the emphasis placed on family in the Severan dynasty, but a conscious effort on the part of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus to revive this image. When Elagabalus became emperor, there was a re-emergence of the focus on dynasty, but more than dynasty, he heavily publicised the Severans as a family. By both of the young emperors claiming themselves to be the bastard sons of Caracalla, they were...}
strengthening their family ties and relationship to Septimius Severus, head of the family and founder of the Severan dynasty. His public image, and that of Caracalla and Geta, from AD 193 to 211 was so successful that seven years later it was resurrected as a way for Elagabalus and later Alexander Severus to legitimise their rule and strengthen not only their individual reigns, but also that of the dynasty as a whole. This decision was a direct result of Macrinus becoming emperor after Caracalla and was an official response to his actions.

Despite such an emphasis on family, the ancient authors wrote extensively on the gods favoured and virtues displayed of the two emperors. This is an aspect which has been highlighted so strongly today in modern scholarship of the last of the Severans. This chapter will examine the gods and virtues favoured and emphasised by the two emperors. Despite the fact that both the ancient and modern sources emphasise Elagabalus’ introduction of the Syrian sun-god Elagabal into Rome and as head of the Roman pantheon, this god does not feature heavily on coins and does not appear in large numbers either in Rome or across the Empire under Elagabalus. Rather, the emperor’s coins demonstrate a focus on Venus and Sol whilst Alexander Severus favoured Jupiter, Sol, and Mars throughout his rule. Both emperors demonstrated the divine support of the gods in the traditional way, but each with their own particular favourite (similar to the divine support shown to Caracalla in Chapter Two). In terms of virtues favoured by the two emperors in terms of their silver reverse types, Elagabalus favoured Pudicitia, Providentia, Pictas, Victoria, Felicitas, Libertas and Concordia and Alexander Severus favoured Aequitas, Providentia, Pax, Annona, Salus and Felicitas. Coins featuring these virtues or personifications were minted heavily, and are all standard virtues for an emperor to emphasise. The use of these traditional gods, virtues and personifications were important for Elagabalus and Alexander Severus to demonstrate divine support, the strength of the emperor and the security of the empire, as previous emperors had been advertising for the past two centuries.

Finally, this chapter will examine the public building programme undertaken by these two emperors throughout their reigns, and the reception of this across the empire. On this point the two emperors do differ in their indirect public image. This is, of course, in large part due to the differing lengths in their respective reigns and how much each was able to achieve in that time: Elagabalus was in power for just four years while Alexander Severus reigned for thirteen years. Coarelli has stated that Alexander Severus had the last major programme of urban renewal at Rome before the

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530 Noreña 2011b: 335-336.
531 Noreña 2011b: 60.
532 Fears 1977: 121.
Tetrarchy,\(^533\) whilst Elagabalus was responsible for only a small number of constructions. Under Alexander Severus baths were constructed in Moesia, Pannonia Inferior, a granary and basilica in Africa, as well as numerous restorations within Rome and throughout the Empire.\(^534\) Elagabalus is credited with undertaking a number of building projects in Rome, most notably the temple constructed on the Palatine Hill.\(^535\) These programmes will be examined and how the people in Rome used these buildings will be considered. Inscriptions from across the empire indicate that the actions of both emperors in terms of their building programs were favourably received and their public image was received and replicated by those both in Rome and in the provinces.

**A Return to Dynasty and Family**

As discussed in the Chapter One, an emphasis on the imperial family and influences from the Antonine dynasty characterised the public image of Caracalla and Geta under Septimius Severus. However, when Caracalla became sole ruler after murdering his brother, less emphasis was placed on this aspect and instead the emperor focussed on *liberalitas*, divine support, and his military persona as his public image.\(^536\) When Elagabalus and then Alexander Severus came to power, this emphasis on family and the Severan dynasty (influenced by the Antonines) re-emerged once more. This not only recalled images of the earlier Severan dynasty, but also aspects of the Antonine dynasty before that, invoking reactions of familiarity and security.\(^537\) This image appeared most prominently on coins, but it can be seen in portraits, through name changes, in epigraphic evidence listing their lineage, and through the adoption of Alexander Severus as Elagabalus’ heir and appointment as Caesar. More than just a continuation of the previous public image under Septimius Severus, this conscious effort made by both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus was in direct response to the reign of Macrinus and the fact that he was not a member of the Severan family. Through re-establishing the Severan family as a powerful dynasty, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus both legitimised and strengthened their reigns, helped in no small part by the Severan women. At this point in time, the images and titles of the Severan family were well recognised and by further emphasising this familial aspect, the strength of the dynasty and individual rule was reinforced, as too was the security of the empire.

**Written Sources**

The importance of being a direct descendant of Caracalla, and for Elagabalus to have a related heir in Alexander Severus is demonstrated in numerous sources. Cassius Dio writes that one of

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\(^533\) Coarelli 2007.  
\(^534\) Coarelli 2007.  
\(^535\) Claridge 1998: 142; Platner and Ashby 1929: 199.  
\(^536\) However, the reception of the *domus divina* still continued in the provinces.  
Elagabalus’ first acts on becoming emperor was to send a dispatch to Rome:

‘Making many derogatory remarks about Macrinus, especially with reference to his low birth and his plot against Antoninus [Caracalla]. For example, he said among other things: “This man to whom it was not permitted even to enter the senate-house after the proclamation debarring all others than senators, dared treacherously to murder the emperor whom he had been trusted to guard, dared to appropriate his office and to become emperor before he had been a senator.” About himself he made many promises, not only to the soldiers but also to the senate and to the people, asserting that he would always and in all things emulate Augustus, to whose youth he likened his own, and Marcus Antoninus.’

In this letter, we are told, Elagabalus ‘styled himself emperor and Caesar, the son of Antoninus, the grandson of Severus Pius Felix Augustus, proconsul, and holder of the tribunician power.’ He did not use his birth name of Avitus, but assumed the name of his pretended father. The author of the Historia Augusta tells us that the imperial office was bestowed upon Elagabalus for the sole reason that he claimed to be the son of Caracalla, and he merely adopted the name Antoninus in order to prove this descent. The unknown author of the Historia Augusta goes even further to state ‘finally, when he received the imperial power, he took the name Antoninus and was the last of the Antonines to rule the Roman Empire.’ At this point Elagabalus changed his name from Varius Avitus Bassianus to Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus. Elagabalus was not the first to adopt the name Antoninus in an effort to link himself with previous emperors. Not only had Caracalla also assumed the name Antoninus, but Diadumenianus, the son of Macrinus, also changed his name from Marcus Opellius Diadumenianus to Marcus Opellius Antoninus Diadumenianus Augustus. This was done in order to strengthen the connection with not only the Antonines, but to Caracalla as well, to try and appease the army who had been very fond of the Severan emperor. The continued use of the name Antoninus was important in evoking a sense of security and continuity from the Antonine rule and into the Severan rule, passing the name down to future emperors. This was clearly noticed by the Senate, who offered Alexander Severus the name of Antoninus, but who declined.

538 Cassius Dio Roman History. 80.1.2-3.
539 Cassius Dio Roman History 80.2.2.
540 SHA Heligab. 1.4-2.1 It is also interesting to note there that Elagabalus is referred to as the last of the Antonines, demonstrating the success of Septimius Severus to link himself and his heirs to the Antonine dynasty. However, the accuracy of the Historia Augusta as a source for Elagabalus has come into question, so the authenticity of this account must be viewed with some skepticism.
541 SHA Diadumenianus 1.3-6; Syme 1971: 78-88; However in other ways, Macrinus distanced himself from his predecessor (Davenport 2012b: 184-203).
542 SHA Alex. Sev. 5.2-4 Despite declining the name Antoninus, Alexander Severus took his name from Alexander the Great, whom Caracalla greatly (and very publicly) admired. This demonstrates a further connection between the two.
The descent of both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus from the earlier Severans is clearly demonstrated on a number of inscriptions. Elagabalus’ descent from Caracalla and Septimius Severus appears on 61 of 153 surviving inscriptions. The repetition of names, titles and the continuing promulgation of the same lineage would have no doubt helped to enforce the idea of a strong family and dynasty.

Similar examples are found in inscriptions mentioning Alexander Severus. The usual form of expression in these is divi magni Antonini Pii filius, divi Severi Augusti nepos. In one instance, Alexander Severus’ descent is listed further: divi Septimi Severi Pii Arabici Parthici maximi nepos, divi Marci Aurelii Antoninini Pii Partici maximi Brittanici maximi Germanici maximi Adiabenici maximus filius. At the same time, numerous dedications to Alexander Severus’ mother, Julia Mammaea, appear in many different forms. A number of inscriptions hail her as Mater Aug. et castrorum et senatus et patriae. Elsewhere she is Mater sanctissimi Imp. Caes. Sev. Alex. Aug. et castrorum senatusque, and another as Mater domini nostri et castrorum. Other titles exist, but all emphasise the familial connection.

Not only was the emphasis on family made clear through proclaiming the emperors’ heritage and family connections, but also in using similar honorific language. Most notably, this is seen in the use of super omnes (retro) principes- a trend which initially saw a significant increase under Caracalla. This honorific epithet was used to distinguish the current emperor from his predecessors and appeared under Caracalla during his sole reign more than any other emperor. Noreña argues that there was a general inflation in the language of praise offered to emperors under the reign of Caracalla. This trend continues under Elagabalus, referring to his superiority over ‘all emperors’. Praise for Elagabalus during his reign went beyond terms such as ‘most indulgent’ or ‘most indulgent beyond all men’ and is indicative of both a growing need for emperors to prove themselves beyond their predecessors, but also of the still increasing use of honorific inscriptions. The fact that this term was most popular under Caracalla and then continues under Elagabalus again highlights certain familial relationships and a continuity between the reigns of the two emperors.

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544 Hopkins 1907: 272. It is also interesting that Alexander Severus is given the epithet of magnus, as this was frequently given to Caracalla perhaps in honour of Alexander the Great but not to other previous emperors (AE 1972, 156; CIL 10.5826; CIL 11.2648; CIL 10.5802; Noreña 2011b: 249).  
545 CIL 8.4231.  
546 CIL 8.1406; 8.1429; 8.1484.  
547 CIL 3.798.  
548 CIL 14.125.  
549 Hopkins 1907: 275.  
551 CIL 8.10304; CIL 8.10308.  
Likewise, under both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus the use of *fortissimus felicissimusque* remains common and both also display the language of invincibility, employing *invictus* or *invictissimus*. Noreña also notes that there are echoes of second century imperial ideology during the reign of Alexander Severus. Alexander Severus is also referred to as *nobilissimus Caes. imperi sacerdotis* and *nobilissim. Caes. im[p]eri et sacerdot* in a praetorian diploma, linking his titulature as his brief time as Caesar under Elagabalus to the emperor. The use of similar honorific language towards the two emperors from the provinces highlights the reception of the familial connections and continuity throughout their reigns. It is also interesting to note that honorific terminology referring to braveness and invincibility is being used during the reigns of these two emperors, especially given that Elagabalus had no military experience and nor did Alexander Severus for a period either. Rather, this terminology can be indicative of the strength and stability of the emperors’ reigns based on their dynastic claims, and their reliance on terminology typically associated with emperors before this time. The strength of Elagabalus’ reign was helped in no small part by Elagabalus naming his cousin Caesar, showing the importance of an on-going Severan family and dynasty, providing security for the empire into the future and highlights some of the similarities and continuing themes of the two young emperors. This was a development continued later into the third century, employed by emperors no matter what their background was or how long they reigned for. For example, an inscription in Moesia Superior names Philip the Arab as *[su]per omnes/ [f]ortissimo* and an inscription is dedicated to Maximian as *magnus et invictus ac super omnes retro principes fortissimus*. Gordian III and Trebonianus Gallus with Volusianus all use *invictissimus*, demonstrating the continuing use of this honorific terminology later in the third century.

**Portraits**

The Severan family was further emphasised in the public image of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus through the use of statues and portraits as physical reminders of the Severan dynasty across the empire. The coins of Elagabalus show that the emperor had two distinct portrait types, although after the *damnatio memoriae* enforced by the Senate, only six unaltered sculptures survived,

553 *CIL* 2.4766-7; 2.4769; 2.4805 for Elagabalus and *AE* 1987, 790 for Alexander Severus.
555 *CIL* 8.10304; *CIL* 8.10308.
556 Noreña 2011b: 228.
557 *CIL* 16.140; Dušanić 1980: 117-120.
558 *CIL* 3.1687.
559 *CIL* 6.1125.
560 *CIL* 8.10079; *CIL* 14.4397.
561 *CIL* 8.10252.
limiting modern analysis on his portraiture.\textsuperscript{562} One problem faced by the sculptors for both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus was representing the boy emperors with authority and dignity despite their youth and adolescent features. In both cases, artists used the tradition in imperial portraiture of representing boys who were designated heirs to power in an ‘elegantly classicising style.’\textsuperscript{563} Wood argues that the calmness and simplicity of a youthful face alludes to an aristocratic birth and a quiet maturity; stylistic treatments which were used in the previous century on portraits of the young Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, as seen in Figures 23 and 24.\textsuperscript{564} However, most importantly, the most recognisable portrait of Elagabalus, as seen below, also resembles a young Caracalla in some aspects.\textsuperscript{565}

Figure 24. Portrait of Alexander Severus from the Capitoline Museum Centrale Montemartini.\textsuperscript{566}

Figure 25. Portrait of Elagabalus from the Capitoline Museum.\textsuperscript{567}

\textsuperscript{562} Varner 2004: 189.
\textsuperscript{563} Wood 1986: 49
\textsuperscript{564} Wood 1986: 49
\textsuperscript{565} Kleiner 1992: 362.
\textsuperscript{566} Photo by author 2013.
Figure 26. Portrait of Caracalla from the Capitoline Museum.\textsuperscript{568}

Figure 27. Portrait of Marcus Aurelius from the Capitoline Museum, c. AD 140.\textsuperscript{569}

\textsuperscript{567} Photo by author 2014. \\
\textsuperscript{568} Photo by author 2014. \\
\textsuperscript{569} Kleiner 1992: 270.
Kleiner identifies many similarities in the portraiture of the two young emperors, particularly between Elagabalus and Caracalla’s Type 1 portraiture. Both Caracalla and Elagabalus feature the same full, softly tousled hair with a naturalistic texture, plump broad face on a compact head. More than this though, the portraits of Elagabalus not only share similarities with Caracalla’s Caesar portraits, but with the Antonine youths as well. Smooth hair in swirling waves, a low hairline framing and emphasising large eyes are detectable in the portraits of Elagabalus, Caracalla, Commodus and Marcus Aurelius. This enforces the visual message of family and was perhaps deliberately emphasised and exaggerated by the sculptor to stress the relationships. It is unsurprising that the portraits of Elagabalus recalled a young Caracalla. Not only would they have presented themselves as familiar images to the empire, but also have heightened the family connection through similar features. As seen in the portraits above, these features and the style in which they are presented even share similarities to the Antonine portraits of the second century AD and evoke memories of young portraits of Commodus.

The boyhood and adolescent portraits of Alexander Severus do differ in style in many ways to those of Elagabalus, but some similarities are still discernable. Varner identifies that portraits of both the emperors employ closed and simple contours with rounded modelling, presenting the emperors in a

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572 Even if we consider that this particular portrait style was simply the most prevalent or popular at the time, it does not lessen the visual similarities between emperors.
smooth and elegant manner. Obvious differences are apparent in the hairstyles of the two emperors, Alexander Severus’ smaller eyes and an oval face rather than the compact head of Elagabalus. However it is the broader similarities in the two emperors, which meant that following the damnatio memoriae on Elagabalus, his portraits could be reconfigured into that of Alexander Severus. In all, four portraits of Elagabalus have been modified into statues Alexander Severus. One of these was an over-life sized statue found in the Baths of Caracalla. Originally representing Elagabalus, his face was detached from the sculpture and a likeness of Alexander Severus attached. As will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus continued work on the Baths. This sculpture was made purposely to fit in with the decoration of the rest of the Baths and works as a link not only between Alexander Severus and Elagabalus, but it is also indicative of the later emperor to also relate himself back to Caracalla. Portraits of Gordian III draw inspiration from both the portraits of Caracalla and Alexander Severus. Gordian III is styled with many of the same facial features as Alexander Severus and have similarly short hair styles, but Gordian III’s portraits have the same furrowed brow that characterised Caracalla’s type 4 and 5 portraits. Here, both Severan emperors are recalled in the imagery of Gordian III’s portraits, sculpted only a few years after the death of Alexander Severus.

Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, therefore, recalled the images of a young Caracalla and Geta, and also the young Antonine princes to emphasise a time of peace and a right to rule. However, after the end of the Severan period, these portraits were forsaken in favour of the later Caracalla types as discussed in the previous chapter. Later emperors wished to emphasise their militaristic nature and it was through these portraits in which they were able to do so, more so than with the portraits of the two young emperors Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. However, portraits of Gordian III draw inspiration not only from Caracalla, but Alexander Severus as well.

Coins
The last way in which both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus emphasised family and dynasty was through the use of coinage, both centrally controlled in Rome but also on coins minted in the provinces. According to Noreña, the emperor/imperial family counts for 1718 out of 10117 silver reverse types for Elagabalus (almost 17%) and 1436 out of 13211 (almost 11%) for Alexander Severus. In both these cases, they represent a higher than average occurrence than other emperors.

574 Varner 2004: 190.
for the period AD 69-235 for silver (7%). This increase in coinage with a focus on the imperial family is not surprising, nor unexpected during Elagabalus’ short reign. Elagabalus came to power after the brief reign of Macrinus and in order to legitimise his rule it was essential that he emphasise the family line and his lineage. This was easily achieved through coinage, and it was the same for Alexander Severus. Part of the emphasis of family on coins was to display the Severan women (particularly the Severan Iuliae).

The imperial women appeared quite prominently on coins both minted in Rome and also in the provinces. Although the imagery associated with the coins depicting the Severan women are not always consistent, Rowan has found that the proportion of silver coinage allotted to Severan women was relatively unchanging. This, Rowan argues, is the result of a direct line of power in the Severan family and is unique to this period. The consistency in silver coinage struck (proportionately) not only reinforces the role of the domus divina in the Severan period, but also acts as a point of continuity between the rules of Caracalla, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. The imagery of the Iuliae include types of Venus Felix, Venus Genetrix, Venus Victrix, Vesta, Juno, Felicitas and Fecunditas. These are conventional types, associated with previous empresses, however, Rowan argues that despite these overall similarities, the image of each empress through coinage was different and was used to support and enhance the public image of the emperor at the time. The prominence of imperial women on coins was not unique to the Severan rule. Indeed, under the rule of Nero, the emperor’s mother Agrippina was displayed quite frequently on coinage during his rule, demonstrating the power of the empress. On many coins, Agrippina the Younger appears on the obverse of Nero’s coins, facing her son as well as appearing on her own coins, both in Rome and in the provinces. The coins of Julia Domna, however, show that she was accepted as almost ruling with her son, helping him carry out administrative duties in the east, thus paving the way for the later Severan women to appear on the coins of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. Wood argues that the representation of imperial women in the public sphere could be used to reflect various virtues of the imperial family (of which the emperor was a part of) or indeed

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579 This was primarily the Iuliae (Julia Maesa, Julia Mamaea, and Julia Soemias). Elagabalus’ wives and Alexander Severus’ wives were also represented, but not to the same degree.
580 A set proportion of coinage was struck probably by an officina (Rowan 2011: 271).
582 Rowan 2011: 248.
584 For example RIC I Nero 1, 2, 3, 7, 608, 611.
585 RIC I Agrippina II 75, 103; RPC 3221, 3101, 3042.
the emperor’s entire regime.\textsuperscript{587}

Figure 29. Julia Maesa and \textit{Fecunditas RIC IV Elagabalus} 249.\textsuperscript{588}

Figure 30. Julia Mamaea and \textit{Venus Genetrix RIC IV Alexander Severus} 355.\textsuperscript{589}

In the provinces, different images appear associated with the imperial women—generally foreign gods, such as Julia Maesa with Demeter,\textsuperscript{590} Julia Mamaea with Artemis Ephesia,\textsuperscript{591} and Julia Soeamas with Apollo Tyrimnaeos.\textsuperscript{592} However, one example from Asia Minor depicts Elagabalus on the obverse and Julia Maesa on the reverse (as seen below in Figure 28) whilst another from Markianopolis depicts both on the obverse (see Figure 29). Similar images are seen being minted under Alexander Severus as well, as seen in Figure 30.

\textsuperscript{587} Wood 1998: 409.
\textsuperscript{588} Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.
\textsuperscript{589} Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.
\textsuperscript{590} BMC 26.
\textsuperscript{591} BMC 38.
\textsuperscript{592} BMC 119.
Medallions were also being minted under the rule of Alexander Severus. The Aboukir Medallions feature two versions of three obverses of Caracalla (as he appeared between AD 198 to 217) being associated with Alexander the Great. These medallions not only demonstrate that Caracalla’s attachment to Alexander the Great was great enough that it was remembered by Alexander Severus some thirteen years after his death, but also of Alexander Severus recalling and emphasising...
continuity within Severan dynasty. Combined with Alexander Severus adopting the name Alexander, themes from earlier on in the Severan period are being picked up and replicated, recalling not only Caracalla, but also associating the Severan rule with Alexander the Great.

It is unsurprising that at this stage the family was emphasised so strongly by both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. As both were so young when they became emperor, they did not have any military experience to legitimise their rule, as so many later emperors of the third century did. Certainly by the start of the fourth century, military power and experience was a primary requirement for potential emperors. Although emperors styled themselves as a *civis princeps*, they were essentially military dictators. Rather than styling themselves on the youth and inexperience of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus (although they were the last of the Severans, the last stable dynasty of Rome), the later third century emperors instead looked to Caracalla. As this option was unavailable to both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, they instead relied on the family connection to legitimise their rule and to use this to gain and maintain popularity from the Senate, the army, and the Roman *populus*. The two emperors did, however, influence later emperors in different ways, specifically the honorific terminology employed and the portrait style for later youthful emperors.

The emphasis on family permeated so many aspects of Elagabalus’ and Alexander Severus’ rule, each aspect working with together to re-establish the image of a strong family and stable dynasty. This was not only in response to the brief rule of Macrinus, but also a clear message to the empire as a whole and any future would-be emperors.

### Gods and Virtues

Modern scholarship tends to highlight the differences between Elagabalus and Alexander Severus through the subject of gods and virtues. Elagabalus is well remembered for introducing the god Elagabal as head of the Roman pantheon, whilst Alexander Severus famously restored Jupiter when he became emperor. Elagabalus’ association with the Syrian god and his status as priest-emperor is generally seen as the source of his peculiarities. Cassius Dio, in reference to the bad character of Elagabalus, states ‘closely related to these irregularities was his conduct in the matter of Elagabalus [the sun god].’ Elagabalus made the local Syrian sun god Elagabal head of the Roman pantheon

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597 Humphries 2008.
598 Manders & Hekster 2011; Benoist 2007: 262-265.
600 Cassius Dio *Roman History* 80.11.1.
and he thus called himself amongst other things *sacerdos dei Solis Elagabali*. Elagabalus’ ‘religious behaviour’ in worshipping Elagabal has dominated subsequent assessments of his reign, not only in antiquity but also in modern times. This image largely originates from the few ancient authors who inform us about Elagabalus’ reign: Cassius Dio, Herodian and the writer of the *Historia Augusta*. But to what extent did this Syrian god play a part in the official public image of Elagabalus? Imperial coins testify to the religious reformatio

So an enormous picture was painted of him as he appeared in public performing as a priest. Also in the picture was a portrait of the Emesene god, to whom he was represented making a favourable sacrifice. The picture was sent to Rome with orders that it should hang right in the middle of the senate house, very high up over the head of the statue of Victory.

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601 Cassius Dio *Roman History* 80.11.1; Manders 2012: 146.
602 *RIC* IV Elagabalus 131, 194, 369, 370.
603 Herodian *History* 5.5.6-7.
604 Rowan 2006: 114.
605 Rowan 2006: 115.
The coins featured above only represent a very small portion of the Emperor’s coinage, either in Rome and in the provinces. Indeed, Elagabalus certainly recognised other deities on his coinage, which contradicts the idea in the ancient sources that Elagabalus wanted to establish monotheism with Elagabal as sole god. Manders raises the point that if Elagabalus had wanted to replace the current Roman religion with that of just the Syrian sun god, he would have attempted to rule out other gods and elements entirely. However, under the young emperor coins continued to be minted featuring Roman gods and cult objects, indicating that he did not in fact try and stamp out current Roman religious practices, but allowed them to be worshipped side by side with his own Syrian deity. In fact, a quantitative analysis undertaken by Noreña found that on Elagabalus’ silver reverse types, Venus was the goddess most favoured by the emperor, followed by Mars and then Sol. Of his bronze types, Venus and Sol were again favoured.

Rowan views the religious activities of Elagabalus as part of a wider Severan emphasis on the divine sanction of imperial rule, but with significant developments during the emperor’s rule. Like the earlier Severan rulers, Elagabalus associated himself with a particular deity who had a provincial cult centre (Caracalla too favoured provincial gods) and in constructing two temples to his god in Rome Elagabalus was also following a precedent that dated back to Augustus. But in publically representing himself as high priest of the god, in addition to his role as pontifex maximus, Elagabalus differed significantly from what had gone before him, or from what would follow. This is primarily seen in his use of the title sacerdos amplissimo dei invicti solis Elagabali. However this title itself appears on only 13 of 153 extant inscriptions to Elagabalus. Certainly in some respects

608 Manders 2012: 149. ‘As soon as he entered the city, however, neglecting all the affairs of the provinces, he established Elagabalus as the god on the Palatine Hill close to the imperial palace; and he built him a temple, to which he desired to transfer the emblem of the Great Mother, the fire of Vesta, the Palladium, the shields of the Salii, and all that Romans held sacred, purposing that no god might be worshipped at Rome save only Elagabalus’ (SHA Heliogab. 3.4-5).
609 Manders 2012: 149.
610 Noreña 2011b: 337.
611 Noreña 2011b: 343.
612 de Arrizabalaga y Prado 2010: 113.
the people of Rome were aware of emperor’s priestly duties and preferences, but it by no means characterises his religious public image.613 It should also be noted here that there are far more coins depicting Elagabalus in his priestly garb than of the sun god itself. This is not unusual, as images of emperors in sacrificial activity were quite familiar to those in the Empire. Indeed Dirven argues that the clothes Elagabalus wears were not in fact the traditional eastern garb and that the cult of Elagabalus, therefore, was not simply copied from Syria.614 This in turn leads to the possibility of a cultural and religious interaction taking place.615 The rule of Elagabalus’ successor, Alexander Severus, would be characterised in the ancient sources by an emphasis on Roman precedent and tradition.616

Rowan sees Alexander Severus’s reign as one that emphasised renewal and restoration. The visual representation of the divine support of the emperor was crafted so as to reflect these themes and to tie the young leader to Romulus and Augustus. A renewed emphasis on Jupiter and Mars on Alexander Severus’ silver reverse types signalled a conspicuous return to traditional Roman religion, and on his bronze reverse types, a focus on Jupiter and Sol. Many view this as a direct reaction to Elagabalus’ reign and his sun god. From examining the gods displayed by Alexander, the emperor himself seems to be a founder, a restorer of the city of Rome and its cultural, moral and religious traditions. Alexander Severus also converted the temple of Elagabalus built on the Palatine Hill to the Temple of Jupiter Ultor, Jupiter the Avenger.617 This act in itself certainly appears to be a response to Elagabalus’ temple, however the predilection of Alexander Severus for Jupiter on his coins as well does not necessarily have to be an attack on his predecessor, nor an attempt at distancing himself from Elagabalus.

Here it can be seen that each emperor did place an emphasis on different gods as part of their public image, however it does not necessarily follow that each of their respective public images is really so different. As seen from the previous section, Caracalla had an emphasis on Aesculapius, Serapis and Apollo,618 Domitian favoured Minerva619 and Augustus too held a certain affiliation with the

613 Elagabalus also did not limit himself to his Eastern priestly clothes, but did appear at times in traditional Roman dress (Icks 2011: 73).
619 Suet. Dom. 15. However Domitian never claimed to rule by the election of Minerva, unlike Hadrian who officially celebrated his election by Jupiter (Fears 1977: 14).
god Apollo. In a similar vein, both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus were representing their divine support, but through the use of different gods.

In terms of virtues favoured by the two emperors, Elagabalus favoured Pudicitia (the personification at Rome of women’s chastity and modesty), Providentia (foresight, the capacity to distinguish good from bad), Pietas (the typical Roman attitude of dutiful respect towards gods, fatherland, and parents and other kinsmen), Victoria and Concordia (the cult of personified harmonious agreement within the body politic at Rome). Alexander Severus favoured Aequitas, Providentia, Pax (the personification of political peace) and Felicitas (goddess of good fortune and success in battle). These were standard virtues and personifications that had been displayed by emperors for the previous two centuries, and largely the represent the ability, strength and stability of the emperor. Such messages were important at the time, with the stability of the Severan dynasty having been called into question by Macrinus just prior to Elagabalus’ rule. The circulation of these types of messages on coins means that they would have been seen by a large audience, and the fact that messages and images on them had been in use for centuries means that they most likely would have been recognisable to the public. A number of these virtues were also minted on the coins of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus in the provinces, although not to the same extent. Under Elagabalus, coins were minted for Concordia in Alexandria, Victory in Alexandria, Laodicea ad Mare, and Phoenicia as well as Pudicitia in Phoenicia. Coins minted for Alexander Severus include Aequitas in Asia Minor and Markianopolis.

The emphasis on gods and virtues by the two emperors is quite conventional. The individual gods chosen for divine support and the virtues displayed by Elagabalus and Alexander Severus do differ

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620 Suet. Aug. 70; Miller 2009: 16.
621 BMC 263; RIC IV Elagabalus 268, 420 These were minted for Julia Maesa.
622 RIC IV Elagabalus 23, 42, 129, 130.
623 RIC IV Elagabalus 263, 264, 414.
625 RIC IV Elagabalus 187.
627 RIC IV Alexander Severus 64, 127, 185, 274, 547.
628 RIC IV Alexander Severus 173, 250-252, 294, 404.
630 RIC IV Alexander Severus 137, 192.
633 SPC 3285; 3286; 3287; 3295.
634 SPC 3281; 3283; 3288; 3291.
635 SPC 3604.
636 BMC 388.
637 BMC 263.
638 SPC 3788; 4526.
639 Moushmov 701.
somewhat, but the overall message is the same, and that is the strength of the on-going Severan dynasty. Again, this was standard behaviour of what was expected by an emperor, demonstrating the support of the gods. However, despite the overall conventionality of divine support demonstrated by Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, they were influential in the divine support demonstrated by later emperors in the third century, particularly that of Aurelian. The emperor Aurelian introduced an eastern solar cult to Rome from Syria during his rule in 270-275. It has been suggested that the emperor simply adapted the cult of Elagabal to better suit Roman tastes, thus to avoid the contempt for Elagabalus when he introduced the cult half a century earlier. The author of the *Historia Augusta* tells that after winning a victory at Emesa, Aurelian travelled to the temple of Elagabal and recognised it as its divine helper and so constructed a temple to the sun god in Rome. Watson argues against this, and although Aurelian’s cult may not be specifically modelled on that of Elagabalus, they certainly share some similarities such as the inclusion the epithet *invictus*. If the story told in the *Historia Augusta* is not entirely accurate, the reign of Elagabalus and the Severans’ association with Syria certainly set a precedent for not only the introduction of significant cults into Rome, but in particular eastern cults associated with the sun god.

**Action and Reception**

Finally, in examining the public image of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, their respective public building programmes must be considered. As Elagabalus ruled for such a short time (just four years) he had a much smaller building programme than Alexander Severus did in his thirteen year reign. Nonetheless, Elagabalus was responsible for a number of constructions and restorations within Rome as well as in the provinces, at least according to the author of the *Historia Augusta*.

Firstly, Elagabalus was responsible for the continuation of the construction of the Baths of Caracalla, discussed in the previous chapter, as well as beginning repairs on the Amphitheatrum Flavium after damage was caused by lightning in AD 217. The author of the *Historia Augusta* tells us that:

> No public works of his are in existence, save the temple of the god Elagabalus (called by some the Sun, by others Jupiter), the Amphitheatre as restored after its destruction by fire, and the public bath in the Vicus Sulpicius, begun by Antoninus, the son of Severus. This bath, in fact,

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640 SHA *Aurelian* 25.4.
641 Watson 1999: 193-195. Commodus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Macrinus were also styled *invictus* (Noreña 2011b: 377-408) but not to the same extent as Elagabalus.
642 A lot of the information concerning the building programmes of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus comes from the *Historia Augusta*. Because of the problems associated with using this source for the later emperors, this information has been compared with that in the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* and Richardson’s *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (1992) where relevant.
643 Cassius Dio *Roman History* 78.25.
had been dedicated by Antoninus Caracalla, who bathed in it himself and opened it to the public, but the portico was left unbuilt and this was added after his death by this spurious Antoninus, though actually completed by Alexander.\textsuperscript{644}

Other works carried out under Elagabalus\textsuperscript{645} include laying pavements at the Palatinus Mons,\textsuperscript{646} the construction of the \textit{Gradus Heliogabali};\textsuperscript{647} the construction of an assembly hall for women at the \textit{Senaculum Mulierum} on the Quirinal;\textsuperscript{648} the \textit{Horti Variani};\textsuperscript{649} the \textit{Circus Elagabali};\textsuperscript{650} the building and restoration of the gardens of Adonis on the Palatine; the construction of the \textit{Templum Divi Caracallae};\textsuperscript{651} the construction of the temple of Elabagalus (the sun god) in the suburbs of the city;\textsuperscript{652} a temple in the forum adjacent to the temple of Vesta; a public bath on the Palatine;\textsuperscript{653} and finally the \textit{Templum Elagabali}, erected on the Palatine near the imperial palace to the sun god.\textsuperscript{654} Dedication to this final temple occurred in AD 221, however there are no known dates for the other constructions or restorations undertaken by Elagabalus in Rome.\textsuperscript{655}

Herodian gives us detail not only about the presence of this temple in Rome, but also of how it was used. He writes that Elagabalus:

\begin{quote}
Built an enormous and magnificent temple to his new god, around which he set up many altars. Each day at dawn he came out and slaughtered a hecatomb of cattle and a large number of sheep which were placed upon the altars and loaded with every variety of spices. In front of the altars many jars of the finest and oldest wines were poured out so that streams of blood and wine flowed together. Around the altars he and some Phoenician women danced to the sounds of many different instruments, circling the altars with cymbals and drums in their hands. The entire senate and equestrian order stood round them in the order they sat in the theatre. The entrails of the sacrificial victims and spices were carried in golden bowls, not on the heads of household servants or lower-class people, but by military prefects and important officials wearing long tunics in the Phoenician
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[644] SHA \textit{Heliogab.} 17.9.
\item[645] As identified by Benario 1961.
\item[646] SHA \textit{Heliogab.} 24.6; Richardson 1992: 279-282.
\item[647] Coarelli 2007: 155-156; Richardson 1992: 182.
\item[648] SHA \textit{Heliogab.} 4.3.
\item[649] SHA \textit{Heliogab.} 13.5, 14.5; Richardson 1992: 204.
\item[651] However the actual existence of this temple is in doubt.
\item[652] Herodian. \textit{Histories} 6.6-7; Claridge 1998: 142; Richardson 1992: 142.
\item[653] SHA \textit{Heliogab.} 8.6; Claridge 1998: 124.
\item[655] In comparing this evidence to the \textit{Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae}, very few of these buildings can actually be verified through archaeological evidence. Certainly the Temple of Elagabalus on the Palatine and the further construction of the Baths of Caracalla have been confirmed, but to date either the structures have not been located, or there is no way of telling if Elagabalus did actually carry out some of the repairs (Steinby 1993 vol 2:373; vol 3: 87; vol 4: 372).
\end{footnotes}
style down to their feet, with long sleeves and a single purple stripe in the middle. They also wore linen shoes of the kind used by local oracle priests in Phoenicia. It was considered a great honour had been done to anyone given a part in the sacrifice. 

This passage from Herodion provides many insights not only into how this temple was used, but also the public perception of this temple. Whereas reports by Cassius Dio, the author of the *Historia Augusta* and even parts of Herodion’s own history tend to be quite scathing of the young emperor, Herodion explicitly ends his account of the temple and activities surrounding it that it was a great honour for those involved in the sacrifice. There is no tone of judgement in this passage, but simply an explanation of the activities involved at the temple. Moreover, Herodion also says that those in the senate, the equestrian order, military prefects and important officials were involved: not simply the priest-emperor. Here Herodion does not indicate the opinion of those involved or viewing the activities taking place at the temple, and this in itself is noteworthy. He does not mention that Elagabalus was an embarrassment for the people of Rome, or that those in the equestrian order were loathed to sit and watch the sacrifices take place. Certainly this does not indicate that the activities were viewed with approval from those in the senate or military, but the lack of criticism from Herodion remains telling. Ultimately, however, we will never know for sure one way or the other how the general public perceived these rites of the young emperor. Icks argues that the amount of festivals combined with the gifts of the emperor may have left a generally positive view of Elagabalus regardless (or perhaps despite) of his religious festivities. This was possibly aided by the fact that he was the first emperor to spend time in Rome since Caracalla departed for the East.

The author of the *Historia Augusta* does not go into as much detail regarding this temple, merely stating:

He established Elagabalus as a god on the Palatine Hill close to the imperial palace and he built him a temple to which he desired to transfer the emblem of the Great Mother, the fire of Vesta, the Palladium, the shields of the Salii and all that the Romans held sacred, purposing that no god might be worshipped at Rome save only Elagabalus.

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656 Herodion. *Histories* 5.5.8.
657 Bowersock (1975: 234-236) has identified that in some regards Herodion was a less biased source when it came to Elagabalus, writing of things he matters of which he has personal knowledge.
658 Various reasons have been put forward to explain the different attitudes towards Elagabalus by Cassius Dio and Herodion. Icks suggests that traditional Roman senator would have been appalled by the ‘violation’ of sacred Roman traditions, for claiming to be Caracalla’s son (the False Antoninus) and that he therefore did not have the right to rule, also to make him out to be so bad that Alexander Severus looks better by comparisons (Icks 2011: 79-81).
659 Icks 2011: 82.
660 SHA. *Heliogab.* 3.4 The author also notes that this site was previously a shrine to Orcus.
Inscriptions to Elagabalus in Rome are quite scarce, and all follow the standard formula in addressing the emperor, with the exception of his title *sacerdos amplissimus*. Honorific inscriptions to the young emperor did exist on buildings, as seen in the previous section on family, but just not in the same quantities as to Alexander Severus. This is hardly surprising when one considers the relatively short rule Elagabalus had. What is interesting is that his priestly title of *sacerdos amplissimus* was used in inscriptions to the emperor in Rome and the provinces. This is an unusual title for an emperor and the fact that it managed to catch on in such a short period of time is telling of how successful the transmission of Elagabalus’ public image was. 153 inscriptions have been identified as being belonging to Elagabalus, 139 of them in Latin, 14 in Greek. In total, 121 of these can be dated. Thirteen of these inscriptions bear the sacerdotal title Elagabalus adopted, as discussed in the previous section, accounting for approximately 8.5% of his total surviving inscriptions. These include military diplomas, a civic decree, milestones, and honorary inscriptions. This in part represents the reception of Elagabalus’ official title *sacerdos amplissimo dei invicti solis Elagabali*. When Elagabalus reformed Roman state religion in 220 and *sacerdos amplissimus* became a part of the emperor’s official title, he still continued to style himself as *pontifex maximus*. The low proportion of inscriptions bearing this title therefore, could be a result of the fact that it was not introduced until halfway through his reign. Similarly, both in Rome and in the East, imperial coins mentioning the emperor as ‘*pontifex maximus*’ on the reverse do not add *sacerdos amplissimus* title, however they are often accompanied by an image of Elagabalus in his sacrificial oriental garb. Here *sacerdos amplissimus* seems like a deliberate allusion to *ponifex maximus* and could therefore be almost interchangeable and interpreted as representing the same thing. Not only are traditional honorific epithets used for the emperor, but also those he established himself. The fact that the inhabitants of the Empire are willing to use this different and new title for Elagabalus is an example of the provincial reception and loyalty to imperial values outlined by Ando as well as the forming of a consensus on imperial ideology. Here, the use of *sacerdos amplissimus* on coins accompanied with an image of Elagabalus in his priestly clothes could additionally be a reference to Caracalla’s militaristic side. Caracalla wore Germanic dress in his Eastern campaigns and frequently employed the epithet *sacerdos amplissimus*. Dirven argues that this could be seen as an appeal to the troops, proclaiming military invincibility. Even in this regard, the memory of Caracalla once again becomes central to the representation of Elagabalus.

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661 CIL 6.40677; 6.40678; 6.40679a; 6.41191
663 de Arrizabalaga y Prado 2010: 106-204.
664 Icks 2012: 73.
Alexander Severus was responsible for a large number of constructions and restorations, both in Rome and the provinces. The author of the *Historia Augusta* writes that he ‘restored the public works of former emperors and built many new ones himself.’ Within Rome, he was responsible for restoring and decorating the Aedes Isidis; rededicating the temple of Elagabalus to Jupiter; the Aqua Alexandriana; he laid pavements at the Palatinus Mons; potentially restored the Theatre of Marcellus; restored the Stadium of Domitian (which was given the parallel name of Circus Alexandri); the Balnea Alexandri were built in all parts of the city which did not yet have public baths; the construction of the Horrea, built in each of the fourteen regions as warehouses; the beginning of the construction of the Basilica Alexandrina in the Campus Martius; the Sessorium; the Diaetae Mammaeae (apartments for Julia Mammaea located on the Palatine); the Castra Peregrina (a shrine of Jupiter Redux on the Caelian erected in honour of the emperor and his mother); the completion of the porticoes at the Baths of Caracalla begun by Elagabalus; copied the practice of Augustus, setting up a hall of fame in his forum, repair of bridges built by Trajan with construction of some new ones; completed the repairs of the Amphietheatrum Flavium begun by Elagabalus; repaired the shrine to Vesta at the corner of the atrium Vestae; and rebuilt and therefore renamed the Thermæ Neronianae as the Thermæ Alexandrianæ.

Of these constructions and restorations, many of them were for the public use and enjoyment of the public, although very few ever appear minted on coinage, not unusual as imperial coinage tended to focus on broader themes rather than specific buildings as a way of circulating imperial ideals. However, one coin minted under Alexander Severus depicts the Colosseum, representing the restorations completed under the emperor. Toynbee classifies the bronze coins of Alexander

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668 SHA Alex. Sev. 15.3.
669 Richardson 1992: 211-212.
676 Richardson 1992: 50.
683 Benario 1961: 720-722. Again when compared with the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, not all of these can be verified. Certainly the repairs to the Colosseum, the construction of the Aqua Alexandriana, and construction of the Baths of Caracalla occurred under Alexander Severus, but it is likely that he set up a hall of fame, or repaired the bridges built by Trajan. See Steinby 1993 vol 1: 60-61, 155-156, 168-169, 249-1250; vol 2: 11; vol 4: 304-308.
Severus with the Colosseum as medallions on the grounds of their great rarity- perhaps they too were distributed at games in the amphitheatre.\textsuperscript{685} These coins do not survive today, but a single aureus featuring the Amphitheatre remains.\textsuperscript{686}

![Image of a coin of Alexander Severus depicting the Colosseum](Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.)

Figure 37. A coin of Alexander Severus depicting the Colosseum, minted in honour of the completed restorations of the Flavian Amphitheatre- \textit{RIC IV} Alexander Severus 33.\textsuperscript{687}

The public building programmes of the last two Severans are indicative of the typical benefaction given to the public by the emperor.\textsuperscript{688} Elagabalus and Alexander Severus were doing many of the things that emperors were supposed to. Of the many expected duties undertaken by emperors, construction, restoration and renovation was one of the most basic jobs an emperor was to do. The public building programmes by the two emperors in this sense do not go above what was expected of them, but rather they are carrying out one of the many forms of public benefaction essential to maintain public support. It also demonstrates at times continuity in the projects undertaken by Caracalla, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. The restorations of the Colosseum begun under Elagabalus and completed under Alexander Severus, and also the construction of the Baths of Caracalla: begun in AD 212 by Caracalla, with work on the building completed under Elagabalus and Alexander Severus.\textsuperscript{689} Many of the buildings constructed or restored by Elagabalus and Alexander Severus were to the benefit of people not only in Rome.

**Conclusion**

Despite the very different accounts of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus as emperors by the ancient authors and the continuation of this idea by more recent scholars, the public image of the two did not vary as greatly as might be expected. As it was seen from the ancient literary sources, the private lives of the two young men were very different and were often contrasted with each

\textsuperscript{685} Elkins 2006: 220; Toynebee 1944: 165, 200.
\textsuperscript{686} \textit{RIC IV} Alexander Severus 33.
\textsuperscript{687} Image courtesy of WildWinds 2014.
\textsuperscript{688} Veyne 1990; Fagan 1999.
\textsuperscript{689} DeLaine 1997.
other. Elagabalus was the young Syrian priest who flouted the traditions of Rome bringing in his native sun god to replace Jupiter as the head of the Roman pantheon and behaving in a way that was not acceptable for an emperor to be behaving in. Alexander Severus, however, was seen as a good emperor. Favoured in particular by the historian Cassius Dio, he was seen as bringing traditions back to Rome and responsible for positive changes for the empire. Both carried on a focus of family and dynasty, making the stability of the Severans a key theme in their public image. Traditional gods and virtues were emphasised on coinage both centrally in Rome and in the provinces too. And finally, the reception of the emperors by the public indicated that these messages were received and replicated by those in the provinces. This can be seen as a reaction to actions undertaken by the emperor, such as public buildings erected, and a response to the public image spread throughout with portraits, coins and official inscriptions. The overall public image of these emperors can be seen as being responsive to the usurpation of Macrinus.

The first aspect of public image examined was the emphasis on family and the Severan dynasty, originally begun under Septimius Severus. This was seen through fairly standard means similarities in portrait types, a high percentage of coins minted with the imperial family and imperial women, references to their heritage in inscriptions, as well as the inclusion of Antonine names in their official titles. Other smaller references in conjunction with the above, such as the Aboukir medallions minted under Alexander Severus and similar honorific epithets, emphasised the ongoing stability and strength of the Severan dynasty. The fact that both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus made the conscious decision to emphasise not only dynasty, but the Severan family is telling of the political climate at the time. In particular, it can be seen as a direct response to the interruption of the Severan dynasty by Macrinus. At this point it was imperative that Elagabalus re-establish the Severan dynasty and its strength and through that, his right to rule. This is something that was seen during the reign of Alexander Severus as well, and something which was communicated successfully, being picked up and replicated by those in the provinces.

The gods and virtues favoured by Elagabalus and Alexander Severus were examined and like every emperor before them, divine support was used to legitimise their rule and traditional virtues were publicised by both emperors, mostly through the use of coinage. This was a standard aspect of emperors’ public image, used over a long period of time to demonstrate recognisable and desirable virtues. As it has been well documented in the ancient sources, Elagabalus’ introduction of the Syrian sun-god to Rome is one of the things the young emperor is most well remembered for, and Alexander Severus’ favouring of Jupiter was seen as restoring time-honoured Roman traditions. However, as it was seen from examining numerous coins and inscriptions, Elagabalus did not
 emphasise Elagabal to such an extent as might be expected from the literary accounts given by Cassius Dio, Herodian and in the *Historia Augusta*. Elagabalus did give himself the priestly title of the Syrian sun god and dedicated temples to Elagabal, but very few coins minted feature the conical black stone, or baetyl. Rather, the gods favoured by Elagabalus in Rome were Venus and Sol. Alexander Severus also favoured traditional gods on his coins minted in Rome, including Jupiter, Mars and Sol. Similarly, the virtues emphasised by both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus were fairly standard for emperors, supporting Noreña’s argument that coins featuring standard imagery and virtues circulated over long periods of time were more successful than other newer or more unique designs introduced. Both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus seem to have adhered to tradition in terms of virtues expressed.

Finally, the actions and reception of the public image of the two emperors was examined. Primarily, the actions here involved the public building of the two young men and how these buildings were used at the time. Alexander Severus undertook a large building programme, whilst Elagabalus’ was quite small by comparison. Both, however, favoured a building programme that could be used by the people of Rome, and Alexander Severus was also responsible for the construction or restoration of a number of buildings across the provinces. This is demonstrative of the emperor’s need to show public benefaction above and beyond that illustrated by previous emperors. Both emperors received favourable reception by those in the provinces (as might be expected) but reference to aspect of each emperor’s public image demonstrates the success of the transmission of these images and the provincial loyalty to the emperor and his family at this time.

Overall, it can be seen that despite the outward differences in the reigns between Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, both men aimed to emphasise the same broad messages in their public images. Largely this image was responsive to events happening at the time, with the aim of this to strengthen their individual reigns as well as the Severan dynasty as a whole after the brief reign of Macrinus. Inspiration and influence came from earlier Severan emperors, but also traditional messages utilised by emperors since the reign of Augustus. The end result was that the public images of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus articulated a message of stability to the empire at the time of many changes. This message was to an extent replicated by later, younger emperors such as Gordian III in portraiture as well as in the use of the same honorific epithets, demonstrating a legacy well beyond their reigns.
Conclusion

The public image of the later Severans was highly receptive to political, economic and social events in the first half of the third century AD. The way in which the Severans reacted to these events were formed by both pre-existing responses established by earlier emperors, as well as new approaches. These new approaches in turn influenced the public image of emperors in the later third and into the early fourth centuries AD. As each emperor faced different challenges in their rule, distinct changes can be seen between the reigns of each of the later Severans. As such, there is no single consistent theme which can be ascribed to the Severan dynasty. However, by examining the public image of Caracalla, Geta, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, we can see that each emperor adhered to general themes of legitimisation, security (of their rule, and thus of the empire) and public benefaction. The public actions taken by each of the emperors, and the image they projected to the empire through these, meant that noticeable variations could be seen in the public response to each rule.

In order to explore the public image of the later Severans, this thesis adopted a chronological approach, studying the portraits, coins, inscriptions and buildings of Caracalla, Geta, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus in order to identify and analyse the underlying motivations behind the actions undertaken by each of the Severans in the third century. This analysis of archaeological material was supplemented chiefly with the written works of Cassius Dio, Herodian, and the Historia Augusta. However, as these works do not necessarily reflect the public image circulated by the emperors themselves, which is the primary focus of this thesis, the archaeological material from the time of the Severans has been the primary source of evidence for this work. These materials represent the way in which the emperors (or those close to the emperor) chose to portray themselves and the way in which these messages were received and repeated by the public.

As established in Chapter One, the public image of Caracalla and Geta as Caesars and later Augusti under Septimius Severus from AD 195 to 211 was largely dictated by their father, and therefore followed the public image that he had set out for himself at the commencement of his rule in AD 193. This image was in large part a continuation of that set out by the Antonines, as a way for Severus to legitimise his rule and lend authority to his new status as emperor. In addition to these Antonine connections, the creation of a new dynasty and an emphasis on family characterised the co-reigns of Caracalla and Geta with their father. This move was largely a result of the circumstances in which Septimius Severus came to be emperor and was therefore a direct response to concerns surrounding legitimisation and the emperor’s right to rule. Septimius therefore relied
heavily on his two sons to emphasise the stability of his rule and stressed his Antonine ‘heritage’ to legitimise his rule. In the inclusion of his sons in his public image, there was a rise in the imagery associated with ‘the heir.’ This had its roots in Augustan imperial ideology and was further emphasised by Marcus Aurelius with his son Commodus, however under Septimius Severus, this was developed even further for Caracalla and Geta. Importantly, this saw changes to the title and imagery of the princeps iuuentutis and religious iconography of the jug and lituus to be representative of the heir to the emperor. Later emperors who wished to liken their rule to that of the Severan dynasty continued this further. Similarly, the honorific epithet nobilissimus, which had previously been given to Commodus, was now given to Geta. Again, this became synonymous with the Caesar in the later third century AD. At this stage, therefore, the focus of Caracalla and Geta was strongly linked to family, and dynasty, aspects which had been used by emperors for centuries before and were used in the century afterwards, which was in large part identifying an heir in order to promote the stability of the rule as well as legitimisation for future rulers.

Under Caracalla’s sole rule, however, Chapter Two demonstrated that his public image took a quite a different direction. In large part, this was due to the fact that the only surviving member of his family was his mother. Caracalla had no heir to promote, nor any family to rely upon for his legitimisation or strength of his rule. For this, he turned to other areas previously utilised by previous emperors, but to different degrees. Of course, the reception of the domus divina was still strong in the provinces, but Caracalla heavily promoted his Liberalitas to the Roman Empire- a virtue minted extensively on his coins and which appealed to the army (as a result of the pay rise given to them), to the people of Rome (for the construction of the baths of Caracalla), and to the people of the provinces (for granting them citizenship). Despite the fact that Caracalla’s portraits were quite militaristic in style, he did not particularly promote himself as a soldier-emperor beyond this. During his sole rule, Caracalla chose to legitimise his rule through divine support. A method used by emperors since the time of Augustus, Caracalla minted his own personal favourite gods on his coins. Gods which, although were unique to Caracalla, were not so unusual in general. In this respect, Caracalla’s public image was fairly typical, relying on effective and reliable methods of previous emperors, but the extents to which he publicised these makes his rule quite unique. Furthermore, his portraiture was very influential to the later soldier-emperors of the third century AD, and it is unsurprising that they should rely on this aspect of Caracalla’s appearance to promote their own strength in a time of great upheaval.

After Caracalla’s death, the Severan dynasty was interrupted with the rule of Macrinus. However with Elagabalus becoming emperor, there was a return to the emphasis on the Severan family. For
both the reigns of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, Chapter Three ascertained that they returned to a focus on family and the Severan dynasty, both claiming to be illegitimate sons of Caracalla to strengthen the bond. Legitimisation through family links can be seen in inscriptions throughout the empire, attesting to both the emperors’ connections to Caracalla and Septimius Severus, but even beyond that. This is further seen in the names they adopted for themselves upon becoming emperor. Both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus also heavily relied on divine support, as Caracalla had, but again with their own personal preference for certain deities. Here the two emperors employed very standard, typical ideology, with perhaps the only exception being Elagabalus’ introduction of the Syrian sun god to Rome. The virtues displayed by both the emperors on their coinage were also quite standard, and despite their youth, these emperors displayed the virtues expected from much older men and rulers. As such, these familiar images and themes would have been understood and comforting to the public. The public building programmes by Elagabalus and Alexander Severus were a reflection of their public benefaction and were a way for the two emperors to attempt to maintain order in what was becoming an increasingly tumultuous time. The reigns of the last two Severan emperors tended to indicate that as instability grew, so too did the emperor’s reliance on a more traditional public image.

Overall, it can be seen that despite the outward differences in the reigns between Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, both men aimed to emphasise the same broad messages in their public images. Largely this image was responsive to events happening at the time, with an aim of the emperors to strengthen their individual reigns as well as the Severan dynasty as a whole after the brief reign of Macrinus. Inspiration and influence came from earlier Severan emperors, but also wider imperial ideologies utilised by emperors since the reign of Augustus. The end result was that the public images of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus sent out a message of stability from the Severan family to the empire at the time of many changes.

The later Severans, relied on effective and reliable means of publicising themselves as well as introducing new methods by which they could publicly respond to events. The public image of the later Severans is quite different picture to the image presented in Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*, Herodian’s *History of the Empire* and the later *Historia Augusta*. Caracalla, Geta, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus were concerned with legitimising their rule, creating a sense of stability for the public, generating support from the army and also from the general population. This was achieved through traditional and new ways and in many aspects was largely successful. Understanding this image has much wider implications for the study of the Severans, of the third century, and of imperial ideology in general.
By understanding the public image of the later Severans, we can better understand the mind-set of the emperors (or at the very least the political advisors acting on behalf of the emperors) in a period on the verge of great change across the Roman Empire. This thesis has demonstrated how the Severans fit into the greater context of imperial ideology: how their predecessors influenced them, and how they influenced their successors and helped shape this framework they were operating in. Through their public image, the later Severans responded to a variety of situations, indicating that the image they presented to the Empire was a carefully constructed one and is indicative of how Caracalla, Geta, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus each reacted to great change in the third century AD. This public image in turn influenced later emperors, demonstrating the Severans’ lasting legacy in Roman imperial ideology.
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