Boys will be Boys: The Portrayal of Youthful Emperors in Roman Imperial Histories and Biographies

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the portrayal of youthful Roman emperors in imperial histories and biographies, specifically in the works of Suetonius, Tacitus, Cassius Dio, Herodian, and the Historia Augusta. As such, it limits the scope of research to the first three centuries AD. The emperors that fall into this category are Caligula (25 at accession), Nero (16 at accession), Commodus (co-Augustus at age 16; 19 as Augustus), Caracalla (co-Augustus at age 11; joint-rule with Geta at age 23), Geta (co-Augustus at age 20; joint-rule with Caracalla at age 22), Elagabalus (14 at accession), Alexander Severus (13 at accession) and Gordian III (13 at accession).

For the purpose of this thesis, the phase of youth will be defined as the period between 13/14 years of age and 28 years, in line with the stages of the human life-course suggested by Macrobius.\(^1\) Laes and Strubbe suggest this age boundary as one that was accepted and popular among the ancient Romans.\(^2\) They further acknowledge that although people in antiquity did not possess age awareness comparable to modern society, they were not indifferent towards the factor of age. Rather, they discerned a phase between childhood and adulthood to which they did not assign fixed and universal numerological boundaries. Nonetheless, this critical stage of human life was one characterised by restlessness, conflict and change.

This thesis studies the imperial histories and biographies of these young emperors alongside the traditional rhetoric associated with ‘good’ and ‘bad’ emperors. In saying this, it will demonstrate that the age of the youthful emperors played a role in excusing or condemning their carefree behaviour. As was typical of histories and biographies, the nature and character of the emperor was believed to significantly affect the quality of their rule. The emperors discussed within this thesis are generally regarded as bad emperors. Thus, they were often portrayed as lacking self-control, and possessing a licentious and cruel nature. However, it is their youth that made these emperors stand above other bad emperors as the worst of the worst. Reaching the highest office at an age where they typically would not have been allowed to enter political life, these young emperors were perceived as never outgrowing their youthful vices.

Focusing on three thematic areas of youth (guiding youths, youths and leisure, and narratives of cruelty), this thesis will argue that these authors used the *topos* of ‘youth’ in order to condemn certain negative aspects of the young emperors’ reigns. While cultural expectations of youth gave them a

\(^{1}\) Macrobius. *Comm. Somn. Scip.* 1.6.70.

margin of allowance to behave in a youthful manner, typically early on in their reign, the Roman elite authors interpreted the vices that arose from this behaviour as characterising their rule of the Empire. Accordingly, their youth was used as part of the rhetoric of praising and condemning emperors in order to illustrate the inability of a youth to rule in line with expectations of imperial power.
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.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I. Standard References

Journal titles have been abbreviated in accordance with *L’Année philologique*. The titles of other standard reference works can be found below.


II. Ancient Sources

Ancient sources are referred to in accordance with OCD, with the exception of Dio Cassius’s *Roman History*, which is simply referred to as ‘Dio’ throughout. The following forms have been used for the lives of the *Historia Augusta* (SHA):

SHA. *Hadr.* Life of Hadrian
SHA. *Marc.* Life of Marcus Aurelius
SHA. *Ver.* Life of Lucius Verus
SHA. *Comm.* Life of Commodus
SHA. *Did. Juli.* Life of Didius Iulianus
SHA. *Sept.* Life of Septimius Severus
SHA. *Carac.* Life of Caracalla
SHA. *Elagab.* Life of Elagabalus
SHA. *Alex. Sev.* Life of Alexander Severus
SHA. *Gord.* Life of the Three Gordians
SHA. *Gall.* Life of Gallienus
SHA. *Tacit.* Life of Tacitus
SHA. *Prob.* Life of Probus
INTRODUCTION

Age is another cause of difference. For ... those who differ in age are differently moved in respect of choice and avoidance. For whereas children – to take a case – are all eagerness for balls and hoops, men in their prime choose other things, and old men yet others. And from this we conclude that differences in age also cause different impressions to be produced by the same underlying objects.¹

I. The Premise of the Thesis

The eighteenth century historian Edward Gibbon eloquently describes the period between AD 96 and 180 as the happiest in the history of the human race.² This era of prosperity, governed by the so-called adoptive emperors, would only be destroyed in the following years by ‘some licentious youth’, namely Commodus.³ Youth, defined for this thesis as from the ages of 13/14 to 28 years,⁴ was a critical stage of human life, and one the Romans believed to be characterised by restlessness, conflict and change.⁵ Specifically, during this period a male Roman youth was expected to prepare himself for the duty of an adult.⁶ Lacking true political responsibility, he was expected to study, to be instructed in morality, and to showcase his prowess in the forum.⁷ In essence, the period of youth was liminal. The young man was passing through a phase that allowed him to develop skills needed during adulthood. As such, during the period of youth, iuventa or iuventas,⁸ the young man was expected to either succeed or fail in making the transition from a confused and undefined youth, to that of a good Roman.⁹

While typically youths were not allowed to hold positions of power, there were certainly exceptions to the rule. Examples are prevalent throughout the Late Republic, with the first century BC seeing the rise of young men achieving offices, commands and honours reserved generally for those of a more advanced age. These included Pompey the Great, Sextus Pompeius, and Octavian. During the Early and High Roman Empire, the era with which this thesis is concerned, youths held the highest

¹ Sext Emp. Pyr. 1.105-6: παρὰ δὲ τὰς ἡλικίας ... καὶ παρὰ τὰς αἱρέσεις δὲ καὶ φυγὰς ἀνομοίως κινοῦνται οἱ ταῖς ἡλικίαις διαφέροντες: παισὶ μὲν γὰρ, εἰ τύχοι, σφαίραι καὶ τροχοὶ διὰ σπουδῆς εἰσιν, οἱ ἀκμάζοντες δὲ ἄλλα αἱροῦνται, καὶ ἄλλα οἱ γέροντες, ἢς ἡ δὲ συνήγεται δι᾽ αὐτοῦ γίνονται φαντασίαι ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν ὑποκείμενον καὶ παρὰ τὰς διαφόρους ἡλικίας. I owe this reference to Eyben (1993: 1).
² All dates are AD unless otherwise stated.
³ Gibbon 2000: 1.78.
⁴ It is important to note that, for the purpose of this thesis, the age ranges reflect the age of young emperors at their accession, rather than their age for the duration of their reigns. Refer to section II of the Introduction for a more detailed analysis on the age range of youth for this thesis.
⁵ According to the Augustan poet Horace (Ars P. 163), ‘the beardless youth ... [is] wax malleable for sin ... spirited, passionate, and swift to change his whim’ (inberbus iuuenis ... cereus in utilium flecti ... sublimis cupidusque et amata relinquire pernix).
⁶ Eyben 1972: 45.
⁷ For a detailed analysis the Roman life course, particularly in reference to youth, see Laurence and Harlow 2002: 1-6.
⁸ OLD s.v. iuventa 1; OLD s.v. iuventas 1.
⁹ Eyben 1972: 45.
political office as Emperor. While only two emperors during the first century took to the throne in their youth, Caligula (25 at accession) and Nero (16 at accession), the second and third centuries saw a number of youths become emperor while still young: Commodus (co-Augustus at age 16; as sole Augustus he was 19), Caracalla (co-Augustus at age 11; joint-rule with Geta at age 23), Geta (co-Augustus at age 20; joint-rule with Caracalla at age 22), Elagabalus (14 at accession), Alexander Severus (13 at accession) and Gordian III (13 at accession) are all examples of youthful emperors who ruled as Augusti in the first three centuries. While these youthful emperors shared many of the experiences of the upper class youths, one imperative difference remained: they were absolute ruler of the Roman Empire. This thesis will examine the portrayal of young Roman emperors in imperial histories and biographies. Specifically, it will focus on three thematic areas and their relation to the ambivalent portrayals of youthful emperors throughout this period:

1. Guiding youths: The importance of a good advisor;
2. Youths and leisure; and

These themes have been selected as they make up part of the tradition of criticising an incompetent and bad emperor, while also being highly prevalent in literature on Roman youth. As with any stage of the life-course, youth was associated with specific characteristics that explained their rashness and inexperience. As Eyben and Kleijwegt state, youth was an ambiguous period between boyhood and adulthood. As such, the Romans thought that the ‘young man was thoughtless, licentious, he did not worry about the future, he was easily influenced, playful, prodigal, unrestrained. Vices tempted him.’ From these characteristics of youth, we can see how the three themes mentioned above are often intertwined with youth. Thus, I will argue that these youthful topoi, positioned within the context of Imperial culture, influenced the manner in which these emperors were portrayed in the works of Tacitus, Cassius Dio, Herodian, Suetonius, and the Historia Augusta. Though these emperors were given a margin of allowance to engage in youthful behaviour, the Roman elite authors interpreted the vices of youth as characterising their rule of the Empire. Accordingly, youth was used as a means of explaining, and either excusing or condemning, the carefree and unrestrained behaviour of the youthful emperors, in line with cultural expectations and the perceptions of imperial power.

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10 Eyben 1993: 67; McEvoy 2013: 3; cf. Biographical works on these emperors: Winterling 2011 (on Caligula); Barrett 1989 (on Caligula); Griffin 2001 (on Nero); Champlin 2003 (on Nero); Hekster 2002 (on Commodus); Icks 2011 (on Elagabalus). For the purpose of this thesis, the term ‘Augustus’ will be used interchangeably with the term ‘Emperor’.
12 Laes and Strubbe 2014: 43.
II. Youths in Roman Society and Imperial Power

For the purpose of this thesis, the period of youth shall be defined as occurring from the age of 13/14 years until 28 years. This is in line with the stages of the human life-course suggested by Macrobius.\textsuperscript{13} Laes and Strubbe suggest that these age limits were accepted and popular among the ancient Romans.\textsuperscript{14} They further acknowledge that although people in antiquity did not possess age awareness comparable to modern society, they were not indifferent towards the factor of age. Rather, they discerned a phase between childhood and adulthood to which they did not assign fixed and universal numerological boundaries.

Much of the focus within modern scholarship on Roman youths is placed on the social aspect of Roman history, examining the reality of the ‘categories’ that make up the life cycle, and the position of youths within Roman society. A number of studies have aimed to provide a survey of the attitudes ancient Romans held towards the male youth, and the role this group possessed in Roman life – philosophy, education, the army, politics, and personal life.\textsuperscript{15} The concept of the life course, the division of one’s life into certain stages, is of particular interest; specifically the existence of the period of adolescence is one that has received much attention. E. Eyben argued that the Romans viewed adolescence as a separate stage of human life that possessed its own characteristics, comparable to modern adolescence.\textsuperscript{16} However, Eyben’s study did not remain without criticism.\textsuperscript{17} M. Kleijwegt argued that the concept of adolescence was a psychological concept unknown to the ancient Romans. Young Romans were expected to take on the responsibilities of an adult from an early age, both political and occupational, and conform to society’s expectations.\textsuperscript{18} More recent studies have taken a broader approach, studying the portrayal of both male and female youths in a wide range of sources.\textsuperscript{19} Most scholars today agree with Kleijwegt that the concept of youth as a defined stage of life was relatively unknown to most ordinary Romans. However, it was a concept relevant primarily to the male upper class.\textsuperscript{20} Most recently C. Laes and J. Strubbe argue that, pertaining to upper class males, perceptions of youth

\begin{footnotes}
\item[15] Eyben 1993; Kleijwegt 1994, 1993; Laes and Strubbe 2014; Laurence and Harlow 2002. Parkin (2003) provides an analysis of older Romans and the attitude held towards them, as well as the attitude elder Romans possessed in regards to youths.
\item[19] Laes and Strubbe 2014.
\item[20] Laes and Strubbe 2014: 231-2; Kleijwegt 1993; At the point of life, youths of the lower classes would already be integrated into the adult society of work and marriage (Laes and Strubbe 2014: 197-214).
\end{footnotes}
were ambiguous.21 Those who displayed signs of early maturity were admired as they represented the ideal image of society. Yet each generation criticised their youth, with the most common view being that the youth of the day lacked the seriousness and self-control associated with adulthood.22 Accordingly, the characteristic of restless or impetuous youths cannot be applied with certainty to society as a whole. The experiences of the lower class youths certainly were not the same as those of their upper class counterparts.23 Laes and Strubbe argue that a period of youth emphatically existed, distinguished by certain roles and characteristics; however, such characteristics of this phase of life can only be applied to upper class Roman youths who possessed the time and freedom to experience it.24 This concept that the characteristics of youths only applies to upper class youths is very much appropriate to the young emperors, as they certainly had the time and money to indulge in similar activities.

For the most part, little work has been dedicated to the topic of youth in power during the Roman imperial period. In the field of this thesis the approach has largely been focused around the presentation of the children of Roman emperors in the Historia Augusta, and the continuation of child-emperorship from the fourth century onward.25 The longstanding view in regards to the presentation of these emperors has been that Romans were unenthusiastic about such young rulers. As W. Hartke’s 1951 book Römische Kinderkaiser notes: ‘For indeed, nothing was more alien to Roman tradition with its strict division into age-grades than to have a child in the highest position of the Empire.’26 While the essence of this book concerns the Historia Augusta, Hartke goes on to discuss in chapter five the concept of Roman child emperors and their presentation with this history. This approach is largely used to support a 394 date of composition for the Historia Augusta. He argues that the issue of child-emperors could not have arisen under the rule of Julian or prior to 370, as a number of child-rulers ascend to the throne in the following years.27 By examining this topic in relation to the ethos of the fourth century, Hartke endorses the assumption that, following the period of successive child-emperors, resentment towards these child rulers began to grow, and the Historia Augusta was written to reflect this.28

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21 Cf. Tac. Ann. 13.11.1; Hor. Ars P. 163.
22 Laes and Strubbe 2014: 46-7, 229.
23 Laes and Strubbe 2014: 197-214
24 Laes and Strubbe 2014: 22.
27 Gratian came to the throne at the age of sixteen in 375, Valentinian II at twelve in 383, and Arcadius and Honorius ruled from the age of seventeen and ten respectively in 395 (Hartke 1951: 219).
28 Hartke 1951: 218-220.
It was not until 2013 that a work provided an extended scholarly treatment of the phenomenon of child emperors. M. McEvoy’s book, *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West, AD 367-455*, focuses on the late fourth and early fifth centuries, a time in which the concept of child-emperors was becoming an institutionalised reality. McEvoy delves further into the concept of a child ruler than previous studies, dismissing the simplistic approach of dynastic ideologies. Rather, her study focuses on the transformation of the imperial office in late antiquity and Roman imperial governance as a consequence of child-emperor rule. In particular it addresses questions such as how child-emperor rule came about in the fourth century, how it functioned, and why it was accepted.29 Through her study, McEvoy presents a new understanding of late Roman administration, highlighting how the reigns of the child emperors made it possible for individual generals to dominate the Roman state, and in turn contributed to the altering imperial ideology to portray young boys as viable rulers.30 Accordingly, this piece of scholarship is particularly significant to this thesis as it serves to highlight the importance of guidance and control of both child and youthful emperors.

What is lacking in current scholarship is an examination of those emperors that are no longer children, but who are still emerging as adults according to the social constructs of Roman society. In particular, the relationship between the stigmas attached to youth and the representation of the youthful emperors within the literary sources needs discussion. This thesis seeks to fill this gap through an examination of the social constructs of the youthful emperors during the early and high Roman Empire. Specifically, this study will concentrate on three archetypes of youth so as to demonstrate their use in histories and biographies as both a virtue and vice of a ruling youthful emperor.

### III. The Do’s and Don’t’s of Being an Emperor: Imperial Virtues and Vices

Five principal historical sources are the focus of this thesis: Suetonius’ *Lives of the Caesars*, Tacitus’ *Annals*, Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*, Herodian’s *History after Marcus Aurelius*, and the *Historia Augusta*. It is important to note that although these works were written in periods spanning from the late first century until the late fourth century, there are similarities in use of literary devices and rhetorical tropes are often seen. In particular, the examination of virtues is one major component commonly utilised in imperial history.31 Nearly all authors of the imperial age agreed that the emperor, possessing unrestrained power, was regulated by his character alone. These qualities established the discourse of imperial virtue. In a monarchy such as the Roman Empire,

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29 McEvoy 2013: 19.
what mattered was the character of the emperor. As such, the concept of imperial qualities was frequently used as a rhetorical device in historical, biographical and panegyrical works.\(^\text{32}\) Millar asserts that the basic role of the emperor was to be a ‘supreme dispenser’: to give out moneys, lands, privileges, honours, and justice.\(^\text{33}\) The publication of these acts served to strengthen the Roman people’s faith in the imperial office and therefore assured the orderly functioning of Roman bureaucracy. As Ando notes:

Rome did not rely on the inertia or the awe of her subjects to compel their quietude; her guardians instead defined, distributed, and ultimately decorated the landscape of their imperium, while their images stood in every square, their names marked every road, and their coins jingled in every market in the empire.\(^\text{34}\)

Accordingly, the acceptance of the emperor himself was based on the actions taken in line with these virtues.\(^\text{35}\) Imperial qualities were continuously utilised in historical, biographical, and panegyrical works and featured on coinage circulated throughout the Roman Empire.\(^\text{36}\) A vast number of virtues were associated with a ‘good’ emperor.\(^\text{37}\) In 1937 Charlesworth put forward the notion of a ‘canon’ of four imperial virtues established by the Golden Shield dedicated to Augustus by the Senate: \textit{virtus} (valour), \textit{clementia} (clemency), \textit{iustitia} (justice), and \textit{pietas} (dutiful respect).\(^\text{38}\) However, Wallace-Hadrill in his 1981 article challenged Charlesworth’s original thesis, contending that a universal set of virtues did not exist.\(^\text{39}\) Rather individual sources adapted the virtues of a good emperor to suit their own purpose. He states that the ‘use of virtue language should illuminate the points at which they felt threatened: where the bad emperor could damage their interests, and the virtuous ones prevailed upon to respect them.’\(^\text{40}\) Wallace-Hadrill expanded on this in his 1982 article, in which he writes that an ideal emperor is best described by the term \textit{civilitas}.\(^\text{41}\) He comments that this term ‘aptly evokes the behaviour of a ruler who is still citizen in a society of citizens…’\(^\text{42}\) In contrast, as Dunkle illustrates, a bad emperor was characterised by \textit{vis} (violence),

\(^{33}\) Millar 1977: 516.
\(^{34}\) Ando 2000: 411.
\(^{37}\) Wickert (1954) lists over fifty qualities assigned to numerous emperors over the centuries from various sources, including literary, numismatic, and epigraphic. It should be noted that these virtues were often specifically selected by the emperor and his administration in order to highlight the image they wished to promote.
\(^{38}\) \textit{OLD} s. v. \textit{virtus} 4, 1; \textit{clementia} 1.1; \textit{iustitia} 10.1; \textit{pietas} 1, 4a; Charlesworth 1937.
\(^{41}\) \textit{OLD}. s. v. \textit{civilitas} 1.
\(^{42}\) Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 42; Pliny the Younger (\textit{Pan.} 64.4) attributes such a virtue to Trajan, writing ‘a prince showed himself no different from a commoner, an emperor no different from one of his subjects’ (\textit{idem principem quod privatum, idem imperatorem quod sub imperatore}).
superbia (arrogance), avaritia (greed), crudelitas (cruelty), and saevitia (savagery). A bad emperor or tyrant acted according to their own self-interests and sought only to satisfy their own desires. In this way, it was expected that a good emperor would allow freedom of speech, be modest, recognise the value of Republican offices, particularly the consulship, and both dress and act like a private citizen. Ultimately, the best emperor was an emperor who behaved like a citizen, and treated the populous with respect. In this manner ‘virtue language’ was used as part of moral exempla directed towards imperial personalities. In particular, self-restraint in both governing the empire and the emperor’s personal life was a trait particularly desired.

IV. Approaching Roman Imperial Histories and Biographies

Biographical works are one such genre that makes use of the examination of moral qualities. As biographies, both Suetonius’ Lives and the enigmatic Historia Augusta contain both public and private representations of the emperors’ lives, and examine them according to imperial ideals. Typical of the biographical style, these works present a vast corpus of information on the emperors’ public and personal lives, both chronologically and thematically, and with numerous contradictions. Writing in the second century, Suetonius’ Lives aimed to provide examples of the imperial ideal through examining particular virtues and vices of the early Roman emperors. As Wallace-Hadrill notes, Suetonius provides an ethical analysis of the emperors’ reigns in a public capacity:

Was he virtuous or vicious? …Was he clement or cruel? Liberal, or mean and grasping? Civil or arrogant? Content, or self-indulgent, luxurious and lustful? These are the polarities in terms of which emperor after emperor is judged.

This use of morals throughout Suetonius’ work stems from the period in which he was writing, the early second century, when Roman society had developed a structured concept of how an emperor

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43 OLD. s.v. vis 1a, c; OLD. s. v. superbia 1; OLD. s.v. avaritia 1a; OLD. s.v. crudelitas 1a; OLD. s.v. saevitia 1a, 2b; Dunkle 1971: 13.
46 Pliny (Pan. 56.3) attributes to Trajan the virtue of moderatio consistently throughout his work.
48 Hägg 2012: 215, 219; Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 149. Suetonius’ successive positions of a studiis, a bibliothecis, and ab epistulis allowed him access to state papers, and both public and private letters (Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 115; Bradley 1991: 3710; For further discussion on the dates of Suetonius’ career, see Lindsay 1994 and Wardle 2002. This abundance of information ceases in the later Lives, with modern scholars believing that he was relieved of imperial services around this time (Cf. Jones and Milns 2003: 3-4). As a result, Suetonius relied heavily on oral sources, often including snippets of gossip (Bradley 1991: 3710-11). See Power (2014) for a discussion on Suetonius’ relationship to Tacitus.
50 Wallace-Hadrill 1995: 142; cf. Lindsay 1994; Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 150. Accordingly, Suetonius’ biographies are written in categories (per species) [Suet. Aug. 9], a method that allows for an effective dichotomy of individuals.
should ideally behave.\textsuperscript{51} Such an ideal likely arose in response to the potential for despotic behaviour inherent in the principate,\textsuperscript{52} as well as precedents set by past emperors’ in their response to the needs of their subjects and commemoration of the empire’s achievements.\textsuperscript{53} Thus, Suetonius’ biographies of the young emperors, Caligula and Nero, follows the typical structure of his Lives. Though Suetonius does not present his Lives in chronological order, they contain an introduction to the emperor’s family history, the virtues of the emperor, followed by the introduction of a turning point and discussion on the vices of the emperor.\textsuperscript{54} However, unlike in the biographies of the older emperors, Suetonius presents a particularly escalated descent into depravity for both Caligula and Nero, and associates this with their youthful insolence and incapability, along with their inherent nature.\textsuperscript{55} By foregrounding youthful vices that plagued these young emperors early in the narrative, Suetonius attempts to present a rational explanation for their escalation in cruelty that surpassed the immorality of their early years.

The Historia Augusta comprises thirty biographies, the majority which detail the reign of a single ruler though some include a set of two or more Augusti, Caesares, or claimants to the empire. Numerous theories have been devised in an attempt to explain the authorship of this work. While the work claims to have been written by six individuals during the early fourth century, the accepted view today is that a single author wrote the Historia Augusta in the late fourth century.\textsuperscript{56} A number of biographers had considerable influence upon the structure of the Historia Augusta, including Suetonius and Marius Maximus.\textsuperscript{57} Written in the early decades of the third century, Marius’ series of biographies of twelve emperors acts as a link between Suetonius and the Historia Augusta. Although it is now lost, Marius’ biographical work imitates and continues the Lives of Suetonius, by writing the lives of the emperors from Nerva up to and including the reign of Elagabalus.\textsuperscript{58} Throughout the Historia Augusta, Marius is listed as a source twenty-eight times.\textsuperscript{59} This abundance of references has lead scholars such as A. R. Birley to suggest that Marius’ lost work was the main source used by the author of the Historia Augusta.\textsuperscript{60} Accordingly, many authentic names and details for the period 96 to 222 likely come from his work and can be compared and confirmed by

\begin{itemize}
\item Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 115, 165.
\item Cf. Suet. Ner. 1; Suet. Dom. 1.
\item Cf. Suet. Aug. 29, 31.5, 37, 40.2; Aug. R.G. 19-21, 23; Milns 2010: 117.
\item Lindsay 1993: 21; Wardle 1994: 19-21.
\item Lindsay 1993: 13; Wardle 1994: 24, 71-73.
\item SHA. Probus. 2.7.
\item Birley 1997a: 2685.
\item Meckler 1996: 365.
\item Cf. Birley 1997a: 2679-757.
\end{itemize}
comparison with works such as Dio. Thus, the author of the Historia Augusta approaches biographical characterisation, though the criticisms and commendations are far more overt than in earlier works, such as the Lives. Moreover, criticisms of young emperors are ubiquitous throughout the Historia Augusta, and more evident than in the other histories and biographies, with the author stressing his utter dismissal of the capability of a youth to run the empire. Writing much later than the other imperial histories and biographies discussed in this thesis, the Historia Augusta had many precedents for the incapability of a young ruler and the problems associated with their youth. Indeed, from the time of Constantine onwards in particular, young imperial sons regularly succeeded their fathers, such as Constans who was only 17. Later examples include Valentinian II, who came to the throne at 4 years-old, Gratian, at 8 years-old, Honorius, 9 years-old, Arcadius, 6 years-old, and Theodosius II, who became sole-emperor at the tender age of 7. Though these child emperors were much younger than the youthful emperors of the first three centuries, they were just as susceptible to outside influences. This fact alone was enough to arouse the concerns of the Historia Augusta. A capable emperor had no need for another to run the empire in their place, and certainly did not neglect their imperial duties for leisurely pursuits. Additionally, they were expected not to be governed by their rash and impetuous nature. Ultimately, the author of the Historia Augusta continued to view the reigns of Commodus, Caracalla, Elagabalus, Alexander Severus, and Gordian III as the beginnings of what would later be seen as puppet emperors.

Histories likewise adopt this moralising tone in a manner comparable to Suetonius and the Historia Augusta. Tacitus is the earliest historian this thesis will look at. A senator and historian writing during the early second century, Tacitus is best known for writing two major accounts of the early Roman emperors: the Annals and the Histories. Throughout his works, Tacitus took it upon himself to ensure that the virtues of individuals were recorded, and the vices condemned. It is important to note that in the Annals Tacitus claims to write his history sine ira et studio (‘without anger and bias’). In line with this statement, Tacitus notes in his Histories that ‘those who profess inviolable truthfulness must speak of all without partiality and without hatred.’ From this, Tacitus makes it clear that he possessed no reason to speak insincerely about the emperors of the early first century, as he did not experience life during their reigns. However, as Luce argues in his 1989 article,
Tacitus’ writings are considerably influenced by the regimes during which he lived.\textsuperscript{68} In particular, the manner by which he approached the early Roman emperors was certainly shaped by his experiences under the emperor Domitian’s ruthless regime. This is particularly interesting when looking at the young emperors, because, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, Domitian appears to be presented as an emperor who did not outgrow his youth upon ascending the throne.\textsuperscript{69} While it is certainly not the most focal characteristic of ‘reign of terror’ which Tacitus saw, Domitian’s more youthful vices certainly would have affected the way Tacitus viewed, in particular, the emperor Nero. These traits included the characteristic vices of tyrants - cruelty (\textit{crudelitas} and \textit{saevitia}), lust (\textit{libido}), greed (\textit{avaritia}) and violence (\textit{vis}) – which are used in order to encourage critical opinions of those emperors whom he believed to be responsible for destroying Republican virtues.\textsuperscript{70} In this way, Tacitus may have seen many of Domitian’s characteristics amplified in Nero, as the young emperor forgoes his imperial responsibilities for both youthful and tyrannical pleasures.\textsuperscript{71} Clearly Tacitus possessed a strong notion as to what an emperor’s obligations, duties, and overall behaviour should consist of, both publically and privately, and no matter their age.

Dio’s \textit{Roman History}, although written in an annalistic manner, likewise possess, at times, a biographical structure. This is particularly evident in the books dealing with the imperial period. His \textit{Roman History} comprises 80 volumes, written in Greek, documenting the history of Rome from its legendary founding in 753 BC until his own time, c. 229.\textsuperscript{72} Apart from the greater part of Books 36-60 and excerpts of Dio’s original text preserved in the \textit{Parisian Fragments} and \textit{Codex Vaticanus Graecus} 1288, much of the \textit{Roman History} survives as epitomes produced by Byzantine historians, such as the eleventh century monk Xiphilinus and the twelfth century chronicler John Zonaras.\textsuperscript{73} It is essential to note that Xiphilinus preferred to approach history in a biographical manner, preserving personal details of the emperors more so than annalistic details of Dio’s original work.\textsuperscript{74} Nonetheless, Dio himself certainly made use of the biographical structure, principally in his account of the imperial period.\textsuperscript{75} He presents much of his history year-by-year, providing an account of the emperor’s rise to power, while also including a biographical account of each emperor at the beginning and end of their reign.\textsuperscript{76} It should be noted that Dio does not follow Suetonius in recounting the childhood of the emperors he is writing about. Rather, Dio uses these individuals as

\textsuperscript{68} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 1.1; Luce 1989: 16.
\textsuperscript{69} See section VI of Chapter Three for further discussion on this idea.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{OLD. s.v. crudelitas} 1a; \textit{OLD. s.v. saevitia} 1a, 2b; \textit{OLD. s.v. libido} 2b, 3; \textit{OLD. s.v. avaritia} 1a; \textit{OLD. s.v. vis} 1a, c; Keitel 2007: 441-2; Sullivan 1976: 313.
\textsuperscript{71} Syme 1958: 309.
\textsuperscript{72} Barnes 1984: 245; Millar 1964: 110-118.
\textsuperscript{73} Brunt 1980: 488; Mallan 2013a: 610; Millar 1964: 107.
\textsuperscript{74} Mallan 2013a: 616.
\textsuperscript{75} Pelling 1997: 117.
\textsuperscript{76} Cf. Dio. Books 45, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 78; Pelling 1997: 124.
a device that ordered and articulated the narrative. Such a change in narrative develops as the events of history are influenced by one individual; the emperor. There is no doubt that, as imperial personalities, the Roman emperors had a considerable influence on the subjects Dio found of great concern, such as imperial interactions with the senate, military campaigns, and politics. In this manner, Dio’s use of biographical structure works alongside his interest in the mechanism of the imperial system.

Herodian’s History after Marcus Aurelius records the same events as Dio’s Roman History from 180-229, though it documents several subsequent years from the reign of Maximinus until the end of the Year of the Six Emperors in 238. This book was composed sometime after 238. It is important to note that the viewpoint from which Herodian is writing remains uncertain. He tells us that he was engaged in ‘imperial [and] civil service’, however no details are disclosed. Herodian is particularly hostile to young emperors, an outlook that is made clear throughout his work – ‘the emperors who were advanced in years governed themselves and their subjects commendably … but the younger emperors lived recklessly and introduced many innovations.’ Such aversion to youth may be seen as reflective of the attitudes of his time; an era in which young emperors were fast becoming a reality. Contemporary works such as Dio’s Roman History also seemingly mirror this distrust of young men and children ruling over the Roman Empire.

V. Thesis Structure

This thesis is, first and foremost, an analysis of literary sources, both contemporary and non-contemporary. The principal historical and biographical works to be considered are Suetonius’ Lives, Tacitus’ Annals, Cassius Dio’s Roman History, Herodian’s History, and the Historia Augusta. Numerous other works will be studied, complementary to the main analysis, such as Seneca’s De Clementia, the Octavia, Calpurnius Siculus’ Ecolgues, Cicero’s De Officiis and Pro Caelio, and Pliny’s Panegyric to Trajan. As this thesis seeks to examine the perceptions of the youthful emperors in imperial histories and biographies, focus will be placed on the representations of the emperors within the text, rather that the historical reality of their reigns.

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77. Pelling 1997: 118.
78. For a more detailed discussion on the date of composition of this work, see Alföldy 1971 and Sidebottom 1997a.
79. See Kemezis 2014: 298-308 for further discussion on the date of Herodian’s work; Whittaker 1969: ix.
80. Herodian. 1.2.5.
81. Herodian. 1.1.6.
83. Cf. Dio. 59.19.2-3; 61.22.1; 72.1.1-2; 76.14.7.
Chapter One looks at the first of these areas, guiding youths. The idea that a male youth should be handed to a well-regarded and prominent older male to instruct them on how to be a good Roman is ubiquitous in Roman society. Indeed, it is even seen as a concern for the young Roman emperors. This chapter examines the perception of guidance in relation to the young emperors’ ability to rule. Principally, it identifies what type of advisors were available to the young emperors – such as family members, praetorian prefects, senators, and tutors – and how they are viewed by imperial histories and biographies. Many factors governed the eventual outcome for the youth: the young emperor could be directed to virtue or led towards vice based on their advisor, and the extent to which they accepted guidance. It argues that the concept of youth as a slippery path, and a time when guidance was needed, influenced the way the historians and biographers presented the reigns of the young emperors. Thus, the youthful rulers and their regimes were characterised by the uncertainty and irresponsibility that youth represented within the life-course.

Chapter Two studies the extent to which games and pleasures are used in imperial histories and biographies in order to stress the unjust nature of the young emperors’ reigns. The activities and decadent behaviour indulged by elite Roman male youths are looked at, along with the behaviour expected of an emperor. This chapter argues that the young emperors could be portrayed in two ways – either as unruly youths, or as young tyrants – depending on the approach taken by individual historians and biographers. As unruly youths, the technique of turning points was used to emphasise and explain the transition from unacceptable but youthful behaviour into unrestrained tyranny and depravity. Ultimately, this chapter will show how their youth was presented as a cause of their tyrannical nature. The second technique illustrates how ancient writers presented stories of debauchery and immorality that was not only the result of the emperor’s youth, but also his innate nature. Accordingly, rather than viewing the emperors as youthful rulers who turned into tyrants, historians and biographers could also present them as megalomaniac youths from the outset of their reign. Having taken into consideration the two ways a young emperor could be portrayed, this chapter will ultimately argue that imperial historians and biographers presented the young emperors as having been corrupted by their youth, power, and fortune, irrespective of the technique used.

Chapter Three considers the narratives of cruelty prevalent in imperial histories and biographies of the young emperors. It identifies three key categories of cruelty:

1. Political murders and traditional tyranny;
2. Playful or childish cruelty; and
3. Youthful tyrants
In addition to examining these three types of cruelty, this chapter looks at how descriptions of acts of cruelty differ between the young emperors and their older counterparts. It illustrates how the random and chaotic nature, elaborate detail, and inventiveness of the narratives of cruelty associated with the young emperors are typically not found in the accounts of the older emperors. Ultimately, this chapter argues that the narratives of cruelty associated with the young emperors are attributed both to the savagery and violence of traditional tyrants, and the connection in Roman thought between youth and impetuosity and ferocity. In this way, imperial historians and biographers used the more sadistic, insolent, and chaotic narratives of the young emperors in order to stress the escalation in their depravity.

While cultural expectations of young Romans gave these young emperors a margin of allowance to behave in a youthful manner, typically early on in their reign, the Roman elite authors interpreted the vices that arose from this behaviour as characterising their rule of the Empire. This thesis will show that similarities in these interpretations are frequently found among these histories and biographies. For example, clear commonalities as to what makes a good or bad imperial advisor are found in Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio, Herodian and the Historia Augusta. Despite differences in genre and time periods, these works presented similar ideals for the guardians of the young emperors they discuss. Principally, that the guidance of an older virtuous Roman male was ideal, whereas advice given by a woman, particularly by their mother or grandmother, would be detrimental to the young emperor’s reign. Further, Suetonius, Dio, and Herodian all make use of turning points when discussing Nero’s enthusiasm for music and stage performance, and Commodus’ love for hunting and gladiatorial sports. However, it will be argued that there were also differences in the portrayal of youthful emperors in imperial histories and biographies. For instance, when discussing Elagabalus’ promiscuity, Dio and Herodian tend to focus more on his Syrian nature, whereas the Historia Augusta, whose anxiety towards young rulers is made clear throughout the work, focuses intrinsically on the emperor’s youth. In discussing narratives of cruelty, Suetonius and Dio choose to stress the intrinsic tyrannical nature of the young emperors, while the Historia Augusta, once again, focuses on more childish cruelty. Despite these differences, it is clear that the topos of youth was used as part of the rhetoric of praising and condemning emperors in order to illustrate the inability of a youth to rule the empire in line with expectations of imperial power.
CHAPTER ONE
THE ROAD TO ADULTHOOD: GUIDING YOUTHS

I. Introduction
When young emperors ascended the throne, contemporary writers such as poets and philosophers wrote of these youths possessing great prospect.¹ Later historians and biographers, however, wrote of people questioning the young emperors’ ability to govern and defend the Empire.² In essence, these youthful emperors were portrayed as both promising young monarchs and, posthumously, as incapable young rulers and uncontrollable youthful tyrants. This chapter will examine how the association between youths and a need for guidance was applied in the construction of a young emperor’s ability to rule. Principally, it will look at what constituted a good or bad advisor to a youth. While court poetry and panegyric, and imperial histories and biographies certainly had different experiences and perceptions as a result of the emperors under whom they lived, a clear pattern emerges of what makes a good or bad advisor. A good advisor stood to control the youthful behaviour of the emperor, preventing them from becoming uncontrollable. In contrast, bad advisors enhanced the licentious nature of the emperor’s youth. Accordingly, the young emperor could be led down either the path of virtue or vice based on their advisor, and the extent to which they accepted their guidance. Thus, this preconception that youth was a malleable stage of life³ influenced the multitude of authors whose narratives record the tumultuous reigns of these young emperors. Their view of youths in power was influenced by their historical perspective and their perception of imperial rule. As such, as part of an author’s analysis of imperial power, the limitations of youth were used as a tool to explain the strengths and weaknesses in the young emperor’s principate.

II. All a Part of Growing Up: The Necessity of Guidance
It was the belief of the Romans, philosophers in particular, that during youth the ability for logical thought began to appear.⁴ Youths began to think logically and to separate virtue from vice.⁵ However, it was emphasised that their mind remained immature, and consequently youths were prone to life’s temptations.⁶ As such, it was important that a virtuous youth receive appropriate guidance from an older, successful, and honourable Roman male. This concept certainly extended to the young

¹ Calpurnius Siculus 1.42: ‘With this untroubled peace, the Golden Age is renewed; at last kindly Themis returns to the earth, and set aside the squalor of suffering; blissful ages attended the youth (Nero) who overcame the case of the Julii of the mother town.’ (aurea secura cum pace renascitur aetas et redit ad terras tandem squalore sitoque alma Themis posit iuuenemque beata sequuntur saecula, maternis causam qui uicit Iulīs).
² Tac. Ann. 13.6.1, 11.1; Herodian. 1.1.3.
³ This preconception held by elite Romans is discussed in Section II of the Introduction to this thesis.
emperors as well. Like the non-imperial youths, the young emperors were still maturing, both physically and mentally. Accordingly their acceptance of an advisor or tutor was perceived to be of great importance, and served as a basis for the characterisation of the youthful emperors in histories and biographies over the course of the Empire.\textsuperscript{7}

The Romans were intensely aware of the impact teaching and social influences had on the character of their youth.\textsuperscript{8} Stress is continuously placed on the necessity for young men to develop the capacity to control both their desires and emotions.\textsuperscript{9} As Cicero said in defending the youthful indiscretions of Cælius, nature ‘shows youth many slippery paths on which this age can barely stand or walk without falling or slipping’.\textsuperscript{10} Accordingly, choosing a suitable tutor or advisor was regarded as crucial in order for a youth to respond positively to their advice. Most typically, an older, established Roman male ‘who [is] at once brilliant and wise as well as patriotic counsellors in public affairs’ was most desired.\textsuperscript{11} Presenting a similar view, Tacitus, in the \textit{Dialogues on Oratory}, writes of the orator Vipstanus Messala reminiscing on the days of his youth. Tacitus’ Vipstanus remarks that it was traditional practise for a young man, having assumed the \textit{toga virilis}, to be taught and guided by an orator ‘who held the highest rank in the state’.\textsuperscript{12} Vipstanus continues on to state that ‘[f]rom this, young men acquired from the outset great experience, much self-possession, and a vast reservoir of judgement.’\textsuperscript{13} Only after this process of supervision and training would a youth be considered valuable to the state.\textsuperscript{14}

The younger Pliny provides a good illustration of the importance placed on choosing a learned and virtuous advisor or tutor. In a letter written to Corellia Hispulla, Pliny discusses her son whom he believed would grow into an honourable man, provided that he chose an appropriate teacher:

\textsuperscript{7} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.6.1: ‘[The youth] would give clear indication as to whether his friends were honourable or to the contrary…’ (\textit{daturum plane documentum, honestis an secus amicis uteretur}).
\textsuperscript{8} Sen. \textit{Contr.} 1.8.5; Juv. 14.1; Cic. \textit{Att.} 10.11.
\textsuperscript{9} E.g.: Cic. \textit{Off.} 1.1-2, 1.93-123; Hor. \textit{Sat.} 1.4.103.
\textsuperscript{10} Cic. \textit{Cael.} 17.41. This translation has been adapted from Gardner’s edition: \textit{multas vias adulescentiae lubricas ostendit, quibus illa insistere aut ingredi sine casu aut prolapso vix posset}; cf. Hor. \textit{Ars P.} 163.
\textsuperscript{11} Cic. \textit{Off.} 2.46: \textit{qui se ad claros et sapientes viros bene consulentes rei publicae contulerunt}; cf. Quintilian \textit{Institutio Oratoria} 2.1-5 (On the necessity of teachers); Laes and Struibe 2014: 80-92.
\textsuperscript{12} Tac. \textit{Dial. De orat.} 34.1-2: \textit{qui principem in civitate locum obtinebat}.
\textsuperscript{13} Tac. \textit{Dial. De orat.} 34.3: \textit{magnus ex hoc usus, multum constantiae, plurimum iudicii iuvenibus statim contingebat, in media luce studentibus atque inter ipsa discrimina}…
\textsuperscript{14} Cic. \textit{Cael.} 76.
And now his studies must go outside, and we must cast a look around for a Latin rhetorician, of whose school the discipline, propriety and chastity are unchanging … [At] his slippery age we must look for not only a teacher but a guardian and guide.¹⁵

He then goes on to recommend Julius Genitor, a man whom Pliny held in high regard. Pliny writes that Julius is ‘a man of flawless character and serious disposition, even a little rough and austere, as seen in the light of this licentious period.’¹⁶ This man’s nature and high standing was what was desired by parents of young men to guide them through this uncertain period and to advise them in issues of morality.

In addition to this, it is important to note the role of the mother in raising a youth. While women were often not seen as the best role models for a Roman male, the idea that they could set the ground work for later advisors, and also seek out appropriate guardians for their sons, was very much alive. The letter to Corella Hispulla above certainly illustrates attempts to find a suitable advisor for her son – undoubtedly the mark of a positive guardian. An interesting and well known example is Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. Though she is a Republican figure, her role as mother of famous sons, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, presents an interesting parallel to the imperial women that will be discussed later in this chapter. On Cornelia’s role in the education of her sons, Cicero comments:

Gracchus was educated from boyhood through the conscientiousness of his mother Cornelia and schooled in Greek literature. For he had superb teachers from Greece, among them – while Tiberius was still a youth – Diophanes of Mytilene, at that time the most eloquent speaker in Greece.¹⁷

Here Cicero makes clear the role a mother should play. Ideally, she should ensure that her sons were being educated by the best men. In doing this they played the role of supervisor, making sure that their sons were being directed towards virtue and receiving a proper education and interfering when any undesirable behaviour arose.¹⁸ Ultimately she is doing what a mother should – ensuring her sons were guided by the best men.

While positive role models were understandably preferred in order to produce honourable young men, this did not always happen. Although the events take place during the Roman Republic, Sallust’s

¹⁵ Plin. Ep. 3.3: iam studia eius extra limen preferenda sunt, iam circumspeciendus rhetor Latinus, cuius scholae severitas pudor in primis castitas constet … cui in hoc lubrico aetatis non praeceptor modo sed custos etiam recto quaerendus est.
¹⁶ Plin. Ep. 3.5: vir est emendatus et gravis, paulo etiam horridior et durior, ut in hac licentia temporum; Bonner 1977: 105.
Jugurthine War appropriately illustrates the impact of negative guardians on a youthful mind. In the first chapters of this work, Sallust presents Jugurtha as a youth of great prospect, who initially responded positively to the guidance of Scipio, a prominent Roman general, but was then tempted to reject this positive advice by ambitious Romans.\(^{19}\) These negative influences eventually became the dominant force guiding the young man, and consequently the youth was ruled by his ambition.\(^{20}\) Furthermore in the War with Catiline, Sallust discusses his own *imbecilla aetas* (‘weak age’), a period in which he was temporarily corrupted by the customs of society and dominated by wicked ambition.\(^{21}\) Sallust writes that with age, his ‘mind found peace after many troubles and perils’.\(^{22}\) This idea that youth was a period of instability was clearly a cliché among the Romans, and stressed the concept that young men may go down either the path of virtue or vice.\(^{23}\) Nevertheless, under the influence of a virtuous man, a young Roman would be guided towards the ideal and virtuous path, and the uncertainty of youth could be managed and eventually settle into unswerving maturity.

### III. Elite Roman Males as ‘Good’ Advisors

Above all, the positive influence of virtuous and mature Roman men was the most desired outcome for an easily swayed youth. This ideal also applied to the young Roman emperors. While they were expected to act the part of the emperor, these Romans were still youths, and were thus perceived to be inexperienced and susceptible to influences. This section will discuss the portrayal of the young Roman emperors in line with Roman views of youth and guidance, drawing attention to the similarities and differences between contemporary works and later imperial histories and biographies. The extent to which these authors viewed the young emperors as accepting the guidance of their tutor or advisor affected whether they viewed the youth’s reign as good or bad. Moreover, an author’s view was influenced both by their experiences and their perception of imperial rule.

To begin with, contemporary court poetry and hortatory essays will be examined to illustrate the continuation of ideas in poetry and works of praise, and how these ideas were used in imperial histories and biographies. The portrayal of Nero’s reign reflects the positive outcomes of an honourable elder guiding a young emperor towards a virtuous life. According to all the literary sources that will be discussed, Rome prospered while Nero was influenced by the guidance of the philosopher and tutor Seneca. Interestingly, the historians and biographers depict this prosperity as

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\(^{19}\) Sall. *Iug.* 8.1.

\(^{20}\) Sall. *Iug.* 20; 25.7.

\(^{21}\) Sall. Cat. 3.3, 4.2; Sallust (*Cat.* 14.5) similarly describes Catiline’s corruption of youthful men whose *animi molles … et fluxi dolis haud difficulter capiebantur*.

\(^{22}\) Sall. Cat. 4.1: *igitur ubi animus ex multis miseriis atque periculis requievit*. This translation has been adapted from Handford’s edition.

something that was initially hoped for, but did not transpire. Poets and essayists, however, appear to view the young emperor’s acceptance of guidance with a sense of hope, rather than despair. The poet Calpurnius Siculus stresses that with Seneca’s guidance, the young emperor Nero will prosper throughout his reign.\textsuperscript{24} Eclogue Four in particular discusses the discourse of youth, through both the shepherds who sing of the young emperor and the new Golden Age, and by their patron Meliboeus. This character, believed by modern scholars to be associated with Nero’s tutor Seneca the Younger, is said to act as a literary supporter of the new youthful emperor:\textsuperscript{25}

> For long, Meliboeus, have I been pondering verses, those of no woodland but those which are able to sing of the Golden Age, and who sing to that very god who controls the nations and cities and toga-clad peace.\textsuperscript{26}

Acting as a mediator between the world of the poet and that of the emperor in Rome, Meliboeus/Seneca responds by saying that Apollo approves of this endeavour.\textsuperscript{27} As Nero was known to cast himself in the role of Apollo, it may be assumed that this character represents the young emperor.\textsuperscript{28} As part of Apollo/Nero’s inner circle, Meliboeus/Seneca is said to have set boundaries and carefully guided both the young poets and the youthful emperor.\textsuperscript{29} This same role is one that is reflected in Seneca’s own work, On Clemency, in which Nero is cast as the paragon of virtue. The philosopher states that he hopes ‘to act as a mirror’ to reveal Nero as a person ‘about to approach the greatest pleasure of all.’\textsuperscript{30} As Nero’s teacher and advisor, Seneca aims to teach him to reflect upon the role of the emperor, with the expectation that the young emperor will see himself from the perspective of another.\textsuperscript{31} In particular it is stressed that Seneca expects that Nero will not be motivated by anger (\textit{ira}), the impetuosity of youth (\textit{juvenilis impetus}) nor impulsiveness (\textit{temeritas}).\textsuperscript{32} Through the acceptance of the moral lessons of his tutor, it is hoped that Nero will be able to offset the natural

\textsuperscript{24} See M. Griffin (1976) for further discussion on Seneca’s role within Nero’s administration. It is essential to note that the dating of Calpurnius’ work has been debated. Champlin (1978) suggests that, although references to Nero cannot be excluded, an association with Alexander Severus is equally applicable. Mayer (1980) however re-emphasises the Neronian date. Nonetheless, despite the uncertainty of the date of composition, the central theme relating to a young emperor and his advisor remains clear and relevant.

\textsuperscript{25} Calp. \textit{Ecl.} 4, II.29-63. Much debate has been conducted over the identity of Calpurnius’ Meliboeus. It is possible that the character himself is purely fictional. However, popular speculation has focused on two possible figures: the nobleman C. Calpurnius Piso, and, most persistently, Seneca the Younger. Few clues are found in the \textit{Eclogues} to identify this character (cf. Mayer 2006: 459). The association between Meliboeus and Seneca is accepted for the purpose of this thesis (Schröder 1991: 29-34 provides the most detailed account of this debate).

\textsuperscript{26} Calp. \textit{Ecl.} 4, II.5-8: \textit{carmina iam dudum, non quae nemorale resultent, volvimus, o Meliboee; sed haec, quibus aurea possint saecula cantari, quibus et deus ipse canatur, qui populos urbesque regit pacemque togatam.}

\textsuperscript{27} Calp. \textit{Ecl.} 4, II.9-11.

\textsuperscript{28} Sen. \textit{Apocol.} 4; Manning 1975: 166-7; Shotter 2005: 39, 57-9.

\textsuperscript{29} Calp. \textit{Ecl.} 4, II.19-28. This idea that Nero will live up to the expectations of Rome, transcend the mortal world and become a god is similarly expressive in Lucan’s \textit{Civil War} (1.1-66).

\textsuperscript{30} Sen. \textit{De Clem.} 1.1: \ldots ut quodam modo speculi vice fungeret et te tibi ostenderem perventuram ad voluptatem maximam omnium.

\textsuperscript{31} Braund 2009: 105.

\textsuperscript{32} Sen. \textit{De Clem.} 1.2, 1.30.
impulsiveness attributed to his age.

These same ideas of guidance seen in contemporary works of praise manifest themselves in imperial histories and biographies, though the indiscretions of the emperor are not so easily forgiven and used to demonstrate a transition from hope to despair. As they did not have to concern themselves with pleasing Nero and aimed to critique his rule, the joy expressed at his accession and the surety that he would be guided in the right direction is only briefly mentioned. This uncertainty is used to set up the narrative for the turning point at which Nero would transform from a hopeful youth to a ruthless despot. According to Tacitus’ second century work the *Annals*, ‘gossip’ spread throughout Rome doubting Nero’s ability to rule, especially in wake of a Parthian rebellion: ‘…the question was asked, “How a prince who had barely passed his seventeenth birthday would be able to sustain or repel such a menace?”’

Tacitus, and later Dio, presented the hope that Seneca, in partnership with the praetorian prefect Burrus, would provide guidance and experience to the young emperor. Tacitus writes that these two men exercised ‘power in partnership’ (*in societate potentiae*) and shared an ‘equal but contrasting influence.’ As a military man, Burrus set a model of duty and traditional Roman *gravitas*. Contrastingly, Seneca provide an example of a wise politician, who possessed eloquence and intelligence. They thus provided a balance of influences to ensure that Nero would be managed within the boundaries of reason.

Tacitus’ opinion on this matter is particularly evident in the first two chapters of Book 13, where he notes that, at his accession, Nero was scarcely out of childhood and these dangerous years were only minimized by the guidance of Burrus and Seneca. Moreover, in Chapter 6, Tacitus writes of an alleged debate over Nero’s capability to oversee the war against the Parthians. These instances in which Nero’s youth is not automatically presented in a negative manner, but with slight ambivalence, further alludes to the dual nature of Nero’s reign: the positive aspects come from the period in which the youthful emperor was well-advised, principally by Seneca. The negative derives from the latter half of his rule when he was susceptible to the negative influences of ambitious men. In accordance

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33 Tac. *Ann.*, 13.6.1: *igitur in urbe sermonum auida, quem ad modum princeps vix septemdecim annos egressus suscipere eam molem aut propulsare posset…*

34 Tac. *Ann.*, 13.2.1; cf. Dio, 61.4.1; Roper 1979: 348; Barrett 1996: 156-7. Interestingly Seneca does not play a large role in Suetonius’ *Life of Nero*. He is only briefly mentioned at 7.1 of the *Life* at which point Suetonius associates the young Nero with Caligula. Instead, Agrippina is associated with advising, or micro-managing, her son (9-10). This suggests that Suetonius saw Agrippina as the power behind the throne, and, perhaps, sought to associate Nero’s eventual downfall with her overbearing nature.


36 Tac. *Ann.* 13.2.2; Dio 61.3.

37 Tac. *Ann.* 13.1.2; 13.2.1; 13.2.2.


with this, the historian emphasises the year 62, the year of Burrus’ death and Seneca’s request to retire, as a decisive turning point in Nero’s reign.\textsuperscript{40} The contrast between the less depraved events prior to Burrus’ death and Seneca’s retirement, and the aftermath of Nero’s sole reign appears to shift the emphasis of the later narrative from his imperial advisors to the emperor himself.

In particular, Tacitus refers to the dangers of unguided youth, along with the corrupt nature of the emperor himself, through Seneca’s final conversation with Nero.\textsuperscript{41} This conversation is intended to put forward the question as to whether Nero is capable of using wisdom and moderation, traits of a virtuous emperor, throughout his reign. Tacitus records Seneca as saying that Nero possesses strength and had learnt how to exercise power.\textsuperscript{42} However, the historian, true to his use of innuendo, twists the direction of the dialogue when noting the young emperor’s response.\textsuperscript{43} Rather than accepting Seneca’s argument, Nero comments on the uncertain path of youth and that he is still in need of the philosopher’s guidance. Nero considers this to be a particularly slippery (\textit{lubricum}) time for him and states that he has only ‘[tread] the threshold of empire’.\textsuperscript{44} The former term is used earlier when Tacitus writes of Burrus and Seneca’s attempts to govern the imperial youth: ‘strove alike to confine the frailty (\textit{lubricam}) of the emperor’s youth’.\textsuperscript{45} This connection between what the imperial guardians attempted to do and what Tacitus has Nero state clearly stresses the fear that the young emperor will slip from the virtuous path. Thus, Tacitus carefully sows these statements of uncertainty with reminders and foreshadowing in order to focus the reader’s attention on the conclusion favoured by Tacitus – that young emperors, such as Nero, did not possess the experience or ability for logical thought to successfully run the Empire. Accordingly, the young emperor still required the guidance of prominent and honourable men, particularly of elite Romans such as Seneca.

This perception of an elite Roman male as the ideal advisor to a young emperor continued into the late empire. The \textit{Historia Augusta}’s account of Gordian III’s reign is a valuable example, as this fourth-century text frequently stresses the problems associated with a young ruler. This likely arose from the author’s knowledge of child emperors and manipulative advisors, as is discussed in section IV below. As such, the \textit{Historia Augusta}’s positive perception of Gordian’s reign under a mature and virtuous Roman, the praetorian prefect Timesitheus, is particularly interesting. Gordian was thirteen-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{40} Tac. Ann. 14.52.1, 57.1.
\item\textsuperscript{41} Tac. Ann. 14.56.1.
\item\textsuperscript{42} Tac. Ann. 14.54.
\item\textsuperscript{43} Sullivan (1976) provides an in-depth analysis of Tacitus’ use of innuendo throughout the \textit{Histories, Annals,} and the \textit{Agricola.} In summary, Sullivan (1976: 313) states that Tacitus uses grammatical devices, distortion of facts, and the ambiguous nature of events in order to express doubt and ‘imply a preference between alternative explanations’.
\item\textsuperscript{44} Tac. Ann. 14.56: \textit{et nos prima imperii spatia ingredimur.}
\item\textsuperscript{45} Tac. Ann. 13.2: \textit{quo favilius lubricam principis aetatem.}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
years-old when he ascended to the throne. At the time, he was the youngest sole emperor in the history of the Roman Empire. It is the *Historia Augusta*’s view that the young emperor enjoyed a noble reputation in all but his age:

The youth was happy, handsome, amiable, pleasing to all, joyful in life, noble in learning, certainly so that nothing was wanting except his age for the empire. He was loved by the people, the senate, and the military, before Philip’s insurrection, like no other emperor.

The years from 240 until 243 best illustrate the positive influence an elite Roman male had on young Gordian. According to the *Historia Augusta*, Gordian ruled as a figurehead on account of his youth, with administrative and military affairs allegedly placed in the hands of his mother’s eunuchs who ‘arranged[d] all things for money.’ However, in late 240, power passed into the hands of Timesitheus, Gordian’s father-in-law and praetorian prefect. In this position, Timesitheus is said to have guided the young emperor ‘faultlessly and diligently’. Little more is known of the influence that Timesitheus had on the young emperor. However, the *Historia Augusta* does provide a set of letters allegedly written to the young Gordian and in reply to Timesitheus. It is important to note that the *Historia Augusta* created these letters for the purpose of the narrative. Moreover, the author’s perception of the relationship between the young emperor and his praetorian prefect is clearly influenced by the fourth-century context, namely the aversion to young emperors and their susceptibility to negative influences:

From the Emperor Gordian Augustus to Timesitheus … I have learned from suggestions by you, who are incorruptible, what I could not know by myself. … My father, I should like you to hear a true thing: wretched is an emperor before whom men do not speak out the truth, for since he himself cannot walk out among the people he can only hear things, and then believe either what he has heard or what the majority have corroborated.

This passage provides an insight into how the *Historia Augusta* perceived Gordian’s reign and the guidance of his Praetorian Prefect. Despite the author’s aversion to child emperors, he appears to believe that a young emperor can be a good emperor, provided that good guidance is given by an

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47 SHA. Gord. 31.4-5: *fuit iuvenis laetus, pulcher, amabilis, gratus omnibus, in vita iucundus, in litteris nobilis, prorsus ut nihil praeter aetatem deesset imperio. amatus est a populo et senatu et militibus ante Philippi factionem ita ut nemo principum.
48 SHA. Gord. 24.2: *omnia vendebantur…*
49 SHA. Gord. 24.1: *emendatius ac diligentius*. This translation has been adapted from Magie’s edition.
50 Cf. SHA. Gord. 24.2-5.
51 SHA. Gord. 25.1-4: *Imperator Gordianus Augustus Misitheo … quod te insimuante, qui nihil vendis, didici ea quae inclusus scire non poteram. … mi pater, veram audias velim: miser est imperator apud quem vera reticentur, qui cum ipse publice ambulare non possit, necesse est ut audiat et vel audita vel a plurimis roborata confirmet.*
acceptable tutor. As such the counsel of Timesitheus, a virtuous man according to the *Historia Augusta*, was viewed as bettering the young ruler.\(^{52}\) Rather than being a simple invention by the author of the *Historia Augusta*, these stories serve to exaggerate the concerns and anxieties associated with a young emperor. Thus, the focus was placed on a desire to teach the youth the importance of using reason and sound judgement to control their natural impulses. Although the belief in whether the guidance of a young emperor would be successful differed between contemporary court poetry and hortatory essays, and imperial histories and biographies, the perception that an older Roman male could moderate a young emperor’s impulses remained the same.

**IV. When Things Go Wrong: Resisting Good Advice**

There is no doubt that it was easier to direct a passive youth towards a virtuous path.\(^{53}\) However, the extent to which the youthful emperors accepted guidance became a governing force in the way in which advisors were portrayed. Both Caligula and Commodus are portrayed as eventually resisting the guidance offered to them. After the young emperors reject good counsel, imperial histories and biographies cast their reigns in a more negative light. Consequently, their acceptance of guidance and eventual resistance is used as the distinguishing factors between the early years and a latter period of tyranny.

In both Suetonius and Dio’s accounts of Caligula’s reign, a small section is dedicated to the good deeds done by the emperor, suggesting that Caligula’s principate was not entirely incompetent.\(^{54}\) Thus, the early and more favourable actions of Caligula’s principate may be seen as being the result of the guidance the young emperor received from the praetorian prefect Naevius Sutorius Macro. The importance of Macro’s role is certainly highlighted within the histories and biographies, beginning with the lead up to Caligula’s succession and into the early period of his reign.\(^{55}\) Tacitus briefly comments on Macro’s position in the *Annals*, stating that ‘[Caligula] Caesar, who had hardly completed his boyhood, was thoroughly ignorant and bred under the vilest training, would enter on a better course with Macro for his guide…’\(^{56}\)

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\(^{52}\) Cf. SHA. *Gord.* 25.2.

\(^{53}\) This same principle applies to the youthful emperors. McEvoy (2013: 309) notes the importance of this concept in the late Empire, stating that ‘the essential obstacle of how to cope with the progression of the child-emperor’s age endured. As long as Honorius was content to remain passive, the situation was still workable’.

\(^{54}\) Suet. *Cal.* 15.4-16.4; Dio. 59.9.4-7. It is important to note that Tacitus’ account of Caligula’s reign no longer survives (Lindsay 1993: 80, 107); cf. Wardle (1994: 20-1) and Lindsay (1993: 21) for analysis of the *species*.


\(^{56}\) Tac. *Ann.* 6.48.1: *G. Caesarem vix finita pueritia, ignorant omnium aut pessimis innutritum, meliora capessiturum Macrone duce*...
The most detailed source for this, however, is the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, whose account, although likely exaggerated, owes a great deal to personal experiences. Though Philo is not one of the primary historians or biographers this thesis focuses on, his work, On the Embassy to Gaius, shows the same themes regarding the perceived need for a good guardian and the problems that arise when this advice is rejected. Early on in this work, Philo portrays the emperor at a time when he was beginning to throw off the restraints his guardians placed on him. The philosopher attributes the positive aspects of Caligula’s reign to Macro, stating that the praetorian prefect mentored the young emperor, gave honest advice, restrained the youth’s excessive behaviour in public, and even scrutinised him on his etiquette. Of Macro’s actions, Philo writes that ‘[Macro] kept impressing suggestions of this kind into his [Caligula’s] ears in the hope of improving [him].’

Most notably, in an attempt to advise Caligula not to make hasty actions, a quality typically associated with youth, Philo has Macro instruct the young emperor on how he is expected to behave:

But the most suitable gift for a ruler to give is to adopt wise counsels with respect to those who are subject to his authority, and to execute intentions which have been rightly formed, and to bestow on them good things without any limitation, with a liberal hand and mind, except such as it may be better to keep in reserve from a prudent foreknowledge of the uncertainty of the future.

Philo presents Macro as the older advisor, correcting Caligula’s behaviour whenever he feels it is unbefitting an emperor. It is clear that this sentiment is Philo’s, as this speech serves as an extended version of Philo’s own view of Roman society. The emperor is the most important link in society, and ‘ought rather to surpass all other men in every action of [his] life, as much as [he] surpass them in good fortune.’ Despite Macro’s efforts, Caligula was said to have resisted all attempts to restrain his licentious behaviour, allegedly crying out τολμά τις διδάσκει; (‘who dares teach me?’). Following Macro’s speech, Philo writes that Caligula responded by stating that he believed himself to have inherited the knowledge and power required to govern the Empire. At section 52 Caligula argues that at his age, and because of his imperial heritage, he possessed the good sense to rule without an advisor. This exchange clearly presents the typical troubles associated with the uncertainty of

58 Philo Leg. 7.43-52; Barrett 1989: 78.
59 Philo Leg. 8.52: οἱούτοις κατεπῆδεν ὁ δυστυχής, ὡσε βελτιώσα τὸν Γάιον
60 Philo Leg. 7.43-51: ἄρχοντι δὲ ὁκειότατος ἔρασιν, βουλῆς ἀγαθῆς εἰσηγήσαται περὶ τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων καὶ πράττειν τὰ βουλευθέντα ὀρθῶς καὶ ἀπαρίστητα προφέρειν τὰ ἀγαθὰ πλοῦσις χειρὶ καὶ γνώμῃ, πλῆν ὅσα κατὰ πρόνοιαν τῆς εἰς τὸ μέλλον διδάδειντο ἄξον παραφυλάττειν.
62 Philo Leg. 43: ἄλλα προφέρειν ἂν τοιοῦτον ἐν ἔκάστῳ τῶν περὶ τὸν βίον, ἢρ’ ὅσον καὶ ταῖς εὐτυχίαις διενήνοχας
63 Philo Leg. 8.56; Barrett 1989: 78.
64 Philo Leg. 8.52-53.
65 Philo Leg. 8.52-53.
youth and any attempts to guide the young Roman. Ultimately Philo believes that Caligula’s reign was only initially successful because of Macro’s advice, as from this point on Caligula turns away from Macro’s guidance.\textsuperscript{66} It is only after the Praetorian Prefect’s suicide that Caligula is presented as a power-hungry, debauched tyrant.

Unlike Caligula, the perception of Commodus’ resistance to guidance is not based on the rejection of all advice. Rather, it is his dismissal of reliable advisors and acceptance of advice from inappropriate guardians. Dio states that upon the death of Marcus Aurelius, Commodus inherited from his father a circle of reliable advisors who possessed considerable experience between them.\textsuperscript{67} However, not long after Commodus is said to have killed all of his father’s advisors and withdrawn almost entirely from the government, leaving the empire to be governed by others.\textsuperscript{68} For the most part, much attention has been given to two individuals: the praetorian prefect Sex. Tigidius Perennis, and freedman M. Aurelius Cleander. Appointed during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Perennis came to occupy the position of praetorian prefect following the execution of the incumbent prefect Paternus. Differing accounts as to the nature of his influence on Commodus are provided by Dio and the \textit{Historia Augusta}. Dio presents Perennis as a capable administrator, whose only fault was his role in the undoing of his colleague Paternus:

\begin{quote}
For privately he never strove in the least for either fame or wealth, but lived a most incorruptible and temperate life; and as for Commodus and his imperial office, he guarded them in complete security.\textsuperscript{69}
\end{quote}

A considerably different image arises when reading the \textit{Historia Augusta}. According to this work, Perennis was not quite as honourable as Dio makes out. Rather the praetorian prefect ‘assumed all burdens of government.’\textsuperscript{70} Little more is said specifically of the influence Perennis had on young Commodus, except to say that it was, overall, negative. The \textit{Historia Augusta}, influenced by the author’s overall perception of young emperors, goes into considerable detail of the behaviour now shown by the young, unrestrained emperor as a result of Perennis’ encouragement.\textsuperscript{71} Additionally, the \textit{Historia Augusta} states that in guiding the young emperor towards this behaviour, Perennis was aiming for the imperial throne: ‘For Perennis, being well acquainted with Commodus’ character, discovered the way to make himself powerful, namely, by persuading Commodus to devote himself

\begin{footnotes}
\item[66] Philo. \textit{Leg}. 8.59-60.
\item[67] Dio. 73.2.
\item[68] Dio. 73.9.1; Herodian. 1.8.1; SHA. \textit{Comm}. 5.1-3.
\item[69] Dio. 73.10.1: ἵδι μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲν πόσποτε ὅπῃ πρὸς δόξην ὅπῃ πρὸς πλούτον περιμβάλετο, ἄλλα καὶ ἄδωρότατα καὶ σωφρονέστατα διήγαγε, τοῦ δὲ Κομμόδου καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῦ πᾶσαν ἄσφαλειαν ἐποιεῖτο.
\item[70] SHA. \textit{Comm}. 5.3, 6,13: \textit{idem vero Perennis curis incumbet}; Herodian. 1.8.2.
\item[71] SHA. \textit{Comm}. 5.1.
\end{footnotes}
to pleasure ... by this time Perennis had secured all the power for himself. Clearly Perennis was perceived as a negative influence on the young emperor, and, compared to the illustrious senatorial advisors left to him by his father, Perennis was an inappropriate figure.

This thought extended to Cleander who, upon Perennis’ death, replaced the Praetorian Prefect in influence. An imperial freedman of Marcus Aurelius, Cleander quickly gained favour with Commodus, being raised to ‘so exalted a station.’ Hekster writes that Cleander’s position was undeniably powerful; what this position actually involved, however, is less certain. Dio comments that Cleander was greedy and ambitious, and sold ‘all privileges, and indulg[ed] in wantonness and debauchery,’ while the Historia Augusta comments that he ‘sold everything for money.’ These sorts of accusations bring to mind the traditional Roman tyrant who is renowned for appointing corrupt men as advisors. And, certainly, Commodus’ behaviour, influenced by Cleander, was more atrocious than previously under Perennis. But what Commodus’ relationship with his bad advisors adds to this tyrannical characterisation is his impetuous behaviour and intent to neglect the empire. Influenced by Cleander, Commodus ‘devoted most of his life to ease and to horses and to combats of wild beasts and of men.’ While Sidebottom is referring only to Herodian, he aptly comments on the use of the young emperor’s advisors and the stereotypical characteristics of a tyrant: ‘[the author’s] depiction of Commodus as a man of promise (cf. 1.7.1) who was progressively corrupted by external circumstances playing upon his youth is more psychologically interesting than a picture of an out-and-out tyrant.’ That said, it was ultimately Commodus’ rejection of the good senatorial advisors provided by his father which allowed this bad advisor to corrupt the young emperor.

In the reigns of all these young emperors, there was often a sense of hope that the young emperor would outgrow such conduct. This belief of the nature of youth extended back to the Roman Republic, with the idea that ‘boys will be boys’ often used to excuse any youthful dalliances. Cicero, in a defence speech, responds to charges against the young Caelius by stating that he has the ‘excuse … of youth’ for, like any young man, Caelius had indeed misbehaved but that he was by nature a good man. He goes on to state that it is the ‘common consent of all men [that] some indulgence is given

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72 SHA. Comm. 5.2-5: Perennis autem Commodi persciens invenit quem ad modum ipse potens esset. nam persuasit Commodo, ut ipse deliciis vacaret, ... tunc tamen Perennis cuncta sibimet vindicavit; Herodian 1.9.1.
73 Dio 73.13.1.
74 Dio 73.10.2; Hekster 2002: 68; Herodian 1.12.3-4.
75 Dio 73.10.2. Κόμμοδος δὲ τὸ πλέοντος τοῦ βίου περί τε τὰς ῥαστώνας καὶ τούς ἄπως περί τε τὰς μάχας τῶν τε θηρίων καὶ τῶν ἄνδρῶν εἶχον; SHA. Comm. 6.10: omnia Cleander pecunia venditabat.
76 Hekster 2002: 67-9; SHA. Comm. 6.5.
77 Dio 73.10.2.
78 Sidebottom 1997b: 2807.
79 Laes and Strubbe 2014: 159.
80 Cic. Cael. 1.2: excusationem ... aetatis.
to this age. Seneca the Elder also has a youth in his *Controversiae* acknowledge this practice, which suggests that this was a belief held by him:

> I am enjoying the pastimes permissible at my age … I am doing what my father did when he was a youth. Will he deny it? I began at a good age; as soon as I have gone through this first and almost obligatory trial of youth, I will return to the good ways.

This perception may have influenced the way Dio viewed Commodus’ actions. Writing shortly after the events following Commodus’ succession as sole emperor, Dio’s *Roman History* was very much a ‘reaction to the world in which he lived.’ In much the same way as the historian attempts to find greater reason in the outcome of significant events, Dio relates how the reigns of these young emperors relate to the political anarchy of their time. Accordingly, Commodus is the naïve and impetuous young ruler who, on account of his age, refuses the advice of his father’s best men, and is susceptible to the wicked influences of ambitious men. This is particularly emphasised by the dichotomy between the ‘good’ senators and the ‘bad’ advisors to the incapable youth.

In the case of the *Historia Augusta*, the perception of youth as a malleable stage of life, highlighted by Commodus’ rejection of advice, provides the majority of the author’s motivation for the denigration of the young emperors. One of the most lengthy and telling critiques of youthful emperors comes from the *Life of Tacitus*. In this passage Maecius Faltonius Nicomachus, a fictitious senator, delivers a speech in which he begs the elderly emperor Tacitus not to let his fictitious young sons succeed him, while contrasting the ability of past young emperors against those of a more mature age:

> For instance, if you wish to consider those monsters of old, your Nerones, I mean, or Elagabali, or Commodi – or rather the Incommodi – their vices would certainly be found to be no more of the men themselves but of their youth. May the gods prevent a boy to be called prince and a beardless boy ‘Father of the Country’, whose hand a schoolmaster must guide for the signing of his name…

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81 Cic. Cael. 12.28, 18: *datur enim concessu omnium huic aliqui ludus aetati…*
82 Sen. Contr. 2.6.11: *concessis aetati iocis utor … id facio quod pater meus fecit cum iuvenis esset. Negabit? Bona ego aetate coepi; simul primum hoc tirocinium adulescentiae quasi debitum ac sollemne persolvero, revertar ad bonos mores.* This translation has been adapted from Winterbottom’s edition.
84 Kemezis 2014: 87.
85 Positive senatorial advisors: Dio 73.1.2, 73.5, 73.8.6, 73.11.1-2, 73.20.1; Bad advisors: Dio 73.1.1, 73.10.2, 73.12. I owe these references to Hekster 2002: 5; Gowing 1997: 2565-6.
86 The motif of young emperors first appears in the *Life of Marcus Aurelius* in which it is stated that Hadrian passed over Marcus Aurelius in selecting a successor because of his young age (SHA. Marc. 5.1).
87 Cf. SHA. Tacit. 3.6.2-3; 3.6.8; Eyben 1993: 68.
88 SHA. Tacit. 6.4-5: *enimvero si recolere vellitis vetusta illa prodigia, Nerones dico et Heliogabalos et Commodos, seu potius semper Incommodos, certe non hominum magis vita illa quam aetatum fuerunt. di avertant principes pueros et
This passage is an excellent example of the *Historia Augusta*’s utter dismissal of the capability of a youth to run the empire, and the author’s dislike of those who guided them.\(^{89}\) Further, the section following this passage is equally revealing. In this, the fictitious senator lists the numerous vices of a youthful ruler, stressing particularly an emperor ‘who stands in dread of a guardian, before finally calling for the people to “rejoice that we have an elder emperor.”\(^{90}\) This is perhaps a reflection of the troubles that arose during the fourth century, the period in which the *Historia Augusta* is said to have written his narrative.\(^{91}\) During this period, stability of the imperial power was unpredictable.\(^{92}\) Of the greatest importance to this thesis, however, is the prevalence of the accession of child-emperors. With this phenomenon came the danger of entrusting power to those who possessed influence over the young rulers.\(^{93}\) Such instances included Justina, mother to Valentinian II, the advisors of the young Arcadius, Rufinus and Eutropius, or the poet Ausonius who tutored a young Gratian.\(^{94}\) To the *Historia Augusta*, such young rulers are always under the control of a tutor or advisor, and for every good mentor (such as Timesitheus), there is a bad advisor eager to manipulate the young emperor. As such, in the *Historia Augusta*, Commodus’ failings are quite explicitly attributed to obtaining power too early, his rejection of his good advisors and his susceptibility to bad advisors.\(^{95}\)

Thus, there were two different ways which a young emperor and his advisors could be portrayed. We have focussed on specific case studies showing these two choices: the guidance of a good Roman and willingness to be moderate (the reign of Gordian III under the guidance of Timesitheus as portrayed by the *Historia Augusta*, and the first half of Nero’s reign under the direction of Seneca), and rejection of advice (the second half of Caligula’s reign, Nero’s reign, and Commodus’ principate when the advice of good men is rejected). Moderation leads to a better chance of a smooth and successful transition into adulthood, a wise and just principate, and maturity. On the other hand, rejection of advice leads to perpetual adolescence, and negative rule.

\(^{89}\) Cf. section III in which the *Historia Augusta* praises positive, strong guardians like Timesitheus advising willing youths like Gordian III; Hartke 1951: 191-4.

\(^{90}\) SHA. *Tacit*. 7: *magis gratulemur quod habemus principem senem...* This translation has been adapted from Magie’s edition.


\(^{92}\) The crisis of the third century introduced a period of political instability that continued into the fourth century in the Eastern Empire and even longer in the West (cf. Legutko 2005 and Alföldy 1974); Cameron 1993: 102.

\(^{93}\) McEvoy 2013: 135-186; Cameron 2011: 750-3.

\(^{94}\) Cameron, Long and Sherry 1993: 102, 143-198: The western court poet Claudian intensely criticises the influences these men had over the young Arcadius (*Claud. In Eutr.*; *Stil.* 2.79-82).

\(^{95}\) SHA. *Comm*. 2.6-9, 3; SHA. *Sept*. 21.4-6.
V. Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don’t: Women as ‘Bad’ Advisors

A common theme is the influence imperial women had on the impressionable young emperors. While it is true that the wives of emperors, both young and old, are depicted in advisory roles and often said to hold power over the emperor, it is the influence of the emperor’s mother or grandmother that is associated with the young emperors. Ultimately, many of the young emperors were perceived to be under the influence of their female relatives, and it is this alleged domination by their mother that was most damning to the emperors’ portrait. This section will focus on the way in which historians and biographers depict the influence the mothers and grandmothers of the emperors.

A common theme among historians and biographers is that inexperience and the development of a licentious nature impacted greatly on the young emperors’ ability to successfully rule. This not only resulted from their youthful nature, but also from their reliance on imperial females to guide them. A number of the young emperors’ reigns, including Nero, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, were viewed as being controlled by female relatives, particularly their mothers. Each of these young emperors reacted differently to their mothers’ and, in the case of Alexander, their grandmother’s advice. Both contemporary writers, such as Dio and Herodian, and non-contemporary works, such as the Historia Augusta, portray Alexander as a passive emperor, a characteristic perceived as a detrimental vice. Nero, Caracalla and Elagabalus, however, were unruly in their behaviour, and thus were less prone to listen to any guidance offered by the imperial women. While these young emperors are certainly held to account for their licentious and boisterous behaviour, the imperial women present in their lives are typically subject to scrutiny for the counsel they provided to the youthful rulers. Ultimately a woman seeking power for themselves through their imperial son would not amount to a good advisor in the opinion of historians and biographers no matter the quality of their counsel.

The perception of Nero’s mother Agrippina Minor guiding her young son in imperial duties is consistently negative in works from the first until the fourth century. In wake of the death of her husband, the emperor Claudius, in 54 Agrippina entered into an advisory role to her 16-year-old son Nero. Her role in advising Nero lasted until her murder in 59, and is said to have been a main reason for this period being referred to in later years as the Quinquennium Neronis. While Tacitus lists few specific details as to the political power exercised by Agrippina, Suetonius and Dio claim that, early in his reign, Nero left all public and private matters in the hands of his mother. While this is likely an exaggeration, it does suggest that, as far as Suetonius and Dio were concerned, the young emperor

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96 Dio 61.3.2.
98 Tac. Ann. 2.37.3, 13.5.2; Suet. Nero. 9; Dio 61.3.1
was heavily dependent on his mother.\textsuperscript{99} Passages 3 and 4 of book 61 of Dio’s \textit{Roman History} is particularly interesting, as it highlights the principal issue with Agrippina’s governance of the young emperor Nero. While Agrippina may have possessed the skill and capability to administer the empire, she lacked the ability to advise her son as emperor.\textsuperscript{100} Agrippina is described in a similar manner in the play \textit{Octavia}, dated to the period of the Flavian dynasty, in which the author states that the mother of the Emperor was ‘striving for personal sovereignty’ (\textit{regnum petens}) and was ‘dar[ing] to reach for control of a sacred world’, the ‘sacred world’ being a role which should be occupied by the most deserving man.\textsuperscript{101} This ambition may have been perceived to have led to the eventual end of the \textit{Quinquennium Neronis}. After all, Nero was a young man, and it would have been expected that he would want to show that he was capable of independently ruling.

Tacitus also exploits the theme of the negative impact on the young emperors resulting from their mothers’ counsel. True to his style, Tacitus uses a number of unique words to create a portrait of each individual, applying them repeatedly in order to influence his audience into accepting the image presented.\textsuperscript{102} This approach is frequently used in his account of Nero’s reign, though it is the young emperor’s youth and reliance on advisors that is emphasised.\textsuperscript{103} As Barrett notes, Tacitus was particularly hostile towards ambitious imperial women.\textsuperscript{104} In regards to Nero and his advisors, Tacitus aimed to emphasise what he saw as a serious problem regarding the power held by imperial women. By exercising power through her son, Agrippina was thought to be interfering with the traditional Roman political system.\textsuperscript{105} This disrespect and immoral nature was highlighted by Tacitus’ accusations of ‘masculine despotism’ (\textit{virile servitium}), an insatiable greed for money, and that she would go to any lengths in order to gain power.\textsuperscript{106} Furthermore, Tacitus refers to Agrippina as \textit{trux} and \textit{minax} (‘grim’ and ‘menacing’) in her management of Nero certainly suggests that these authors viewed this constant reminder of Nero’s immaturity and reliance on his mother as a primary cause of

\textsuperscript{99} Tacitus’s \textit{Annals} provide few specific details as to the power held by Agrippina (Barrett 1996: 158).
\textsuperscript{100} Dio 61.3.3-4; Barrett 1996: 160.
\textsuperscript{102} Tacitus in particular favoured language which Dunkle (1971) suggests are those of the stock tyrant of declamations. These attributes include \textit{saeavitia, crudelitas, avaritia, vis, superbia} and \textit{libido}. He notes that these terms were most often applied to describe the reigns of Tiberius, Nero, Galba and Domitian.
\textsuperscript{103} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.1.1: \textit{pueritiam egresso Neroni} (Nero, scarcely out of his childhood); 13.2.1: \textit{imperatoriae iuventae … lubricam principis aetatem} (imperial youth … the dangerous age of the emperor); 13.3.3: \textit{puerilibus … annis egressus} (an emperor who was barely seventeen years old); 13.13.1: \textit{adulescentis cupidines … prima aetas} (the desires of a youth). Tacitus frequently establishes in the \textit{Annals} his dislike of youth gaining power too early. Book 1 is particularly illustrative of this: 1.3.1 (\textit{Claudium Marcellum … admodum adulescentem pontificatu}); 1.3.3 (\textit{Gauium ac Lucium … neodium posita puerili praetexta … destinari consules}). In none of these instances is youth presented as a positive trait; Sullivan 1976: 317.
\textsuperscript{104} Barrett 1996: 205. According to Barrett, ‘the main problem is not Tacitus’ general view of women but his assessment of a particular class of women, those who sought to participate in the political process.’ (1996: 206).
\textsuperscript{105} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 12.7.1.
\textsuperscript{106} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 12.7: \textit{cupido auri immensa obtentum habebat, quasi subsidium regno pararetur.}
his resentment of Agrippina’s counsel.\textsuperscript{107} The reduction of Agrippina to this stereotype highlights Tacitus’ disdain for such a woman controlling Nero.\textsuperscript{108} Tacitus, after all, pursued a moralising agenda throughout his history. Thus, by portraying her in this manner, Tacitus aimed to make a mockery of Agrippina’s influence and desire for power, while underlying what he saw as a serious problem regarding the power that these early imperial women held. Dio similarly suggests that such controlling behaviour drove the young emperor further into the influence of Seneca, an advisor preferred by the historian.\textsuperscript{109} The historian is particularly hostile towards Agrippina, especially when compared to his depictions of the Severan women, discussed below. Ultimately, Dio views Agrippina as power-hungry. It is likely that this perception arose in order to contrast the impact Agrippina had on her son with that of Nero’s elite male advisor Seneca.\textsuperscript{110} In taking control of the empire and micro-managing her son, Agrippina created a situation in which the young emperor’s vices began to surface and eventually dominated his character.\textsuperscript{111} This falls in line with Dio’s belief that one’s vices could not arise unaided – encouragement was needed from those close to the individual.\textsuperscript{112}

Turning to the Severan women, we see variations in how they are portrayed in the historical sources. These are largely dependent on the aim of the author, and the role they believe the women played in each young emperor’s reign. Julia Domna’s role in Caracalla’s reign differs from Agrippina’s, and even the other Severan women discussed below. Though she is not presented as a shining example of female counsel, she is likewise not characterised as a dominating figure intent on ruling through her son. She is scarcely mentioned in the \textit{Historia Augusta’s} narrative, and only plays a small role in Herodian’s. However, Domna is a key character in Dio’s account of Caracalla’s reign. In this work, Dio appears supportive of Julia’s role in the administration of Caracalla. In this way, he is careful to distance Domna from the condemnation of Caracalla despite her alleged advisory position. However, Dio does leave the impression that Domna possessed influence over her youthful son, and thus equates her with the likes of the remaining Severan women.

Dio states that Domna’s role was equivalent to that of the \textit{ab epistulis Latinis et Graecis}, and that she ‘gave much excellent advice’ to her son, the emperor.\textsuperscript{113} In addition, Dio writes that Domna played

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{107} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 12.64.5, 13.6.2; Ginsburg 2005: 244.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.13.1; Ginsburg 2005: 245.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Dio 61.7.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Gowing 1972: 2565.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Dio (61.7) describes how Agrippina tried to control many aspects of Nero’s life, including his friends and lovers.
\item \textsuperscript{112} The belief that one needed to guard against the influences of others is similarly seen in Dio’s (72.1) account of Commodus. The young emperor was not ‘naturally wicked’ (πανούργος μὲν οὐκ ἔφη). Such behavior only arose as he became the ‘slave of his companions’ (ἐδοτέλεσε τοῖς ἑπαρκοῦσι).
\item \textsuperscript{113} Dio. 78.18.2: καὶ κατὶ τὴν τῶν βιβλίων τῶν τε ἐπιστολῶν ἔκατέρθην, πλὴν τῶν πάνω ἀναγκαῖων…; Scott 2008: 191.
\end{itemize}
some role in managing the finances of the empire,¹¹⁴ and that her name was used, along with the name of Caracalla, in official correspondence with the Senate and the army.¹¹⁵ In recording these positions Domna is alleged to have held, Dio interestingly stresses that she did occupy a politically significant role, while still making sure to distance Domna from Caracalla’s administration.¹¹⁶ Creating opposition between mother and son, the former as advisor to the latter, largely achieved this. In Dio’s opinion, many poor administrative decisions were made under Caracalla’s rule. The historian chose to place blame on Caracalla rather than Domna by stating that ‘[n]either in these [administrative] matters nor in any others did he heed his mother, who gave him much excellent advice.’¹¹⁷ Caracalla blatantly ignored this advice, and so, to Dio, Domna was not to blame for any failings. In this way, Dio is presenting Domna in the same way as Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, discussed in section II. Rather than ruling through her son, as the other Severan women do, she is acting as more of an official to the emperor and, thus, only offering advice where needed. In this way, this perception of Domna does suggest that Dio intended to criticise Caracalla’s need for an advisor, and rejection of positive advice.¹¹⁸

The young emperors Elagabalus and Alexander, the last of the Severan dynasty, were approximately 14 and 13 years old respectively when they came to the throne.¹¹⁹ While these two emperors may be seen as representing the two types of youth, licentious and restrained respectively, they both are recorded as being controlled by other parties. These are Julia Maesa (grandmother of both Elagabalus and Alexander), Julia Mamaea (mother of Alexander), and Julia Soaemias (mother of Elagabalus). Numerous reasons are given by ancient writers as to why Elagabalus was unfit to rule.¹²⁰ Along with his frivolous nature and favouritism shown towards certain individuals, Elagabalus’ dependence on others and inability to make judgements on his own were equally detrimental to his character.¹²¹ For instance, Dio stresses only Maesa’s attempts to advise Elagabalus when discussing his rejection of her guidance.¹²² Mamaea is similarly represented, with any actions taken early in Alexander’s reign being praised.¹²³ Soaemias takes more of a background role in advising Elagabalus, though she is presented in a slightly more negative light. For while her influence is hardly acknowledged by Dio, he does make a point of criticising Soaemias for encouraging Elagabalus in his ‘barbaric chants’

¹¹⁴ Dio 77.10.4; Levick 2007: 96-7.
¹¹⁵ Dio 77.18.2.
¹¹⁷ Dio. 78.18.2: οὐδὲ ἐπιθύμητο οὔτε περὶ τούτων οὔτε περὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῇ μητρὶ πολλά καὶ χρηστὰ παραινώσῃ...
¹¹⁹ Kienast 2004: 172, 177
¹²⁰ Cf. Dio. 80.5.4; 16.7; Icks 2011: 103.
¹²¹ Cf. Herodian 5.5.1-7.1.
¹²² Dio 79.15.4.
¹²³ Zonar. 12.15.
(βαρβαρικὰς φόδας) to the god Heliogabalus. Dio’s language suggests that he did not approve of Elagabalus flaunting these oriental practices, and this disapproval certainly was projected onto his mother’s support. Accordingly, while Dio does not write extensively on Soaemias’ influence over Elagabalus, she is portrayed as negatively guiding the young emperor.

The Historia Augusta likewise presents Elagabalus as being controlled by his mother and grandmother. This work alleges that the emperor conducted no business without Julia Soaemias’ consent, going so far as to allow her to ‘attend the senate like a man, just as though she belonged to the senatorial order.’ Additionally, Elagabalus is said to have taken Julia Maesa with him whenever he travelled to the Senate-house or praetorian camp ‘in order that through her prestige he might get greater respect – for by himself he got none.’ The youth’s reliance on another, especially a woman, to gain prestige and administer the empire certainly would not be perceived in a positive light. For this reason, many of these anecdotes not only highlight the contempt held by Elagabalus for the senate, an association common with bad emperors, but also act as an attack on the young emperor’s character. The emperor was reliant on an advisor, a woman, who nonetheless effectively stood in place of his own judgement. Rather than learning from appropriate advisors how to govern well, the youth was allowed to engage in frivolous activities, while the empire was left at the mercy of a woman. Thus, while Elagabalus is ultimately presented as the stereotypical bad emperor, these tales also illustrate a crucial point regarding how the youth was perceived. Namely, that the ancient writers believed that Rome was without a doubt ruled by a woman while the Emesan youth acted as a figurehead.

In contrast to Elagabalus’ tumultuous reign, Alexander was presented as return to normality. Much like his cousin, however, Alexander did everything in conjunction with his mother Julia Mamaea. Dio’s perception of Alexander’s mother is slightly more complementary than those of Herodian and the Historia Augusta. In a fragment from the Roman History recorded by Zonaras, the author recalls that when Alexander was proclaimed emperor, his mother ‘took over the direction of affairs and gathered wise men about her son, in order that his habits might be correctly formed by them; she also

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124 Dio 79.11.3.
125 Icks 2011: 98.
126 SHA. Elagab. 2.2.1. 4.2: sub quo mulier quasi clarissima loco viri senatum ingressa est; Elagabalus is also said to have established a senaculum, or women’s senate, on the Quirinal Hill that was presided over by his mother Julia Soaemias (SHA. Elagab. 2.4.3).
130 SHA. Alex. Sev. 6.5, 10.8; Herodian. 6.9.8; Icks 2011: 104.
131 SHA. Alex. Sev. 14.7; Herodian. 6.1.1.
chose the best men in the senate as advisors…’

In this passage, Dio does not choose to diminish the power he perceived was held by Mamaea. Instead he chooses to present the influence she had over young Alexander in a more positive light. Dio’s slightly more complimentary representation of Julia Mamaea must be seen as a product of Alexander’s reign. While Alexander was in power, hope was still expressed for the stability of the young emperor’s principate. Moreover, while this woman and the young emperor were still alive any direct criticism would have been unwise. As a contemporary, Dio would not have condemned Mamaea for being the dominant hand in Alexander’s principate. Nonetheless, the overall view was one of caution. While Dio does not attribute the failure of Alexander’s administration to the Severan women themselves, he does acknowledge what he perceived as their failure in advising and guiding their son in the role of emperor, particularly under Elagabalus.

While Dio presents a positive view of the advisory relationship between Alexander and Julia Mamaea, other writers are more negative. The Historia Augusta presents an opposing view in the Life of Alexander Severus, stressing that Alexander was mockingly referred to as Alexander Mamaeae (‘the son of Mamaea’) by many. While this title was not official, its presence within this work is significant to understanding the Historia Augusta’s perception of Mamaea’s dominance over her son. Herodian offers a similar interpretation of Mamaea’s influence:

Such was the fate suffered by Alexander and his mother after he had ruled fourteen years without blame or bloodshed so far as it affected his subjects. A stranger to savagery, murder, and illegality, he was noted for his benevolence and good deeds. It is therefore entirely possible that the reign of Alexander might have won renown for its perfection had not his mother's petty avarice brought disgrace upon him.

For Herodian, the role Alexander’s mother played was inexcusable. In particular, he writes that she was behind Alexander’s decision to quell the warring Germanic barbarians through bribes. This was one of the most questionable actions of the young emperor’s reign, and is said to be a principal

132 Zonar. 12.15: ἡ τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων οἰκονομίαν μετακεχείριστο, καὶ περὶ τὸν ὕδρα άνδρας συνήγαγεν, ἵνα δὴ ἔκεινον αὐτῷ τὰ ἢ ὠδινί λυθήκητο, κάκ τῆς γερονίας τοῦ ἄμεινονας συμβούλους προσεέλητο…
133 Millar (1964: 24) suggests that Dio composed his Roman History sometime between 230 and the overthrow of Alexander Severus in 235. Barnes (1984: 253-4) offers a slightly different date, arguing that Dio wrote most of the Roman History during the 220’s.
135 SHA. Alex. Sev. 3.1.
136 Herodian 6.9.8: τέλος μὲν δὴ τοιούτῳ κατέλησε τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον καὶ τὴν μητέρα, βασιλεύσαντα ἐτέσι τεσσαροσκαίδεσκα, ὅσον πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχομένους, ἀμέμπτος καὶ ἀναιμοτι-φόνου τε γὰρ καὶ ὀμότητος ἄκριτον τε ἔργων ἄλλης ζητοῦντος ἔγένετο, ἐξ τὸ τὸ φιλανθρωπίαν καὶ εὐρυγεικότηταν ἐπερετῆς, πάντως γὰρ ἢ Ἀλεξάνδρου βασιλεία εὐδοκίμησεν ἐξ τὸ ολοκλήρου, εἰ μὴ διεβέβλητο αὐτῷ τὰ τῆς μητρὸς ἐφ θαλαγμοῖς τε καὶ μυκρολογίαιν.: SHA. Alex. Sev. 14.7.
137 Herodian. 6.7.9; Southern 2001: 60-3.
reason for his downfall. For Herodian, at least, this decision took away Alexander’s chance to gain what every ‘good’ emperor sought: ἀνδρεία.\textsuperscript{138} The equivalent of the Latin virtus (‘manliness’), this virtue was central for constructing an image of the emperor as a warrior protecting and defending Rome from its enemies.\textsuperscript{139} Although Alexander was emperor, he was still young, and though he was presented as a good ruler, his youth was one aspect that was open to criticism.\textsuperscript{140} It is for this reason that Herodian chooses to focus on Julia Mamaea’s controlling nature, and Alexander’s inability to gain ἀνδρεία.\textsuperscript{141} This is particularly noticeable in the structure of Alexander’s life, as in the first section of Herodian’s sixth book, which centres on Alexander’s reign, the biographer discusses the emperor’s personality and his flaws, which included his submissive nature towards his mother.\textsuperscript{142} Immediately following this, and without spending too much time on the youth’s character, Herodian delves straight into the military campaigns Alexander faced throughout his reign. These exploits provided the young emperor with a chance to demonstrate his courage and manliness, and to show the people and soldiers why he should be emperor. However, as Herodian writes, ‘[his mother] blocked his efforts at courage (ἀνδρεία) by persuading him that he should let others risk their lives for him, but that he should not personally fight in battle.’\textsuperscript{143} Thus, the emperor’s reluctance to advance into enemy territory was thought by Herodian to be due to his mother’s ‘feminine fears or excessive mother love.’\textsuperscript{144} Clearly, not only did Alexander’s reliance on Mamaea undermine his authority in the same manner as Elagabalus, but also her influence was the primary cause of Alexander’s unfavourable actions.\textsuperscript{145} This was a theme that continued into works such as the Emperor Julian’s Caesars, in which the character Silenus heckles young Alexander, exclaiming ‘Exalted as you were you could not govern your own family, but gave your revenues to your own mother.’\textsuperscript{146} Clearly, Alexander’s reliance on his mother was a fault that stood out above all others.

For Dio and Herodian, the fact that women, let alone Syrian women, were advising and controlling the emperor was beyond the pale. Indeed, that the emperors were under the thumb of their mother said more about the young emperors’ ability to rule than it did the craftiness and ambitiousness of the imperial women. While the portrayal of Julia Domna appears as an outlier as she is used as a contrast to Caracalla’s cruelty and ineptitude, the dominant nature of Agrippina and the remaining Severan

\textsuperscript{138} Herodian 6.5.9.
\textsuperscript{139} McDonnell 2006: 149
\textsuperscript{140} Kemezis 2014: 248.
\textsuperscript{141} Sidebottom 1997b: 2810-11.
\textsuperscript{142} Kemezis 2014: 248; Sidebottom 1997b: 2804.
\textsuperscript{143} Herodian 6.5.9: ἢμβλυνε γάρ αὐτοῦ τὰς πρὸς ἀνδρείαν ὁμάς, πείθουσα δὲι̇ν ἄλλους ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ κινδυνεύειν, ἀλλὰ μὴ αὐτὸν παρατάττεσθαι; Kemezis 2014: 249.
\textsuperscript{144} Herodian. 6.5.8: ἡ τῆς μητρὸς ἐπισχούσης γυναικεία δείλια καὶ ὑπερβαλλούσῃ φιλοτεκνίᾳ; cf. Herodian. 6.5.9.
\textsuperscript{145} Sidebottom 1997b: 2804.
\textsuperscript{146} Julian Caesars. 35-6: τηλίκουτος ὡν ὁὐκ αὐτῶς ἤρχες τῶν σεαυτό, τᾶς χρήματα δὲ ἐδίδους τῇ μητρὶ…
women was certainly stressed in order to promote the inexperience of the young rulers. Clearly, the youth of the emperors and their reliance on inappropriate advisors was just as prominent a theme in their histories as in the Historia Augusta. Indeed, for the Historia Augusta, emphasising the reliance on female advisors was crucial to his aim in presenting young rulers as incapable of ruling. While the young emperor was certainly held responsible for his own indiscretions in the Historia Augusta’s biographies, the morality and overall character of his advisor no doubt reflected on the nature of the young emperor’s rule. Accordingly, criticism can be found in the guidance of women, no matter whether such advice is accepted or not.

VI. Conclusion
The concept of youth’s character and the ambiguous nature of this age, stemming from Republican times, widely influenced the literary constructions of the youthful emperors. Accordingly, the ambiguous portraits of these young emperors can be attributed to the manner in which ancient historians and biographers shaped their constructions around the limitations of youth.

It was a characteristic of ancient authors to draw on precedents and rhetorical characteristics in order to shape their subjects. There is little doubt, then, that young rulers would be characterised by the traditional stereotypes of youth. As these young Romans were said to still be maturing, both physically and mentally, it was believed that youths were susceptible to being tempted into a life of vice. Thus, it was imperative that young men, particularly youthful emperors, received proper guidance. As section III illustrated, the guidance of a virtuous older man was the preferred path. Court poetry, such as Calpurnius Siculus’ Eclogues, hortatory essays, such as Seneca’s On Clemency, and the later historians and biographers, including Suetonius, Tacitus, Dio, Herodian, and the Historia Augusta, all presented the view that a young Roman would not be able to maintain a virtuous life without a mature and noble guardian to guide him. Most importantly, they shared the opinion that a young emperor could be a good emperor, provided he had a positive and influential advisor and accepted his advice. However, while court poems tend to focus on the hope of a new age in praise of the emperor, the imperial histories and biographies had a different scope and agenda, presenting this hope as part of the rise and fall of the young emperor. In the case of Nero, he is presented as possessing a great tutor who will encourage him and lead him towards virtue by Calpurnius Siculus, but authors like Tacitus present the young emperor as possessing merit only under Seneca’s guidance. Following this, Tacitus then sets up the causes for the downfall of the emperor, in part resulting from the loss of this guidance. In this way, there is a clear continuation of themes between contemporary poetry and

147 See Introduction for discussion on what makes a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Emperor.
essays and imperial histories and biographies, with differences appearing in how the authors intend to present the character of the emperor: either as the hope of the state, or lost potential.

Section IV continued to stress the importance of having a good male advisor, but also brought attention to responses of the youths themselves. Thus, the success of this guidance was also dependent on the youth’s continued acceptance of advice. Youths who resisted guidance would ultimately be lead into a life of vice, as with the emperors Caligula, Nero, and Commodus. This is particularly true of Caligula and Commodus, as their rejection of positive advice and acceptance of negative counsel is almost immediate. Both these young emperors begin their reign under the guidance of prominent senatorial men. And, likewise, both these youths refuse to listen to their counsel, instead choosing to heed the advice of ambitious men who encourage them to indulge in licentious behaviour, and who seek to govern the empire through the young emperors. From this point onwards, the young emperors are presented as continuing down the path of tyranny as they engage in more inappropriate behaviour and neglect the empire. In this way, the rejection of good counsel and acceptance of advice from ambitious men is presented as a distinguishing factor between the initial years and the later period of tyranny. Ultimately, those who rejected the advice of good guardians or advisors were perceived as being the puppets of manipulative, bad advisors, as they effectively ruled through them.

As section V demonstrated, a woman’s role as an advisor was not so willingly accepted, particularly if they were the mother or grandmother of the emperor. However, the overall representation of the female advisor depended on her position of power. For instance, Caracalla allegedly received much advice from his mother Julia Domna, yet the emperor’s reluctance to accept her guidance is the focus in histories and biographies, rather than her own character. This is likely because Julia Domna did not try to rule through her son, the emperor. Instead, she acted purely as a guardian. In contrast, Julia Maesa, Julia Mamaea, and Julia Soaemias took on more involved roles, with their sons/grandsons acting more as figureheads than emperor. Thus, their total involvement in the respective young emperors’ lives influenced the negative portrayal in histories and biographies. In addition, a passive youthful emperor who placed himself in the unwavering care of another would similarly be viewed in an unflattering light. The young Elagabalus was just one example, with his mother, Soaemias, and grandmother, Maesa, being portrayed as dominant influences, to the extent that Maesa is depicted as the driving force behind Elagabalus’ imperial power. Indeed, while Soaemias does not appear to have such a prominent role in the imperial histories and biographies, she remains a negative influence as she encourages Elagabalus to engage in oriental practices. As was seen in the case of Alexander, the liminal nature of youth and reliance on guidance is used in order to explain the negative aspects of an otherwise prosperous reign. This image of these young emperors as good or bad emperors, built on
the foundation that youth was a ‘slippery path’ which required guidance, was clearly contingent upon the aims of particular authors. Thus, these writers positioned the young emperors and their regimes in the uncontrollable and uncertain role that youth played within the life-course.
CHAPTER TWO
THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS: THE LEISURE YEARS

nec erat eiulla vitanisi exquirere voluptates.¹

I. Introduction
Youthful Roman males were regarded as passing through a period of rebellion and experimentation. They idolised individuals who rebelled against authority and lived their lives in extravagance; they fell in love, and experimented with their sexuality. In essence, youth was seen as a time in which adolescents lacked self-control. Thus, typically, they were slaves to their desires, especially for pleasure, love, and glory. For Roman Emperors, these same characteristics of youth are ubiquitous. The emperors Caligula, Nero, Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus were all portrayed by historians and biographers as dissolute and inexperienced youths, corrupted by luxury and unlicensed sexual desire.

The freedom to engage in this behaviour was clearly not afforded to the emperor, no matter their age. Their duties were often done in view of the public, and thus judged by the people of Rome.² Evidently moderation was a trait of a ‘good’ emperor; overindulgence and obsessiveness, however, was the mark of a ‘bad’ emperor and tyrant. As such, moderatio is one imperial virtue that was expected of an emperor. Defined as self-control or temperate behaviour, moderatio, along with clementia and libertas, were virtues associated with an emperor’s devotion to an honest government, in line with decorum and public expectations.³ Writing during the Late Republic, Cicero comments on the connection between the success of the state and the morality of the Roman elite:

However I believe that a transformation occurs in a nation’s character when the habits and lifestyle of the nobility change. Because of this men of the upper class who do wrong are especially dangerous to the state, because they not only indulge in vicious practices themselves, but also infect the entire commonwealth with their vices.⁴

This belief applied in turn to the emperors, as the success of the Roman Empire and the emperor’s own morality and self-restraint were thought to correlate. Pliny the Younger frequently references the

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¹ SHA. Elagab. 2.19.6: ‘Indeed, for him life was nothing except a search after pleasures.’
³ OLD s.v.moderatio 2; Humphries 2002: 77.
⁴ Cic. Leg. 3.32: ego autem nobilium uita uictuque mutato mores mutari ciuitatum puto. Quo peneiosius de re publica merentur uitosi principes, quod non solum uilia concipient ipsi, sed ea infundunt in ciuitatem, neque solum obsunt quod ipsi corruuntur, sed etiam quod corruuntur plasque exemplo quam peccato nocent. This translation is adapted from Keyes edition.
moderatio of Trajan throughout his *Panegyric*. He states that an ideal prince is one who has self-control, is free from lusts and greed, and liberal and generous. Moreover, a decadent lifestyle was often associated with the inappropriate behaviour of emperors. Dio writes of the Emperor Pertinax allegedly refusing to allow his son ‘to be spoiled by the glamour and the prospect involved in the title of Caesar before he had received his education.’ Further to this is the use of self-restraint to criticise. Historians such as Tacitus, Dio, and Herodian, and biographers such as Suetonius and the *Historia Augusta* dedicate large sections of their works to the misdeeds of the emperors, particularly their lack of self-restraint, and often use it to signify a diseased state. Wicked emperors were said to frequent brothels, keep the company of prostitutes, actors and singers, dress up in women’s clothes, and offer themselves as prostitutes.

What type of rule might be expected, then, of a boy emperor characterised by youthful impetuosity? Much like their non-imperial counterparts, the young emperors often lacked extensive political experience and were perceived as susceptible to vice. Herodian makes this clear in a passage from his *History*:

> The more mature emperors took greater care to control themselves and their subjects because of their political experience. The very young ones led rather less disciplined lives and brought in many innovations. This disparity in age and authority naturally resulted in different activities.

As this statement is situated at the beginning of the *History*, this passage serves to introduce a principal theme of his work, namely the comparison between mature, older emperors and their younger counterparts. To Herodian, a ‘good’ ruler was mature in age rather than young, much like his ideal ruler, Marcus Aurelius, with whose death Herodian begins his *History*. Length in years was said to provide a man in power with virtuous qualities, such as reason (λόγος), judgment (γνώμη),...
soundness of mind (σωφροσύνη), and wisdom (φρόνησις).

This theme plays a significant role in the works of other Roman imperial historians and biographers. The Historia Augusta contrasts the wisdom of the more mature emperors Trajan (41 or 44 at accession), Hadrian (41 at accession), and Antoninus Pius (51 years old in 138), with the inexperience of the young Nero (16 at accession), Elagabalus (13/14 at accession) and Commodus (18 at accession). Dio likewise writes that Hadrian remarked of Antoninius Pius that he was ‘not too young to be reckless or so old to neglect anything.’

Overall, an older emperor was preferred because they possessed what an emperor was thought to require: wisdom and restraint. These older emperors had shown their character and proven themselves virtuous throughout life, while also possessing political and military experience. The young emperors, however, lacked these traits.

In line with this concept of moderatio, this chapter will examine the extent to which the relationship between youths and leisure activities is used in the imperial histories and biographies of the young emperors to criticise their behaviour and to explain their tyrannical nature. In particular, it will focus on three key areas of youthful behaviour – music and theatre, gladiatorial fighting and hunts, and sexual conduct – and will consider their role in shaping the portrayals of the emperors in imperial histories and biographies. It will be shown that two techniques could be used to illustrate and explain the autocratic and unruly nature of these young emperors. The first of these was the use of turning points within the narrative. Youth could often be used as a marker to distinguish a young emperor’s behaviour from his innate character. Initially they are portrayed as normal youths, engaging in typical pastimes and acting out youthful desires. Then a turning point is stressed, after which their youthful behaviour becomes unacceptable and an example of their descent into vice. Ultimately, their youth was thought to be a cause of their tyrannical nature, and thus could be used by historians and biographers to mark a turning point in a young emperor’s behaviour.

The second of these techniques saw writers constructing narratives of immorality that was as much a result of the emperors’ youth as it was their innate character. Essentially, rather than perceiving these emperors as young rulers who become tyrants, historians and biographers could present the emperor as a megalomaniac youngster. There is no turning point, as their madness is evident from the beginning of their reign. As such their youth and indiscretions are intertwined with a fault in the character of the young emperor, and viewed as indistinguishable from their natural immorality. Ultimately, it will be argued that no matter the technique used, the perception of the young emperors

\[14\] Cf. Herodian. 1.1.6; Tac. Ann. 3.8.4. I owe these characteristics to Parkin 2003: 67; Sidebottom 1997b: 2804.

\[15\] SHA. Tacit. 6.6-9; cf. SHA. Tacit. 5; I owe these age references to Parkin 2003: 107.

\[16\] Dio 69.20.4: μήθ᾽ ώσπερ νέοτητος προπετές μήθ᾽ ώσπερ γήρως ἀμελές ποιήσαι τι δονήμενον; Davenport and Mallan 2014: 645-6, 659.
was that, corrupted by their youth, their power, and their fortune, they abandoned themselves to the most debauched of pleasures with unrestrained impetuosity.

II. Youthful Pastimes: Leisure, and a Decadent and Debauched Lifestyle

First, it is necessary to look at the activities favoured by Roman youths. In examining a vast number of literary sources over the course of the Roman Empire, it is difficult to speak of a typical youthful lifestyle. Even if one were to speak only of elite youths, no lifestyle could be classed as ‘typical’. For youths, there were those who sought to dedicate themselves to a specific practice, whether it was the army, oratory, politics, or academia. In contrast, there were those who used this period of time as a chance to use their newfound freedom to experiment and enjoy their youth. Leisure, decadence and debauchery encompassed their lives.

II.i. Acting the Part: Youths, Music, and Theatre

During the Republic, the idea of a youth participating in dance, music and acting was abhorred. These ‘imported’ activities were opposed by the traditional Roman, as ‘a “true” Roman neither danced or sang and certainly not in the Greek fashion.’ Polybius relates how many youths in the second century BC showed increased displays of enthusiasm for all things Greek, particularly music and dance. This view continued on into the Empire. Tacitus perceived a decline in eloquence and attributed this to the Roman youths’ laziness. He wrote that youths showed such great enthusiasm for music, and other activities he considered inappropriate, that they could not show interest in higher pursuits. As Tacitus aims to stress the importance of oratory in the Dialogue on Oratory, and anything that he believes conflicts with oratorical training is criticised. Here Tacitus demonstrates educational rather than moral objections to youths taking an interest in performances. It was expected that a youth would take some interest in music and stage performances. Indeed during the Empire, music was a key subject in a young Roman’s education. Nonetheless, youths were known for their inability to control their desires, and it was because of this that their interests often became an obsession. Complaints about this were constant from the early empire to late antiquity. However, there were those who regarded these skills as a necessity for a well-rounded youth. Attitudes towards musical skills and performance certainly shifted during the early Principate. Writing under the Flavians, Quintilian believed that they were an excellent means of grooming the voice, and physical

17 Eyben 1993: 85.
18 Polyb. 31.25.4.
19 Tac. Dial. 29.3.
20 Mayer 2001: 18, 75.
22 Cf. Lib. Or. 3.
discipline. He adds, however, that this training must be limited to one’s boyhood. Likewise, Macrobius discusses the increase in interest of dancing among Roman youths, writing that it had occurred since the beginning of the second century BC and had been of no harm to their morality. Thus, as a youthful pastime, music was quite often viewed ambiguously. Opinions were largely based on the purpose of the youth’s interest. These interests became a problem when a young Roman’s interest extended beyond boyhood and, most importantly, became an obsession that took their attention away from more appropriate activities for a man, such as politics, oratory, and the military.

Professional musicians and performers were symbols of shame in ancient Rome. Their lack of reputation was reflected in the law by which they were classified as infames. Ultimately, these activities were examples of what aristocratic young men who sought to retain their dignitas ought to avoid. That is not to say that members of the upper class did not engage in such behaviour. Numerous men and women were said to have taken to the stage at the ludi Maximi held by Nero in 59. Dio is particularly vocal about the shame such behaviour brought, commenting that, no matter whether they were forced to perform or volunteered, they all equally disgraced their ancestors:

So the men of that day beheld the great families — the Furii, the Horatii, the Fabii, the Porcii, the Valerii, and all the rest whose trophies and whose temples were to be seen — standing down there below them and doing things some of which they formerly would not even watch when performed by others.

Despite this, the youth of Rome expressed no inhibition in appearing on stage, particularly when the emperor shared their enthusiasm. Clearly, as a youthful pastime, music, acting and dance were popular among Roman youths. Training in these activities were thought to strengthen the voice and body, but only while the individual was still a child. Past this point in life, theatrical activities were viewed as depraved, more so if one voluntarily took part in these activities, or received payment.

II.ii. Seeking Virtus: Youths and Gladiatorial Hunts

When it came to physical activities, there were none strictly associated with youth. Rather, there were those pastimes that displayed virtus, thought to be for adult men, and those for children. These

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23 Quint. 1.8, 10.
24 Quint. 1.11.19.
26 Cic. Cat. 1.29, 2.24; Edwards 1997: 66. Greenidge (1894: 8) defined infamia as follows: ‘Special disqualifications based on moral grounds from certain public or quasi-public functions.’
28 Suet. Ner. 11.2; Champlin 2003: 69.
29 Dio 61.17.4: καὶ ἔδων οἱ τότε δήθροι τά γένη τά μεγάλα, τοὺς Φουρίους τοὺς Ὀρατίους τοὺς Ψαβίους τοὺς Πορκίους τοὺς Ὀδιαλείριους, τῶλα πάντα ὃν τὰ τρόπαια ὃν οἱ ναιοὶ ἔκρανο, κατέῳ ἡ ἔστηκότας καὶ τοικτά δρώντας ὃν ἕνα οὖς ὑπ’ ἄλλων.
childish games were put behind a youth once he donned the *toga virilis*, as the poet Horace describes: ‘Building small houses, harnessing mice to a little cart, playing odds and evens, and even riding a long stick – if these things delighted a bearded man, lunacy would plague him.’\(^{30}\) More challenging physical activities were considered an appropriate pastime for a Roman youth: ‘The beardless youth … finds pleasure in horses and hounds and the grass of the sunny Campus.’\(^{31}\) Roman youths engaged in a number of different pastimes, such as running, horse-riding, bathing, music and dance, and attending performances at the circus, theatre, and amphitheatre.\(^{32}\) Some of these activities, particularly physical ones, were more popular than others, like music and dance.\(^{33}\)

Conservative Romans certainly preferred a youth to show enthusiasm for hunting as this was part of becoming a good Roman man.\(^{34}\) Pliny the Younger frequently discusses hunting in his letters, writing that it keeps one’s body and mind healthy.\(^{35}\) Further, he comments that hunting and horse-riding was said to make youths stronger, faster and more robust:

This was the training and delight of youth, these were the skills which formed the leaders of the future – to pit speed against an animal’s swift-footedness, and strength and dexterity against its courage and cunning: while in times of peace it brought no small honour to sweep marauding wild beasts from the plains and raise the siege they laid to the farmers and their work.\(^{36}\)

Dio expresses a similar sentiment, writing of this need to strengthen Roman youths:

When children turn into youths, they should turn their minds to horses and to arms … In this way from their very boyhood they will have had both instruction and practice in all that they will themselves be required to do on reaching manhood, and will thus prove more serviceable to you.\(^{37}\)

\(^{30}\) Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.347-9: *aedificare casas, plostello adiungere mures, ludere par impar, equitare in harundine longa, si quem delectet barbatum, amentia verset*. This translation is modified from Fairclough’s edition.

\(^{31}\) Hor. *A.P.* 161-2: *imberbis iuvenis … gaudet equis eanibusque et aprici gramine Campi*.

\(^{32}\) Laes and Strubbe 2014: 137.

\(^{33}\) Dio 52.26.1 (On youths training in arms and horse-riding); cf. section II.i of this chapter for discussion on music and dance as part of a youthful lifestyle. For further discussion on these activities, see Eyben 1993: 85.

\(^{34}\) Eyben 1993: 139-41.


\(^{36}\) Plin. *Pan.* 81.2: *olim haec experientia iuentutis, haec voluptas erat; his artibus futuri duces imbuebantur: certare cum fugacibus feris cursu, cum audacibus robore, cum callidis astu: nec mediocre pacis decus decus habebatur submotis campis irruptio ferarum, et obsidione quadam liberatus agrestium labor*.

\(^{37}\) Dio 52.26.1: καὶ ἐπειδὴν ἐξ μωράκια ἐκβάλοσιν, ἐπί τι τούς ἱπποὺς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ὄπλα τρέπονται … οὕτω γὰρ εὐθύς ὡς παῖδεν πάνθ’ ὁσα χρή ἀνδρας αὐτούς γενομένους ἐπιτελεῖν καὶ μοιχόντες καὶ μελετήσαντες ἐπιτηδειώτεροί σοι πρὸς πάν ἔρημον γενήσονται.
Indeed, under the principate of Augustus hunting and horse riding were promoted as part of a regime to encourage youths to exercise and train so that they would be prepared for government.\textsuperscript{38} Augustus reintroduced the custom of \textit{exercitatio campestris} in the hope of reviving the ‘race of hardy stock’ who had defeated Pyrrhus and Hannibal.\textsuperscript{39} The Augustan poets Virgil and Horace reflected the spirit of this reform, writing of the need to restore physical prowess and moral fibre to the youth of Rome. In his description of the \textit{lusus Troiae}, Virgil wrote of the tradition of such exercises, while Horace, in his Roman \textit{Odes}, wrote of his admiration for Roman youths and criticised the character Lydia for luring Sybaris from exercises on the Campus.\textsuperscript{40}

This passion for hunting as a youthful pastime only increased throughout Roman history, especially from the late first century, as a way of displaying \textit{virtus}.\textsuperscript{41} Throughout the Republic warfare was the principal field in which young Romans who had yet to enter into the political sphere could display \textit{virtus}.\textsuperscript{42} However, as McDonnell states, under the Empire acknowledgement of martial \textit{virtus} was monopolised by the emperor and those favoured by him.\textsuperscript{43} Accordingly, fewer men completed military service, and those of the upper classes had fewer opportunities to obtain military glory. Thus, hunting and fighting became a popular form of demonstrating \textit{virtus}.\textsuperscript{44} Hunting in particular was a popular sport throughout the Empire. For instance, the \textit{Historia Augusta} suggests that hunting was a favoured hobby of the young Marcus Aurelius.\textsuperscript{45} Indeed Fronto, the emperor’s tutor, wrote a letter to him in the early 140s advising him on hunting methods.\textsuperscript{46} Marcus Aurelius’ was certainly not alone in regards to his youthful enthusiasm for hunting. This sport was a popular activity among Roman youth and was particularly favoured in competitions such as the \textit{Iuvenalia}, or youth games.\textsuperscript{47} Kleijwegt references a number of inscriptions that suggests that youths frequently trained in hunting and fighting for these games.\textsuperscript{48} Thus, as a youthful activity, hunting served to build character, show courage, and illustrate marksmanship. All these skills and traits were ideal for a youth emerging from childhood into the world of a proper Roman.

\textbf{II.iii. Promiscuous Youths: Sexual Pastimes}

\textsuperscript{38} Taylor 1924: 158.
\textsuperscript{40} Virg. \textit{Aen.} 5.545-603; Hor. \textit{Odes.} 1.8.
\textsuperscript{41} Balsdon 1969: 159-60.
\textsuperscript{42} McDonnell 2006: 385.
\textsuperscript{43} McDonnell 2006: 387.
\textsuperscript{44} Kyle 1998: 81.
\textsuperscript{45} SHA. \textit{Marc.} 4, 9-10; Dio 72.36.2-3.
\textsuperscript{46} Fronto \textit{Ep. Ad M. Caes.} 3.21.
\textsuperscript{47} Dio 67.14; Kleijwegt 1994: 79; Crowther 2009: 353.
\textsuperscript{48} Kleijwegt 1994: 86: \textit{CIL} 12, 533 (this text refers to a young man from Aquae Sextiae - \textit{variis circumdatus armis}).
Excessive devotion to sexual pleasure was also a characteristic of a youth’s debauched lifestyle. To engage in sex simply for gratification, whether active or passive, was immoral. It was preferable that in a virtuous society, ‘real Romans only had sex with their wives and even then not too often.’ However this was not often the case in Roman life. Looking at a youth’s approach to sexual pleasure reveals a similar debauched and unrestrained view of sex for gratification. The removal of the *toga praetexta* and donning of the *toga virilis* brought with it a sense of freedom not previously experienced. As such, youth was associated with sex, alcohol, and violence.

Only in this period of youth were such sexual transgressions thought to be pardonable, as in the bloom of youth a young man was under the influence of youthful impetuosity and, thus, was not in full control of his bodily desires. This period was believed to end with the onset of a full beard, and the arrival of the *depositio barbae* sometime in his early twenties. Writing in defence of the young Caelius, Cicero states:

> So then let this deserted road, no longer kept up and now blocked by leaves and bushes, be abandoned. Let some playfulness be granted to youth; let the years of youth be somewhat free; let not everything be denied the pleasures … let desire and pleasure sometimes triumph over reason, provided that this teaching of moderation be followed.

While it is important to remember that this passage is part of a wider Ciceronian speech designed to acquit Caelius, it does suggest that there was a widespread view to allow young men to ‘sow their wild oats’ prior to settling down. The use of the adverb *aliquando* and adjective *aliqui* throughout this passage only furthers this idea of ‘excess in moderation’. It is stressed to the listener that decadence and debauchery is accepted while a man is still young, but moderation must be observed. However, many youths were keen let go of all restraint and participate in debauchery, particularly as young men were most desired by older men and women. Naturally, such desirability often left them...

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49 Cic. Off. 3.119.
51 Benjamin and Masters 1966: 42.
52 Pers. Sat. 5.30-6; Laes and Strubbe 2014: 57.
54 Tacitus (Ann. 14.15) writes that in 59 Nero instituted the *Iuvenalia*, and Dio (61.19.1) states that the young emperor did this is honour of the arrival of his beard; Williams 2010: 79.
55 Cic. Cael. 42: Ergo haec deserta via et inculata atque interclusa iam frondibus et virgultis relinquatur; detur aliquid aetati; sit adulescentia librior; non omnia voluptatibus denegentur … vincat aliquando cupiditas voluptasque rationem, dum modo illa in hoc genere praescriptio moderatissque teneatur.
56 This is often referred to as the *locus de indulgentia* (Plaut. Bacch. 409-10, 1079-80; Sen. Contr. 2.4.10, 2.6.11; Juv. 8.163-6); Williams 2010: 82-3.
57 More so if they were hairless (*glaber*). Juvenal (10.298-345) writes of the downfalls of having a beautiful son in the prime of his youth: ‘But a son blessed with a remarkable body always has unhappy, fearful parents: so rare a thing it is to find beauty and chastity joined together’ (*rara est adeo concordia formae atque pudicitiae*); Williams 2010: 83.
vulnerable to the advances of older men. Although sex for pleasure in general was said to be a vice, the engagement of a young male in a passive role, that is to be penetrated, was considered even more depraved. To the Romans being the receptive partner in a sexual relationship represented subjugation; the concept of masculinity required one to be dominant. It is clear that not only was it the Roman perception that youths derived pleasure from playing the feminine role, but also that this was a reality that was accepted, or at the very least tolerated. Thus, by virtue of their youth, which denies them their masculinity, such desires were often excused.

III. Blurred Lines: Tyrannical Emperor or Licentious Youth?

III.i. Turning Points: From Youthful Emperor to Tyrannical Ruler
Ancient writers frequently employ certain techniques and devices in order to shape the narrative to reflect their agenda. The use of turning points is particularly favoured in order to emphasise a decline in morality or behaviour. In the case of the young emperors it was their youth that allowed them to act out their desire to be musician, actor or hunter; yet this behaviour was also viewed as unacceptable and as an example of their descent into vice. Just as virtues and vices were used throughout writings on imperial history as part of an author's assessment of emperors, so too are youthful activities used to mark a transition or turning point in a young emperor’s behaviour. Though such youthful behaviour may not be seen to be suitable at any point during their reign, an element of acceptance can sometimes be detected in these works as a result of their youth. However, once the author views this behaviour as transgressing the boundaries of youth, it is at this point that the young emperor’s behaviour is seen as a sign of their descent into tyranny. This use of a turning point is particularly apparent when discussing the young emperor’s involvement in public performances. Music and stage performances feature frequently in histories and biographies of the young emperors. Suetonius and Dio’s accounts of Nero both use turning points to stress the emperor’s escalation into depravity. In both authors, the turning point is associated with music and stage performances. In choosing to become an actor and singer, Nero took on a role that was far removed from that of the emperor, as far as the senatorial and equestrian elite were concerned. As such, Nero’s acting and singing was a crucial component in the hostile pictures constructed by Suetonius and Dio, particularly

59 Blanshard 2010: 80; Williams 2010: s.
60 Williams 2010: 18; Richlin 1993: 538: ‘What defines the vir is penetration.’
63 See Introduction for discussion on Imperial virtues and vices, and use in rhetoric.
as a means of illustrating a turning point in his reign. For both Suetionius and Dio, Nero’s love for acting and music was perceived with a high degree of absurdity. In his Life of Nero, Suetionius illustrates this absurdity in the positioning of his discussion on Nero’s musical and theatrical interests. As is usual for Suetionius’ style, the biographer employs a turning point (divisio) at which he separates the good years of the young emperor’s reign from the bad. The exact point at which this separation occurs is slightly ambiguous, however both Bradley and Warmington believe that the basic divisio occurs at 19.3, which is made clear by the two sections on probra (20.1-25) and scelera (26.1 onwards).64 It is within this section associated with Nero’s probra (‘shameful deeds’) which Suetionius discusses Nero’s artistic enthusiasm. The construction of Nero’s probra is interesting, and certainly alludes to why his theatrical activities were separated from those Suetionius considers criminal. Principally, the probra appear to document a descent into depravity for the young emperor.65 Echoing the structure of the Life as a whole, the probra begin with Nero’s early education, then his interests in music as emperor, and systematically develops into public performances. Ultimately, the probra are designed to reach a crescendo. Suetionius’ account of Nero’s probra begin at 20.1 with a comment on his boyhood education. This knowledge was appropriate for a young Roman, as was demonstrated in section II.i. This then forms into greater enthusiasm for music once Nero become emperor, though he is still a youth.66 At this point in the narrative, Nero is said to be training his voice, neglecting none of the exercises ‘which artists of that kind are in the habit of following, to conserve and strengthen their voices.’67 Here Suetionius intends to illustrate Nero’s dedication to training his voice, a topic that is reminiscent of Quintilian’s belief in strengthening the voice as part of oratorical education.68

However, following this short section, Suetionius swiftly begins to introduce anecdotes that illustrate why these habits were considered part of Nero’s probra. In particular, Suetionius places Nero beyond the range of behaviour appropriate for a youth and, more importantly, an emperor.69 The sections following 20.1 detail Nero’s desire to perform on stage, with the young emperor making his debut at Naples, and frequently competing in lyre contests and on the stage.70 To Suetionius, these competitions were absurd. As we discussed in section II.i, engagement in musical or theatrical activities, whether youth or adult, was perceived as disgraceful beyond early education. This aversion was heightened

67 Suet. Ner. 20.1: quae generis eius artifices vel conservanda vocis causa vel augendae factitarent. This translation is adapted from Edwards’ edition.
68 Refer to section II.i.
69 Curry 2014: 198.
when it came to the emperor. No aristocratic Roman could retain their dignitas having performed on stage to a public audience; it could not be expected then that the emperor would either. Indeed Suetonius goes on to comment on the seriousness with which young Nero approached his art, writing that ‘the trepidation and anxiety with which he contended, his keen rivalry of his opponents, and his dread of the judges, can hardly be believed.’\textsuperscript{71} Suetonius presents these anecdotes as slowly becoming more absurd, commenting that Nero observed the rules of competition meticulously, while also bribing the judges; the young emperor was said to have even entered Rome in the chariot used by Augustus in his triumphs.\textsuperscript{72} This section, and indeed the probra, conclude with the following sentence: ‘To many men he [Nero] offered his friendship or announced his hostility, just as they had applauded him lavishly or parsimoniously.’\textsuperscript{73} This final sentence of the probra is indicative of Suetonius’ opinion of Nero’s artistic interests as a whole. The young emperor treated them as serious endeavours, even going as far as selecting his friends based on their level of praise. Here Suetonius is stressing the frivolous manner in which Nero approached governing the empire.\textsuperscript{74} It was a common perception among ancient authors that a good emperor should select good and suitable advisors from among the senatorial and equestrian ranks. Most importantly they should be good and accomplished men.\textsuperscript{75} Bad emperors, however, picked from among friends, actors, and eunuchs. Accordingly, what Suetonius saw as beginning as a childhood interest turned slowly into an obsession that affects his conduct in government. In writing this section, Suetonius does not comment on how Nero’s youthful interests affected his ability to rule; this is discussed later in the scelera. However, in organising Nero’s deeds as such, and positioning the young emperor’s performances in between two contrasting sections, Suetonius presents the probra as an intermediate period in the gradual manifestation of Nero’s natural corruption.\textsuperscript{76}

The introduction to the scelera at 26.1 shows the next stage, as this is the peak of the crescendo that Suetonius intended to develop. Here Suetonius writes:

Although at first his acts of wantonness, lust, extravagance, avarice and cruelty were gradual and secret, and might be condoned as errors of youth (iuuenili errore), yet even

\textsuperscript{71} Suet. Ner. 23.2: quam autem trepide anxieque certaverit, quanta adversariorum aemulatione, quo metu iudicum, vix credi potest. This translation is adapted from Edward’s edition.
\textsuperscript{72} Suet. Ner. 23.2, 25.1-2; Curry 2014: 207.
\textsuperscript{73} Suet. Ner. 25.3: multisque vel amicitiam suam optulerit vel simulatem indixerit, prout quisque se magis parciusve laudasset. This translation is adapted from Edward’s edition.
\textsuperscript{74} Champlin 2003: 81.
\textsuperscript{75} See Chapter One for further discussion on appropriate advisors for young emperors.
\textsuperscript{76} Champlin 2003: 76.
then their nature was such that no one doubted that they were defects of his character and not due to his age.\textsuperscript{77}

In this passage Suetonius firmly comes to the conclusion that it was popular opinion that Nero’s ‘shameful deeds’ were the result of a flaw in his character rather than the idiocies of youth. In doing this, Suetonius intends to remind the audience that while those actions described in the \textit{scelera} may be thought of as simply youthful dalliances, there was actually a more sinister cause; namely, the depravity of Nero’s innate character.\textsuperscript{78} Moreover, this section as a whole allows Suetonius to connect the \textit{probra} to the \textit{scelera}. Throughout 26.1-2 Suetonius discusses the final escalation in Nero’s behaviour regarding his musical and theatrical interests. Here, Nero goes beyond obsessiveness and escalates to harming individual Romans in pursuit of his interests.\textsuperscript{79} The biographer mentions a number of instances in which the young emperor accosted men ‘as they came home from dinner,’ robbed shops, and even risked his life when he was ‘beaten almost to death by a man of the senatorial order, whose wife he had maltreated.’\textsuperscript{80} Following this, Suetonius details Nero’s antics at the theatre, writing that:

…from the upper part of the proscenium [Nero] would watch the brawls of the pantomimic actors and egg them on; and when they came to blows and fought with stones and broken benches, he himself threw many missiles at the people and even broke a praetor’s head.\textsuperscript{81}

At this point, as is mentioned after this at 27.1, Nero’s vices grew stronger and he ‘openly broke out into worse crime.’\textsuperscript{82} From this passage onwards, the crescendo has been reached and Nero’s vices are on public display. No longer does he engage in more youthful behaviour, that which Suetonius finds absurd, such as music and dancing. His behaviour has reached the point at which it causes harm to others, and has thus become part of the \textit{scele}ra. This clearly shows how Suetonius perceived Nero’s reign as changing from the rule of a youthful and absurd emperor to that of a corrupt and depraved ruler. Although Suetonius does not perceive the young emperor’s interest in music and acting to be in line with his later bad deeds, such as his acts of ‘wantonness, lust, extravagance, avarice and cruelty,’ they certainly allow the biographer to present an intermediate period in the young emperor’s

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\textsuperscript{77} Suet. \textit{Ner.} 26.1: \textit{petulantiam, libidinem, luxuriam, avaritiam, credulitatem sensim quidem primo et occulte et velut iuvenili errore exercuit, sed ut tunc quoque dubium nemini foret naturae illa vitia, non aetatis esse. This translation is adapted from Edward’s edition.}\textsuperscript{78} Champlin 2003: 66.\textsuperscript{79} Curry 2014: 206.\textsuperscript{80} Suet. \textit{Ner.} 26.1-2: \textit{ac saepe in eius modi rixis oculorum et vitae periculum adiit, a quodam laticlavio, cuius uxorem adrectaverat, prope ad necem caesus.}\textsuperscript{81} Suet. Ner. 26.2: \textit{interdiu quoque clam gestatoria sella delatus in theatrum seditionibus pantomimorum e parte proscaeni superiore signifer simul ac spectator aderat; et cum ad manus ventum esset lapidibusque et subselliorum fragminibus decernetur, multa et ipse iccit in populum aitque etiam praetoris caput consauciavit.}\textsuperscript{82} Suet. \textit{Ner.} 27.1: \textit{paulatim vero invalescentibus vitius iocularia et latebras omisit nullaque dissimulandi cura ad maiora palam erupit.}
behaviour, in which Nero’s behaviour is not cruel, but shameful.\textsuperscript{83} In this way, Nero’s involvement in music and stage performance is being used as a turning point to illustrate a descent into depravity.

Dio likewise stresses a turning point in Nero’s behaviour and enthusiasm for performing. However, he is more forward in presenting the absurdity of the young emperor’s behaviour. This is particularly clear in the following passage:

As a fitting climax to these performances, Nero himself made his appearance in the theatre … So there stood this Caesar on the stage wearing the garb of lyre-player … and this Augustus sang to the lyre some piece called ‘Attis’ or ‘The Bacchantes,’ while many soldiers stood by and all the people that the seats would hold sat watching.\textsuperscript{84}

This was not the behaviour of a good emperor. At the same time, these anecdotes are not used to show tyrannical behaviour. Instead, Dio chose to write of Nero’s enthusiasm for activities that were expected of any other youth but the emperor. The youth’s interest was so great that he was awarded the crown for lyre-playing during the quadrennial games ‘for all others were debarred, on the assumption that they were unworthy of being victors … thereafter all other crowns awarded as prizes for lyre-playing in all the contests were sent to him as the only artist worthy of victory.’\textsuperscript{85} The most important indication of Dio’s attempt to convince his readers of Nero’s youthful indiscretions is found after this passage, in the first section of book 62. Intending to discuss the uprisings occurring in Britain, Dio first attempts to connect Nero’s behaviour with the neglect of the Empire by writing that ruin was being brought upon the Romans ‘while this sort of child’s play (ἐπαίζετο) was going on in Rome…’\textsuperscript{86} Here the imperfect form of the verb παίζω (‘to play like a child’) is used both to Nero’s youthful antics and also to mock the manner in which he chose to perform. Principally, Dio referred to the absurdity of Nero’s competitive performances as something youth would do, not emperors. Nero had been awarded prizes throughout Italy whether he competed or not.\textsuperscript{87} The participation of the emperor brought an end to true competition as there was no doubt who would be the victor. Accordingly, many of the young emperor’s competitive performances appeared to ancient writers, such as Dio, as nothing more than a game in which the youthful emperor wished to participate.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{83} Suet. Ner. 26.1: petulantiam, libidinem, luxuriam, avaritiam, crudelitatem…
\textsuperscript{84} Dio 61.20.1: καὶ ἐδει γὰρ καὶ τὸν κολοφόνα δύον τῶν πραπτομένων ἐπενεχθῆναι, παρῆλθε τε καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Νέρων ἐς τὸ θέατρον … καὶ ἔδει τε ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς ὁ Καίσαρ τὴν κιθαρῳδίαν σκευῆν ἐνδεδυκῶς … ἐκθαρράδησε τε ἐς Λττίν τινὰ ἤ Βάκχας ὁ Ἀδύσουστος, πολλῶν μὲν στρατιωτῶν παρεστηκότων.
\textsuperscript{85} Dio 61.21.2: τὸν μέντοι στέφανον τὸν τῶν κιθαρῳδῶν ἀνικεὶ ἔλαβε, παντὸς ως καὶ ἀναξίων τῆς νίκης ἐκβληθέντων … καὶ τούτῳ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι αὐτῷ στέφανοι οἱ τῆς κιθαρῳδίας ἐξ ἀπάντων τῶν ἄρτών ὡς καὶ μόνῳ ἀξιονίκῳ ἐπέμενον.\textsuperscript{86} Dio 62.1: Dio (61.4.1) had previously mentioned Nero’s preference for engaging in theatre rather than governing the empire; Eyben 1993: 88.
\textsuperscript{87} Dio 61.21.1; 61.21.2; Suet. Ner. 12.3; 22.3; Tac. Ann. 14.21. 8; 16.4.
\textsuperscript{88} Gowing 1997: 2569, 2578.
Nero’s passion for acting and lyre playing, however, extended beyond what was tolerable. In book 63 of the Roman History, Dio mockingly writes of Nero’s trip into Greece to overcome Terpnus and Diodorus and Pammenes with an ‘army’ carrying lyres and plectra, ‘instead of Philip or Perseus or Antiochus.’ Dio goes on to comment on the disgrace Nero was bringing to the constitution of both emperor and empire:

Had he merely done this, he would have been the subject of ridicule. Yet how could one endure even to hear about, let alone behold, a Roman, a senator, a patrician, a high priest, a Caesar, and emperor, an Augustus, named on the programme among the contestants, training his voice, practising various songs.

Once again, Dio perceives the young emperor’s behaviour as going beyond youthful indiscretions, and negatively influencing the morality of the imperial office. He writes that if the young emperor had simply engaged in these performances with the enthusiasm he had previously shown, ‘while being a source of shame and of ridicule, would still have been thought harmless.’ But during this expedition in particular, Nero ‘devastated the whole of Greece precisely as if he had been sent out to wage war … and he slew great numbers of men, women and children.’ Here Dio shows a similar concern to Suetonius, though he certainly goes much further, and thus stresses a turning point in the young emperor’s behaviour. Further, the incessant referral to the destruction and murderous behaviour attributed Nero immediately after references to his child-like behaviour alludes to the nature Dio associated with young emperors. Certainly in the case of Nero the ancient authors such as Suetonius and Dio perceived his musical and theatrical interests as negatively impacting on the character of the young emperor. These child-like interests were fuelled by his youthful passion, and only through indulging his interests to the extent of obsession does the perception of this behaviour become absurd, unacceptable, and incompatible with imperial office.

Another example where a turning point is stressed to demonstrate an escalation in the emperor’s immorality is Commodus’ enthusiasm for the arena. As was discussed in section II.ii of this chapter, hunting and gladiatorial fights were popular pastimes among Roman youths, with the former particularly considered appropriate for their age and necessary for the development of physical

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89 Dio. 62.24.2.
91 Dio. 63.9.1: καὶ εἰ μὲν μόνα ταῦτα ἐπεφράξει, γέλωτα ἐν ἀφόθηκε, καὶ τοῦ πῶς ἐν τις καὶ ἀκουστῇ, μὴ ὡς ἰδείν, ὑπομείνειν ἄνδρα Ρωμαίον βουλευτὴν ἐπεστρίῳν ἄρχερεα Καίσαρα αὐτοκράτορα Ἀδυνατον ἐς τὸ λείκωκα ἐν τοῖς ἀγονισταῖς ἐγγραφόμενον καὶ τὴν φωνὴν ἀκουστῇ, μελετοῦντα τὶ τινας ὁδᾶς, καὶ τὴν μὲν κοφαλῆν κομώντα.
92 Dio 63.11.1: Ἀλλ᾽ εἰ μὲν ταῦτα μόνα ὑπερεῖτος ἐγεγόνει, ἀσχόνη τὴν ἀν καὶ χλεισθία τὸ πρᾶγμα ἀκίνδυνον ἐνενόμιστο.
93 Dio 63.11.1: νῦν δ’ ὡς ἀληθῶς, ὥσπερ εἰπὶ πολέμῳ σταλεῖς, πάσιν μὲν τὴν Ἑλλάδα ἑλεπλάτησε, καίτερ ἐλευθέραν ἀφεῖς, συμπληθεῖς δὲ.
Moreover, the idea that young men were inherently interested in hunting and gladiatorial sports was a literary commonplace. However, the young emperors were both *princeps* and youth. As leaders of the Roman Empire, they were expected to behave with restraint and *virtus*. Yet as youths, they were treated with some leniency in historical and biographical accounts of their reins. It is perhaps for this reason that the perception of their participation in arena sports is an ambiguous one.

Hunting, even staged hunting, performed a symbolic function for the emperor. By killing a wild beast, such as a lion, the emperor was perceived to be eliminating a threat to the empire, and thus fulfilling one of the duties of the *princeps*. Indeed this association of hunting imagery with the emperor and the celebration of his *virtus* can be traced back to the early principate under Caligula. Like Commodus, Caligula came to power while still a youth and without the military experience expected of an emperor. Accordingly, Caligula sought to demonstrate his prowess and *virtus* in the arena, participating in activities such as gladiatorial combat and chariot racing.94 The bronze equestrian statue of Domitian from the Sacellum of the Augustales at Misenum which, according to Tuck, depicts the emperor as a lion-hunter, likewise illustrates an emperor promoting his *virtus* through hunting-imagery.95 Indeed, a number of medallions associating hunting with the *virtus* of the emperor were struck under Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus.96 The Hadrianic tondi similarly present hunting as part of imperial imagery celebrating the emperor’s *virtus*. Preserved on the Arch of Constantine, the eight Hadrianic tondi, originally commissioned by the emperor Hadrian for an unknown monument, ‘portray three relief images of Hadrian hunting bear, boar, and lion along with four scenes of post-hunt sacrifices and one interpreted as departure for the hunt.’97 As Tuck suggests, this is neither a celebration of an actual hunt nor do the tondi represent sport hunting: ‘Rather, this is predator-control hunting showing Hadrian bring the benefits of his rule to the Roman world by removing dangerous animals and thus ensuring peace and stability.’98 This extension of *virtus* in connection with an emperor protecting his Empire continues into the fourth century. An example of this is a verse (c.379) written by the fourth century poet Ausonius in celebration of the young emperor Gratian (8-years of age as junior *Augustus*; 16-years of age as senior *Augustus*) accompanied by a painting of the youth slaying a lion: ‘The picture below (shows) a lion killed by Gratian with a single arrow. The death which the lion suffered from such a frail arrow was due, not to the force of the weapon, but to the striker.’99 As Gratian was only a child when he became emperor,

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95 See Tuck (2006) for further discussion on the purpose of this statue. See appendix image 1.
99 Ausonius *Ep.* 30: *pictura subditti ubi leo una sagita a Gratiano occisus est. Quod leo tani tenui patitur sub harundine letum, non vires ferri, sed ferientis agunt.* This translation is adapted from Green’s edition; Wiedemann 1992: 64.
he too required acknowledgement of his ability to protect the Empire. As this could not be achieved through military feats, hunting was used to celebrate the boy-emperor’s devotion to his empire. Thus, hunting in the arena and performing in gladiatorial battles became an alternative to defeating Rome’s enemies and displaying the emperor’s *virtus*.

Returning to Commodus’ enthusiasm for hunting, it is clear that both authors stress a turning point at which the young emperor goes from inappropriate behaviour to tyrannical. The young emperor’s desire to perform in the arena, accept the names of gladiators as if they were triumphal titles, and his belief in his own divinity, has often been seen as a sign of the youth’s insanity and megalomania. Yet within these colourful and often critical anecdotes, a sense of unrestrained enthusiasm and youthful vigour can be found. Thus, although each historian may emphasise the absurdity of Commodus’ actions in different ways, similarities in the young emperor’s descent into depravity are evident.

Herodian’s account of Commodus as gladiator at 1.15 of his *History* is particularly interesting in this respect. While no panegyric, Herodian’s account of Commodus’ reign is certainly more forgiving than Dio’s, though the young emperor’s indiscretions are not omitted. As one of ‘the younger emperors [who] lived recklessly and introduced many innovations’, Herodian emphasises that Commodus’ ‘shameful practices’ (ἐπιτηδεύματος κατησχυνεν) were his ultimate downfall. Ultimately in his description of Commodus’ antics in the arena, Herodian appears to share the sentiment of the fourth century *Historia Augusta*; namely that hunting in the arena was suitable for a youth, though not for someone who came to the throne at an advanced age. Herodian begins his account of Commodus as gladiator by suggesting that the emperor sought to demonstrate his *virtus* or ἀνδρεία. At 1.15.1, he writes of how ‘people hastened to Rome from all over Italy and from the neighbouring provinces.’ To Herodian, this suggests that the young emperor wanted people to see him display courage. In regards to Commodus’ performances, the historian’s tone is ambiguous, combining both criticism of the lack of restraint shown by the emperor and praise at his youthful vigour and skill:

> Now the emperor, casting aside all restraint, took part in the public shows, promising to kill with his own hands wild animals of all kinds and to fight in gladiatorial combat

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100 Hekster 2002: 137; Dio. 73.17.4.
101 Herodian 1.1.6: οἱ δὲ κομιδὴ νέοι ῥαθμοτερον βιώσαντες πολλὰ ἐκαινοτόμησαν·; Herodian 1.17.12.
103 Herodian 1.15.1: διαδραμούσης δὲ τῆς φήμης συνέθεοι ἐκ τῆς Ἰταλίας πάσης καὶ τῶν ὁμόρων ἐθνῶν…
against the bravest of the youths … Special mention was made of the skill of his hands and the fact that he never missed when hurling javelins or shooting arrows.\[104\]

The historian then goes on to detail how Commodus did not risk his life in these events, preferring to hunt from a distance, offering ‘a display of skill rather than courage’.\[105\] This passage is important in Herodian’s overall construction of Commodus as gladiator. Herodian does not believe that Commodus’ staged hunting allowed him to demonstrate ἄνδρεία (‘manliness’ or ‘courage’). The young emperor was not hunting wild beasts on an equal plain; rather a terrace had been constructed specifically to allow Commodus to ‘avoid risking his life’. As such, Commodus was able to hurl javelins or shoot bows from ‘a safe place’. To Herodian, this did not constitute ἄνδρεία. Nonetheless, in writing of Commodus’ skilful aim (ἐφιστοχία), Herodian’s account reads more like a letter praising the skill of a young hunter or athlete than the history of an infamous Roman emperor.\[106\] Much like literary works praising athletes, Herodian goes into great detail about the exploits in which he believed Commodus to display remarkable skill in weaponry. At 1.15.3, Commodus struck down ‘deer, roebuck, and horned animals of all kinds, except bulls, he struck down, running with them in pursuit, anticipating their dashes, and killing them with deadly blows;’\[107\] at 1.15.4 it is said that ‘for at the very moment the animal started up, it received the blow in its forehead or its heart, and it bore no other wound, nor did the javelin piece any other part of its body;’\[108\] and at 1.15.6 Herodian alleges that Commodus once saved a condemned criminal from a leopard that had seized him, killing the leopard swiftly with a javelin.\[109\] The way Herodian presents Commodus as showing off his skills in the arena shows how the historian highlights the emperor’s youthful antics. Moreover, it appears to have served to emphasise that although while the emperor demonstrated skill in the arena, he was inexperienced in military ventures. As he was only 19 when he became sole emperor, Commodus had little military experience upon ascending to the throne, and this lack of experience continued even as sole Augustus.\[110\] Accordingly, he lacked the military credibility that was expected of an emperor. It is understandable then, why ancient authors such as Herodian would emphasise the young emperor’s prowess in hunts, or why Commodus would seek to perform in these events, despite their false nature.

\[104\] Herodian 1.15.1: ὁ δὲ Κόμοδος μηκέτι κατέχον ἐαυτοῦ δημοσία θέας ἐπετέλεσεν, ὑποσκήμενος τὰ τε θηρία πάντα ἱδία χειρὶ κατακτενεῖν καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρειστάτοις τῶν νεανίδων μονομαχῆσειν … καὶ γάρ δυνηζέλετο αὐτοῦ τῆς χειρὸς τὸ εὐστήρον, καὶ ἰδία ἐμέλεν αὐτῷ ἀκοντιζόντας καὶ τοξεύοντοι μὴ πτείνειν.

\[105\] Herodian 1.15.2: εὐστοχίας μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνδρείας.

\[106\] Take, for example, Dio Chrysostom’s account of Melancomas and his victories (28.5-7).

\[107\] Herodian 1.15.3: ἐλάφους μὲν ἄδικα καὶ δωρκάδας ὡσα τε κερασφόρα πλήν ταύρους, συνθέων αὐτοῖς καὶ καταδιώκων ἐβαλές ὑφάνειν τε αὐτὸν τὸν δρόμον καὶ πληγαῖς καρδίοις ἀναρέων.

\[108\] Herodian 1.15.4: ἀμα γάρ τῇ τοῦ ὄζου όρμῃ κατὰ τοῦ μετώπου ἢ κατὰ καρδίας ὄψει τὴν πληγήν, καὶ οὐδὲποτε σκοποῦν ἄλλον ἐδεχεν οὐδὲ ἐν ἄλλο μέρος ἤλθε τὸ ἀκόντιον τοῦ σώματος, ὡς μὴ ἀμα τε τρόσσαι καὶ φονεύσαι. τὰ δὲ πανταχόθεν ἔδει ἤθροιζέτο αὐτῷ.

\[109\] Herodian 1.15.6.

\[110\] Hekster 2002: 158.
As a prolific hunter, the young emperor would showcase his abilities in a different setting, exchanging the battlefield for the arena.

Interestingly, Herodian perceives a point at which the young emperor’s behaviour reached its climax, and the youth is said to have showed increased enthusiasm for the youthful pastime.\textsuperscript{111} Herodian’s view of Commodus is quite similar to Dio’s, discussed below, though emphasis is placed on the disgraced afforded to his noble lineage:

So far Commodus was still quite popular with the mob even if his conduct, apart from his courage and marksmanship, was unfitting for an emperor. But when he ran into the amphitheatre stripped and carrying his weapons for a gladiatorial fight, the people were ashamed to see a Roman emperor of noble lineage, whose father and forebears had all celebrated great triumphs, now disgracing his office with a thoroughly degrading exhibition, instead of using his weapons to fight the barbarians and prove himself worthy of the Roman empire.\textsuperscript{112}

At this point, Herodian emphasises how Commodus had once had the favour of the public despite the uncharacteristic nature of his behaviour. However, once the young emperor enters the arena as a gladiator, and begins slaughtering individuals, he loses the support of the crowd. Herodian accordingly has presented a decline in Commodus’ behaviour, from that which may be construed as youthful dalliances to that of a corrupt emperor. Herodian goes on to stress this final descent into tyranny, as he makes mention neither of Commodus’ perceived skill nor his courage. In fact, the historian makes a point out of noting that ‘the time had finally come for Commodus to cease his mad antics and for the Roman Empire to be rid of his tyrannical rule.’\textsuperscript{113} Although the young emperor’s behaviour earlier in the \textit{History} had been called ‘mad antics’, this is the first reference in regard to his gladiatorial pursuits. Thus, it is at this point that what had previously been considered as ‘games’ was now looked upon as tyrannical. Though these performances continued, they were no longer viewed as harmless or tolerable. Thus, to Herodian, this was the behaviour of an unrestrained young ruler, which then turned into the actions of a tyrant.

Similar development of Commodus’ descent can be found in Dio’s \textit{Roman History}, though his perception of Commodus is more critical of the youth’s behaviour than in Herodian’s \textit{History}. As a

\textsuperscript{111} Hekster 2002: 154.

\textsuperscript{112} Herodian 1.15.7: μέχρι μὲν εῶν τούτων, εἰ καὶ βασιλέας τὰ πραττόμενα ἣν ἀλλότρια πλὴν ἄνδρειας καὶ εὐστοχίας, παρὰ τοῖς δημοδόσειν εἰχὲ τινα χάριν. ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ γυμνός ἐς τὸ ἀμφιθέατρον εἰσῆλθην ὅπλα τε ἀναλαβὼν ἐμοινόμαχε, τότε σκοθηρώσας ἐδόν ὁ δήμος θλίμα, τὸν εὐγενῆ Ῥωμαίων βασιλέα μετὰ τοσάτα τρόπως πατρός τε καὶ προγόνων ὅσι ἐπὶ βαρβάρους ὅπλα λαμβάνοντα στρατιωτικὰ ἢ Ῥωμαίων ἄρχη πρέποντα, καθαφρέζοντα δὲ τὸ ἀξίωμα αἰσχρότε καὶ μεμηαμένον σχῆματι.

\textsuperscript{113} Herodian 1.16.1: ἐδεί δὲ ἂρα ποτὲ κάκειν παύσασθαι μεμηνότα και τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἄρχη τυραννουμένην.
member of the senatorial class and a man with a strict sense of morality, Dio does not present Commodus’ enthusiasm for the arena, whether as hunter or gladiator, in a positive light. In fact, much of his account presents this behaviour as absurd and an embarrassment to the elite.\textsuperscript{114} Most notably, Dio uses the noun παιδιαί (‘youthful sports’) to describe Commodus’ participation in the arena.\textsuperscript{115} This may be seen as both a reference to the youthful activity that the emperor was engaging in and as a criticism of the manner in which the youth was performing. Regarding this first reference, Dio may have intended to emphasise that this behaviour was that of a youth, albeit an imperial youth. Interestingly, while Dio only uses this noun to describe Commodus’ antics once, it is found throughout the imperial chapters of his Roman History to describe the sports engaged in by various young men. At 65.15.2, Dio mentions the ‘youthful sports’ (παιδιαί) of a young Titus, while at 78.6 he mentions the changing interests of Caracalla from ‘murder to sports’ (παιδιαί).\textsuperscript{116} The use of παιδιαί in regards to Titus’ participation may be a reference to the Iuvenalia games, as is suggested in Murison’s commentary, and thus be seen as a positive reference to the emperor’s virtus.\textsuperscript{117} These games, instituted by Nero in 59 to commemorate the shaving of his beard, consisted of theatrical performances, chariot races, and hunting.\textsuperscript{118} Kleijwegt suggests that this last activity, hunting, was popular among the youth in the games.\textsuperscript{119} If this interpretation is applied to Dio’s description of Commodus, the historian may be intending to associate Commodus’ behaviour with that which occurs at the Iuvenalia games. Thus in regard to both interpretations, Dio’s description of Commodus’ behaviour suggests that the historian, to an extent, appears to have interpreted it as the behaviour of an unrestrained and all-powerful youth. Nonetheless, this behaviour was not appropriate for an emperor, and it was this fact that warranted criticism.

As is suggested by Hekster, the use of παιδιαί implies a second connotation: mocking Commodus’ lack of courage in his performances.\textsuperscript{120} For unlike hunts discussed earlier in section II, there was no immediate danger to the young emperor.\textsuperscript{121} This description of Commodus’ behaviour as child’s play ties together earlier mockery of the youth’s behaviour and his child-like absurdity.\textsuperscript{122} In the same way

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{114} Dio. 73.21.
\item\textsuperscript{115} Dio. 73.19.5: ‘After that the contests no longer resembled child's play (παιδίας), but were so serious that great numbers of men were killed.’ (ἐπράττετο δ’ οὐδὲν ἐτι παιδίας ἔχομενον, ἄλλα’ ὡστε πάνω πολλούς ἀποθνήσκειν.)
\item\textsuperscript{116} Dio. 65.15; Dio 78.6.
\item\textsuperscript{117} Murison 1999: 169.
\item\textsuperscript{118} Dio 67.14.
\item\textsuperscript{119} Kleijwegt 1991: 109.
\item\textsuperscript{120} Hekster 2002: 154-5.
\item\textsuperscript{121} Cf. Herodian 1.15.8: ‘He had no difficulty overcoming his opponents by merely wounding them, since they all looked upon him as the emperor rather than as a gladiator, and let him win.’ (ὁ μὲν οὖν μονομαχὸν ῥᾴδιος τῶν ἀντιπάλων πειραυίτο Καὶ μέχρι τριμήτων προερχόμενο ὑπεκύνον ἄπαντος καὶ τοῦ βασιλέα οὐ τὸν μονομάχον ἀνατελθοῦνην;) Hekster 2002: 154.
\item\textsuperscript{122} Dio (72.21) makes note that much of Commodus’ behavior was met with laughter from spectators: ‘Any man would indeed have perished by the sword on the spot, for laughing at him (for it was laughter rather than indignation that
as Herodian, Dio makes reference to the lack of danger Commodus placed himself in. He describes the manner in which the amphitheatre was divided up into sections by large walls, ‘the purpose being that the beasts, divided into four herds, might more easily be speared at short range from any point.’\textsuperscript{123} Dio then goes on to specifically mention the types of animals killed by the young emperor, being ‘all the domestic animals that approached him’, and those that were ‘led up to him or were brought in nets.’\textsuperscript{124} While Commodus may have been symbolically risking his life to ‘defend’ Rome, as Hekster suggests, Dio believed that hunting beasts personally brought to the young emperor did not demonstrate courage as youth or emperor.\textsuperscript{125} The only skill on display was his marksmanship, thus Dio perceived this behaviour to be merely absurd games, rather than a show of real prowess. Just like Herodian, Dio perceived a point at which the young emperor’s behaviour reached its climax. For Dio, this point was when Commodus’ behaviour no longer resembled child’s play.\textsuperscript{126} Ultimately, the historian viewed Commodus’ behaviour as that of a megalomaniac youngster free to indulge his own whims. Moreover, the repercussions of his behaviour grew more serious. For when Commodus’ behaviour no longer resembled ‘youthful sports’, he began to slaughter ‘great numbers of men’.\textsuperscript{127} Dio goes on to describe one event in particular:

Indeed, on one occasion, when some of the victors hesitated to slay the vanquished, he fastened the various contestants together and ordered them all to fight at once. Thereupon the men so bound fought man against man, and some killed even those who did not belong to their group at all, since the numbers and the limited space had brought them together.\textsuperscript{128}

Though the young emperor’s behaviour is still viewed as absurd following this passage, it no longer is said to appear harmless or as ‘youthful sport.’\textsuperscript{129} This descent is reminiscent of Nero’s transition from youth to corrupt emperor.

Though the activities these young emperors took an interest in were vastly different, both their portrayals developed into narratives of cruelty. Clearly these authors perceived the young emperor’s early behaviour to be restrained, no matter how absurd they found an emperor still engaged in child-

\textsuperscript{123} Dio. 72.18.1: ‘ιν’ ἐξ ὀλίγου πανταχόθεν τετραχῇ τὰ θηρία μεμερισμένα ῥᾷον ἄκοντίζοντα.
\textsuperscript{124} Dio. 72.19.1-2: ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἀλλαῖς τοῖς μὲν βοτά, κάτω ἐς τὸ τοῦ κύκλου ἐδαφὸς καταβαίνων ἄνωθεν, ὡσα ἐπιπλήσας, τὰ δὲ καὶ προσαγόμεναι ἢ καὶ ἐν δικτύοις ἀυτῷ προσφερόμενα, κατέκοπτε…
\textsuperscript{125} Hekster 2002: 151.
\textsuperscript{126} Dio. 72.19.5; SHA. Comm. 1.11.10-12.
\textsuperscript{127} Dio. 72.19.5.
\textsuperscript{128} Dio. 72.19.5-6: καὶ ἐὰν ἐποτα βραδινῶν τινῶν περὶ τὰς σφαγὰς τοὺς τὰ ἀντιπάλους συνέδησεν ἄλληλοις καὶ πάντας ἄμα μάχεσθαι ἐκέλευσε. καὶ τούτῳ ἠγνώσταν μὲν ἐξ ἀυτῷ ὡσα ἐν τοῖς ὀμολογούμενοι, ἔσφαξαν δὲ τινὲς καὶ τοὺς οὐδὲν προσφικύνοντες σφισαν, ὡσα τὸ τοῦ ὄχλου καὶ τῆς στενοχωρίας ἐμπεσοῦσθέντες αὐτοῖς.
\textsuperscript{129} Dio. 72.20.
like behaviour. His later behaviour however was unacceptable. Certainly different authors may interpret the young emperor’s behaviour in various degrees of severity. Nonetheless, it is clear that this stereotypical vice of youth is used by these authors in early discussions of the young emperors’ behaviour, and then quickly divorced from their age. This offers an example of how the youthful man and the concept of virtus was adapted and employed by imperial historians and biographers to construct a turning point for the behaviour of this young emperor.

III.ii. It’s in Their Nature: Raising a Megalomaniac Youth

While this turning point technique was favoured when trying to justify a decline in character of the youthful emperors, a second method was also used to present the historian’s and biographers’ views of imperial youth in a slightly broader manner. Essentially, rather than perceiving their behaviour as originally that of a youth and then transitioning into a tyrant, the young emperor’s behaviour could also be presented as that of a youthful megalomaniac. There appears to be no perception of innocent youthful endeavours. Youth certainly is presented as a cause of any unfavourable actions, however this is also combined with a fault in the character of the young emperor. Examples of this are best seen in the accounts of the emperors Caligula and Elagabalus written by imperial historians and biographers.

Like Nero, Caligula possessed natural enthusiasm for music and stage performance. As the quintessential ‘bad’ emperor, the accounts of his reign describe the atrocities Caligula was alleged to have carried out. His love of performing was considered to be the less severe aspect of his behaviour. Ancient writers such as Suetonius and Dio include lengthy anecdotes of Caligula’s devotion to appearing as a singer and dancer, with Suetonius commenting that Caligula was ‘was an enthusiastic devotee of singing and dancing, that even at public performances he could not restrain himself from singing with the tragic actor as he delivered his lines, or from openly imitating his gestures by way of praise or correction.’ Of the most outrageous stories told of Caligula’s behaviour is that on one occasion he summoned the leading men of the senate in order to perform a dance for them.

Although Philo is not one of the historians or biographers this thesis is primarily concerned with, his account of the young Caligula’s behaviour in On the Embassy to Gaius is most intriguing, particularly as the philosopher experienced life under the emperor’s tumultuous reign. Philo begins to discuss Caligula’s love for music and spectacle early on in this work. The philosopher describes Caligula’s

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130 Suet. Calig. 54.1-2: canendi ac saltanti voluptate ita efferebatur, ut ne publicis quidem spectaculis temperaret quo minus et tragoedo pronuntianti concineret et gestum histrionis quasi laudans vel corrigens palam effingeret; Dio. 57.21.3, 59.2.5, 5.2, 5.5, 7.5, 21.2.
131 Dio. 59.5.4-5; Suet. Calig. 54.2.
unusual antics in detail, intertwining the narrative with accounts of his madness and youth. At 7.42, the philosopher writes that Caligula would become ‘frantic with excitement at the sight of dancers, sometimes joining in, or greeting an enactment of scandalous scenes with a loud youngster’s guffaw.’ From this point onwards, Philo makes it clear that Caligula is not simply a tyrannical emperor, but an irresponsible youth. There is no turning point for Caligula. Instead, he is young and reckless from the outset. Caligula’s tyrannical behaviour is intertwined with references to the problematic nature of a young ruler and his indulgences in youthful pastimes. As Barrett suggests, Philo’s ‘final impression is not of a madman, but of a conceited, ill-mannered and rather irresponsible young ruler.’

Accordingly, much of Philo’s account is composed of Caligula’s outrageous behaviour. The philosopher writes that ‘as if in a theatre [Caligula] assumed different costumes; sometimes a lion skin and club as Heracles, sometimes … making himself up as the Dioscuri, or another as Dionysus with ivy, thyrsus and fawn’s skin.’ This behaviour continued throughout Caligula’s reign, and Philo even describes his court as ‘a theatre and a prison than a court of justice’. Whereas Dio, discussed in section III.i, prefers to view Nero reign as transitioning from youthful to tyrannical emperor, Philo presents Caligula’s as a chaotic mix of youth and madness. There was no possibility for Caligula to be a good emperor, even at the beginning of his reign; the young emperor was enslaved by his passions, and directed by the caprice of his youthful desires. Following Caligula’s threats to destroy a Jewish temple, a decision that angered the philosopher, Philo wrote that the young emperor’s insanity coupled with the eager and ferocious nature of youth would be his undoing:

But the other storm is caused by a man who cherishes no ideas such as become a man, but is a young man, and a promoter of all kinds of innovation, being invested with irresponsible power all over the world. And youth, when combined with absolute power and yielding to irresistible and unrestrained passion, is an invincible evil. This passage reveals Philo’s perspective of the young emperor and his youthful interests. The On the Embassy to Gaius was written under the emperor Claudius, successor to Caligula, and details Caligula

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132 Philo Leg. 42: ἢ τινας ἐκμικάς ὀρχηστὰς ὄρθωνα ἢ ἐστιν ὅτε συνορχούμενον ἢ ἐπὶ μίμους ἁἱμῖρον καὶ σκομμάτων μὴ ὑπομειδώντα σεμιότερον ἄλλα, μικραισκάκτεστερον καγχάζοντα...

133 Barrett 1989: 215. Barrett also notes that Philo is the best source scholars have for Caligula’s true personality and mental well-being, since he met with Caligula shortly before his death in 41.

134 Philo Leg. 11.79: ἤδη ἄσπερ ἐν θεάτρῳ σκηνήν ἄλλτε ἄλλοισιν ἀνελάμβανε, τοῦτο μὲν λεοντήν καὶ ρόπαλον, ἁμφότερα ἐπίχρυσα, διακοσμούμενοι εἰς Ἡρακλέα … ὑπὸ τοῦ ἅσκοιτο ἐς Διοσκοῦρους ἢ στὶ ὅτι κατ᾽ ἕστι θύρσῳ καὶ νεφρίσ anomaly eis Δίντιαν ἤσκετο καὶ ταῦτα διαφέρειν ἀξίων.; Dio (59.26.6-8) mentions similar antics.

135 Philo Leg. 46.368: Τούδοντν ἀντὶ δικαστηρίου θεάτρου ὁμοῖο...

136 Philo Leg. 29.190: ἐκεῖνον ἐδ θύρσῳ καὶ ταὐτα διαφέρειν ἀξίων.; Dio (59.26.6-8) mentions similar antics.
in his dealings with the Jews.\textsuperscript{137} Both these factors provide an insight into why Philo portrays Caligula as a youthful emperor and criticises his musical and theatrical interests. Ultimately, it stems from the Jews’ desire to gain favour with the new emperor Claudius. This was achieved by condemning Caligula’s behaviour towards this ethno-religious group and his lack of maturity and self-control as a young emperor.\textsuperscript{138} Throughout this text, the Jews are presented as innocent victims of the behaviour of an all-powerful youth, while Caligula is blamed for the civil unrest in Alexandria.\textsuperscript{139} This was a clear contrast to the older and more mature emperor Philo saw Claudius as. Claudius was said to be more receptive to the Jews concerns in Alexandria, as is shown in a famous letter to the Alexandrians.\textsuperscript{140} Thus, it would be an obvious choice for Philo to stress Caligula’s youth and to use those issues, such as his willingness to engage in youthful activities, to contrast against an older emperor who already possessed much life experience and knew what behaviour was expected of an emperor. Clearly, Philo possessed an aversion to such a young man ruling an empire without restraint. The philosopher perceived this as leading to Caligula’s insanity and, consequently, the brutality of his regime.\textsuperscript{141} Thus, through presenting an account that does not possess a turning point, and is based on the continued madness of a youthful emperor, Philo creates a narrative reflecting his perception of a chaotic regime.

Caligula’s promiscuity was also used to suggest that the emperor was a megalomaniac youth. Association in literary sources with sexual promiscuity was a common topos of the youthful emperor and is frequently referenced in the narratives of the reigns of Nero, Commodus, Caracalla and Geta, along with Caligula and Elagabalus who will be discussed below. Both Dio and Suetonius make subtle references to Nero’s promiscuous behaviour, with Dio commenting that Nero had two ‘bedfellows’.\textsuperscript{142} The first, Sporus, to play the role of the wife, and second, Pythagoras, to play that of the husband.\textsuperscript{143} Suetonius also states that Nero ‘prostituted his own chastity [and] defil[ed] almost every part of his body,’ and, further to this, the biographer writes that the young emperor was ‘married to this man [Doryphorus] … going so far as to imitate the cries and lamentations of a maiden being deflowered.’\textsuperscript{144} Even the young emperor Commodus was accused of polluting his body as a result of his youthful curiosity. Principally, the \textit{Historia Augusta} comments on the number of ways Commodus...

\begin{footnotes}
\item[137] Gruen 2009: 80-82.
\item[139] Barrett 1989: 215; Borgen 1997: 42.
\item[140] \textit{CPJ II}, no 153. I owe this reference to Gruen 2009: 291.
\item[141] Barrett 1989: 57; Borgen 1997: 139.
\item[142] Champlin 2003: 146.
\item[143] Dio. 62.13.
\end{footnotes}
was said to have been penetrated: ‘[Commodus was] polluted with regard to each sex in every part of his body, including his mouth.’ Finally Caracalla and Geta are also said to have engaged in passive sexual relations, though this is mentioned only briefly in comparison to the previous young emperors. Dio writes that after they had rid themselves of their teacher, the young emperors ‘went to all lengths in their conduct. They outraged women and abused boys...’ A commonality between these narratives of the young emperors is their desire to engage in sexual relations with both male and female partners. Though this was not unusual, their tendency to also accept the passive role in these relationships was something Roman historians and biographers perceived as unbefitting an emperor, and alluded to the submissive nature of the leader of the Empire. Thus, in line with the second technique, it will be shown that the passivity and sexual depravity of young emperors was a topic frequently used to connect the effeminacy of the young emperors with their tyrannical behaviour.

This is particularly true of the young emperor Caligula, as presented in Suetonius’ *Life of Caligula*. The vicious nature of Caligula as a young emperor is amplified through accounts of his insatiable sexual appetite. Through detailing this excessive behaviour, Suetonius intends to demonstrate the inadequacy of this particularly cruel young emperor. Suetonius’ basic divisio in the *Life of Caligula* occurs at 22.1, when the biographer states: ‘So much for Caligula as emperor; we must now tell of his career as monster.’ From this point, Suetonius returns to the initial years of Caligula’s reign, detailing the development of the vices the young emperor demonstrated from the beginning, in a similar manner to Nero. The first anecdote refers to Caligula’s alleged incestuous relationship with his sisters, most famously Drusilla. Following this comment, Suetonius does not mention any further allegations of sexual misconduct until section 36. This section Suetonius devotes to Caligula’s unchaste behaviour, including anecdotes of Caligula’s sexual relations with Marcus Lepidus, the pantomimic actor Mnester, and certain hostages. Suetonius’ presentation of the young emperor in the first few sentences of section 3.1 is particularly interesting:

*He [Caligula] is said to have had unnatural relations with Marcus Lepidus, the pantomimic actor Mnester, and certain hostages. Valerius Catullus, a young man of a consular family, publicly proclaimed that he had violated the emperor and worn himself out in commerce with him.*

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145 SHA. Comm. 5.11: omni parte corporis atque ore in sexum utrumque pollutes.
146 Dio 77.7.1: οὐδὲν ὃ τι οὐκ ἔποιησαν, καὶ γὰρ καὶ γυναῖκας ἁτέχνων καὶ παιδιάς ἀφίκον.
151 Suet. Calig. 36.1: *M. Lepidum, Mnesterem pantomimum, quosdam obsides dilexisse fertur commercio mutui stupri. Valerius Catullus, consulari familia iuvenis, stupratum a se ac latera sibi contubernio eius defessa etiam vociferatus est.*
Suetonius makes it clear that Caligula was playing both the passive and active role in his relationships. Though this was common for a Roman man, this behaviour was not something believed to be appropriate for a Roman emperor. To assume the passive role in a relationship, an individual was seen to be submitting to the active partner. For an emperor to do this was inconceivable. As he held the highest position in the Roman state, an emperor could not be seen to be publicly submitting to someone of a lower status or one who held less power than himself. This was particularly true of the emperor’s relationship with the actor Mnester and ‘certain hostages.’ By entering into a sexual relationship, a passive one no less, with men of such a low social status, the emperor had compromised his imperium as well as the social mores, particularly of moderation (moderatio), which the emperor was expected to exemplify. Most interesting about this passage, however, is the role Suetonius believes Mnester played in Caligula’s administration. As was mentioned in Chapter One, young Roman males were thought to be in need of a mature and successful Roman man who could lead them down a path of virtue and away from vice. Further, as was mentioned in section II.iii, Roman youths were also susceptible to the allure of older Roman men. When examined together, these two points help us to interpret section 36.1 of the Life. Suetonius is certainly concerned here with the emperor’s vulnerability to sexual advances. Even as emperor, a youthful Roman was vulnerable to being led astray by older men, and not just in regards to their ability to govern. Caligula’s fondness for acting and music only heightened the influence an actor could have on him. Thus, in suggesting that Caligula was assuming the receptive role in a relationship with an actor, who was believed to also be an advisor, Suetonius intends to stress the depravity of not only the young emperor’s innate nature, but also the problems associated with having a youth as ruler of the empire.

No emperor aroused more indignation concerning his behaviour than the young emperor Elagabalus. His sexual activity and predilection for passivity in particular was a topic of discussion among ancient writers. Biographers and historians constantly return to the theme of the young emperor’s unnatural desires, claiming that ‘he was more degenerate than any unchaste or wanton woman could ever be.’ Just as Caligula’s fondness for theatre and music, and his sexual promiscuity was said to be caused by both his madness and his youth, so too was Elagabalus’ scandalous nature, particularly his sexual antics. Dio and Herodian’s accounts of Elagabalus’ reign are particularly interesting, and illustrates the use of youth and assumed madness to explain the emperor’s behaviour.

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154 Aur. Vic. Caes. 23.2: Hoc impurius ne improbae quidem aut petulantes mulieres fuere; In the Historia Augusta, Elagabalus is referred to as impurus (impure) and obscenus (obscene) and infamis (infamous) and luxuriosis (luxurious) (SHA. Alex. Sev. 6.3-5.).
155 Icks 2011: 95.
Although much of Dio’s account of Elagabalus’ reign does not survive, the historian’s account of the young emperor’s behaviour is clear. Unlike his history of Commodus and Nero, Dio makes clear that Elagabalus is quite young for an emperor, writing that Elagabalus commented on Macrinus’ derogatory remarks concerning his age. In further contrast to Dio’s account of earlier youthful emperors, the historian chooses not to divide the narrative into sections, as he had done in some of his earlier works, or to include a turning point at which the behaviour of the young emperor becomes unacceptable. Rather, Elagabalus’ youthful behaviour, particularly his sexual experimentation, is perceived as unruly and deplorable throughout the entirety of his reign. For the historian, Elagabalus’ disgraceful behaviour, most notably his effeminacy, was a result of his Eastern background. To Dio, the Syrians were not considered ‘real men’. Rather, they were viewed as immoral, sexually perverted effeminates surrounded by extravagance. This view is also true for Herodian, though the young emperor’s Syrian descent is not stressed as much as his natural effeminacy. Nevertheless, in both these works the young emperor’s association with Eastern traditions over those of a Roman was met with disapproval. Herodian comments that he ‘painted his face more elaborately than that of any modest woman, dancing in luxurious robes and effeminately adorned with gold necklaces.’ He then goes on to link Elagabalus’ effeminate dress was associated with his Syrian background, writing that ‘the effect was something between the sacred garb of the Phoenicians and the luxurious apparel of the Medes. Any Roman or Greek dress he loathed…’ Moreover, this effeminate behaviour also happened to be associated with the outlandish nature of youth.

This effeminate desire and its connection to his youthful sexual behaviour is seen as a point of interest in Dio’s discussion. Dio first stresses the unusual nature of Elagabalus’ sexual behaviour at section 5.5 of book 79, writing that ‘he [Elagabalus] appeared both as manly and unmanly, and in both relations conducted himself in the most licentious fashion.’ Here Dio appears to be indicating that he believes that Elagabalus participated in sexual activity as both the penetrating and penetrated partner. This was supported by linking Elagabalus to a number of older male companions as, according to conventions of age, the young emperor would naturally have been the passive partner in

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156 Dio 80.1.4.
157 Pelling 1997: 120.
159 Icks 2011: 98.
161 Herodian 5.8.1: ἐμυσάττοντο δὲ αὐτῶν ὅρωντες τὸ μὲν πρόσωπον καλλωπιζόμενον περιεργότερον ἢ κατὰ γυναῖκα σώφρονα, περιδεραίοις δὲ χρυσίνοις ἐσθῆσι τις ἀπαλαίς; Icks 2011: 100.
162 Herodian 5.5.4: χρυσῷ καὶ λίθους πολλὰς τιμίας, ἦν το αὐτῶ τὸ σχῆμα μεταξὺ Φοινίσσης ἱερᾶς στολῆς καὶ χιλιῆς Μηδικῆς. Ρωμαϊκὴν δὲ ἡ Ἑλληνικήν πάσαν ἐσθήσα ἐμυσάττετο, ἐρίου φάσκοιν εἰργάσθαι, πράγματος εὐτελοῦς· τοὺς δὲ Σηρῶν ὑφάσματα μόνοις ἠρέσκετο.
163 Dio 79.5.5: καὶ γὰρ ἠνδρίζετο καὶ ἠθηλόντε καὶ ἔπασχεν ἑκάτερα ἀσελγέστατα.
the relationship.\textsuperscript{164} This was not unusual, as Elagabalus was only fourteen years of age when he ascended to the throne; an appropriate age for one to engage in passive sexual activity. Nevertheless, the perception of Elagabalus’ boyish sexual behaviour was that it was not appropriate for an emperor.\textsuperscript{165} Accordingly, both as a result of his youth and oriental desires, Elagabalus refused to display any moderation, particularly when it came to his sexual desires, which was associated with a good emperor.\textsuperscript{166} Dio writes that the young emperor ‘used his body both for doing and allowing many strange things, which no one could endure to hear of.’\textsuperscript{167} Further to this, Dio wrote that Elagabalus would visit taverns by night, endeavouring to play the prostitute.\textsuperscript{168} While this not only suggests that Elagabalus reduced himself to the level of a prostitute, something thought to be inconceivable for any respectable Roman male, it also alludes to Dio’s view, mentioned earlier, that Elagabalus played the passive role and showed no restraint when it came to his morality.

As Herodian appears to show reluctance throughout his *History* to discuss sexual matters in relation to any emperor, much of the historian’s discussion on the young Elagabalus’ effeminacy and sexual passivity manifests itself in his youthful attractiveness.\textsuperscript{169} The following passage appears early in Herodian’s narrative of the young emperor, occurring prior to Elagabalus’ accession:

\begin{quote}
He was in the flower of his youth, and in beauty he surpassed all others of the same age. Since he combined youth, beauty, and fine dress, he made men think of a beautiful picture of the young Bacchus … His youthful beauty attracted the eyes of all … The soldiers used frequently to come into the city, and, visiting the temple to attend service there, took pleasure in watching the young man.\textsuperscript{170}
\end{quote}

This passage is certainly reminiscent of the allure of youth discussed in section II.iii. Much like those youths who were said to stand at the acme of physical desirability, Elagabalus is described as being in in the ‘flower of his youth’ (ηλικίαν ἀκμαῖος). In this passage, Elagabalus is presented as a youth of great desire, and this beauty caught the attention of older men, the soldiers. Here Herodian draws on the idea that youths were thought to be vulnerable to being sexually corrupted by older men. At the same time, these dances in which Elagabalus displays his youthful beauty are described as being

\textsuperscript{165} Icks 2011: 100; Kemezis 2016: 11.
\textsuperscript{166} Kemezis 2016: 12.
\textsuperscript{167} Dio 80.13.2: πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἄτοπα, ἃ μὴτε λέγων μὴτε ἀκούων ἃν τις κατερήσειν, καὶ ἔδρασε τῷ σώματι καὶ ἔπαθε.
\textsuperscript{168} Dio 80.13.2-3; Icks 2011: 101.
\textsuperscript{169} Icks 2011: 104; Kemezis 2014: 246.
\textsuperscript{170} Herodian 5.3.7-9: ἣν δὲ τὴν ἡλικίαν ἀκμαῖος καὶ τὴν ὄψιν τῶν κατ᾿ αὐτὸν ὑφαινότατοι μειράκιων πάντων, ἐς τὸ αὐτὸ δὴ συνιόντων κάλλους σώματος, ἡλικίας ἀκμῆς, ἄβροδος σχῆματος, ἀπείκασεν ἄν τις τὸ μειράκιον Διονύσου καλάς εἰκόνιν ... καὶ τῆς ὄρας αὐτοῦ πάντων τὰς ὄψιν ἐς ἀντινὴν ἐπιτηροῦσιν ... φοιτῆτες οὖν οἱ στρατιώται ἐκάστοτε ἐς τὴν πόλιν, ἐς τὸν νεόν ἱδείς ἡρησκείας δὴ χάριν, τὸ μειράκιον ἴδεως ἐβλέπον.
Furthermore, Herodian includes references to his luxurious attire and extravagant ways, stating that the combination of his ‘physical beauty, bloom of youth, and splendor of attire’ produced ‘the same effect’. Here Herodian intends to stress the lack of moderation shown by Elagabalus both as a result of the vices associated with his youth and the corruption of his oriental ways. As such, Herodian puts forward his perception that Elagabalus’ Eastern mannerisms, in combination with his youth, was the cause of his immoral behaviour. In associating Elagabalus’ failures with both his youth and his Eastern effeminacy, both Dio and Herodian showed how the young emperor was unfit for imperial office. The young emperor displayed none of the moderation associated with a good emperor, and represented the problems of an unrestrained youth guided by his oriental debauchery. Elagabalus’ reign could simply not be taken seriously. These historians construct a narrative that presents Elagabalus as a youthful tyrant whose reign was one of chaos from the beginning. The view of each of these writers was that there was no turning point for the young emperor. By the nature of his character and his age, he was immoral. Thus, in line with the second technique, the folly of these young emperors was as much a result of the youth as it was their corrupt and effeminate nature.

IV. Conclusion

When writing about either youths or emperors, Roman historians and biographers could employ a number of different characteristics in order to explain and condemn certain behaviour. As was discussed in section I, the type of activities a youth engaged in could be used against them if moderation was not observed as expected of an emperor. Indeed, the reception of these activities also depended on the author’s personal opinion. For Emperors, there was much expectation placed on how they behaved, with moderation being the ideal virtue, and overindulgence being least desired. These imperial virtues or vices were used by historians and biographers to explain the respective emperors’ actions. The specific virtues or vices discussed were chosen dependent on the narrative the author wished to construct, and often used to contrast against the virtues and vices of a predecessor.

For a youthful emperor, there is little doubt that both the techniques presented in the introduction could be employed by ancient writers in order to condemn their behaviour. As was shown in Section III, two structures used in various histories and biographies use an idea of youth and the emperor’s immoral nature in order to construct a negative portrait of the young emperors. The first technique, turning points, is easily seen in Dio and Herodian’s accounts of Commodus’ enthusiasm for

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171 Herodian 5.3.8.
gladiatorial hunting, and Dio and Suetonius’ accounts of Nero’s passion for theatre. In Herodian and Dio’s presentation of Commodus reign, and the latter’s narrative on Nero’s regime, the respective emperor’s vices grow out of their unrestrained youthful behaviour. This is also true for Suetonius’ Nero, as the youth transitions from a harmless, but licentious, youth to a despotic ruler. As such, youth is presented as the cause of the later development of an oppressive nature. Thus, a turning point is used in order to explain the transition from a spoilt, yet harmless youth, to a corrupt and immoral Roman emperor.

In the second technique, youthful behaviour and immoral nature are combined. In Philo’s account of Caligula, the young emperor’s reign is presented as chaotic, with his youthful impulses and madness contributing to his brutality towards Philo and his fellow Alexandrian Jews. Dio and Herodion’s account of Elagabalus likewise presents the emperor’s youth and barbaric oriental behaviour as being the root cause of his immorality. This image of a youthful emperor corrupted not only by his youthful impulses, but also by his nature, was intended to create a chaotic portrait of his reign, further stressing the inherent tyrannical nature of the young Eastern emperor. Clearly, the approaches were designed to present the respective emperor in a negative light. Whether an emperor began as simply a youth indulging in traditional pastimes or was clearly a megalomaniac youth from the outset, their continuing youthful antics demonstrated their unsuitability for imperial rule. This was especially so when combined with the corruption of their natural character. As such, certain games, leisure, and pleasures associated with youth could be of use to ancient authors in order to construct narratives that reflected their view of the problems of a youthful ruler.
CHAPTER THREE

JUVENILE DELINQUENTS: NARRATIVES OF YOUTHFUL CRUELTY

I. Introduction
Narratives of cruel emperors are ubiquitous in the accounts of Roman imperial history. Each emperor’s reputation in posterity relied on the extent to which he was perceived as being cruel, whether due to war, rebellion, paranoia, or his inherent nature. Put simply, a classic good emperor did not put Romans to death without cause, and they most certainly did not kill senators. The traditional bad emperor, however, was characterised by tyrannical tropes, most commonly saevitia (‘cruelty’).1 It is clear that, no matter the age of the emperor, each individual ruler was judged according to what makes a civilis princeps.2 The young emperors I have discussed throughout this thesis traditionally fall into the category of bad emperors, with the exception of Alexander Severus and Gordian III. It is understandable, then, why the accounts of the reigns of these emperors are made up of narratives of cruelty. Just like their older counterparts, their lives and reigns were damned by historians and biographers, and their varying degrees of cruelty perceived as the embodiment of their regimes.

This chapter will discuss the differences in perceptions of cruelty of the young and old emperors. Three categories of cruelty have been identified, and will be discussed:

1. Political murders and traditional tyranny;
2. Playful or childish cruelty; and
3. Youthful tyrants

These three sections will examine the different types of cruelty exhibited by imperial personalities, and how descriptions of these acts differ between older rulers and the youthful emperors. It will show that the narratives in histories and biographies associated with older emperors generally lack the random and chaotic qualities that characterise the actions of the young emperors: capriciousness, sadism, and insolence. Furthermore, the tales of cruelty in connection with older emperors lack the elaborate detail and inventiveness that often appears in accounts of young emperors. Thus, the nature of the cruel acts associated with the young emperors differs in scope from those of their older counterparts and represents an escalation in their depravity. Ultimately, it will be argued that the narratives of cruelty of the young emperors are attributed to both the traditional association between youth and ferocitas (‘impetuosity’) in contemporary Roman

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1 OLD s.v. saevitia
2 See Wallace-Hadrill 1982 for discussion on the civilis princeps.
thought, and the use of cruelty and savagery as a rhetorical device when writing about bad emperors.³

II. Models of Impetuous Youths

An impetuous nature was the mark of youth in Roman thought. As Eyben has shown, this association between youth and ferocitas is attested by a number of writers, and appears to have constituted an enduring paradigm throughout Roman history.⁴ Ferocitas is defined in a sense as ‘excessive spirits’, ‘aggressiveness’ or ‘insolence’.⁵ For Romans such as Cicero and Seneca, each age possessed its own temperament.⁶ Moreover, these were different ‘for every stage of life, one for a baby, another for a youth, another for an old man.’⁷ Cicero describes these constitutions, assigning a specific characteristic to each age:

Life’s race-course is fixed: Nature has only a single path and that path is run but once, and to each stage of existence has been allotted its own appropriate quality (tempestivitas); so that the weakness (infirmitas) of childhood, the impetuosity (ferocitas) of youth, the seriousness (gravitas) of middle life, the maturity (maturitas) of old age – each bears some of Nature’s fruit, which must be garnered in its own season.⁸

Youth’s association with traits of passion, heat and impetuosity only furthers this. As Eyben notes, the characteristics of the Latin words ardor (‘heat’, ‘impatience’), fervor (‘ardour’, ‘passion), and calor (‘zeal’, impetuosity’) were believed to be instilled in Roman youths.⁹ Examples of this behaviour are commonplace throughout Roman history. Dionysius of Halicarnassus provides an early account (c. 461 BC) of what allegedly occurred to a man named Lucius and his brother Volscius when they happened to venture into the Suburra: ‘At first they laughed at us and abused us, as young men when drunk and arrogant are apt to abuse the humble and poor.’¹⁰ Acts of violence like this perpetrated by the young men of Rome frequently occurred following gatherings, after which they sought to work off their constrained aggression.
The Roman playwright Plautus wrote how, in his day, such disruptive behaviour had become ‘habits of youth’ (*iuventutis mores*). This concern is likewise expressed in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, written nearly four centuries later, in which Photis advises Lucius to return home early from a party, because ‘there is a rabble of well-born youths that disturb the public peace.’ Additionally, Juvenal writes of an encounter between a man and a youth who claimed that he could not sleep until he fought with someone, as ‘it takes a brawl or two to send him to sleep.’ Clearly the connection between youths and a need to rebel and cause havoc was constant throughout Roman history. Indeed, an interesting example of misbehaving youths comes from the late fourth century Church Father Augustine. Though this text is later than the period with which this thesis is concerned and focusses on Pauline theology, it serves as an excellent example for what drives a youth to act in such an impetuous manner. Commenting on a theft he and his peers carried out as youths, Augustine writes:

> A pear tree there was near our vineyard, laden with fruit, tempting neither for colour nor taste. To shake and rob this, some lewd young fellows of us went, late one night … It was foul, and I loved it; I loved the self-destruction, I loved my fall, not the object for which I had fallen but my fall itself.

This final line is particularly interesting. Augustine illustrates the motive of a youth who seeks out trouble, or simply carries out acts of cruelty. They are driven only by the pleasure they get by inflicting injury or destruction on another. Clearly these traits of passion and impulse were all inextricably linked to the essential character of youth. That is not to say all youths acted this way. But for upper class youths who had the time and money to spare, spending their free time partying and pulling what they considered to be pranks was a reasonable pastime. While these views likely reflect the reality of young rebellious young Romans, it also formed a literary cliché exploited not only by poets, but also by historians and biographers. As part of this topos, these youths were zealous and arrogant, and their behaviour was associated with black humour, mockery, and humiliation. Their violence knew no limit, and was

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13 Juv. 3.281-2: *ergo non aliter poterit dormire; quibusdam somnum rixa facit.*
14 August. *Conf.* 2.4: *arbor erat pirus in vicinia nostrae vineae, pomis onusta, nec forma nec sapore inlecebrrosis. ad hanc excutiendum atque asportandum nequissimi adulescentuli perreximus nocte intempesta … foeda erat, et amavi eam; amavi perire, amavi defectum meum, non illud, ad quod deficiebam, sed defectum meum ipsum amavi, turpis anima et dissiliens a firmamento tuo in exterminium, non dedecore aliquid, sed dedecus appetiens. I owe this reference to Eyben 1993: 107.*
15 Cf. Cic. *Sen.* 38: ‘For just as I approve of the young man in whom there is a touch of age (*adulescentem in quo est senile aliquid*), so I approve of the old man in whom there is some of the flavour of youth (*senem in quo est aliquid adulescentis*).’ Imperial examples include Alexander Severus and Gordian III (see Chapter One).
often characterised by an abundance of energy and desire; it was due to this excessive energy or impulse that a youth’s behaviour was often viewed as excessive.

Octavian, the future emperor Augustus, is the perfect illustration of an impetuous youth who outgrew this behaviour once he obtained supreme power at Rome. Although Octavian was thirty-two years of age when he became sole ruler of the Roman Empire and accepted the name Augustus, his aggressive political career began at the tender age of nineteen. As Yavetz states, the behaviour of Octavian throughout his life can be described as follows: ‘[He] was cruel in his youth; sensible, forgiving, and accommodating at the height of his power, and suspicious in old age.’ Of importance here is the link between Octavian’s youth, and his cruel nature. To begin with, both Suetonius and Dio record an anecdote in which Octavian was said to have collected the severed head of Brutus following the Battle at Philippi and sent it to Rome. Suetonius further comments on Octavian’s behaviour in the aftermath of Philippi, writing that the youth was ‘savage in his treatment of prominent captives, not even sparing them insulting language.’ Another narrative recorded by both Suetonius and Dio is one in which a father and son who were forced to draw lots to decide who should be slain. Most violently, Suetonius writes of a rumour that, following his victory over Lucius Antonius at Perusia, Octavian had three hundred senators and equestrians killed on the Ides of March. Moreover, the biographer states that Octavian allegedly ordered the torture of the praetor Quintus Gallius and, prior to his execution, tore ‘out the man’s [Gallius’] eyes with his [Octavian’s] own hand.’ While these anecdotes are often exaggerated, they form part of the larger portrayal of Octavian. Most notably, they allow for a turning point in the youth’s narrative as he matures into a clement and just princeps. The tutor of Nero, Seneca, perhaps attaches the most blame to Octavian during this period, writing that at the age of twenty-two Octavian had already carried out proscriptions and ‘had already buried his [Octavian’s] dagger in the bosom of

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18 It is important to note that Nicolaus of Damascus presents a more favourable account of Octavian’s youth. As a close associate of the emperor, Nicolaus’ work is best considered with caution due to his lack of impartiality and critical judgment (Edmondson, 2009: 8). Additionally, the works of Seneca, Suetonius, and Dio provide interesting accounts for the purpose of this thesis, as they have written their accounts in hindsight. Thus, they are able to provide accounts of Octavian as a youth with full knowledge of the evolution of the principate and the dangers of a youth as emperor (Edmondson, 2009: 8).
19 Suet. Aug. 13.1; Dio 47.49.2; Wardle 2014: 131-2.
21 Suet. Aug. 13; Dio 51.2.5-6; Wardle 2014: 132-3.
22 Suet. Aug. 15.1.
23 Suet. Aug. 15, 27.4: prius oculis eius sua manu effossis.
24 Wardle 2014: 130, 134.
friends.'

Nonetheless, Seneca does make an allowance for this cruelty by placing responsibility on Octavian’s youthful hotheadedness. Further, and of most importance, is that Seneca comments that, with age and maturity, Octavian, then Augustus, outgrew this impetuous behaviour: ‘But when he had passed his fortieth year, and was staying in Gaul, intelligence was brought to him that Lucius Cinna … was plotting against him.’ After much consultation with friends and advisors, Octavian showed clemency towards Cinna, thus demonstrating the maturity that came with age. Contrastingly, in the De Ira, Seneca stresses the arrogance and cruelty of an older Octavian, writing that he ‘beheaded three hundred persons in one day, [and]… strutted among the corpses with the proud air of one who had done some glorious deed worth beholding.’

Despite these anecdotes varying in degrees of Octavian’s responsibility, they provide an outlet for the authors to describe what they perceived as the ferocious behaviour of a young man. Indeed, this behaviour bears a resemblance to the literary depictions of Octavian’s descendants Caligula and Nero. Just like his descendants, Octavian is depicted as toying with the lives of others, deriving pleasure from their suffering, and engaging in capricious and unnecessary acts of cruelty. While these violent actions occurred during a time of great turmoil, they are notable in that these negative representations of the first Roman emperor only occur in the context of his youthful career. Though the ancient sources do not explicitly discuss Octavian growing out of these tendencies, the transformation from a ruthless young general to a benevolent leader is certainly reflective of Octavian’s changing nature.

In works such as those written by Dio and Suetonius, this change certainly allowed the authors to explain away Octavian’s more savage behaviour as part of his youth. Thus, Octavian’s reputation was only restored with his acquisition of age and experience.

It is certainly true that as Octavian gained more power he was able to suppress negative representations of himself. However it is interesting that in both contemporary and non-contemporary literature, this savage behaviour ascribed to his youthful career remains. This suggests that the thematic link between youth and ferociousness was strong enough to allow this material to survive despite the reimagining of Octavian’s image later in life.

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26 Sen. De Clem. 1.9.1: cum hoc aetatis esset, quod tu nunc es, duodevicensimum egressus annum, iam pugiones in sinum amicorum absconderat.
28 Sen. De Clem. 1.9.1: sed cum annum quadragensimum transisset et in Gallia moraretur, delatum est ad eum indicium L. Cinnam … insidias ei struere.
III. The Actions of a Princeps: Political Murders and Traditional Tyranny

The way in which an emperor was seen to treat his subjects plays a large role in determining how he was portrayed in later histories and biographies. In particular, these perceptions focus on whether the emperor demonstrated clementia (‘clemency’) or saevitia (‘cruelty’). The history of the Roman Empire is rich in tales of emperors displaying clemency, much to the approval of the populace and the senate, and of tyrannical emperors showing their cruel nature. The cruelty or despotic nature of the individual ruler is defined in Latin by terms such as saevitia. The Greek equivalents include words such as ὀμότης (‘savageness’), ἀσέλγεια (‘violence’; ‘licentiousness’), and μιαιφονία (‘bloodthirstiness’).

With this in mind, the narratives of the Roman emperors can now be examined. Many different types of cruelty are prevalent in histories and biographies. Typically both good and bad emperors exercised some sort of politically motivated cruelty; contrastingly only bad emperors would be associated with deaths of the public as a result of unjustified cruelty. As sole rulers of a vast empire, it was inevitable that an emperor would have to deal with an uprising or conspiracy at one point in his reign. Further, attempts on the emperor’s life often went hand in hand with an increase in his paranoia, as he went to extreme lengths to prevent attempts on his life. Thus, this section will show that both old and young emperors alike executed individuals for political reasons. Though these acts may be presented as either the saevitia (‘cruelty’) of a tyrant or the severitas (‘severity’) of a good emperor, the narratives have much in common with how they are portrayed.

Older emperors and young emperors alike were guilty of ‘cruelty’ in both these senses. For those who would become part of the tradition of ‘good’ emperors, politically motivated deaths would often be presented as a necessary, but reluctant, form of imperial severity. Severitas was an ambiguous quality, possessing both positive and negative connotations. The following passage from Tacitus’ Histories best illustrates the distinction between severitas and saevitia:

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36 OLD. s.v. clementia 1a; OLD. s.v. saevitia 1, 2a and b, 3, 4; For further discussion on imperial policies of clemency and the use of severitas or saevitia, see Dowling 2006: 169-218.
37 See table 1. See Dunkle (1971:14-15) for further discussion on the rhetorical tyrant.
38 LSJ. s.v. ὀμότης 1; LSJ. s.v. ἀσέλγεια 1; LSJ. s.v. μιαιφονία 1.
39 Dunkle 1971: 15-16.
40 OLD. s.v. severitas 1a.
41 Cf. Table 1 in which Alexander Severus, Caligula, and Nero are positively associated with severitas; Ware 2014: 103.
42 OLD. s.v. severitas 1a.; See Dowling 2006: 7-8 for further discussion.
For what others call crimes he calls reforms, and, by similar misnomers, he speaks of strictness (severitas) instead of barbarity (saevitia), of economy instead of avarice, while the cruelties and affronts inflicted upon you he calls discipline.\textsuperscript{43}

This severitas was generally recognised as a Roman virtue associated with the exercise of power over another, and thus must be approached with care and moderation.\textsuperscript{44} For, as this passage illustrates, it can so easily be construed as barbarity.\textsuperscript{45} Nonetheless, as Table 1 illustrates, severitas was not one of the favoured virtues.\textsuperscript{46} It is unsurprising, then, that executions are rarely mentioned in the account of the so-called good emperors. Nonetheless, executions, mainly political, did occur, and were only excused as they were attributed to imperial severitas. The death of Helvidius Priscus is mentioned in Dio and Suetonius as one of the few instances in which Vespasian ordered an execution as a result of his opposition to the emperor.\textsuperscript{47} Though few other names are recorded, Suetonius’ comment that the emperor ‘wept and sighed over those who suffered merited punishment,’ suggests that a number of individuals were sentenced to death throughout Vespasian’s reign.\textsuperscript{48} Even the venerated emperor Marcus Aurelius reluctantly executed a number of individuals as a result of a rebellion of Avidius Cassius. Both Dio and the Historia Augusta comment on this, the former going on to note that Marcus only executed those who were clearly guilty.\textsuperscript{49} Thus, as these examples illustrate, severitas encompasses the necessary sternness and authority of an emperor.

For those who would later be regarded as bad emperors, such as the majority of our young emperors, severitas would often take the form of saevitia, and was fuelled by paranoia. As Dunkle notes, the term saevitia is linked with despotism, and refers to the ‘savagery’, ‘barbarity’ and ‘beast-like ferocity’ of a tyrant.\textsuperscript{50} As would be suggested by its definition, the use of the term saevitia typically involves the perception of an unnecessary or callous death at the hands of another. This likewise appears to be the case for the Greek terms ὀμότης, ἀσέλγεια, and μιαιφονία. Respectively defined as ‘savageness,’ ‘violence,’ and ‘bloodthirstiness,’ these terms tend to be used when an unnecessary or savage death occurs.\textsuperscript{51} The young emperors Caligula and Commodus were part of this tradition, as were the older emperors Tiberius, Domitian, and Hadrian. For these

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{43} Tac. Hist. 1.37.19-22: nam quae alii scelera, hic remedia vocat, dum falsis nominibus severitatem pro saevitia, parsimoniam pro avaritia, supplicia et contumelias vestras disciplinam appellat.
\textsuperscript{44} Val. Max. 6.3.
\textsuperscript{45} Ware 2014: 102-3.
\textsuperscript{46} See Table 1; cf. Ware (2014: 102) discussing the emperor Aurelian, writing that ‘severity is expected against the enemy, but Aurelian went too far so that his subjects could not distinguish between crudelitas and severitas.’
\textsuperscript{47} Dio 66.12; Suet. Vesp. 15; Tac. Hist. 4.5.
\textsuperscript{48} Suet. Vesp. 15.1: ceterum neque caede cuiusquam unquam laetatus iustis suppliciis inlacrimavit etiam et ingemuit.
\textsuperscript{49} Dio 73.28.3; SHA. Marc. 25.6.
\textsuperscript{50} OLD. s.v. saevitia 1, 2a and b, 3, 4; Dunkle 1971: 4, 14.
\textsuperscript{51} Refer to Table 2.
\end{footnotesize}
emperors, their reputations were shaped by stories of murder and deceit as a result of political
tension, or military conflict, and even their inherent nature.

Caligula’s reign is often portrayed as tumultuous as the young emperor quickly descends into
madness. Arguably Caligula is presented as perhaps the most depraved and horrifying of the young
emperors. Due to this reputation, the ancient literature provides ample examples of Caligula’s
tendency towards cruelty. Dio writing that the young emperor ‘fell to plotting against many more
persons than ever...’\textsuperscript{52} Fifteen names are provided by Dio and Suetonius, and many of these deaths
were the result of failed conspiracies.\textsuperscript{53} Not long after his succession, Caligula ordered the death of
Tiberius’ grandson Tiberius Gemellus, his father-in-law Silanus, and the praetorian prefect Macro.
Though the exact reason for their deaths is unknown, modern scholars have speculated that it was
the result of a possible conspiracy, or the young emperor simply removing threats to his position.\textsuperscript{54}
In 39, the \textit{maiestas} trials returned and a number of individuals were executed as a result of these.
Dio provides an ample list of those who were punished under these trials, including Gaetulicus and
Lepidus.\textsuperscript{55} Though a number of these deaths may be ‘justified’ under different circumstances, the
reintroduction of such trials was not a decision that was favoured. Consequently, these deaths
played a significant role in the damnation of Caligula’s memory and in the construction of ‘Caligula
the Tyrant’ by imperial historians and biographers. Nonetheless, such acts of cruelty were not
uncommon throughout the history of the Empire and, thus, were not unique to the young Roman
emperors.

Indeed, the use of \textit{maiestas} trials is arguably one of the most infamous policies of Tiberius’ reign.
Under this law, many Romans were condemned for treason. Tacitus illustrated two early cases that
would foreshadow the cruelty to follow:

\begin{quote}
It will not be unremunerated to recall the first, tentative charges brought in the case of
Falanius and Rubrius, two Roman knights of modest position; if only to show from
what beginnings, thanks to the art of Tiberius, the accursed thing crept in, and, after a
temporary check, at last broke out, an all-devouring conflagration.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{52} Dio 59.18.1: \textit{ἐξαναλωθεὶς γὰρ ἐς αὐτὴν πολλὴ πλεῖοσι διὰ τὸς οὐσίας ἐπεβούλευσεν}; Cf. Suet. \textit{Calig.} 38 and Joseph.
\textit{A.J.} 19.3.
\textsuperscript{53} Refer to table 3.
\textsuperscript{54} Barrett 1989: 66.
\textsuperscript{55} Dio 59.22.5; Dio 59.22.7.
\textsuperscript{56} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 1.73.1: \textit{haud pigebit referre in Falanio et Rubrio, modicis equitibus Romanis, praetemptata crimina, ut quibus initis, quanta Tiberii arte gravissimum exitium inreperit, dein repressum sit, postremo arserit cunctaque
corripiuerit, noscatur.}
Both these men’s alleged crimes were hardly treasonous. Falanius was accused of admitting a pantomime actor and catamite, Cassius, among the ‘votaries of Augustus’, and had included a statue of Augustus when selling some gardens.\(^{57}\) As for Rubrius, he was put on trial for violating the numen of Augustus through perjury.\(^{58}\) Though these two men were eventually released, Tacitus perceives this as a warning of the evils to come; namely, that Romans would be put on trial for petty reasons, and the emperor’s paranoia would cost them their life. Following the conspiracy and death of Sejanus, Tiberius’ paranoia grew and a number of Romans were executed as a result. Tiberius acted ruthlessly towards the supporters of Sejanus, but few were executed without trial.\(^{59}\) Scullard notes that, throughout Tiberius’ twenty-two years of rule, sixty-three people were condemned as part of the maiestas trials.\(^{60}\)

For Commodus, his development of cruelty began early in his youth, as he was ‘led into lustful and cruel habits, which soon became second nature.’\(^{61}\) It was perceived by imperial historians and biographers that it was the youth’s innate character that led him to murder. Interestingly, though, in the first half of Commodus’ reign, the murders that take place are often linked with a political motive. Mostly, they are a result of a number of conspiracies, including the conspiracy of Lucilla, followed by Perennis, the insurrection of Maternus, and the death of Cleander.\(^{62}\) Monetary gain is also often linked with many of the deaths during Commodus’ reign, though threat of a conspiracy is typically mentioned as a possibility, as the following passage from Dio illustrates:

Commodus likewise killed the two Quintilii, Condianus and Maximus; for they had a great reputation for learning, military skill, brotherly accord, and wealth, and their notable talents led to the suspicion that, even if they were not planning any rebellion, they were nevertheless displeased with existing conditions.\(^{63}\)

Clearly, there is little evidence here of outrageous cruelty on the part of the Emperor, especially when the numbers are attributed to many conspiracies that were plotted against him and the jealousy of the emperor himself. Though the deaths are large in number, they initially lack a sense of chaos in Dio, Herodian, and the Historia Augusta, and only later become part of the young

\(^{57}\) Tac. Ann. 1.73.1.  
\(^{58}\) Tac. Ann. 1.73.1.  
\(^{59}\) Tac. Ann. 6.1-27.  
\(^{60}\) Scullard 2013: 281.  
\(^{61}\) Dio 73.1: καὶ ὑπ’ άυτῶν ἄγνοια τὸ πρώτον τοῦ κρείττονος ὁμαρτών ἐς ἐθος...  
\(^{62}\) On Lucilla: Dio 73.4.4; Herodian 1.8; SHA. Comm. 5.7; On Perennis: Dio 73.9; Herodian 1.9; SHA. Comm. 6; On Maternus: Herodian 1.10; SHA. Comm. 7; On Cleander: Dio 73.12-13; Herodian 1.13; SHA. Comm. 7.1.  
\(^{63}\) Dio 73.5.3: ἐφόνευσε δὲ καὶ τοὺς Κοντιλίους, τὸν τε Κονδιανόν καὶ τὸν Μάξιμον: μεγάλην γὰρ ἔχον δοξάν ἐπὶ παιδεία καὶ ἐπὶ στρατηγεία καὶ ὁμοφροσύνη καὶ πλοῦτο. ἐκ γὰρ δὴ τῶν προσόντων σφίσει ὑποπετέοντο καλῶν, εἰ καὶ μηδὲν νεώτερον ἐνενόουν, ἀρχέσθαι τοῖς παρόδισι.
emperor’s tyrannical nature as the need to condemn Commodus develops within the narrative.\(^{64}\)

This is likely because of the political nature of these deaths. Rather than them being seen as a senseless murder, the youth is portrayed as acting out his role as emperor in quelling and preventing rebellions.

Vespasian’s youngest son Domitian possessed a similar reputation to Commodus, as many political murders were viewed as unjust due to his less than favourable reputation among senators. In fact, his memory suffered *damnatio memoriae* as a result of this alleged cruelty, as these executions were perceived by ancient writers as representing his hatred of the senate. Irrespective of his posthumous reputation, it remains that Domitian faced a number of conspiracies during his principate and became increasingly paranoid.\(^{65}\) As a result, a number of Romans were executed or exiled, including Antonius Saturninus, who was killed following an unsuccessful revolt; another, Vettulenus Civica Cerealis, proconsul of Asia, was condemned for allegedly attempting a revolution.\(^{66}\) In total, thirteen named individuals were executed under Domitian as a result of conspiracies or rebellions.\(^{67}\) Moving into the early second century, Hadrian too was responsible for a number of politically charged executions.\(^{68}\) As Table 2 shows, eight names are recorded throughout Dio’s *Roman History* and the *Historia Augusta*, though it is alleged that he put a number of others to death.\(^{69}\) However, unlike Domitian, Hadrian is regarded by authors such as Dio as a good emperor, despite these murders.\(^{70}\) Clearly the interpretation as to whether the emperor showed *severitas* or *saevitia* depends predominantly on the posthumous reputation of the emperor.\(^{71}\) As the young emperors discussed throughout this thesis are part of the tradition of tyrannical emperors, it is understandable why any executions throughout their principate are presented as cruel, ruthless, and driven by unsubstantiated paranoia.\(^{72}\) Nonetheless, associating deaths under the reign of any emperor as a sign of either his *severitas* or *saevitia* was a common topos in the tradition of Roman rhetoric. While this distinction is still found in writings on young emperors’ reigns, what distinguishes them from their older counterparts is the sadistic and chaotic form much of their cruelty takes.

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\(^{64}\) It is only at 1.14.7 of Herodian that these murders are called ‘illegal’. Though Dio groups these killings in with Commodus’ “unseemly deeds”, the historian reluctantly states that many of these murders were the result of conspiracies formed against the emperor. In this way, they differ from the latter narrative in which Commodus kills Romans in the arena (Dio 73.19.3-6). The *Historia Augusta* discusses the conspiracies throughout the *Life*, however it is only after Cleander’s death at 7.1 that the youth’s cruelty begins to become chaotic.

\(^{65}\) Suet. Dom. 10.2; cf. Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 3.

\(^{66}\) Tac. Agr. 42; Suet. Dom. 10.

\(^{67}\) Jones 1992: 184; Refer to Table 4.

\(^{68}\) Birley 1997b: 95.

\(^{69}\) SHA. *Hadr.* 23.8.

\(^{70}\) Dio 69.23.2-3.

\(^{71}\) Birley 1997b: 31–33.

\(^{72}\) Dunkle 1971: 15, 18, 19.
IV. Boys being Boys: Playful Cruelty

It is true that any emperor could be perceived as cruel. However, there are elements that are unique to youthful emperors, and can be found only in narratives of their reign. Most notable is presence of more severe cruelty, as the ancient authors combine innate cruelty with the impetuosity and ferocity of youth. Thus, for older emperors, their narratives of cruelty often revolve around political tension, including conspiracies and the emperor’s paranoia, or military conflict, such as war and rebellion. Rarely do these narratives suggest that this behaviour was purely for the emperor’s amusement. By contrast, narratives of cruelty for the young emperors Elagabalus, Nero, and Caligula, exemplify the amusement of the youth.

Though many of the young emperors are presented as excessively and unnecessarily cruel, Elagabalus is portrayed as even more elaborate and capricious, being accused of crimes ranging from causing chaos among the masses to releasing wild animals on unsuspecting guests. Clearly in all accounts of Elagabalus’ reign, the narratives of apparent cruelty are presented as exaggerated and, to an extent, comical. As a character, Elagabalus is presented as completely uninterested in acting out the role he was given, to govern and rule the empire. Instead, he prefers to spend his time singing, dancing, and carrying out all kinds of dubious games and pranks. The last of these, his games and pranks, is where Elagabalus’ narratives of cruelty come into play. As Mary Beard writes, ancient authors “repeatedly use laughter, and the transgressions of its codes and conventions, to define and calibrate different forms of cruelty and excess, the very opposite of civilitas.” Dio, Herodian, and the Historia Augusta present different narratives of the reign and character of Elagabalus. Each author focuses on specific traits that bring out his perception of the youth’s failure as a ruler, his impetuous character, and the unjust nature of his power. Unlike in the Historia Augusta, Elagabalus does not appear playful or childlike in Dio and Herodian’s narratives. Instead, the narrative is centred on the stereotypical bad ruler, one in whose reign, as Dio comments, ‘everything got turned upside down.' Furthermore, and of most importance, both these authors focus intently on Elagabalus’ unsuitability to rule. For Dio, this focus is directed towards the youth’s Syrian nature, a connection which is particularly evident in the following passage:

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74 Icks 2011: 95.
75 Icks 2011: 92-122.
76 Beard 2014: 132.
77 Dio 80.7.2: οὕτω γὰρ ποιον πάντα ἰνώ κάτω συνεχόθη; Kemezis 2014: 145.
78 Andrade 2013: 27.
I will not describe the barbaric chants which Sardanapalus, together with his mother and grandmother, chanted to Elagabalus, or the secret sacrifices that he offered to him, slaying boys and using charms, in fact actually shutting up alive in the god’s temple a lion, a monkey, and a snake, and throwing in among them human genitals, and practising other unholy rites, while he invariably wore innumerable amulets.79

This is one of the few instances in book 79 where Dio comments, or even makes mention, of the youthful emperor’s cruelty.80 Elagabalus’ childish nature and even outrageous acts of cruelty, discussed in the Historia Augusta below, are omitted in favour of cruelty influenced by the emperor’s Syrian nature.81 Ultimately, it is this violent characteristic, rather than Elagabalus’ youth, which Dio intends to illustrate Elagabalus’ inability to rule. For Herodian’s Elagabalus, focus is also placed on the youth’s Syrian nature, along with his incompetence to rule and irresponsible behaviour.82 A number of anecdotes are included in the biographer’s work which are intended to highlight the young emperor’s insolent and sadistic behaviour.83 In particular, Herodian writes of an instance of Elagabalus’ youthful cruelty, beginning at 5.6.9:84

Climbing to the huge, lofty towers which he had erected, he [Elagabalus] threw, indiscriminately, cups of gold and silver, clothing, and cloth of every type to the mob below … Many lost their lives in the ensuing scramble, impaled on the soldiers’ spears or trampled to death.85

It is important to note that this narrative is intended to be an account of Elagabalus distributing missilia. Typically the scattering of missilia took place at games and shows, when the populous were gathered in a crowd.86 In comparison to other accounts of missilia distribution,87 Herodian twists the narrative when he writes of the vast number that lost their lives as a result of this distribution. Though there is no indication in Herodian’s text that the results were premeditated, the

79 Dio 80.11: ἵνα δὲ παρά τάς τε βαρβαρικάς ὁδός ὥς ὁ Σαρδανάπαλλος τῷ Ἐλαγάβαλῳ ἴδε τῇ μητρὶ ἁμα καὶ τῇ τήθη, τας τε ἀπορρήτους θυσίας ὥς αὐτὸ ἐδοκε, παίδων σφαγιαζόμενος καὶ μαγγανεύσας χρώμενος, ἄλλα καὶ ἐς τὸν ναόν αὐτοῦ λέοντα καὶ πίθηκον καὶ δριφνί τινα ἐκ Γακτακλείσιας, αἰδοία τε ἀνθρώπου ἐμβαλών, καὶ ἄλλ’ ἀτα ἀνοσιοφηγην, περιπάτοις τέ τις μυρίος ἀεὶ ποτε χρώμενος.
80 Andrade 2013: 322-3.
83 In particular, Herodian (5.7.6) writes of a number of instances of more personally motivated violence in Elagabalus’ resentment towards Alexander’s tutors. He writes that Elagabalus ‘banished Alexander’s teachers from the imperial palace; he put to death some of the most distinguished and sent others into exile’. Nonetheless, both these instances of cruelty are attributed to violence more typical of a bad emperor than that of a youth.
84 Ikcs 2011: 105
85 Herodian 5.6.9-10: μετὰ δὲ τὸ καταγεγομεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἠδρασα εν τῷ ναῷ τας τε προερημήνες θυσίας καὶ πανηγύρες ἑπετελει, πόργοις τε μεγίστως καὶ υψιλοτάτως κατασκευάζας, ἦν τε ἐπ’ αὐτοῦς, ἐρρίπτει τοὺς ὀχλους, ἀρραβεῖν πάσην ἐπιτρέψαι, ἐκκοματο τε χρυσά καὶ ἀργυρὰ ἄσθητας τε καὶ ὀθόνας παντοδαπάς … ἐν δὲ τας ὀρθαγαῖς πολλοί διαθείροντο, ὑπὸ το ἅλληρον πατοῦμενοι καὶ τοῦ δόρατι τῶν στρατιωτῶν περιπάτοντες.
87 Accounts of missilia: Suet. Ner. 11-12 (Nero); Dio 66.25.5 (Titus); Suet. Dom. 4.5 and Dio 67.4.4 (Domitian); Dio 69.8.2 (Hadrian).
idea behind the action is clear. Herodian intends to put forward the image of an emperor who wishes to see his subjects fight each other for luxurious items, or, at least, one who is too careless to rule as emperor. Even if the deaths were not intended, the unsuitability and impetuous nature of the emperor remains. Both Dio and Herodian’s accounts are particularly interesting, because, while other aspects of Elagabalus’ vices are accentuated, his cruelty and even his childlike playfulness are downplayed. The few anecdotes that Dio includes present political violence, which is then perceived as personally motivated violence in Herodian.

It is in the Historia Augusta that we find the most elaborate accounts of Elagabalus acting like a callous youth, rather than simply an incompetent ruler. When reading the Life of Elagabalus it is clear that the author of the Historia Augusta saw the youth as little more than a puppet emperor. Indeed while his grandmother and mother ruled the empire, Elagabalus preferred to treat the empire as his personal play-thing. The Historia Augusta writes of an incident in which Elagabalus harnessed women to a wheelbarrow and ‘would drive them about, usually naked himself, as were the women who were pulling him.’ Actions like this are typical of the Historia Augusta’s Elagabalus. Unlike Dio and Herodian’s Elagabalus, the young emperor’s actions are exaggerated, as the youth in the Life of Elagabalus is overly fond of practical jokes. Accordingly in place of the impetuous Syrian of Dio’s account and the accidental chaos stirred up in Herodian’s narrative, Elagabalus prefers to suffocate dinner guests under a blanket of violets and other flowers. The young emperor even went to extreme lengths to frighten his dinner guests, as the Historia Augusta notes:

When his friends became drunk he would often shut them up, and suddenly during the night let in his lions and leopards and bears — all of them harmless — so that his friends on awakening at dawn, or worse, during the night, would find lions and leopards and bears in the room with themselves; and some even died from this cause.

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88 Icks 2011: 105.
89 Icks 2011: 105.
90 Sidebottom 1997b: 2810. Here Sidebottom attributes this to Elagabalus receiving the wrong type of paideia, ‘an alien paideia’ (1997b: 2810). Thus, Elagabalus’ dedication to barbaric practices is the focus of the narrative.
91 SHA. Elagab. 2.1; SHA. Elagab. 12.3; Icks 2011: 108.
92 SHA. Elagab. 29.2: sic vectatus est, sed plerumque nudus, cum illum nudae traherent.
94 Mader 2005: 140.
95 SHA. Elagab. 21.5.
96 SHA. Elagab. 25.1-3: ebrios amicos plerumque claudebat et subito nocte leones et leopards et ursos exarmaatos inmittebat, ita ut expergefacti in cubiculo eodem leones, ursos, pardos cum luce vel, quod est gravius, nocte inventirent, ex quo plerique exanimati sunt.
Before continuing, it is important to note that the *Historia Augusta*’s Elagabalus is not a typical example. Rather, his character is presented as an extreme version of both youth and tyrant in order to stress the incompetence of the emperor and the speed with which his reign collapses.\(^{97}\) The comedic element of Elagabalus’ actions only further illuminates the two sides of the young ruler: his youth and his tyrannical nature. As Mary Beard argues, the autocrat possesses the power to make his jokes become reality: ‘the tigers and so on were harmless, but the guests died anyway.’\(^{98}\) Thus, along this same line, many of the ‘jokes’ presented in the *Historia Augusta* are malicious, and are included to emphasise the cruelty of the young emperor.\(^ {99}\) Indeed Elagabalus’ childish pranks act as a perfect illustration of an anxiety found throughout the entirety of the *Historia Augusta*. Namely, that youths and children should not be emperor.\(^{100}\) Anything from their inexperience to their rashness was used to highlight this point.\(^ {101}\) Thus, keeping with this anxiety, Elagabalus is presented as going beyond the cruelty of the political murders of a stereotypical bad emperor. The young ruler is said to have released snakes when the populous was assembled for games, causing great injury to his amusement.\(^ {102}\) He then went on to bind dinner guests to a water-wheel and ‘by a turn of the wheel, plunge[d] them into the water.’\(^ {103}\) Less extreme were his pranks in which he would ‘sit on air-pillows instead of cushions and would let the air out while they were dining, so that often diners were suddenly found under the tables.’\(^ {104}\) Elagabalus’ acts that are presented as cruelty for the sake of cruelty in the *Historia Augusta* appear as the actions of an impetuous youth and differ significantly from other narratives of cruelty in Dio and Herodian.

As illustrated in Section II of this chapter, nightly revels were a particularly common activity for rowdy youths to engage in. This did not stop with the emperor. Indeed Caligula, a young Lucius Verus, prior to his accession, and Nero were frequently alleged to have been involved in youthful street violence. Suetonius alleges that Caligula would disguise himself so as to indulge in his many vices, including gluttony, adultery, and in order to seek out musical performances.\(^ {105}\) The *Historia Augusta*’s Lucius Verus would also indulge in such activities during his youth, with the author of this work commenting that young Verus would wander the streets at night disguised in a cap, ‘revel

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\(^{97}\) Mader 2005: 141.
\(^{98}\) Beard 2014: 129.
\(^{100}\) The speech of Nicomachus (HA *Tac. 6.1-9*) clearly illustrates the *Historia Augusta*’s aversion to child emperors, as it discusses the positive aspects of choosing a mature and seasoned man as emperor, while contrasting this with the negatives of a young princeps. As youths, these emperors were governed by their rash and impetuous nature. Emperors such as Elagabalus were perfect illustrations of this; Hartke 1951: 190-1, 218-220.
\(^{101}\) Icks 2011: 110.
\(^{102}\) SHA. *Elagab.* 23.2.
\(^{103}\) SHA. *Elagab.* 24.5: *rursusque in summum revolvebat eosque Ixiones amnicos vocavit.*
\(^{104}\) SHA. *Elagab.* 25.2-3: *primus denique invenit sigma in terra sternere, non in lectulis, ut a pedibus utres per pueros ad reflandum spiritum solverentur.*
\(^{105}\) Suet. *Calig.* 11.
with various rowdies, and engage in brawls…’106 Most notably, Nero’s nocturnal delinquencies are mentioned by Dio, Suetonius, Pliny the Elder, andTacitus, with these authors commenting that the youth would frequently prowl through the city at night, often inciting violent brawls and riots.107 The accounts of these three emperors act as perfect illustrations of the negative literary construction of young emperors and their impetuous nature. Of Nero’s transgressions, Dio writes:

Secretly, however, he carried on nocturnal revels throughout the entire city, insulting women, practising lewdness on boys, stripping the people whom he encountered, beating, wounding, and murdering … but he would be recognised both by his retinue and by his deeds, since no one else would have dared commit so many and so serious outrages in such a reckless manner.108

The final line in this passage is interesting, particularly when looking at it in context of the nightly revels of the young emperors mentioned. Though he is both youth and emperor, the emperor was expected to be above such frivolities. It is expected that Caligula, Verus, and Nero’s behaviour should be moderate and virtuous, much like the older good emperors, despite their young age. They are not given any room for youthful error. This perception furthers the depravity presented by both historians and biographers. If the young emperors were ordinary youth this behaviour, though frowned upon, would not be presented in such a negative light. It is only perceived as depraved, tyrannical behaviour because they are emperor.109 Returning to Nero, Suetonius goes further than Dio in describing these events, writing that the emperor went ‘about the streets playing pranks, which, however, were very far from harmless.’110 Here, Nero is clearly depicted as possessing the same animalistic desire for cruelty that is so often seen in writings about Caligula.111 Yet his actions are presented as more extreme than any of his predecessors. Everyday activities, including simple ventures into the city, are stained with instances of cruelty. Clearly Nero’s actions are presented as a combination of the barbaric cruelty of saevitia, and thus a tyrant, and that of a youth.112

If we look back at the stories recounted early in section II of this chapter, the connection between these young emperors’ actions and those of a typical rowdy youth can be seen. Though Elagabalus

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106 SHA. Ver. 4.6: comissaretur cum triconibus, committeret rixas. The Historia Augusta (SHA. Gall. 21.6) likewise has Gallienus roving through the streets at night, commenting that ‘he used to frequent public-houses at night, it is said, and spent his life with pimps and actors and jesters (nam et semper noctibus popinas dicitur frequentasse et cum lenonibus, mimis scurrisque vixisse)


110 Suet. Ner. 26.1: circumque vicos vagabatur ludibundus nec sine pernicie tamen...


112 Dunkle 1971: 15, 18.
and Nero’s actions are certainly more vicious in most instances, the same motive remains: cruelty for pleasure. Just like the youth in Juvenal’s narrative, Elagabalus and Nero’s innate cruelty is presented as only being demonstrated by such pranks. Moreover, in line with the words that Augustine writes, ‘I loved the self-destruction, I loved my fall, not the object for which I had fallen but my fall itself,’ one can see how imperial historians and biographers writing on the young emperors, including Caligula, Nero, and Elagabalus, would view such childish, yet malicious, behaviour as not keeping with the behaviour of a *civilis princeps*.\(^{113}\) These accounts all differ from cruelty perpetuated in a political setting. Though executions ordered by an emperor may be viewed differently depending on their reputation after death, they all lack the chaotic and juvenile qualities found in those done purely for pleasure.

V. More than Just ‘Boys being Boys’?: Youthful Tyrants

Key features of the accounts of the emperors over the course of their life differentiate the way their cruelty is viewed. Most notable is the escalation in cruelty and depravity. While this is something that is seen with many of the young emperors, this section will focus on Caligula, Commodus, and Caracalla. These emperors are presented as more capricious and sadistic, more in line with a traditional tyrant. Their narratives of cruelty are viewed as a mixture of pranks and barbarity, transforming them from a cruel youth to a capricious tyrant over the course of the narrative. As Beard puts it, ‘the jokes of an autocrat can be literally murderous.’\(^{114}\)

For Caligula, who was 25 when he ascended to the throne, the tales of his cruelty are indicative of the ancient writers’ tendency to invent and exaggerate narratives of cruelty. Suetonius in particular has a propensity towards this. In his *Life of Caligula*, the biographer records two narratives of interest among the vast catalogue of the young emperor’s cruelties.\(^{115}\) The first of these stories, at section 27 of the *Life*, describes how Caligula, in an attempt to be conservative with money, fed criminals to the wild beasts, which would take part in the gladiatorial show, in place of their regular food.\(^{116}\) In the same section Suetonius recounts the second of these stories, in which an equestrian was said to have been condemned to the beasts. In this instance the man protested his innocence, and, as a result, Caligula ‘took him out, cut off his tongue, and put him back again.’\(^{117}\) This anecdote bears a resemblance in severity and apparent senselessness to a similar story Suetonius

\(^{113}\) Augustine. *Conf.* 3.4: *amavi perire, amavi defectum meum, non illud, ad quod deficiebam, sed defectum meum ipsum amavi*. See Wallace-Hadrill (1982) for a discussion on what makes a *civilis princeps*.

\(^{114}\) Beard 2014: 132.

\(^{115}\) Suetonius notes (*Calig.* 27.1) that these two narratives ‘demonstrate his [Caligula’s] innate animal savagery’ (*saevitiam ingenii per haec maxime ostendit*). This translation is adapted from Edward’s edition.


\(^{117}\) Suet. *Calig.* 27.4: *Equitem R. obiectum feris, cum se innocentem proclamasset, reduxit abscisaque lingua rursus induxit.*
told of Octavian where he tore out Gallius’ eyes.\textsuperscript{118} Clearly, both these narratives, drawn from the accounts of youthful rulers, illustrate the capriciousness, sadism, and insolence that older emperors lack. There is a sense of elaborate detail and inventiveness that allows the ancient authors to illustrate an escalation in depravity.\textsuperscript{119} Dio provides accounts of similar stories. The historian claims that due to a shortage of criminals, Caligula ordered that some Roman citizens should be seized and fed to the beasts. To prevent them crying out, the young emperor had their tongues removed.\textsuperscript{120} Further, Dio presents an alternative version to Suetonius’ account of the accidental death of twenty-six equestrians, claiming that the young Caligula had, in fact, ordered their execution.\textsuperscript{121} Although this incident appears to have been accidental, it is present in both texts as part of a discussion on Caligula ‘the monster’. Indeed, Dio presents these deaths as deliberate, describing them as a capricious massacre organised by the young emperor.\textsuperscript{122} Despite these differing stories, the perception of cruelty remains, whether fictitious, exaggerated, or otherwise. They present Caligula as the central figure in a tale of capricious violence in which individuals are massacred. No political motive for this cruelty is presented, as in the instances previously discussed in section III.

For 19-year-old Commodus, the stories of his cruelty become more frequent as the narrative progresses, and appear to emphasise the youth’s descent into depravity.\textsuperscript{123} The most intriguing acts of cruelty in the accounts of Commodus’ reign, especially when compared to older counterparts, are those described as ‘humorous moments.’\textsuperscript{124} The \textit{Historia Augusta} pays particular attention to these acts. The author recounts that the youth ‘put a starling on the head of one man’ whose few white hairs resembled worms on his head.\textsuperscript{125} This causes the man’s head to fester ‘through the continual pecking of the bird’s beak.’\textsuperscript{126} The author goes on to recount more abhorrent tales, writing:

One corpulent person he cut open down the middle of his belly, so that his intestines gushed forth. Other men he dubbed one-eyed or one-footed, after he himself had plucked out one of their eyes or cut off one of their feet.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{118} Suet. \textit{Aug.} 15, 27.4; Wardle 2014: 211.
\textsuperscript{119} Barrett 1990: 230-1.
\textsuperscript{120} Dio 59.10; Suet. \textit{Calig.} 26.4.
\textsuperscript{121} Dio 59.10.2.
\textsuperscript{122} Dio 59.10.2-3; Barrett 1989: 232.
\textsuperscript{123} Hekster 2002: 1-2.
\textsuperscript{124} SHA. \textit{Comm.} 10.3: \textit{in locis quoque perniciosus}.
\textsuperscript{125} SHA. \textit{Comm.} 10.4: \textit{nam eum, quem vidisset albescentes inter nigros capillos quasi vermiculos habere, sturno adposito, qui se vermes sectari crederet, capite suppuratum reddedbat obtumsonie oris}.
\textsuperscript{126} SHA. \textit{Comm.} 10.4.
\textsuperscript{127} SHA. \textit{Comm.} 10.5-7: \textit{pinguem hominem medio ventre dissicuit, ut eius intestina subito funderentur. monopodios et luscinos eos, quibus aut singulos tulisset oculos aut singulos pedes fregisset, appellabat.}
In comparison to Commodus’ earlier cruelty, this passage represents a change in the way that the young emperor was portrayed.\textsuperscript{128} Clearly, for the authors of these works, there was no political motive, nor paranoia, or military conflict that caused these acts of cruelty. According to the writers recording Commodus’ reign, these were the acts of a petulant ruler, done purely for the amusement of the younger ruler.

Caracalla follows this pattern, though there is less concern for establishing a ‘descent’ into cruelty in accounts of his reign. Rather Dio, Herodian, and the \textit{Historia Augusta} present a common framework from which Caracalla’s cruelty develops, namely, Caracalla’s rivalry with his brother Geta. During the final sections of their narrative of Septimius Severus’ reign, both biographers and the historian introduce the brothers’ rivalry, which eventually develops into a struggle for power.\textsuperscript{129} Herodian describes this antagonism at length, commenting:

The two brothers were contentious from the beginning; as children they had been rivals over quail fights and cockfights, and had had the usual childish quarrels.\textsuperscript{130}

Caracalla’s childish envy and ruthlessness eventually culminate in the murder of Geta, after which Caracalla’s cruelty only escalates. His attention now focussed on his brother’s friends, Caracalla begins a purge of suspected supporters. Dio alleges that the tally of victims surpassed 20,000, while Herodian comments that ‘no one who had the slightest acquaintance with Geta was spared’.\textsuperscript{131} In both Herodian and the \textit{Historia Augusta}’s accounts, Caracalla’s cruelty quickly expands to an empire-wide level. Herodian lists a number of victims, including Cornificia (Commodus’ sister), Plautilla (his wife), Severus (his first cousin), the son of Pertinax, the son of Lucilla, and any governors and procurators friendly to Geta.\textsuperscript{132} This paranoia then extended to his visit to Alexandria, where he massacred Alexandrian youths because of rumours that the citizens ‘made many jokes at the emperor’s expense about his murdering his brother.’\textsuperscript{133} The \textit{Historia Augusta} adds to this narrative, detailing Caracalla’s massacres in Alexandria, Gaul, and Raetia.\textsuperscript{134} Though these acts are more violent than many narratives discussed throughout this chapter, and certainly more far-reaching, they likewise demonstrate the unjust nature of his rule. Caracalla’s violence, stemming from a long-held rivalry with his brother, eventually becomes part of the youth’s very

\textsuperscript{128} Hekster 2002: 138.
\textsuperscript{129} Sidebottom 1997b: 2808-9.
\textsuperscript{130} Herodian 3.10.3: πρὸς τε ἄλληλους ἐστασιάζον οἱ ἀδέλφοι, τὰ πρῶτα μὲν ὑπὸ παιδαριώδους φιλονεικίας δι’ ὀρτύγων μάχας καὶ ἀλεκτρυονίων συμβολάς πάλις τε παιδών ἄλληλους έρίζοντες.
\textsuperscript{131} Dio 77.4.1; Herodian 4.6.2; SHA. \textit{Carac.} 4.3.
\textsuperscript{132} Herodian 4.6.3-4.
\textsuperscript{133} Herodian 4.9.3: πολλὰ τούν ἐκείνων αὐτῶν σκοφόστων ἐξ τε τὴν τοῦ ἀδέλφου ἀναίρεσιν…
\textsuperscript{134} SHA. \textit{Carac.} 5.1-2 (Gaul), 5.4 (Raetia), 6.2-3 (Alexandria).
nature. This childish competitive behaviour is not left behind once Caracalla becomes emperor, or even after Geta’s death. Thus, though these violent actions are not done exclusively for Caracalla’s amusement, they are a commentary of the failure of the youth as ruler, as he lacks the maturity and self-control expected of an emperor.

This behaviour, and that of Caligula and Commodus, recalls the rowdy behaviour associated, as Plautus writes, with ‘habits of youth’ (*iuventutis mores*). Their behaviour may be viewed along the same lines as a traditional bad ruler, one who abuses his power and prays on the weak. This is certainly true, as Caligula, Commodus, and Caracalla were, after all, emperors of Rome and, as such, were posthumously subjected to the *topoi* chosen by the ancient authors. But what separates these narratives from other narratives of tyrannical cruelty is the sense of amusement and almost childish desire to cause trouble. For Caligula and Commodus, this childish amusement is particularly prominent; for Caracalla, the focus is placed on a childish rivalry and desire to surpass his brother Geta, even after his death. These narratives separate the young emperors from those of their older counterparts, from whose accounts the narratives are absent. Clearly, these accounts all provide examples of how what would initially be construed as the typical cruel nature of a bad emperor is taken to extremes in the case of the young emperors. Further, they often are presented in a more sadistic light, which slowly intensifies as the nature of the acts become more extreme and even comical. The all-encompassing nature of these acts, as they become a part of the emperor’s very nature, suggests that they also serve as a commentary on the failure of the youth as a ruler, his unjust nature, and unacceptable exercise of power. It is not a coincidence then that the most depraved and outlandish narratives belong to the youngest ‘bad’ emperors. Their youth, coupled with their unsurpassed and unrestrained power, is clearly perceived as nurturing the violent and insolent nature already associated with young men.

VI. Peter Pan Syndrome: Emperors Who Don’t Grow Up

The one exception to the differing nature of the cruel emperors is Domitian. Ascending to the throne at the age of thirty, Domitian does not conform to the definition of a young emperor presented in this thesis. However, ancient accounts of his reign do present narratives of cruel acts done purely for pleasure. Of most interest is a dinner-party held by Domitian. Dio writes:

> At first he set beside each of them a slab shaped like a gravestone, bearing the guest’s name and also a small lamp, such as hang in tombs. … After this all the things that are commonly offered at the sacrifices to departed spirits were likewise set before the

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guests, all of them black and in dishes of a similar colour. Consequently, every single one of the guests feared and trembled and was kept in constant expectation of having his throat cut the next moment … Thus, after having passed the entire night in terror, they received gifts.\(^{137}\)

It is important to note that anecdotes such as this one, in which Domitian displays cruelty for pleasure’s sake, are scarce in accounts of his reign. Dio, however, makes an exception in order to provide an example of ‘black comedy’ that suggests that Domitian had a morbid sense of humour. The inclusion of this narrative by Dio may be seen as an attempt to characterise Domitian not only as a stereotypical bad emperor, but also in the same youthful light as Nero. Many of the reforms initiated by Vespasian following 69 focussed on distancing the Flavian regime from the memory of Nero.\(^{138}\) It is understandable, then, why those writing about Domitian’s regime may wish to associate the infamous ruler with the tyrant his family succeeded. Juvenal once referred to Domitian in his *Fourth Satire* as *caluus Nero* (‘bald Nero’).\(^{139}\) Here, the poet suggests that both Nero and Domitian were alike in their behaviour, and ‘it was only Domitian’s baldness that differentiated him’ from Nero.\(^{140}\) As Charles wrote, ‘Domitian, when he was depicted as another Nero, thus received the ultimate condemnation.’\(^{141}\) However, this particular anecdote in Dio presents a unique example for how ancient authors may have drawn upon Nero’s more youthful behaviour, principally those classified as ‘pranks’ rather than cruelty, and used it to add to the condemnation of Domitian.

In addition, the ancient authors stress that Domitian did not mature once he became emperor, in contrast to his brother Titus, and thus possessed a perpetually childish nature. This association between Domitian and a playful behaviour allows Dio to emphasise the illegitimacy and incompetency of his reign. As this thesis has demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, many factors associated with young emperors, and consequently their youth, illustrated the perception that they were not suitable to govern.\(^{142}\) Although Domitian had emerged from this youthful phase upon taking the purple, Dio’s representation of him certainly suggests that the last of the Flavian

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\(^{137}\) Dio 67.9.1-5: καὶ πρῶτον μὲν στήλην ταφοειδή ἐκάστῳ σφῶν παρέστησε, τὸ τε ὅνομα αὐτοῦ ἔχουσαι καὶ λυχνούχου μικρὸν, οἷος ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις κρεμανται … καὶ μετὰ τόῦτο πάνθ’ ὀσπαρ ἐν τοῖς ἐναγίμμασκαθαγῆς εἶται, καὶ ἐκείνοις μέλανα ἐν σκέυοις ὑποκείσχθησθαι καὶ φοβεῖσθαι καὶ τρέμειν καθ’ ἐκαστὸν αὐτῶν πάν ταυς, ἀεὶ τε ὄνομοι ἄνθροι αὐτῶν ἐν σκέπασθαι προσδέχεσθαι … καὶ ἐκεῖ ὕποι πάσης τῆς νυκτὸς φοβοῦσαν τὰ ὅσια ἔλαβον.


\(^{139}\) Juv. *Sat.* 4.38.

\(^{140}\) Charles 2002: 19.

\(^{141}\) Charles 2002: 20.

\(^{142}\) See Chapter One (Guiding Youths) and Chapter Two (Youths and Leisure) for discussions on the inability of youths to rule.
emperors had not matured when he became emperor, as would have been expected. Do not hallucinate.

Domitian was 18 years old when his father Vespasian became emperor in 69, and in early 70 he was named Caesar alongside his brother Titus. He spent the next eleven years holding this title, as heir to both Vespasian and Titus. As Caesar, Domitian was appointed praetor with consular power and, with the guidance of Mucianus, represented the family in the senate. Initially, as Tacitus writes, Domitian had ‘no care as yet for his duties; but with debauchery and adulteries he played the part of the emperor’s son.’ Even after acquiring power, Domitian devoted himself to literature, feigned madness, and ‘spent most of his time at the Alban Villa and did many absurd things, one of them being to impale flies on a stylus.’ This behaviour certainly resembles the most outrageous or mad antics written about Domitian during his reign, such as the black dinner. It is the similarity between these narratives that suggest that Domitian is being portrayed as a perpetual child, along with his tyrannical nature, and thus not fit to rule.

Domitian’s portrayal is in contrast to his older brother, Titus. As Caesar, and head of the Praetorian Guard, Titus committed many atrocities that left much for the Roman people to desire. Though not necessarily youthful transgressions, as he was older than 30 years, Titus was accused of acting ‘in a somewhat arrogant and tyrannical fashion’, behaviour more traditionally associated with later representations of his young brother. Suetonius extensively details tales of the elder Flavian son’s transgressions, including a number of individuals he put to death, and his promiscuous and unchaste lifestyle. From these action ‘he incurred such odium at the time that hardly anyone ever came to the throne with so evil a reputation or so much against the desires of all.’ This behaviour was certainly not expected of the heir to the empire, and many feared that the eldest of Vespasian’s sons would become a second Nero. Yet when Vespasian died and left Titus as his successor, the new ruler stepped up and assumed the behaviour appropriate of an emperor. As Dio writes:

143 McEvoy (2013: 301) presents a similar idea in reference to the child-emperors of the late Roman west. She states that ‘as long as the emperor remained passive – content, effectively, to remain a child – it did function’. Thus, even as adults, those emperors who ruled for a significant period, such as Honorius, were effectively possessed a perpetually child-like nature.
144 Jones 1992: 14-5.
146 Tac. Hist. 4.2.1: nondum ad curas intentus, sed stupris et adulteriis filium principis agebat.
149 Suet. Titus 6.1, 7.1; Jones and Milns 2002: 104-5.
151 Suet. Titus 7.1: ‘In short, people not only thought, but openly declared, that he [Titus] would be a second Nero.’ (denique propalam alium Neronem et opinabantur et praedicabant.), Jones 1984: 86.
Titus after becoming ruler committed no act of murder or of amatory passion, but showed himself upright, though plotted against, and self-controlled, though Berenice came to Rome again. This may have been because he had really undergone a change.  

In this introductory passage to Titus’ reign, Dio stresses that the emperor ruled virtuously throughout his short reign. However, the historian is also under no illusion that, as Caesar, Titus’ character left much to be desired. Dio struggles to find a reason for this change, suggesting later in the passage that Titus’ premature death was perhaps a blessing, as his true nature might have been revealed had he reigned any longer. Another suggestion, illustrated above, is that Titus did undergo a change in character, and matured as he assumed greater responsibility. Suetonius likewise comments on Titus’ character change, writing that Titus won ‘the affections of all men, and that, too, which is no easy task, while he was emperor; for as a private citizen, and even during his father’s rule, he did not escape hatred, much less public criticism’. In this way the representation of Titus is certainly similar to Octavian/Augustus, discussed in section two. As Tatum notes, ancient authors must have ‘observed parallel between the ruthlessness of Octavian the triumvir and the cruelty of Titus the prefect of the praetorian guard…’ Both these emperors were rebellious or impetuous during their youth, and only matured when they became emperor. In this way, these men, who would be seen by posterity as ideal rulers, grew into the role of emperor, and embodied what was expected of the princeps. Thus, there is a clear difference in the perception of Domitian as Caesar and then as Emperor, and Titus as both Caesar and Emperor. Though Titus’ reputation was not exemplary prior to his succession, ancient historians and biographers attest to a change that occurred once he assumed the role. Essentially, upon becoming emperor, Titus ‘grew up’. On the other hand, Domitian’s character remained the same both prior to and after his accession. Along with his tyrannical nature, Domitian’s refusal to mature and act as emperor no doubt added to the damnation of his memory, in the same vein as Nero and Commodus. Clearly, this is a singular example of how the nature of an impetuous youth is used in the narrative of an older emperor to demonstrate an escalation in depravity.

152 Dio 66.18.1-2: ὁ δὲ δὴ Τίτος οὐδὲν οὔτε φονικὸν οὔτε ἐρωτικὸν μοναρχῆς ἔπραξεν, ἀλλὰ χρηστὸς καὶ περὶ ἐπιβουλευθῆς καὶ σώφρον καὶ τῆς Βερενίκης ἐς Ῥώμην αὖθις ἐξοδύσος ἐγένετο. τάχα μὲν γὰρ ὅτι καὶ μετεβάλετο...
153 Dio. 66. 18.3-5; Wardle 2001: 66.
154 Jones 1984: 115.
155 Suet. Titus 1.1: tantum illi ad promerendam omnium voluntatem ... et, quod difficillimum est, in imperio, quando privatus atque etiam sub patre principe ne odio quidem, nedum vituperatione publica caruit.
156 Tatum 2014: 162.
VII. Conclusion

The concept of narratives of cruelty is a complex one. This chapter has explored the differences and similarities in perceptions of cruelty of young and old emperors in imperial histories and biographies. It has suggested three main types of portrayal – political murders, playful cruelty, and youthful tyrants. While any emperor, both young and old, were accused of committing political murders, only young emperors were presented as showing playful cruelty or were portrayed as youthful tyrants.

An emperor could be faced with a number of reasons to execute an individual throughout his reign, with political reasons being the most common. It was inevitable that any emperor would have to deal with conspiracies, rebellions, and treason. So, the key point that would define an emperor within the narratives as either saevus or severus was the posthumous reputation of the emperor: was he a benevolent ruler or a tyrant? Nonetheless, these executions were just that – politically motivated deaths. Older emperors and young emperors alike were guilty of condemning any number of individuals throughout their reign. What separated them from each other is the escalation in cruelty and the appearance of elaborate and inventive tales for the latter.

The second category, playful cruelty, is unique to the young emperors. A combination of those tales associated with a ferocious youth and an incompetent emperor, these narratives were built upon the basis of capriciousness, sadism, and insolence. As section IV illustrates, they were designed to come across as random and chaotic reflections of those stories found in accounts of everyday Roman youths. The young emperors Elagabalus, Caligula, and Nero, were presented as both traditional bad emperors and stereotypical youths in histories and biographies. It is for this reason that they were more likely to attract accusations of more playful cruelty and violence, albeit still extreme, than their older counterparts. These exaggerated and often fantastical narratives allowed the authors to strengthen their case against the unjust nature of the youthful rulers’ principates.

Lastly, young emperors were also viewed as youthful tyrants. An escalation of cruelty over the course of a young ruler’s reign was particularly indicative of this. Using Caligula, Commodus, and Caracalla as examples, this section demonstrated how the narratives of cruelty become more depraved as each respective emperor’s reign went on. Ultimately, narratives of cruelty in their histories and biographies were presented as a mixture of pranks and barbarity. Their extreme youth, combined with unrestrained power, was evidently viewed as nurturing the violent and insolent nature already associated with young Roman men. Over time, these emperors were transformed from cruel youths to capricious tyrants. Thus, as part of the construction of an inept and unjust
ruler, the nature of the acts of cruelty associated with the young emperors differs in scope from those of their older counterparts in order to emphasise an escalation in their depravity.
CONCLUSION

The very concept of a period of youth is not easily defined. Much like modern interpretations of age, ancient Rome did not possess a straightforward or universal age at which a boy became a youth, and a youth a man. Certainly, a boy was said to become a man after donning the toga virilis, but the exact age at which this occurred varied from individual to individual. Perhaps this is the reason why youths were regarded with such ambiguity. The problem this thesis has sought to answer lies in the portrayal of youthful Roman emperors by imperial historians and biographers. The character and reign of the young emperors provided imperial writers with an abundance of material to either condemn or praise their principate in accordance with the expectations of an emperor. As youths, they were perceived as impetuous, immoral, and incompetent. As emperor, they were either moderate and virtuous, such as Gordian III, or licentious and defined by excess, such as Caligula and Elagabalus.

This thesis has argued that Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio, Herodian, and the Historia Augusta used three characteristics of youth to condemn certain negative aspects of the young emperors’ reigns. It has demonstrated how, alongside the traditional rhetoric associated with praise and condemnation of emperors, the age and youthful behaviour of these emperors played a role in excusing or judging their licentious behaviour. The first of these characteristics, a youth’s need for guidance, was discussed in Chapter One. In this chapter the different types of advisors to a youth and emperor were examined. Here, it was shown that the ideal advisor for a youth was an older, virtuous, and successful Roman man who would be able to guide him towards virtue and away from vice. Ambitious and conniving men who sought to gain something from a youth were not viewed as good advisors, and women, who were typically viewed as bad advisors, were only ever presented as positive influences if they sought out virtuous men to guide their sons, as was the case with Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. For an emperor, the advice of honourable and capable elite men was also highly valued. Whether the emperor accepted advice from these skilled Roman men, or chose to listen to less suitable individuals, such as eunuchs, ambitious men, or women, often would influence how he would later be portrayed, particularly if such advice would lead to the downfall of the emperor. As both young Roman and emperor, much focus was placed on the young emperors’ use of advisors and guardians. Section II addressed the continuity of this theme between poetry and imperial histories and biographies. Clearly the idea that youth would slip from their path without guidance continued to be stressed in both contemporary works, such as Calpurnius Siculus’ fourth Eclogue, and imperial histories, such as Tacitus’ Annals, and biographies, like the Historia Augusta. Certainly there is a difference in aims when presenting this theme, as contemporary works tend to
focus on the hope of a new age when praising the emperor, while imperial histories and biographies are interested predominantly in the rise and fall of the emperor, and the reasons for their downfall. However, both these contemporary and non-contemporary works maintain that a young emperor is able to be a virtuous and ideal ruler, so long as guidance is given by an honourable Roman male and accepted by the youth. For the few young emperors who accepted the advice of a good Roman man, such as Gordian III and Nero in the first half of his reign, their principates were often viewed in a more positive light than those who would later reject this guidance.

In section III, we turned to the idea that while it is important to have a good advisor, it is equally important for the young emperor to accept the advice. For Caligula and Commodus, the presence of good guardians was not enough to steer them in the right direction. Rather, these young emperors chose to resist any attempts to guide them towards virtue, instead relying on ambitious men who allowed them to abandon their imperial duties and indulge in luxury and licentiousness. Ultimately, the young emperors who accept the advice of bad advisors are typically used as puppets, as the guardians effectively rule through him. As section IV demonstrated, a woman’s role as an advisor was not so willingly accepted, particularly if they were the mother or grandmother of the emperor. However, the overall representation of the female advisor depended on her position of power. For instance, Caracalla allegedly received much advice from his mother Julia Domna, yet the emperor’s reluctance to accept her counsel is the focus in histories and biographies. This is likely because Julia Domna did not try to rule through her son, but instead, she acted purely as an official. In contrast, Julia Maesa, Julia Mamaea, and Julia Soaemias took on more inclusive roles, with their sons or grandsons, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, acting more as figureheads than emperor. Thus, their total involvement in these young emperors’ lives influenced their negative portrayal in histories and biographies. In addition, a passive youthful emperor who placed himself in the unwavering care of another, such as Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, would similarly be viewed in an unflattering light. Thus, this image of these young emperors as incapable of governing the empire certainly served to position the young emperors and their regimes in an uncontrollable and uncertain role.

Chapter Two discussed the second characteristic of youth, ‘youths and leisure’. Moderatio and restraint were valued commodities for an emperor. For this reason those condemned by historians and biographers typically lacked such virtues. Roman youths were also known for possessing such impetuosity. It is no surprise then that the young emperors were often said to engage in behaviour without restraint. This chapter identified two different ways in which youthful impulses manifested themselves in Roman imperial histories and biographies. The first involves turning points, in which the young emperor transitions from youth to tyrant in the course of the narrative. The historians Dio
and Herodian, and the biographer Suetonius particularly play on this idea in order to present negative representations of a young Commodus and Nero. For both these young emperors their vices, in this case their enthusiasm for hunting and theatre respectively, continue to escalate throughout their reign, culminating in the development of their tyrannical nature. In this way, the authors devise a turning point in order to explain the transition from a spoilt, yet harmless youth, to a corrupt and immoral tyrant.

The second structure combines the young emperor’s youthful behaviour and immoral nature. Caligula is used as an example here, as Philo presents the young ruler’s reign as chaotic. In particular, Caligula’s youthful impulses and madness contribute to his brutality towards Philo and his fellow Alexandrian Jews. Dio and Herodian’s account of Elagabalus likewise presents the emperor’s youth and barbaric oriental behaviour as being the root cause of his immorality. Both these emperors are corrupted not only by their intrinsic nature, but also by their youthful impulses; in this way, the authors intend to stress the inherent tyrannical nature of the youths from the very beginning of their reign. Thus, in using this second technique, the young emperors are presented as inherently evil, with their behaviour and interest in youthful activities mirroring their innate depravity. This emphasised their unsuitability for imperial rule.

Chapter Three discussed the final characteristic of youth with which this thesis is concerned, ‘youthful cruelty’. This chapter identified three specific categories common in imperial histories and biographies – political murders, playful cruelty, and youthful tyrants – the latter two being unique to the young emperors. All the young emperors, with the exception of Alexander Severus and Gordian III, are examples of how the typical cruel nature of a bad emperor is taken to extremes in the case of the young emperors. They are presented in a more sadistic scope, which slowly escalates as the nature of the acts become more extreme and even comical. Ultimately, these narratives were presented as chaotic reflections of the ‘playful’ activities found in accounts of everyday Roman youths. The young emperors Elagabalus, Caligula, and Nero in particular, were presented as both traditional bad emperors and stereotypical youths in histories and biographies. It is for this reason that they were more likely to attract accusations of playful, comical, and ultimately more extreme cruelty and violence than their older counterparts. Thus, these sadistic and often exaggerated narratives of cruelty allowed imperial historians and biographers to emphasise the chaotic nature of the respective young emperor’s reign, and, ultimately, their inability to rule in an effective and just manner.
Young emperors could also be presented as youthful tyrants in imperial histories and biographies. As with the second technique discussed in chapter two, there is no descent into cruelty presented by the imperial authors. Instead, the narratives of cruelty are presented as excessive and extremely violent without any playfulness. Using Caligula, Commodus, and Caracalla as examples, it is easy to see how the narratives of cruelty were viewed as even more depraved than their older counterparts from the outset of their reigns. For all these emperors, their youth, combined with unrestrained power, was clearly presented as nurturing the impetuous and violent nature associated with male Roman youths. Thus, the narratives of cruelty associated with the young emperors’ reigns are presented as more violent and capricious than their older counterparts in order to stress the incompetency and unjust nature of the young emperors’ principates.

From the examination of these characteristics of youth, it is clear that the youth of these emperors was one factor that made them stand above other bad emperors. Reaching the highest office at an age where they typically would not have been allowed to enter political life, these young emperors were perceived as never outgrowing their youthful vices. While there certainly were cultural expectations of youth that might have allowed them to get away with some indiscretions, the Roman elite authors presented the vices that arose from such behaviour as personifying their principates. In saying this, there certainly is a difference in the extent which each respective author chose to stress these youthful vices throughout their history or biography. Although Suetonius and Tacitus were writing much earlier than Dio, Herodian, and the Historia Augusta, the focus on these youthful characteristics does not change over the course of the second to fourth centuries. However, the portrayals are influenced by the aims of the individual author. For Tacitus, the youth of the emperors such as Nero was seen as having an impact of the way he governed. Thus, Nero’s youth, and consequently the vices of youth, was used appropriately to stress the incompetency of the emperor. Dio and Herodian similarly focus on the causes of these emperors downfalls. For Dio and Herodian, youth was one particular trait that influence the more absurd behaviour of an emperor, such as Nero and Commodus. However, in instances where another characteristic was more prominent, such as Elagabalus’ Eastern behaviour, youth took more of a background role when discussing the emperor’s antics. The fourth century Historia Augusta significantly differs from Tacitus, Dio, Herodian, and even Suetonius in regards to the focus placed on youth. For the author of this work, a principal fault of all the young emperors discussed was their youth. Moreover, the author understood that the three characteristics of youth discussed in this thesis were a cause for concern when faced with a young ruler. The similarities between the young emperors of the first three centuries and the child emperors that would rule in later periods was certainly evident to the Historia Augusta. Clearly, because of the experiences of its author, the Historia Augusta saw youth
as another vice that an ideal emperor should not possess. Thus, in the same way that imperial virtues were used by historians and biographers to praise emperors, and vices to condemn them, the three thematic areas associated with youth discussed in this thesis were used to further shape the portrayal of the young emperors. As Sextus Empiricus eloquently surmises, ‘from this we conclude that differences in age also cause different impressions to be produced by the same underlying objects.’\(^1\) Accordingly, their youth was used as part of the rhetoric of praising and condemning emperors in order to illustrate the inability of a youth to rule in line with expectations of imperial power.

\(^1\) Sext Emp. *Pyr.* 1.105-6.
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APPENDIX

Image 1 – Bronze equestrian statue of Domitian from the Sacellum of the Augustales at Misenum¹

Image 2 – Hadrianic *Virtuti Augusti* Medallions²

¹ I owe this image to Tuck (2006: 224).
² I owe this image to Tuck (2006: 239).
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| *Crudelitas* | Suetonius     | 27.1; 30.2; 32.1; 34.1.               | 4     |
| *Saevitia* | Tacitus *Annals* | -                                    | 0     |
| *Severitas* | Suetonius     | -                                    | 0     |

| **Claudius** |               |                                       |       |
| *Saevitia* | Tacitus *Annals* | 13.43.                               | 1     |
| *Crudelitas* | Suetonius     | 15.4; 34.1.                           | 2     |
| *Severitas* | Tacitus – *Annals* | 11.25; 15.21.                         | 2     |
| *Severitas* | Suetonius     | -                                    | 0     |

<p>| <strong>Nero</strong>     |               |                                       |       |
| <em>Saevitia</em> | Tacitus <em>Annals</em> | 14.63; 15.44; 15.62; 15.67; 15.73; 16.10; 16.13. | 7     |
| <em>Crudelitas</em> | Tacitus <em>Histories</em> | 4.8.                                 | 1     |
| <em>Crudelitas</em> | Suetonius     | 29.1; 33.1; 36.1; 38.1.               | 4     |
| <em>Saevitia</em> | Tacitus <em>Annals</em> | 14.56; 15.64; 16.18; 16.25.           | 4     |
| <em>Severitas</em> | Tacitus <em>Histories</em> | -                                    | 0     |
| <em>Severitas</em> | Suetonius     | 26.1                                 | 1     |
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<td>Tacitus - <em>Histories</em></td>
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<td>Suetonius</td>
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<td><strong>Titus</strong></td>
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<td>Suetonius</td>
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<td><strong>Domitian</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saevitia</td>
<td>Tacitus - <em>Histories</em></td>
<td>- (in Vespasian’s <em>Life</em>); 10.1; 10.5; 11.1.</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suetonius</td>
<td>1.1 (in Vespasian’s <em>Life</em>); 10.1; 10.5; 11.1.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Suetonius</td>
<td>8.3.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hadrian</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saevitia</td>
<td><em>Historia Augusta</em></td>
<td>14.11; 24.4.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Tally</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crudelitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>20.3; 23.7.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
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**Antoninus Pius**

<table>
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<tbody>
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<td>Saevitia</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
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<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>11.1 (positive)</td>
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**Commodus**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saevitia</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>4.11; 7.1.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crudelitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>1.7; 1.9; 3.9; 9.5; 15.4.</td>
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**Septimius Severus**

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<td>9.6.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Crudelitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>12.1 (in Clodius Albinus)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>4.1.</td>
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**Caracalla**

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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Crudelitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>3.3; 5.3; 8.8; 9.3; 11.4; 4.4 (in the life of Geta).</td>
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<td>Severitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>11.4 (negative)</td>
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**Elagabalus**

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<tbody>
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<td>Crudelitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Severitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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**Severus Alexander**

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<th>Word</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saevitia</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crudelitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severitas</td>
<td>Historia Augusta</td>
<td>28.2 (positive); 53.1 (positive); 54.5 (positive); 59.5 (positive).</td>
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Table 2 – Language of Cruelty by Work:
Herodian *History After the Death of Marcus Aurelius*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Word</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ὀργίζω ‘Make Angry; Provoke; Irritate’</td>
<td>5.8.7, 7.10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὁμότης ‘Rawness; Savageness’</td>
<td>1.3.5, 1.4.5, 3.10.2, 6.9.8, 7.1.2, 7.4.2, 7.5.6, 7.6.3, 7.7.3</td>
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Dio Cassius *Roman History*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Word</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ὁμότης ‘Rawness; Savageness’</td>
<td>58.22.4, 59.10.3, 59.24.1, 59.25.7, 62b.24a.1, 76.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>ἀσέλγεια ‘Violence; Licentiousness’</td>
<td>59.4.1, 59.24.1, 59.25.7, 59.28.10, 61b.2.3, 61b.8.5, 61b.10.3, 62b.13.3, 62.24.1, 64b.4.2, 64b.2.2, 64.2.1, 64.4.1, 65.8.7, 73.9.1, 74.4.1, 74.6.2, 74.15.4, 77.5.6, 78.24.2, 80.16.7, 80.21.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>μιαιφονία ‘Bloodthirstiness’</td>
<td>58.24.4, 59.4.1, 62.12.1, 62b.13.3, 78.16.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>όργίζω ‘Make Angry; Provoke; Irritate’</td>
<td>78.23.2</td>
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<td>79.17.4</td>
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<td>57.1.1.3</td>
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<td>58.5.4</td>
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<td>58.22.2</td>
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<td>58.27.3</td>
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<td>59.23.4</td>
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<td>59.25.9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>61b.7</td>
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<td>64.21.2</td>
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<td>75.14.1</td>
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<td>77.14.7</td>
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<td>78.11.1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>78.12.6</td>
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<td></td>
<td>79.20.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>σκληρός ‘cruel’</td>
<td>67.1</td>
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<td>69.9 (3.2)</td>
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### Table 3 - Recorded Executions Under Caligula in Suetonius and Dio:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Work Recorded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ptolemy, son of King Juba</td>
<td>Suet. 35.1; Dio 59.25.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Suet. 26.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemellus</td>
<td>Dio 59.1.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publius Afranius Potitus</td>
<td>Dio 59.8.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atanius Secundus</td>
<td>Dio 59.8.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus Silanus</td>
<td>Dio 59.8.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvisius Sabinus</td>
<td>Dio 59.18.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titius Rufus</td>
<td>Dio 59.18.5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junius Priscus</td>
<td>Dio 59.18.5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lentulus Gaetulicus</td>
<td>Dio 59.22.5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lepidus</td>
<td>Dio 59.22.7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sextus Papinius</td>
<td>Dio 59.25.5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betilenus Bassus</td>
<td>Dio 59.25.6.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capito</td>
<td>Dio 59.25.6.</td>
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### Table 4 - Recorded Executions Under Domitian in Suetonius and Dio:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C. Vettulenus Civica Cerialis</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 10.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ser. Cornelius (Scipio) Salvidienus Orfitus</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 10.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Acilius Glabrio</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 10.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Aelius Lamia Plautius Aelianus</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 10.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L.) Salvius (Otho) Cocceianus</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 10.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mettius Pompusianus</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 10.3; Dio 67.12.2-3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sallustius Lucullus</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 10.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. Junius Arulenus Rusticus</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 10.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helvidius</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 10.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Flavius Sabinus</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 10.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Arreacinus Clemens</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 11.1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lucius Antonius Saturninus</td>
<td>Suet. Dom. 6.2; 7.3; Dio 67.11.</td>
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### Table 5 - Recorded Executions Under Hadrian in Dio and the Historia Augusta:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Cornelius Palma</td>
<td>Dio 69.2.5; SHA. Hadr. 7.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Publilius Celsus</td>
<td>Dio 69.2.5; SHA. Hadr. 7.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Avidius Nigrinus</td>
<td>Dio 69.2.5; SHA. Hadr. 7.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusius Quietus</td>
<td>Dio 69.2.5; SHA. Hadr. 7.2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>L. Julius Ursus Servianus</td>
<td>Dio 69.6; Dio 69.17.1; SHA. Hadr. 23.3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Pedanius Fuscus</td>
<td>Dio 69.6; Dio 69.17.1; SHA. Hadr. 23.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apollodorus of Damascus</td>
<td>Dio 69.4.1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Euphrates the Stoic</td>
<td>Dio 69.8.3.</td>
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