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Anthony R. Birley

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Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Zentrale, Podbielskiallee 69–71, 14195 Berlin, Tel: +49 30 187711-0

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ANTHONY R. BIRLEY

A nickname for Commodus and the date  
of Fronto's death

I

Commodus underwent several changes of nomenclature at various stages in his life. Starting as L. (Aelius) Aurelius Commodus in A. D. 161, he added Caesar in 166; in 177 he became Imperator Caesar L. (Aelius) Aurelius Commodus Augustus; on his father's death in 180 he adopted the style Imperator Caesar M. (Aurelius) Commodus Antoninus Augustus; and in 191 he reverted to L. Aelius Aurelius Commodus (Pius Felix Augustus – to which extravagant additions were soon to be made).<sup>1</sup> So much is clear enough; but a minor puzzle remains. In his *Περὶ τοῦ προγιγνώσκειν πρὸς Ἐπιγένην*, Galen describes his treatment of Ἐξοτος Ἀντωνίνου υἱός (XIV 651–657 K), and the context makes it clear that the „son of Antoninus“ (i. e. the son of M. Aurelius) can only be Commodus. It is worth looking at the background carefully. In this work Galen tells his pupil Epigenes how he was assigned to the supervision of the prince's health (XIV 648–651 K). It is one of the best-known parts of his surviving writings and the details here given, collated with the information in the *Περὶ τῶν ἰδίων βιβλίων* (XIX 14–19 K = *scripta minora* II 96–99), are central to our knowledge of Galen's career.<sup>2</sup> As he tells it in the latter place, the sequence of events was as follows. When the plague reached Rome (in A. D. 166), Galen returned home to Pergamum, whence he was summoned by M. Aurelius and L. Verus to Aquileia. After his arrival there the plague grew more virulent than ever, and the emperors departed for Rome, L. Verus dying en route. Galen managed to persuade M. Aurelius to allow him to remain at Rome rather than accompany him back to the northern front (in the autumn of A. D. 169). The emperor „left behind his son Commodus, then a very young child, instructing those who were looking after him to keep him in good health, but if he fell ill to call in Galen to cure him“ (XIX 19 K). In the *Περὶ τοῦ*

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<sup>1</sup> See PIR<sup>2</sup> A 1482; further, F. GROSSO, *La lotta politica al tempo di Commodo* (1964) 128; 325 ff. Aelius was probably little used before A. D. 191, but it appears in CIL XVI 128 (23 March 178).

<sup>2</sup> RE 7 (1910) 578 ff. and PIR<sup>2</sup> G 24 give useful summaries.

προηγινώσκειν he gave a more detailed version of his hasty departure from Rome to Pergamum, but is briefer about his mission to Aquileia. Then, after mentioning the death of L. Verus, he relates that M. Aurelius asked him to go on the expedition – „but I was able to persuade him, he being a good and benevolent person, as you know, to leave me behind at Rome; for he was going to return very shortly“ (XIV 650 K). While the emperor was away, Galen, knowing the poor quality of the medical men in the city, decided to go wherever his son Commodus (ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ Κόμμοδος), who was being brought up by Pitholaus, should be from time to time, for Pitholaus had instructions from the emperor to send for Galen if ever Commodus should fall ill. As the emperor's absence was unexpectedly lengthy, Galen was able to get a good deal of writing done, about which he briefly comments (XIV 650–651 K).<sup>3</sup>

Then he begins a detailed case-history of a severe fever suffered by the prince: Ἐξστος οὖν Ἀντωνίνου υἱὸς ἤρξατο μὲν ὀξύτατα νοσεῖν. The name Ἐξστος recurs a further seven times in the account of the illness, but in the concluding sentence Galen once more makes it absolutely clear who Ἐξστος or Sextus is, with the phrase τοῦ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ Κομμόδου (XIV 657 K). At this point, he inserts the story of how he treated M. Aurelius himself, for a stomach complaint, on the latter's return to Rome (XIV 657–661 K); and then reverts to a second illness of Commodus and his treatment of it (XIV 661–665 K): τὸ μέντοι κατὰ Κόμμοδον ἔχειν μὲν φασὶ τι μέγιστον. This time it was inflamed tonsils. The prince is not named further, except as αὐτός or ὁ παῖς or βασιλικὸς παῖς. The τροφεύς Pitho-

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<sup>3</sup> In the penultimate sentence of this section (XIV 651 K, lines 7–12) Galen tells Epigenes that he can find out about the πρόγγωσις made ἐπὶ θατέρου τοῦ Κυντιλιανοῦ υἱὸν if he reads τὴν περὶ κρίσεων πραγματείαν. Although in the three books Περί κρίσεων as we have them (IX 550–708 K) the „other son of Quintilianus“ is not named, Galen may be referring to the case of a νεανίσκος described there (IX 680 ff. K). J. ILBERG, *Aus Galens Praxis. Ein Kulturbild aus der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Neue Jahrbücher f. d. klass. Altertum, Geschichte u. deutsche Literatur 15 (1905) 276–312, at p. 296, n. 5, without explanation identified the „other son of Quintilianus“ with Ἐξστος-Sextus, and failed to recognise that the latter must be Commodus. In an addendum, Sextus bei Galen, ib. 624, he quotes with approval the suggestion made to him by C. CICHORIUS, that this composite figure should be identified with one of the Sex. Quintilii, preferably Sex. Quintilius Condianus (*cos. ord.* 180). E. GROAG, without citing CICHORIUS, put forward the same identification, with a question-mark, in *PIR*<sup>2</sup> II (1936) 248 (C 1024). But, as A. STEIN pointed out in *PIR*<sup>2</sup> IV. 1 (1952) 5f. (G 24), „*qui a Galeno curatur quamquam nominatur Ἐξστος Ἀντωνίνου παῖς non potest esse nisi Commodus ... Immerito igitur Cichorius ... de Sex. Quintilio Condiano cogitat. Quis fuerit Quintiliani filius alter ... ignoro.*“ The point is that the „son of Quintilianus“ need not have any relevance at all to the case of Ἐξστος; the former case is mentioned only as an example for Epigenes to study, presumably in the writings which Galen has just mentioned that he had been working on during the absence of M. Aurelius: παντὶ τούτῳ τῷ χρόνῳ πολλὰς πραγματείας ἔγραψα (XIV 650 K).

laus<sup>4</sup> appears in both cases, while two other figures also play a prominent role: in the first, Claudius Severus, whom Galen does not trouble to identify (it was not necessary), in the second, Ἀνία Φαυστίνη, i. e. Annia Faustina, described as συγγενῆς οὔσα τῷ αὐτοκράτορι ἔγγιστα (XIV 662–663 K). Pitholaus is mentioned at the outset each time, discussing the symptoms and treatment with Galen (XIV 652, 661–662 K). In the first illness, Claudius Severus, who was living in a house next to, or close to, that of the prince (XIV 653 K), intervenes to recall Galen when the patient's condition appears to deteriorate; and Galen records his conversation with Severus (XIV 653–656). In the second, Annia Faustina makes her appearance on the third day, when the boy is almost recovered, apologising for not having come previously – she had heard about the fever after breakfast the day before – and compliments Galen warmly, taking his hand and joking with him (XIV 663–664 K).

The two episodes cannot be closely dated, although that is perhaps immaterial. All that can be stated definitely is that they fall within the period after M. Aurelius' return to the north in autumn 169 and before Commodus himself joined his father there in summer 175.<sup>5</sup> It might be possible to detect a hint, from Galen's description of the boy's character as displayed during the first illness (XIV 652 K: φιλόνηκος ὃν ἐσχάτως ὁ Ἐξιστος, κτλ.) that he was more of a sulky adolescent than an eight year old child at the time; but that is too unscientific and subjective a criterion. Examination of the other two persons named, apart from Commodus-Sextus and Pitholaus, may throw further light on the circumstances. Claudius Severus is the *cos. II ord.* 173, Cn. Claudius Severus, son-in-law of M. Aurelius and well-known as a friend of Galen from a number of passages in the doctor's writings (cf. PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1024 for the details). What of Annia Faustina? It seems to be generally assumed that this is the boy's mother, the empress Faustina II. Thus, for example, A. STEIN, in PIR<sup>2</sup>, although he noted, with reference to the phrase συγγενῆς οὔσα τῷ αὐτοκράτορι ἔγγιστα: „*quamvis mirum videatur eam non significari matrem Commodi.*“<sup>6</sup> It would indeed be strange if Galen had chosen this circumlocution for the *wife* of M. Aurelius. Surely the answer is that this is the emperor's eldest daughter, Annia Galeria Aurelia Faustina, who was married, it

<sup>4</sup> The man is otherwise unknown; cf. RE 20 (1950) 1848. He is described as κοιτωνίτης (*cubicularius*) in XIV 652 K, while in 650 K the phrase ὑπὸ Πειθολᾶω τρεφόμενος indicates his role as τροφεύς (*nutritor*). Cf. also the useful discussion of Commodus' upbringing by F. GROSSO, *op. cit.* (in n. 1) 118 ff.

<sup>5</sup> See A. BIRLEY, *Marcus Aurelius* (1966) 219 ff. = Mark Aurel (1968) 293 ff.; 258 f. = 342 f. HA Comm. 12. 2 dates Commodus' departure. G. BARBIERI, *Nuove iscrizioni di Marsala, Kokalos* 7 (1961) 15–52, at pp. 19 ff., argues that Commodus may have been with his father at the front for a while during the years 169–172. This is quite possible; cf. A. BIRLEY, *op. cit.* 234 f. = 312 f.

<sup>6</sup> PIR<sup>2</sup> G 24 (IV. 1 p. 5 f.). Cf. also PIR<sup>2</sup> I (1932) 132 (A 716). J. ILBERG, *Neue Jahrbücher* 15 (1905) 276, calls her „eine Kousine“ of the emperor, identifying her with Annia Fundania Faustina (PIR<sup>2</sup> A 713).

is now clear, to Cn. Claudius Severus.<sup>7</sup> A picture thus emerges of the sole surviving son of M. Aurelius being entrusted, in the absence of *both* his parents, not only to the immediate supervision of a  $\tau\rho\omicron\phi\epsilon\upsilon\varsigma$ , as would be normal whether his parents were away or not, but also to the general care of his eldest sister and her husband. It is in fact certain that the empress Faustina was away from Rome, at her husband's side, if not for the whole of the first Marcomannic war, certainly during the latter part of it. As Philostratus records (v. soph. 2. 1. 11), she and a three year old daughter (who must be Vibia Aurelia Sabina) were with M. Aurelius during the famous trial of Herodes Atticus at Sirmium – where both mother and daughter tried to influence the emperor in favour of Herodes' enemies.<sup>8</sup> Annia Galeria Aurelia Faustina, born on 30 November 147, as the *Fasti Ostienses* have revealed, will have been in her early or mid-twenties, probably with a son of her own, at this time.<sup>9</sup> Her sister Lucilla Augusta, some eighteen months younger, was presumably away at the front with her husband Ti. Claudius Pompeianus (*cos. II ord.* 173), the emperor's leading military adviser.<sup>10</sup> The other surviving sisters, Arria Fadilla, Cornificia and the youngest, Sabina, who has already been mentioned, were very much younger, as will be seen.

What then is the explanation of the name Sextus or  $\epsilon\acute{\xi}\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ? A readily intelligible answer may be found by examining the composition of the imperial family at the time of Commodus' birth. As is well-known, M. Aurelius and Faustina II had a large progeny, no fewer than twelve named offspring being attested. But many of these died in infancy. The two eldest, Faustina and Lucilla, as already mentioned, were born in 147 and 149 respectively. Between them and Fadilla, born probably in 159, there seem to have been four short-lived children. Fadilla was

<sup>7</sup> PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1024; and see H.-G. PFLAUM, *Les gendres de Marc-Aurèle*, JS 1961, 28–41, at pp. 29 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. A. BIRLEY, *Marcus Aurelius* 248 ff. = *Mark Aurel* 329 ff. See G. W. BOWERSOCK, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (1969) 92 ff., for a valuable discussion of the case and its background. He dates the Sirmium episode to „173 (or possibly 174)“ (p. 94). M. Aurelius evidently spent three years at Carnuntum: *cum apud Carnuntum iugi triennio perseverasset, bellum Marcomannicum confecit* (Eutrop. 8. 13. 1; cf. Oros. 8. 15. 6). Those years were probably 171–173, cf. A. BIRLEY, *op. cit.* 228 ff. = 304 ff., and it is therefore likely that he moved his headquarters to Sirmium in winter 173/174. On Vibia Aurelia Sabina: H.-G. PFLAUM, JS 1961, 37 ff.; A. BIRLEY, *op. cit.* 321 n. 2 = 426 n. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Her son Ti. Claudius Severus Proculus (PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1028), *cos. ord.* in 200, if *consul suo anno* as is probable, would have been born in 167: H.-G. PFLAUM, JS 1961, 30. Her own date of birth is given by *Inscr. Italiae* XIII. 1, p. 207: the year was previously thought to have been 146. It is worth noting here that Herodian's statement (1. 8. 3) that Lucilla was the eldest sister of Commodus, in A. D. 180, is insufficient to prove that Faustina was dead by that year: Herodian probably did not know of her existence, cf. A. BIRLEY, *Septimius Severus* (1971) 98 n. 2.

<sup>10</sup> The year must have been 149 rather than 148 in view of what is now known about her elder sister's date of birth (see previous note): A. BIRLEY, *Marcus Aurelius* 139 with n. 2 = *Mark Aurel* 191 with n. 58. Pompeianus: PIR<sup>2</sup> C 973; A. BIRLEY, 220 ff. = 294 ff.

thus the third child to survive, and Cornificia, born probably in 160, the fourth.<sup>11</sup> When on 31 August 161 the empress gave birth to twin sons (HA Comm. 1. 2), the imperial couple now had six children. The progressive increase in the size of the family is precisely mirrored on the coinage of Faustina II. Several issues appear to show the exact number of her children. One, with the legend *FECVND AVGVSTAE*, shows a female figure, either Fecunditas or Faustina herself, standing between two children, probably girls, and with a smaller child on each arm.<sup>12</sup> Another issue, with the legend *TEMPOR FELIC S C*, shows „Faustina standing I. between four girls. She holds two infants in her arms.“<sup>13</sup> The girls, standing two on either side, seem to be of differing ages, the tallest on the far right, with the shortest next to her, the second tallest on the left, with the third in size placed between her and their mother; while the infants, portrayed as being of identical size to one another, are surely the twin boys. From the nomenclature of the twins, T. Aurelius Fulvus Antoninus (PIR<sup>2</sup> A 1512) and L. Aurelius Commodus, it is virtually certain that Commodus was the younger, the second to leave his mother's womb, for Fulvus bore the names of his recently deceased grandfather, Antoninus Pius, while Commodus was named after a much lesser personage, his adoptive uncle Lucius. It could well be that the twins were nicknamed Quintus and Sextus within the family circle. There was after all a very good practical reason for referring to Commodus, at least, by some other appellation, for the names Lucius Aurelius Commodus had been applied, for more than twenty years, to another person. Whatever was done publicly, for reasons of state, L. Verus may well have been addressed by his old names within the imperial family circle, for a time at least.<sup>14</sup> Apart from any other consideration, it will have taken some time for the members of the family, especially the young girls, to get used to the fact that it was now Lucius, their uncle, and not their father M. Aurelius any more, who was

<sup>11</sup> See A. BIRLEY, Marcus Aurelius, esp. the stemma on p. 321 = Mark Aurel 422, 425 f. The dates of birth of Fadilla (PIR<sup>2</sup> F 96) and Cornificia (PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1505) were elucidated by P. L. STRACK, Untersuchungen zur römischen Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts III (1937) 119–124. His discussion of the other offspring of M. Aurelius (e. g. 111 f. on the first child), 110–118, although to some extent invalidated by the fact that the *Fasti Ostienses* were not as completely available to him then as now published in *Inscr. Italiae XIII*. 1, is still useful.

<sup>12</sup> RIC III p. 345 nos. 1634–1637; BMC IV p. 530 no. 902.

<sup>13</sup> RIC III p. 347 nos. 1673–1677; BMC IV p. 536 nos. 949–955.

<sup>14</sup> Fronto calls L. Verus „*Lucius*“ twice in informal contexts and five times in the *Principia Historiae*; but never „*Verus*“, although this is used in the address or heading to the letters, and L. Verus signs himself *Verus tuus* in two letters (ad Verum imp. 1. 1 and 2 = HAINES I 296, 306 = 111 VAN DEN HOUT). See the Index in VAN DEN HOUT's edition, s. v. *L. Aelius Aurelius Commodus*, p. 245. The elder twin is called *pullus noster Antoninus* by M. Aurelius, ad Ant. imp. 1. 1. 3 = HAINES II 32 = 88 VAN DEN HOUT; *pullus noster* by Fronto, ib. 1. 2. 8 = HAINES II 42 = VAN DEN HOUT 92; and cf. ib. 1. 3. 1 = HAINES II 118 = 93 VAN DEN HOUT (*vidi pullulos tuos*).

called Verus; while the arrival, some eighteen months after the birth of the twins, of a third son, who was named M. Annii Verus (PIR<sup>2</sup> A 698), will have complicated matters further. It may therefore be suggested that the infant Commodus was called Sextus, especially perhaps by his sisters, for some time after his birth; and the circumstance, that it was his eldest sister and her husband who were looking after the boy when Galen treated him, may well explain why Galen uses the name: he will simply be recording the name he heard them use.

## II

This question of Commodus' nomenclature has a bearing on a difficult passage in Fronto (*de orationibus* 17 f. = HAINES II 112 ff. = 154 VAN den HOUT):

*Monetam illam veterem sectator. Plumbei nummei et cuiusce modi adulterini in istis recentibus nummis saepius inveniuntur quam in vetustis, quibus signatus est Perperna, arte factis pristina. (18) Quid igitur? Non malim mihi nummum Antonini aut Commodi aut Pii? Polluta ista et contaminata et varia et maculosa maculosioraque quam nutricis pallium.*

MOMMSEN, who was followed by most students of the subject, argued on the basis of the phrase *nummum . . . Commodi* that Fronto was still alive when coins first began to be struck for Commodus, i. e. in 175.<sup>15</sup> C. R. HAINES did indeed reject MOMMSEN'S conclusion, but although he was able to put forward a positive reason for the *de orationibus* having been composed much earlier than the year 175, he was content to dismiss the argument from the *nummus* with the statement that „this seems less likely than to consider Commodus here to mean Commodus as Caesar only“.<sup>16</sup> But his revival of the view which went back to Cardinal MAI, that Fronto died ca. 166, did not meet with approval, and MOMMSEN'S opinion went unchallenged until recent times. In 1964 H.-G. PFLAUM, in his valuable and instructive study of Fronto's correspondents, implied his preference for the earlier date,<sup>17</sup> and the present writer, in his biography of M. Aure-

<sup>15</sup> Die Chronologie der Briefe Frontos, *Hermes* 8 (1874) 198–216 = *Ges. Schr.* IV 469–486, at p. 216 = 486; followed by BRZOSKA in *RE* 4 (1900) 1317 f.; A. STEIN in *PIR*<sup>2</sup> II p. 323 (C 1364); etc. Coins were first issued for Commodus in 175: see H. MATTINGLY in *BMC* IV p. cxxxvi f.

<sup>16</sup> On the chronology of the Fronto correspondence, *Classical Quarterly* 8 (1914) 112–122, at p. 118. Note *PIR*<sup>2</sup> II p. 323: *de anno dubitat Haines . . . sine iusta causa.*

<sup>17</sup> Les correspondants de l'orateur M. Cornelius Fronto de Cirta, *Hommages à Jean Bayet* (Coll. Latomus 70, 1964), 544–560. It should be noted that PFLAUM only dates the death of Fronto early by implication: „Les noms des vingt-et-un destinataires des deux livres AD AMICOS rappellent ainsi un grand nombre des personnalités en vue de la Rome des années 150 à 170, tant politiques que littéraires“ (p. 544).

lius, published in 1966, pronounced firmly in its favour.<sup>18</sup> This has evoked a protest from G. W. BOWERSOCK, in his 'Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire' (1969), where he devotes a short appendix (124 ff.) to a defence of MOMMSEN's dating.<sup>19</sup> He points out, with perfect justification, that neither HAINES, PFLAUM nor the present writer have provided „an alternative explanation of the text“. In the light of what has been adduced above, in the first part of this paper, it may reasonably be claimed that an alternative explanation is to hand: namely, that Fronto mean, by *nummum* . . . *Commodi*, the coinage of L. Verus; for, to such a close associate of the Aurelian house, the new prince would be thought of by his nickname Sextus, whereas L. Verus would still be thought of as Commodus. The ‚de orationibus‘ may thus be dated without discomfort within the period 161–169 – and preferably early within that period.

There is, to be sure, a further „alternative explanation“. BOWERSOCK states categorically that „medallions in bronze are not *nummi*“ (125), and therefore rejects the possibility that the medallions issued ca. 166 to celebrate the grant of the rank of Caesar to Commodus and his brother Annius Verus could be understood here.<sup>20</sup> But one must note that, as F. GNECCHI pointed out long ago, there was no specific Latin word for a medallion: „Quanto alla denominazione che si dice mancare ai Romani, io credo che le parole *nummus e nomisma* esprimessero tanto l'idea di moneta che di medaglia, a un disprezzo come il *medaille* francese.“<sup>21</sup> Similarly, J. M. C. TOYNBEE writes that „the numismatic vocabulary of ancient Rome contained no separate words corresponding to our modern terms ‚medal‘ and its augmentative ‚medallion‘“. <sup>22</sup> It is difficult, therefore, to see what obstacle there is to taking *nummus* as a reference to a medallion of Commodus Caesar. However, that explanation need not be called upon. BOWERSOCK, indeed, firmly opines that „Fronto's ordering of the imperial names only makes sense if Marcus

<sup>18</sup> A. BIRLEY, *Marcus Aurelius* 198 n. 2: „The date suggested in PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1364 (not before the end of 176) is based solely on an unusually perverse interpretation of *de orationibus*, 12 = Haines II, 114 (line 1)“; cf. *Mark Aurel* 266, n. 19.

<sup>19</sup> BOWERSOCK writes (p. 125) that „as Mommsen knew, there was no *nummus Commodi* before the grant of *imperium* to Commodus on 27 November 176. Thus a *terminus post quem* for the words in Fronto“. Similarly, A. STEIN in PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1364: *Mortuus est non ante finem anni 176, cum nummum memoret Commodi*. In fact, *asses* of Commodus were struck in 175 to celebrate his membership of the priestly colleges (20 January 175: HA Comm. 1. 10): cf. BMC IV p. 641 f. and H. MATTINGLY, *ib.* pp. cxxxvi, cxl: the obverse legend is COMMODVS CAES. AVG. FIL.; and MOMMSEN actually stated that the latest letter was „unzweifelhaft nach dem J. 175 geschrieben“ and that „vor 175 keine Münzen mit Commodus Namen geschlagen worden sind“ (op. cit., 486). Further coins were struck for Commodus in 175–6: BMC IV pp. 476 ff., 642 ff.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. F. GNECCHI, *I Medaglioni romani descritti ed illustrati* (1912) II 44; J. M. C. TOYNBEE, *A bust of an Antonine boy*, JRS 49 (1959) 39–40 with excellent photographs.

<sup>21</sup> Op. cit. I xxv.

<sup>22</sup> *Roman Medallions*, American Numismatic Society, *Numismatic Studies* no. 5 (1944) 15.



and Commodus are understood as the present rulers and Pius as a previous one<sup>23</sup> (125). The argument has some validity, if perhaps a little too dogmatically phrased. He goes on: „And in 166 we should have had the name of Lucius Verus (who, as emperor, is never called Commodus)“. To be sure, L. Verus was never officially called Commodus after his assumption of the purple; but if the young Commodus were known as Sextus, it would be fair to suppose that Fronto, for a while at least after March 161, continued to think of L. Verus as L. Commodus.

It is worth examining the text of the ‚de orationibus‘ further for any independent indication of date. C. 13 = HAINES II 110 = 153 VAN DEN HOUT is surely an important passage: *Dicas fortasse: quid in orationibus meis novitium, quid crispulum, quid luscum, quid purpurisso litum aut tumidum aut pollutum? Nondum quicquam; sed vereor . . .* HAINES used this passage to pour scorn on MOMMSEN'S dating: „Not yet, when Marcus was fifty-six, and had reigned sixteen years, and Fronto would have been eighty!“<sup>23</sup> The imagined exchange – *quid in orationibus meis . . . purpurisso litum . . .? Nondum quicquam* – does indeed suggest a context fairly soon after M. Aurelius had inherited the position of Pius. *Nondum* would seem excessive even for Fronto as late as A. D. 176.<sup>24</sup> There are two further items in the ‚de orationibus‘ which also hint at a date in the (early) 160s. Fronto quotes the phrase *oculos convenientes* (11 = HAINES II 108 = 152 VAN DEN HOUT), which HAINES (ad loc.) reasonably suggests might have been an allusion by M. Aurelius to „himself and Lucius as the eyes of the state“. But it must be conceded that it might equally well have applied to himself and Commodus as co-rulers; or to something completely different. Then one might consider the passage immediately preceding the mention of the *nummus*, where Fronto again quotes M. Aurelius: *florere in suis actibus inlibatam iuventutem*, and he interprets this as follows: *Hoc nempe vis dicere, cupere te Italica oppida frequentari copia iuniorum* (de orat. 17 = HAINES II 112 = 154 VAN DEN HOUT). Once again, the edict and Fronto's comment on it might in theory belong to any part of the reign. But it would be reasonable to conjecture that M. Aurelius' augmentation of the *alimenta* system, in commemoration of the betrothal of L. Verus and Lucilla in A. D. 162, would have been a particularly fitting occasion.<sup>25</sup>

The foregoing discussion will, it is hoped, have indicated that BOWERSOCK'S restatement of MOMMSEN'S argument has not made it any more convincing, and

<sup>23</sup> CQ 8 (1914) 118.

<sup>24</sup> One may recall the passage in the *Meditations* (6. 20. 1) where the emperor exhorts himself not to be ‚dyed‘ (sc. with the purple dye), which indicates that the thought remained with him for some years; but *nondum* does suggest a date soon after his accession.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. HA M. Ant. Phil. 7. 8: *ob hanc coniunctionem pueros et puellas novorum nominum frumentariae perceptioni adscribi praeceperunt*; 11. 2: *de alimentis publicis multa prudenter invenit*. Ib. 26. 6: *novas puellas Faustianas instituit in honorem uxoris mortuae*, might, on the other hand, be used to assign the passage in Fronto to a later date; but *novae puellae* is rather less obviously connected with the *copia iuniorum* than is *pueros et puellas*.

that there remains justifiable doubt whether Fronto survived much later than the year 166, in the absence of further evidence. BOWERSOCK does indeed bring forward two „other indications of late date in the extant correspondance of Fronto“, which must now be examined in turn. In a letter to one Caelius Optatus (ad amicos 1. 9 = HAINES II 240 = 170 VAN DEN HOUT), the orator commends his friend Sardius Saturninus, *coniunctus . . . artissima mihi familiaritate per filios suos doctissimos iuvenes, quos in contubernio mecum adsiduos habeo*. In another letter, to Petronius Mamertinus, Saturninus and his sons are mentioned again (ad amicos 1. 10 = HAINES II 242 = 170 VAN DEN HOUT): one son, Lupus, has already entered public life (*de mea domo meoque contubernio in forum deductum*) and the other has died from drowning (and Fronto's consolatory letter to the father is preserved as ad amicos 1. 22 = HAINES II 242f. = 177 VAN DEN HOUT). The letter to Mamertinus is, therefore, BOWERSOCK concludes, „considerably later than the one addressed to Caelius Optatus“ (later it certainly must be – but not necessarily more than a few months later). Now Optatus appears to be holding some official position when Fronto writes: *magnopere eum tibi, frater, commendo et peto, si quid negotii eum ad te duxerit, carissimum mihi virum omni honore dignum iudices et ope tua protegas*. The letter „ought to be addressed to Caelius Optatus as legate of III Augusta in Numidia in 166/7“. It is indeed the case that a certain P. Caelius Optatus was *leg. Aug. pr. pr.* of III Augusta in the year 166.<sup>26</sup> Assuming that the legate is identical with Fronto's correspondent – which is hardly necessary, and, as PFLAUM has pointed out, the use of the term *frater* raises a serious difficulty<sup>27</sup> –, does the letter in any way make it clear that the recipient was in command of III Augusta at the time? Far from it. He might have been anywhere in the empire; and comparison with the career of the only other legate of that legion from the period whose *cursus* is known in detail shows that P. Caelius Optatus could have served in several responsible posts before going to Numidia. L. Novius Crispinus Martialis Saturninus (*cos.* 149 or 150) went from his praetorship to the post of *iuridicus* of Asturia-Callaecia, then to Moesia Inferior as legate of I *Italica*, and, finally, became proconsul of Gallia Narbonensis before going to Numidia in

<sup>26</sup> CIL VIII 18067 = D 2303 (Lambaesis), cf. B. E. THOMASSON, *Die Statthalter der römischen Provinzen Nordafrikas von Augustus bis Diokletian* (1960) II 181.

<sup>27</sup> H.-G. PFLAUM, *Hommages à Jean Bayet* (1964) 547: „nous sommes gênés par le mot *frater*, employé par l'épistolier à l'égard de ce personnage et qui implique que l'on aurait à faire avec un contemporain de Fronto, donc plutôt avec le père du légat de Lambèse.“ BOWERSOCK comments that PFLAUM's qualms are unnecessary: „Fronto also uses the word to Cornelius Repentinus“ (in ad amicos II 4 = HAINES I 282 = 180 VAN DEN HOUT). But all we know of Repentinus is that he became prefect in succession to C. Tattius Maximus, between 158 and 161 (PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1428): study of the prefects of the Antonine period whose careers are known (cf. H.-G. PFLAUM, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le haut-empire romain*, 1960, nos. 105 bis, 138, 139, 149, 161, 162 + add. for a sample) makes it unlikely that Repentinus would be under fifty years of age on appointment, and thus he would be a near contemporary of Fronto (see n. 32) at the very least.

146 or 147.<sup>28</sup> Two out of three of these positions would have given him sufficient powers to make him a man to whom *litterae commendaticiae* were worth writing, on behalf of anyone with business in the relevant parts of Spain or Gaul. Equally, P. Caelius Optatus could have held such a post in the early 160s. One may note, in this connection, that Fronto wrote three or more *litterae commendaticiae* to one of the Italian *iuridici*, C. Arrius Antoninus, on behalf of his clients Volumnius Serenus of Concordia and a lady named Baburiana.<sup>29</sup> There is thus no reason to date the Optatus letter to „166/7“. If one assumes that the recipient is identical with P. Caelius Optatus, any year from *ca.* 161 onwards would serve equally well (and of course the identity of the two is by no means secure). *A fortiori*, the affairs of Sardinus Saturninus are no proof of a late survival for Fronto.

The second „indication“ concerns Claudius Severus, to whom another letter in the ‚ad amicos‘ collection is addressed (1. 1 = HAINES II 282 ff. = 164 f. VAN DEN HOUT). E. GROAG (PIR<sup>2</sup> C 1027) had identified Severus as the *cos. ord.* 146, Cn. Claudius Severus Arabianus, and he pointed out that Fronto’s request to him shows that the man was, also, in a position of authority at the time, presiding over a court: the letter was written on behalf of Sulpicius Cornelianus, *propediem causam apud te dicturus*. GROAG comments: „*quo munere praeditus Severus ius dixerit, nescimus; vide an fuerit praefectus urbi*“. BOWERSOCK, reasonably, enough, proposes to identify Fronto’s correspondent with the younger Cn. Claudius Severus, the *cos. II ord.* 173 (already discussed in the first part of this paper); but, taking up GROAG’s suggestion about his status at the time of the letter, notes that „city prefects normally had iterated consulates“. This man’s second consulate in 173 means that „a city prefecture for Severus could be fitted comfortably in the vicinity of the city prefecture of C. Aufidius Victorinus, *cos. II* in 183, the son-in-law of Fronto“. To be sure, city prefects did normally enjoy iterated consulates – but not all those who held the *fasces* a second time also held the prefecture: both the consuls of 173 had the honour by virtue of being sons-in-law of the emperor.<sup>30</sup> But, more important, why must one suppose that Claudius Severus was urban prefect at the time when Cornelianus was to plead a case before him? GROAG’s suggestion is not compelling. The man might have been holding one of several other positions; perhaps

<sup>28</sup> CIL VIII 2747 = D 1070 + add. (Lambaesis); cf. B. E. THOMASSON, *op. cit.* (in n. 26) 174 f.

<sup>29</sup> Ad amicos II 6–7 = HAINES II 174–186 = 181–187 VAN DEN HOUT; II 8 = HAINES II 188–190 = 187–188 VAN DEN HOUT. Note also II 9 (title only) = 188 VAN DEN HOUT. For Arrius Antoninus cf. PIR<sup>2</sup> A 1088 and the useful discussion by H.-G. PFLAUM, *Hommages à J. Bayet* (1964) 545 f. PFLAUM also points out, 545 and n. 1, that the Sardii were certainly natives of Italy; there are none indexed in CIL VIII and nothing connects them with Africa – except Fronto.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. H.-G. PFLAUM, *JS* 1961, 29 ff. A likelier person to have been prefect of Rome in the mid-170s is perhaps T. Pomponius Proculus Vitrasius Pollio (*cos. II ord.* 176); cf. A. BIRLEY, *Marcus Aurelius* 256 = Mark Aurel 339 and 340, n. 17.

he was only a praetor. Thus no clear dating evidence may be gleaned from this letter either.

There remains only BOWERSOCK's general comment that „there is no reason to think that we possess anything like the complete correspondence“. He cites M. P. J. VAN DEN HOUT's conclusion in his edition (XLIV) that only 388 pages survive from a codex that originally contained 680. Any statement about the length of Fronto's life based on the evidence of the letters is therefore, one must agree, an *argumentum ex silentio*. But one must nonetheless note that neither was the codex arranged in chronological order, nor are the missing 292 pages lost from the end. On the contrary, what is lost is spread through the codex: of the original 42½ quaternions, the major gaps come in I, XIII–XV, XVIII–XXI, XXVIII and XXIX. While it is true that the largest quantity of lost letters looks as if it has gone from the letters to M. Aurelius as emperor, most of the ‚ad amicos‘ collection is intact.<sup>31</sup> What is of some significance, too, is that the Principia Historiae are preserved (with some lacunae), but that there is absolutely no trace of any of the major historical work which Fronto planned to write on the Parthian war, of which the Principia were the hors d'œuvres: *ubi primum frater suarum rerum commentarium miserit, nos res scribere adgrediemur, si tamen thema quod gusto mittimus non displicebit* (ad init. Princ. Hist. = HAINES II 198 = 191 VAN DEN HOUT). The Principia are followed in the codex by the Laudes fumi et pulveris. Surely, if he had written any of the History, the codex would have had it in that place. Perhaps the plague, the outbreak of another war, or the death of the projected history's protagonist, was a deterrent – or perhaps the *gustus* did displease. But is it not more likely that the author himself died soon after writing the Principia?

It must remain the case that no certainty can be reached until more evidence appears. But the balance of probability favours the view that Fronto, born, as is most likely, ca. 100, died before completing his seventieth year.<sup>32</sup> He may have been something of a hypochondriac, one may suppose; but not all his ill-health can have been imaginary. His sickly pupil M. Aurelius died at fifty-eight; and even that prince of valetudinarians Aelius Aristides did not quite reach seventy, at the most.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Cf. M. P. J. VAN DEN HOUT XLIV ff.

<sup>32</sup> As consul in 143; see R. SYME, Tacitus (1958) 652, for the normal age (42); and more fully J. MORRIS, *Leges annales* under the Principate, LF 87 (1964) 316–336, esp. pp. 325 ff.

<sup>33</sup> Philostratus, v. soph. 2. 9. 7 gives figures for Aristides' age at his death.