

Chapter 4

Commentary on the Interpolation in the *Vita Marci Antonini Philosophi*

Introduction: The Significance of the Interpolation

The inclusion of the interpolation in the main *Vita Marci Antonini* in the *Historia Augusta* has had a serious impact on the analysis of this text.¹ The anomalies that exist in the text when it includes the interpolation could create confusion when attempting to analyse the *Vita Marci*, which largely explains the separation of the interpolation from the *HA* biography in this study. However, the division between the interpolation and the main *Vita* stems largely from the frequent occurrence of repetition, which makes the separation of the texts somewhat reliant on literary interpretation, and thus rather subjective. It is for this reason that the interpolation has also been commented upon in this study; this should allow for the greatest understanding of the extant text of the *Vita Marci Antonini*.

However, the commentary undertaken for the interpolation in the *Vita Marci* has focused on a different aspect from the main text of the *HA* biography of Marcus Aurelius: it has primarily been used to highlight the similarities and differences of the two texts in order to justify its inclusion with and separation from the *Vita Marci*.² The similarities in the interpolation have been commented on in order to understand why at some stage of the development of the *Historia Augusta* it was thought that Sections 15-19 should be included in the *Vita Marci Antonini*. The present chapter has largely concentrated on their similarity to the central themes that occurred in the representation of Marcus Aurelius in the *HA*, particularly in relation to his personal character traits. This is further substantiated by the repetition of various episodes in the two texts, which makes the presence of an interpolation more discernible. The presence of such similar portrayals would largely explain its inclusion in the final text of the *Vita Marci Antonini Philosophi*.

Syme argues that the interpolation (Sections 15-19) was part of the *Vita Marci*,³ with the text finishing at 19.12. This seems unlikely owing to the overall

¹ L. Polverini, "Ancora la *Historia Augusta*", *Athenaeum* 89.2, 2001, p. 617.

² Syme, 1972, *op.cit.*, p. 292.

³ *ibid.*

thematic differences in the interpolation. Syme focuses more upon the historical sources for this section than the thematic continuity of the text, which explains why he thought that it was more logical for the text of the *Vita Marci* to end at Section 19.12.⁴ The unlikely possibility of this is highlighted by the inclusion of the reference to Diocletian in Section 19.12, which accentuates the disjointed nature of the present text, particularly in relation to the question of its authorship. Daniël den Hengst has also argued that with the inconsistencies inherent in the text the presence of the interpolation is quite evident.⁵ Barnes noted these textual inconsistencies and has accepted the insertion of an interpolation within the *Vita Marci*.⁶ However, the main reason for the debate surrounding the text and the presence of an interpolation stems from the uncertainties of the historical sources that influenced the authorship of the *Vita Marci*.

Schlumberger has highlighted many potential sources for the *HA*, particularly in relation to the insertion of passages within the *HA*.⁷ In relation to Section 15.3-19.12 of the *Vita Marci* he illustrates its similarities with Eutropius, Aurelius Victor and possibly the supposed *KG*.⁸ In a similar fashion, Schwartz has argued for a different author for Section 15.3-19.12, but he has emphasised the authorship and influence of Eutropius and Marius Maximus.⁹ While there are differences of opinion surrounding the question of which ‘previous’ sources influenced the composition of the interpolation, most scholars note its existence and accept at least the partial influence of Eutropius.¹⁰ There are particular similarities between Section 17 of the interpolation and Eutropius.¹¹ However, there are also similarities with the Epitomator¹² and Aurelius Victor¹³ in Sections 15-19. If the reference in the interpolation to Diocletian is accepted as evidence for its period of composition, the question of which text influenced another becomes more confusing (discussed below).

Despite these instances, for the purposes of arguing the presence of the interpolation, it is more important to note the repetition of episodes and events within

⁴ See Dessau, 1889, *op.cit.*, pp. 337-92.

⁵ den Hengst, 1981, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

⁶ Barnes, 1978, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

⁷ J. Schlumberger, “Die Epitome de Caesaribus und die Historia Augusta”, *HAC* 1972/4, 1976, pp. 201-19.

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 203-4.

⁹ Schwartz, 1972, *op.cit.*, p. 267.

¹⁰ *ibid.*; Schwendemann, 1923, *op.cit.*, pp. 201-5; Schlumberger, 1976, *op.cit.*, pp. 203-4.

¹¹ Mommsen, 1890, *op.cit.*, p. 274.

¹² Schlumberger, 1976, *op.cit.*, pp. 203-4.

¹³ Schwendemann, 1923, *op.cit.*, pp. 201-5.

the text of the *Vita Marci*. Accounts such as those of Marcus' Germanic campaigns,¹⁴ his response to Avidius Cassius' rebellion,¹⁵ and the death of Marcus Aurelius,¹⁶ were all examined twice within the current text. The inclusion of such repetition in the *Vita Marci* would have been unnecessary for the presentation of Marcus' life and gives the biography a disjointed progression between Sections 14.8-15.3. This is also apparent in relation to the double accounts of Marcus' death,¹⁷ with one version being included close to the middle of the current biography (Section 18.1-3). In addition to this there were also instances where the interpolation differs from the *Vita Marci*, such as in the comparison of **Marcus 4.5** (*virilem togam sumpsit quinto decimo aetatis anno, statimque ei Lucii Ceionii Commodi filia desponsata est ex Hadriani voluntate*) and **Section 16.7** (*quod quidem apparet ex eo, quod generum Pio hunc eundem delegit, ut ad eum, dignum utpote virum, quandocumque Romanum perveniret imperium*), where there is disagreement surrounding who Hadrian wanted Marcus to marry.¹⁸ As Stanton has shown,¹⁹ modern opinion is clearly divided about the reliability and structure of the *Vita Marci*, but this should not preclude its overall analysis and the existence of the interpolation is a significant factor within this.

The differences in the representations of Marcus Aurelius are more significant when considering the impact of the interpolation on the reception of the *Vita Marci* in later periods. The most notable difference that exists between the interpolation and the central text of the *Vita* is the brevity of discussion of various sections that received a much more comprehensive analysis in the *HA*. This is particularly evident in relation to the accounts of Marcus' Germanic campaigns,²⁰ the rebellion of Avidius Cassius,²¹ and the events surrounding Marcus' death.²² However, these brief references are complemented by several episodes that receive much greater attention from the author of the interpolation, such as the questions surrounding the birth of Commodus,²³ the infidelities of Faustina,²⁴ and the auction of Imperial furnishings.²⁵ There is also

¹⁴ *Marcus*, 22; Section 17.1-3.

¹⁵ *Marcus*, 24.5-25.12; Section 15.6.

¹⁶ *Marcus*, 28.1-10; Section 18.1-3.

¹⁷ *Marcus*, 28.1-10; Section 18.1-3.

¹⁸ cf. White, 1967, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

¹⁹ Stanton, 1975, *op.cit.*, pp. 488-9.

²⁰ *Marcus*, 22; Section 17.1-3.

²¹ *Marcus*, 24.5-25.12; Section 15.6

²² *Marcus*, 28.1-10; Section 18.1-3.

²³ Section 19.1-9.

²⁴ Section 19.1-9.

²⁵ *Marcus*, 21.9; Section 17.4-5.

mention of some episodes in the interpolation that were neglected by the biographer of the *Vita Marci Antonini*, such as the possibility of Marcus poisoning Lucius Verus,²⁶ and the statements that affirmed Marcus' divinity,²⁷ which were much more fervent than those in the *HA*.²⁸ The variance in their representation of Commodus is another indication of their differing perspectives: within the interpolation Commodus is shown as inherently 'evil' from the outset,²⁹ whereas in the *Vita Marci* these traits are shown explicitly only in the latter stages of the biography.³⁰ These differences primarily stemmed from the differing intentions of the authors and clearly provide an indication of an interpolation in the text.³¹

However, where the interpolation began and ended is also somewhat problematic. According to Enmann and Magie, for example,³² it started at Section 15.3 and continued until 19.12, where the inserted text clearly concludes with the statement: *et quidem haec breviter et congeste*. The concluding point for the interpolation is definitive and has been followed in this commentary, but for the purposes of the present study the beginning of the interpolation has been placed at Section 15.1 instead. It would seem that the choice of this point in the text was largely determined by the fact that the details in Section 15.1-2 were not mentioned at all elsewhere in the *Vita Marci*, which was therefore interpreted as deserving inclusion in the original text of the *Vita Marci Antonini*. However, this does not seem to be a good basis on which to make such a division, and it seems more appropriate that the break should be placed at the end of Section 14. If the aforementioned justification was applied universally throughout the interpolation there should be several passages included in the main text, such as the possibility of Marcus poisoning Lucius Verus,³³ and the statements that affirmed Marcus' divinity.³⁴

The most important reason for the division being placed between Sections 14.8 and 15.1 is the continuation of theme of the biography from Section 14.8 to 20.1.

²⁶ Section 15.5-6.

²⁷ Section 18.3-8.

²⁸ Section 18.6-7: *denique hodieque in multis domibus Marci Antonini statuæ consistunt inter deos penates. nec defuerunt homines qui somniis eum multa praedixisse augurantes futura et vera concinuerunt.*

²⁹ Sections 16.1, 18.4, 19.1-6.

³⁰ *Marcus*, 27.9, 27.11-12.

³¹ See Dessau, 1889, *op.cit.*, pp. 337-92.

³² D. Magie, *The Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Vol. 1, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1921, p. xxii.

³³ Section 15.5-6.

³⁴ Section 18.3-8.

Section 14.8 concludes with the death of Lucius Verus (*bi<d>[q]uoque, postquam i[n]ter ingressi sunt, sedens cum fratre in vehiculo Lucius apoplexi arreptus perit*) and the response of Marcus Aurelius to this event is then given in Section 20.1 (*sed Marco Antonino haec sunt gesta post fratrem: primum corpus eius Romam devectum est et inlatum maiorum sepulchris*). Prior to this section of the biography, the thematic considerations of the biographer were quite consistent, with a sustained degree of emphasis on the continuity of the account.

If Section 15.1-2 was included at this stage (*fuit autem consuetudo Marco, ut in circensium spectaculo legeret audiretque ac suscriberet. ex quo quidem saepe iocis popularibus dicitur lacessitus. [15.2] multum sane potuerunt liberti sub Marco et Vero Gemin<u>s et Agaclytus*) these two statements introduce a somewhat incomprehensible topic to the biography following the death of Lucius Verus. If the interpolation did actually occur at this point (Section 15.3 instead of 15.1) the continuing theme may have been the reference to the freedmen of Lucius Verus, Geminus and Agaclytus, who apparently served Marcus following Lucius' death, but the relevance of this statement would then be more in connection with the later statement by the biographer at Section 20.5 (*omnibus deinde sororibus et adfinibus et libertis <iu>ris et honoris et pecuniae plurimum detulit*). However, the brevity of the statements in Section 15.1-2 must also be considered. They appear to have been more in keeping with the general literary style of the interpolation. It is primarily on the basis of the thematic continuity that this study has placed the interpolation in the text of the *Vita Marci Antonini* at Sections 15.1 to 19.12.

In relation to the inclusion of the interpolation within the *Vita Marci* there are two problematic passages: 21.9.2 and 23.7.2. The reason why these passages could be used as indications that Sections 15-19 were part of the original text is because of the inclusion of *ut diximus* and *ut superius diximus*. These phrases occurred regularly within the *HA*,³⁵ with four examples being taken from the *Vita Marci* (including the interpolation): 4.1.2, 17.3.4, 21.9.2, 23.7.2. The use of *ut diximus* in both *Marcus* 4.1 (*educatus es[se]t in Hadriani gremio, qui illum, ut supra diximus, Verissimum nominabat et qui ei honorem e[t]qui publici sexenni detulit*) and Section 17.3 (*Pannonias ergo Marcomannis, Sarmatis, V[u]andalis, simul etiam Quadis extinctis*

³⁵ *Hadrian* 23.2; *Aelius* 3.1, 6.6, 7.2; *Pius* 9.1; *Marcus* 4.1, 17.3, 21.9, 23.7; *Verus*. 9.3; *Avid.* 1.4, 13.9; *PescNig.* 3.1, 9.1; *ClodAlb.* 1.4; *OpilMacr.* 5.1, 15.1; *AntHeliog.* 12.3, 33.7; *AlexSev.* 39.2; *Maxim.* 7.3, 14.2, 28.8; *Gord.* 9.1, 15.2, 29.2; *MaxBalb.* 8.3; *Gall.* 5.7, 8.5; *TyrTrig.* 14.1; *Claud.* 6.1, 13.1, 13.9; *Aurel.* 17.5; *Car.* 7.4, 8.3.

servitio liberavit et Romae cum Commodo, quem iam Caesarem fecerat, filio, ut diximus, suo, triumphavit) are consistent with the division of the interpolation because they refer back to passages within the separate texts (1.10 and 16.2 respectively), but there appear to be more issues created by the references at 21.9.2 and 23.7.2.

Marcus 21.9 reads: *et, ne provincialibus esset molestus, auctione<m> rerum aulicarum, ut diximus, fecit in foro divi Traiani, in qua praeter vestes et pocula et vasa aurea etiam signa cum tabulis magnorum artificum vendidit*. The inclusion of *ut diximus* in the text was used as an indication that the biographer had already discussed the sale of imperial furnishings, which was in fact mentioned in the interpolation at Section 17.4-5: *cum autem ad hoc bellum omne aerarium exhausisset suum neque in animum induceret, ut extra ordinem provincialibus aliquid imperaret, in foro divi Traiani auctiorem ornamentorum imperialium fecit vendiditque aurea pocula et cristallina et murrina, vasa etiam regia et vestem uxori sericam et auratam, gemmas quin etiam, quas multas in repostorio sanctiore Hadriani repererat. et per duos quidem menses haec venditio celebrata est, tantumque auri redactum, ut reliquias belli Marcomannici ex sententia persecutus postea dederit potestatem emptoribus, ut, si qui vellet emptam reddere[t] atque aurum recipere, sciret licere. nec molestus ulli fuit qui vel non reddidit emptam vel reddidit*. While the combination of these passages appear to indicate that the *HA* biographer wrote Section 17.4-5, there are still some issues that need to be addressed.

Firstly, it is evident that there are some textual similarities between these two passages, particularly in relation to: **17.4-5** *in foro divi Traiani auctiorem ... fecit vendiditque aurea pocula ... vasa etiam regia et vestem uxori sericam et auratam*, and **21.9** *auctiorem<m> ... fecit in foro divi Traiani, in qua praeter vestes et pocula et vasa aurea*. The similar use of language may indicate that Section 17.4-5 was part of the original text, but it may also indicate that there was a similar source used if it was part of a later inclusion. Schwartz has already noted the similarities between these passages and Eutropius 8.13.2,³⁶ which reads: *instrumentum regii cultus, facta in foro divi Traiani seclione, distraxit, vasa aurea, pocula cristallina et murrina, uxori ac suam sericam et auream vestem, multa orramenta gemmarum, ac per duos continuos menses ea venditio habita est multumque auri redactum*. He has also noted the differences between these versions, particularly in relation to *sanctior*, which was

³⁶ Schwartz, 1972, *op.cit.*, p. 249.

inserted by the author of the interpolation, but not present in either Eutropius or the *HA* at Section 21.9. The inclusion of the *ut diximus* cannot be viewed as being of chronological value.³⁷ Schwartz also raises the possibility that *Marcus* 21.9 was another smaller interpolation that had been inserted within the original text.³⁸ This appears quite unlikely in view of the brevity of the passage, and it seems more appropriate to view this similarity as another indication of the similar sources that were used by these authors. In fact, it is more probable that in view of the similarities between Eutropius 8.13.2 and *Marcus* 21.9 that they had used the present interpolation as a common source for this passage (for discussion of dating, see below).

The final *ut diximus* reference occurs at *Marcus* 23.7, which reads: *de amatis pantomimis ab uxore fuit sermo, ut superius diximus. sed haec omnia per [a]epistolas suas purgavit.* As with *Marcus* 21.9, this could be used as an indication to a previous reference to the rumours that surrounded Faustina's sexual relationships with actors. The discussion of Faustina's infidelities was also mentioned in the interpolation in Section 19.1-2. This passage does not mention her relationships with actors, but instead with gladiators. The passage reads: *aiunt quidam, quod et verisimile videtur, Commodum Antoninum, successorem illius ac filium, non esse de eo natum sed de adulterio, ac talem faellam vulgari sermone contexunt. Faustinae quondam, Pii filiam, Marci uxorem, cum gladiatores transire vidisset, unius ex his amore succensam, cum longa aegritudine laboraret, viro de amore confessa<m>.* The only other reference to the rumours of her sexual relations with actors occurred at *Marcus* 29.1-2 (*crimini ei datum est, quod adulteros uxoris promoverit, Tertullum et <T>utilium et Orfitum et Moderatum, ad varios honores, cum Tertullum et prandentem cum uxore depr[a]ehenderit. de quo mimus in sc<a>ena praesente Antonino dixit; cum stupidus nomen adulteri uxoris a servo quaereret et ille diceret ter 'Tullus', et adhuc stupidus quaereret, respondit ille: 'iam tibi dixi ter, Tullus dicitur'*), which was clearly set at a later stage of the biography. This inconsistency by the biographer highlights the inherent difficulties within the text and furthers the suggestion that the use of *ut diximus* cannot be taken as a definitive indication that Sections 15-19 were included in the original *Vita Marci*. Both 21.9.2 and 23.7.2 establish the problems with taking the meaning of *ut diximus* as definitive evidence

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 249-50.

for the continuity of the text from *Marcus* 14.8-20.1, which is underscored by the overall thematic consistency in the actual *Vita Marci* and the differences in emphasis between it and the interpolation.

The Dating of the Interpolation and its Significance

The period in which the interpolation was written can be largely deduced by its final passage: **19.12** *deusque etiam nunc habetur, ut vobis ipsis, sacratissime imperator Diocletiane, et semper visum est et videtur, qui eum inter numina vestra non ut ceteros sed specialiter veneramini ac semper dicitis, vos vita et clementia tales esse cupere qualis fuit Marcus, etiamsi philosophia nec Plato esse possit, si revertatur in vitam. et quidem haec breviter et congeste* ('Even at this time he is called a god, which has always appeared and even now seems correct to you, most esteemed Emperor Diocletian, who worship him among your deities, not as you revere the others, but as one separately, and who often state that you aspire, in life and clemency, to be such a man as Marcus, even though, in regard to philosophy, Plato himself, were he to return alive, could not be such a philosopher. Therefore, so much for these affairs, told succinctly and in brief').

This direct reference to Diocletian makes a definitive statement about the period in which the interpolation was composed, namely between the years of AD 284-305.³⁹ Assuming that this statement is accurate,⁴⁰ this would imply that the interpolation predated the *HA* by roughly a century, considering that it is likely that the *Historia Augusta* was composed around AD 395.⁴¹ It is also important to note the influence that the interpolation may have had on Eutropius, whose writings hold many similarities in theme and structure.⁴² Eutropius had written the *Breviarium Ab Urbe*

³⁹ cf. A. Cameron, "Three Notes on the *Historia Augusta*", *CR* 18.1, 1968, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁰ This may create some problems when analysing the *Historia Augusta* overall, particularly in relation to those other lives in the *HA* that are actually dedicated to Diocletian. See *Aelius*, 1.1; *Avidius Cassius*, 3.3; *Opellius Macrinus*, 15.4.

⁴¹ Syme, 1968, *op.cit.*, pp. 72-9; "Propaganda in the *Historia Augusta*", *Latomus* 37, 1978, p. 175; N.H. Baynes, "The *Historia Augusta*: its date and purpose: a reply to criticism" *CQ* 22, 1928, pp. 166-71; *The Historia Augusta: its date and purpose*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926; "The Date of the Composition of the *Historia Augusta*", *CR* 38, 1924, pp. 165-9; J. Schwartz, "Sur la date de l'Histoire Auguste", *HAC* 1866/7, pp. 91-9; E. Birley, "Fresh Thoughts on the Dating of the *Historia Augusta*", *HAC* 1975/6, 1978, pp. 99-105; A. Cameron, "Education and Literary Culture", *CAH* 13, 1998, p. 685; B. Baldwin, "Some Legal Terms in the *Historia Augusta*", *Maia* 47, 1995, pp. 207-9; "Ausonius and the *Historia Augusta*", *Gymnasium* 88, 1981, p. 438; A. Momigliano, "Date et destinataire de l'Histoire Auguste (Review)", *JRS* 44, 1954, pp. 129-31.

⁴² See Eutropius, *Breviarium Ab Urbe Condita*, 11-14.

*Condit*a by AD 370,⁴³ which would suggest that owing to their similarities, the interpolation was not an unknown text at this stage.

There are numerous similarities between Sections 15-19 and the works of Aurelius Victor and Eutropius in particular, which leads to the question of which text was used as a source for another. The Diocletian reference in Section 19.12 is tempting to follow, but this is by no means a certainty, owing to the existence of other statements addressing him in the *HA*.⁴⁴ As Syme has shown, within the ‘main’ *Vitae*, these occur in ‘difficult’ passages,⁴⁵ but this is the inherent difficulty of the *HA* in general. It should also be noted that the actual author of interpolation is entirely unknown, possibly representing another *ignotus*.⁴⁶ Judging from the succinct nature of the text and the period in which the author was writing, it is more than likely that they would have used the scholarship of Marius Maximus for the composition of the text,⁴⁷ which would also explain the reference in Section 15.1-2 to another biography of Marcus Aurelius. Nevertheless, a viewpoint must be taken – albeit tentatively – that the reference to Diocletian is a legitimate reference. This is largely owing to the text of the interpolation not being from the *Vita Marci*, which removes the issues surrounding authorship – given that the interpolation does not belong in the *Vita Marci*, the reference to Diocletian is the only point by which we can tentatively date it. Therefore, the interpolation has been dated to AD 284-305 for the purposes of this study. However, more of an understanding of its authorship is impossible to ascertain.

Section 15⁴⁸

15.1

*Fuit autem consuetudo Marco, ut in circensium spectaculo legeret audiretque ac suscriberet. ex quo quidem saepe iocis popularibus dicitur lacessitus:*⁴⁹ The introduction of this statement at the outset of Section 15 clearly illustrates the severe interruption between the main text of the *Vita* and the interpolation. As previously

⁴³ H.W. Bird, *The Breviarium Ab Urbe Condit*a of Eutropius, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993, p. xxiv.

⁴⁴ Such as *Verus*, 11.2; *Severus*, 20.4.

⁴⁵ Syme, 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 302.

⁴⁶ However, this is not necessarily the same *ignotus*: referred to by Syme. See R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 30ff; “The Son of the Emperor Macrinus”, *Phoenix* 26.3, 1972, p. 275.

⁴⁷ For discussion of the period in which Marius Maximus wrote, see A.R. Birley, “Marius Maximus: the Consular Biographer”, *ANRW* 34.3, 1997, pp. 2700-1.

⁴⁸ Schwendemann, 1923, *op.cit.*, pp. 62-6.

⁴⁹ cf. Schwartz, 1964, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

mentioned, the standard division between the two was typically drawn between 15.2 and 15.3 of the biography, but it is clear that the division should be taken from the beginning of Section 15. This reference is one of the few passages that claim that Marcus was overtly criticised by the population, which is not in keeping with the majority of the *Vita* overall. It would seem to suggest that Marcus may not have been as popular with the wider community as previously mentioned in the text of the actual biography, but does correlate with the general theme in Section 29 of the *Vita* itself. There is little contextualisation for this passage by its author, which also seems to suggest the placement of the interpolation between 14.8 and 20.1. As Millar has shown there were other instances where reading official letters at the games was an issue,⁵⁰ with Julius Caesar being another leader who was criticised for bringing his work with him.⁵¹

15.2

*multum sane potuerunt liberti sub Marco et Vero Gemins et Agaclytus:*⁵²

This passage seems highly significant for two separate reasons: firstly, it is the only reference that makes allusions to the influential role of Marcus' freedmen, and it also provides some insight into the composition of the *HA* and the interpolation. The first consideration is important to note because it probably explains why the previous division between the *Vita* and the interpolation was placed after this section. In view of there being no other reference to the role of such freedmen, it was probably thought that this section should be included in the main biography. However, this cannot be used as the sole justification because there is other material in the interpolation that is not mentioned in the main text,⁵³ which refutes this form of reasoning. It is also pertinent to note that this is also the only reference to either Geminus or Agaclytus in the entire text,⁵⁴ which would seem to refute the overall claim by the author that they were so influential during Marcus' principate.⁵⁵ But it is understandable why it has been previously thought that this passage was a part of the original *HA* itself, owing to

⁵⁰ F. Millar, "Emperors at Work", *JRS* 57, 1967, pp. 11-12.

⁵¹ Suet., *Aug.*, 45.

⁵² cf. Schwartz, 1964, *op.cit.*, pp. 158-9.

⁵³ See Sections 15.5-6, 17.7, 18.2-4 and 19.10 for example.

⁵⁴ Barnes, 1967, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

⁵⁵ cf. Pflaum, 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 202; P.R.C. Weaver, "Freedmen Procurators in the Imperial Administration", *Historia* 14, 1965, p. 464, n. 24.

its consistent theme of Marcus' compliance with several other sections of the actual *Vita*.

The second consideration that can be taken from this passage, which deals with its insight into the composition of the *HA* and the interpolation, is even more significant when a passage from the *Vita Lucii Veri* is considered: *Liberti multum potuerunt apud Verum, ut in vita Marci diximus, Geminas et Agaclytus, cui dedit invito Marco Libonis uxorem.*⁵⁶ This reference is significant because it highlights the sequence in which the *Vitae Lucii Veri*, *Marci Antonini* and the interpolation were composed.⁵⁷ The most important aspect was the cross-reference to the *Vita Marci Antonini: ut in vita Marci diximus*. This comment by the author provides a few possibilities. Firstly, it may indicate that this section was not a part of the interpolation, but the actual text from the *HA*. In view of the discrepancy between the two references this appears rather unlikely. In the *Vita Lucii Veri*, both Geminus and Agaclytus were explicitly referred to as the freedmen of Verus instead of Marcus, and were meant to have been highly influential on the former.⁵⁸ In addition to this, if the reference to Marcus' disapproval of Agaclytus' marriage to the widow of Libo is considered, it appears highly unlikely that Agaclytus would have been so influential on Marcus, as mentioned in the present interpolation section. In addition to this Stanton has shown that this seems even less likely in view of Marcus' reluctance to elevate freedmen too readily in the provinces.⁵⁹

With this being understood, there are two other compositional considerations: firstly, that *Vita Veri* 9.3 may have been part of another interpolation in the *HA*, or that the *ut in vita Marci diximus* was intended to refer to another Life of Marcus Aurelius. The possibility of the occurrence of another interpolation is certainly an option, but when the remainder of the *Vita Lucii Veri* is analysed, this appears quite improbable. Therefore, it would seem that the reference to the *Vita Marci* could have been an allusion to another biography, possibly that which was composed by Marius Maximus. This would make sense if the sole biographer of the *HA* was composing the work in sequence. This would mean that the *Vita Marci* had not yet been written, and that the author of the *HA* was cross-referencing this passage to a previous work of

⁵⁶ *Verus*, 9.3. 'In addition, the freedmen of Verus had great influence on him, as we mentioned in the Life of Marcus, namely Geminas and Agaclytus. To the latter of them he presented Libo's widow in wedlock contrary to the request of Marcus.'

⁵⁷ cf. Schwendemann, 1923, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

⁵⁸ See Birley, 1983, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

⁵⁹ Stanton, 1975, *op.cit.*, p. 492.

scholarship. It would also explain the apparent confusion in the allusion of the texts in the *Vita Lucii Veri* and the present interpolation. The apparent confusion in these texts is indicative of the inherent difficulties in understanding the composition of the *HA* in general.

15.3-4

*tantae autem sanctitatis.....qui divis habentur, eidem dedicavit.*⁶⁰ This passage makes another clear break from the previous portion of this Section, which makes the previous interpretations of it as the beginning of the interpolation quite understandable, but this has been discussed above. The overall impression of this passage is largely in keeping with the general theme of the actual *Vita* itself,⁶¹ which makes its inclusion in the text at some stage quite understandable. On the whole, the intention of this passage was to emphasise the great extent of Marcus' tolerance for Verus' vices,⁶² which was highlighted by the reference to Marcus' attempts to conceal them or defend him.⁶³ One significant difference between Section 15.3-4 and the *Vita* itself was in relation to the deification of Verus. The biographer of the *HA* refers to the Senate conferring divine honours upon Lucius Verus (20.1-2 *divini <ei> honores decreti. dein cum gratias ageret senatu<i>. quod fratrem consecrasset*), whereas the author of the interpolation directly attributes it to Marcus (*mortuumque eum divum appellaverit*).

The author of the interpolation then proceeded to emphasise Marcus' personal respect for Verus, by referring to his offering of sacrifices to him and consecration of a *flamen* for him and a college of Antonine priests (*sodales Antoniniani Veriani*).⁶⁴ Another important distinction between these two passages is the overall representation, which is much more positive in the interpolation, whereas the biographer of the *HA* uses the initial stages that followed Verus' death as an opportunity to criticise Marcus' dislike for his former Imperial colleague. This further highlights the discrepancy between the representation provided in the *HA* and by the author of the interpolation, which advances the necessity to consider the texts separately.

⁶⁰ cf. den Hengst, 1981, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

⁶¹ Syme, 1972, *op.cit.*, p. 292.

⁶² cf. Burian, 1981, *op.cit.*, pp. 626-31.

⁶³ Schwartz, 1964, *op.cit.*, p. 151, n. 60.

⁶⁴ See *Hadrian*, 27.3; *Pius*, 13.4.

In addition to this Schlumberger has noted the similarities of this passage with the representations presented by Aurelius Victor and Eutropius,⁶⁵ which raises the issue of influences. Considering that the text of the interpolation could be dated to AD 284-305 if the Diocletian reference is accepted as accurate then it would be accurate to argue that this section of the interpolation was a source for the writings of Aurelius Victor and Eutropius instead.

15.5-6

*nemo est principum, quem non gravis fama perstringat, usque adeo ut etiam Marcus in sermonem venerit, quod Verum vel veneno ita tulerit, ut parte cultri veneno lita <v>ul<v>am inciderit venenatam partem fratri edendam propinans et sibi innoxiam reservans, vel certe per medicum Posidippum, qui ei sanguinem intempesive dicitur emisisse.*⁶⁶ The difference between the representation of Marcus by the biographer of the *HA* and the author of the interpolation is further highlighted in this passage. The reference to the rumours that surrounded Marcus following the death of Verus was intended to emphasise his innocence (*nemo est principum, quem non gravis fama perstringat*).⁶⁷ This was used to contextualise the generally positive nature of the author's representation at this stage of the interpolation: Marcus suffered from the spread of gossip, but he was naturally innocent. This was quite different to the representation in Section 20 of the *Vita Marci* in the *HA*, which did not refer to the rumours of Verus' poisoning by Marcus.⁶⁸ but simply implied that he was not altogether displeased by his death (20.3-4 *addidit pr<a>eterea quaedam, quibus ostendit nunc demum se quasi a principio acturum esse rem publicam amoto eo, qui remissior videbatur. nec aliter senatus accepit, quam Marcus dixerat, ut videretur gratias agere, quod Verus excessisset vita*).

It is important to note the similarities of this passage with the description by Aurelius Victor (16.7 *Namque lita veneno cultri parte vulvae frustum, quod de industria solum erat, eo praecidit consumptoque uno, uti mos est inter familiares, alterum, qua virus contigerat, germano porrexit*). Barnes has argued that the correlation between these descriptions illustrates the dependence of the author on

⁶⁵ Schlumberger, 1976, *op.cit.*, pp. 212-13.

⁶⁶ cf. Hohl, 1913, *op.cit.*, p. 411.

⁶⁷ Schwartz, 1964, *op.cit.*, pp. 156-7.

⁶⁸ den Hengst, 1981, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

Aurelius Victor.⁶⁹ It also further exhibits the marked difference of the author's representation to that of the *HA* biographer. All the same, if the interpolation can be dated to the Diocletianic period, it would be plausible to take this as another example of the interpolation as a possible source for Aurelius Victor.

The only reference by the biographer of the *HA* to the alleged poisoning of Verus by Marcus was made in the *Vita Lucii Veri* in Section 11.2 (*nota est fabula, quam Marci non capit vita, quod partem vulvae veneno inlitam, cum eam exsecuisset cultro una parte venenato, Marcus Vero porrexerit*).⁷⁰ It is notable that there is no mention of this at all in the *Vita Marci*, which was seemingly because of the positive nature of the *Vita*. In that biography, the author did not wish to emphasise the possibility of such rumours because it would have been in contradiction with the overall theme of the representation. In the *Vita Marci* in the *HA*, Marcus may have been pleased to have the opportunity to rule on his own, but he was not to be implicated in murder. This was quite different to the general theme of this passage in the interpolation. It should also be noted that the rumour of Verus' poisoning by Marcus was also alluded to by Cassius Dio (λέγεται γὰρ μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ τῷ πενθερῷ Μάρκῳ ἐπιβεβουλευκῶς, πρὶν τι καὶ δοῦσαι, φαρμάκῳ διαφθορῆναι),⁷¹ which illustrates the prevalence of the rumour in antiquity.

15.6

Cassius post mortem Veri a Marco des<ci>vit.⁷² The differing intentions of the author of the interpolation to those of the biographer of the *HA* are further established in this reference to the revolt of Avidius Cassius.⁷³ The most notable aspect of their dissimilarity is the extent to which this rebellion was discussed. While the author of the interpolation simply states that the revolt occurred and leaves it at that, the biographer of the *HA* discussed the insurgence and its aftermath over two long passages (Sections 24-25) and uses the affair as a representation of Marcus'

⁶⁹ Barnes, 1967, *op.cit.*, p. 78, n. 88.

⁷⁰ *Verus*, 11.2. 'There is a well circulated tale, which Marcus' lifestyle does not justify, that Marcus gave Verus a section of a sow's womb that he had poisoned by carving it with a blade covered on one side with poison.' It should be noted that the biographer also mentions that it was rumoured that Faustina had poisoned Lucius Verus in the *Vita Lucii Veri*, 10.1-5. cf. Syme, 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 303.

⁷¹ Dio, 71.3.1. 'It is mentioned that he was later involved in a scheme against his father-in-law, Marcus, and to have died from poison before he could enact any of his designs.'

⁷² cf. Syme, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

⁷³ cf. Syme, 1972, *op.cit.*, p. 292.

moderation and clemency.⁷⁴ Clearly the author of the interpolation had quite different intentions for the representation of Marcus, which explains the limited amount of detail extrapolated in this episode. Schlumberger has also shown the similarities of this passage to that of Eutropius,⁷⁵ which may provide a further indication of the influence of the interpolation upon later texts.

Section 16⁷⁶

16.1-2

Iam in suos tanta fuit.....in circo pedes cucurrit: The overall theme of this passage was actually quite similar to the prevalent theme of the biography in the *HA*, which provides another indication of why it was included in that text. The general premise behind this description was intended to emphasise the generosity and modesty of Marcus Aurelius. The initial reference to the presentation of official insignia to other members of his *familia* was supposed to highlight how Marcus sought to share the glory of his position with others.⁷⁷ However, it could also be interpreted as being indicative of his desire to firmly establish the continuation of the dynasty as well, but this was not emphasised in the representation by the author, particularly in relation to the first sentence (*iam in suos tanta fuit benignitate Marcus, ut cum in omnes propinquos cuncta honorum ornamenta contulerit*).⁷⁸

The majority of the honours awarded to Commodus in this section were also mentioned in the *HA*, including the presentation of the titles of Caesar,⁷⁹ *Imperator*,⁸⁰ his inclusion in the priesthood,⁸¹ and their shared triumph.⁸² However, unlike the initial references to Commodus in the *HA* biography, the author of the interpolation emphasises his wicked nature from the outset, stating that he was evil, but also impure.⁸³ In addition to this, there also seems to have been some discrepancy between this author and the biographer of the *HA* in relation to the representation of Marcus

⁷⁴ The difference in emphasis is also highlighted in the *Vita Avidii Cassii* where there is much greater detail given by the biographer, in a comparatively shorter *Vita*. See *Avidius Cassius*, 7ff.

⁷⁵ Schlumberger, 1976, *op.cit.*, pp. 212-13.

⁷⁶ Schwendemann, 1923, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

⁷⁷ See Mommsen, 1890, *op.cit.*, p. 272.

⁷⁸ Syme, 1972, *op.cit.*, p. 292.

⁷⁹ *Marcus*, 12.8.

⁸⁰ This occurred on the 27th November, AD 176. See *Commodus*, 2.4, 12.4.

⁸¹ This has been dated to the 20th January, AD 175. See *Commodus*, 1.10, 12.1; *Marcus*, 6.3.

⁸² See *Commodus*, 2.4, 12.5. This was not in reference to Marcus' triumph over Pannonia, which is referred to later in the interpolation. See Section 17.3.

⁸³ cf. Stanton, 1969, *op.cit.*, p. 584, n. 101.

running beside the triumphal chariot in which Commodus was seated in the Circus, despite him being *imperator*.⁸⁴ It would appear that this was intended to further epitomise Marcus' immense paternal affection for his son, but it also seems to be slightly critical, in light of the previous reference to Commodus as being *scelestum* and *impurum*. There are no instances mentioned in the *HA* biography of such deference by Marcus towards his son, with the biographer simply showing Marcus as being initially eager to advance Commodus' career. This would have been quite out of character for the presentation provided in the actual text of the *HA* because of the respectable image that was consistently being depicted. Paschoud has noted the similarities between Section 16.2 and Eutropius 18.1,⁸⁵ which may provide a further example of the influence of the interpolation upon later authorship.

16.3-5

*post Veri obitum Marcus Antoninus solus rem publicam tenuit, multo melior et fera<c>ior ad virtutes, quippe qui nullis Veri iam impediretur aut simulatis callidae severitatis, qu[*i*]a ille ingenito vitio laborabat, erroribus aut his, qu<ae> praecipue displicebant Marco Antonino iam inde a primo aetatis suae tempore, vel institutis mentis pravae vel moribus. erat enim ipse tantae tranquillitatis, ut vultum numquam mutaverit m<a>erore vel gaudio, philosophiae deditus stoicae, quam et per optimos quo<s>que magistros acceperat et undique ipse collegerat.*⁸⁶ This passage was also largely in accordance with the presentation of the biographer, emphasising the self-control and restraint exhibited by Marcus Aurelius during his reign.⁸⁷ However, the accentuation by the author of the interpolation on the link with Marcus' Stoic philosophy (*erat enim ipse tantae tranquillitatis, ut vultum numquam mutaverit m<a>erore vel gaudio, philosophiae deditus stoicae, quam et per optimos quo<s>que magistros acceperat et undique ipse collegerat*)⁸⁸ was made much more explicit than the comparatively liberal inferences drawn by the biographer of the *HA*.⁸⁹ It also highlights the inevitable comparison between the two Emperors that was

⁸⁴ cf. Schwendemann, 1923, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

⁸⁵ F. Paschoud, "Le Diacre Philippe, l'Eunuque de la reine Candace et l'auteur de la *vita Aureliani*", *HAC* 1975/6, 1978, p. 148. Birley (2006, *op.cit.*, p. 20) argues that the similarities are between Sections 16.3-18.2.

⁸⁶ cf. Schlumberger, 1976, *op.cit.*, pp. 202-3.

⁸⁷ cf. V. Neri, "La Caratterizzazione fisica degli Imperatori nell'*Historia Augusta*", *HAC* 1996, 1998, p. 252.

⁸⁸ cf. Syme, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

⁸⁹ cf. Baynes, 1926, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

drawn by many of the ancient sources.⁹⁰ But the similarity of themes by both authors provides another example of some continuity, which further illustrates the reasoning behind the inclusion of the interpolation in the *HA*.

However, it is pertinent to note that the representation in this section is much more positive in relation to Marcus' character following the death of Lucius Verus than that exhibited in the biography itself. Section 16.3-5 provides one of the clearest examples of the similarities between the interpolation and other ancient texts. Opinion is divided as to whether this extended to Section 18.1,⁹¹ or 18.2,⁹² but it is nonetheless important to note the potential influence of the interpolation upon other authors, such as Aurelius Victor and Eutropius, if the text can be dated to AD 284-305.

16.6-7

*nam et Hadrianus hunc eundem successorem paraverat.....quandocumque Romanum perveniret imperium.*⁹³ The similarity that exists in the representations provided by the biographer of the *HA* and the author of the interpolation was further exhibited in this passage, particularly in relation to Section 5.1: *his ita se habentibus cum post obitum Lucii Caesaris Hadrianus successorem imperii quaereret, nec idoneus, utpote decem et octo annos agens, Marcus habe<re>tur, amitae Marci virum Antoninum Pium Hadrianus ea lege in adoptionem legit, ut sibi Marcum Pius adoptaret, ita tamen ut et Marcus sibi Lucium Commodum adoptaret.*⁹⁴

However, this similarity cannot be taken as evidence that both passages were written by the same author, owing to the discrepancy between their descriptions of Marcus' relationship with Antoninus Pius. While the interpolation states that Marcus had been chosen as the son-in-law of Antoninus Pius (*quod quidem apparet ex eo, quod generum Pio hunc eundem delegit*), the biographer of the *HA* claims that he was actually the son-in-law of Aelius Caesar in Sections 4.5 (*virilem togam sumpsit quinto decimo aetatis anno, statimque ei Lucii Ceionii Commodi filia desponsata est ex Hadriani voluntate*) and 6.2 (*post excessum Hadriani statim Pius per uxorem suam Marcum sciscitatus est et eum dissolutis sponsalibus, quae cum Lucii Ceionii Commodi*). This discrepancy appears to highlight the different authorship of these

⁹⁰ Such as Dio, 71.1.3.

⁹¹ cf. Syme, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 71; 1970, *op.cit.*, p. 292; Paschoud, 1978, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

⁹² cf. Chastagnol, 1964, *op.cit.*, p. 55; 1968, *op.cit.*, p. 64; J. Schwartz, "Sur le mode de la composition de la vita Aureliani", *HAC* 1968/9, 1970, p. 239.

⁹³ cf. Saekel, 1912, *op.cit.*, p. 125.

⁹⁴ cf. Hüttel, 1936, Vol. 1, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

passages, particularly in light of the biographer of the *HA* stating that Aelius Caesar was Marcus' father-in-law on two separate occasions. This passage also emphasises the connection between the interpolation and Eutropius,⁹⁵ with it being quite similar to Eutropius 8.8-14 (see text below).⁹⁶ The variations between these representations and *Marcus* 4.5 provide one of the clearest examples of the different authorship for the interpolation and also its ensuing influences.

8.1 Ergo Hadriano successit T. Antoninus Fulvius Boionius, idem etiam Pius nominatus, genere claro, sed non admodum uetere, uir insignis et qui merito Numae Pompilio conferatur, ita ut Romulo Traianus aequetur. **8.2** Vixit ingenti honestate priuatus, maiore in imperio, nulli acerbus, cunctis benignus, in re militari moderata gloria, defendere magis prouincias quam amplificare studens, uiros aequissimos ad administrandam rem publicam quaerens, bonis honorem habens, improbos sine aliqua acerbitate detestans, regibus amicis uenerabilis non minus quam terribilis, adeo ut barbarorum plurimae nationes depositis armis ad eum controuersias suas litesque deferrent sententiaeque parerent. **8.3** Hic ante imperium ditissimus opes quidem omnes suas stipendiis militum et circa amicos liberalitatibus minuit, uerum aearium opulentum reliquit. Pius propter clementiam diutus est. **8.4** Obiit apud Lorium, uillam suam, miliario ab Vrbe duodecimo, uitae anno septuagesimo tertio, imperii uicesimo tertio, atque inter Diuos relatus est et merito consecratus.

9.1 Post hunc imperauit M. Antoninus Verus, haud dubie nobilissimus, quippe cum eius origo paterna a Numa Pompilio, materna a Solentino rege penderet, et cum eo L. Annius Antoninus Verus. **9.2** Tumque primum Romana res publica duobus aequo iure imperium administrantibus paruit, cura usque ad eum singulos semper habuisset Augustos.

10.1 Hi et genere inter se coniuncti fuerunt et adfinitate. Nam Verus Annius Antoninus M. Antonini filiam in matrimonium habuit, M. autem Antoninus gener Antonini Pii fuit per uxorem Galeriam Faustianam iuniorem, consobrinam suam. **10.2** Hi bellum contra Parthos gesserunt qui post uictoriam Traiani tum primum rebellauerant. Verus Antoninus ad id profectus est. Qui Antiochiae et circa Armeniam agens multa per duces suos et ingentia patrauit. Seleuciam, Assyriae urbem nobilissimam, cum quadringentis milibus hominum cepit ; Parthicum triumphum reuexit. Cum fratre eodemque socero triumphauit. **10.3** Obiit tamen in Venetia, cum a Concordia ciuitate Altinum proficisceretur et cum fratre in uehiculo sederet, subito sanguine ictus, casu morbi quem Graeci apoplexin uocant. **10.4** Vir ingenii parum ciuilis, reverentia tamen fratris nihil unquam atrox ausus. Cum obisset undecimo imperii anno, inter deos relatus est.

11.1 Post eum M. Antoninus solus rem publicam tenuit, uir quem mirari facilius quis quam laudare possit. A principio uitae tranquillissimus adeo ut ex infantia quoque uultum nee ex gaudio nee ex maerore mutauerit. Philosophiae deditus Stoieae, ipse etiam non solum uitae moribus, sed etiam eruditione philosophus. **11.2** Tanta admirationis adhuc iuuenis ut eum successorem parauerit Hadrianus relinquere, adoptato tamen Antonino Pio generum ei idcirco esse uoluerit ut hoc ordine ad imperium perueniret.

12.1 Institutus est ad philosophiam per Apollonium Chalcedonium, ad scientiam litterarum Graecarum per Chaeronensem, Plutarchi nepotem, Latinas autem eum

⁹⁵ White, 1967, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

⁹⁶ The included text has been taken from J. Hellegouarc'h, *Eutrope: abrégé d'Histoire Romaine*, Paris: Belles Lettres, 1999.

litteras Fronto, orator nobilissimus, docuit. Hic cum omnibus Romae aequo iure egit, ad nullam insolentiam elatus imperii fastigio; liberalitatis promptissimae. **12.2** Prouincias ingenti benignitate et moderatione tractauit. Contra Germanos eo principe res feliciter gestae sunt. Bellum ipse unum gessit Marcomannicum, sed quantum nulla memoria fuit, adeo ut Punicis conferatur. Nam eo grauius est factum quod uniuersi exercitus Romani perierant. Sub hoc enim tantus casus pestilentiae fuit ut post uictoriam Persicam Romae ac per. Italiam provinciasque maxima hominum pars, militum omnes fere copiae languore defecerint.

13.1 Ingenti ergo labore et moderatiore, cum apud Carnuntum iugi triennio perseuerasset, bellum Marcomannicum confecit quod cum his Quadi, Vandali, Sarmatae, Suebi atque omnis barbaria commouerat. Multa hominum milia interfecit ac, Pannoniis seruitio liberatis, Romae rursus cum Commodus Antonino, filio suo, quem iam Caesarem fecerat, triumphauit. **13.2** Ad huius belli sumptum cum aerario exhausto largitiones nullas haberet neque iudicare prouincialibus aut senatui aliquid uellet, instrumentum regii cultus, facta in foro diui Traiani sectione, distraxit, uasa aurea, pocula crystallina et murrina, uxori ac suam sericam et auream uestem, multa ornamenta gemmarum. Ac per duos continuos menses ea uenditio habita est multumque auri redactum. Post uictoriam tamen emptoribus pretia restituit qui reddere comparata uoluerunt; molestus nulli fuit qui maluit semel empta retinere.

14.1 Hic permisit uiris clarioribus ut conuiuia eodem cultu quo ipse et ministris similibus exhiberent. In editione munerum post uictoriam adeo magnificus fuit ut centum simul leones exhibuisse tradatur. **14.2** Cum igitur fortunatam rem publicam et uirtute et mansuetudine reddidisset, obiit XVIII imperii anno, uitae LXI, et omnibus certatim adnitentibus inter Diuos relatus est.

Section 17

17.1-3

*Ergo provincias post h<a>ec ingenti moderatione ac benignitate tractauit. contra Germanos res feliciter gessit. spe<c>iale ipse bellum Marcomannicum, sed quant<um> nulla unquam memoria fuit, cum uirtute tum etiam felicitate transegit, et eo quidem tempore, quo pestilentia gravis multa milia et popularium et militum interemerat. Pannonias ergo Marcomannis, Sarmatis, V[u]andalis, simul etiam Quadis extinctis seruitio liberavit et Romae cum Commodus, quem iam Caesarem fecerat, filio, ut diximus, suo, triumphauit.*⁹⁷ In this passage it is noteworthy that Marcus was described as having moderation, which was a consistent term used in the *Vita* in the *HA*. But the significance of this may be a result of Marcus' own reference to the importance of modesty,⁹⁸ rather than it being indicative of similar authorship. However, it is also important to observe that the use of *benignitate* as a descriptor for Marcus' character only occurred in the interpolation (in Section 16.1). As with the

⁹⁷ cf. U.P. Boissevain, "Über die dem Ioannes Anticchenus zugeschriebenen Excerpta Salmasiana", *Hermes* 22, 1887, pp. 165-6.

⁹⁸ *Med.* 1.2; Birley, 1987, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

representation of Marcus' military campaigns in the biography of the *HA*, the representation in the interpolation similarly concentrated on the overall successes of the campaign, which was highlighted in the phrase: *contra Germanos res feliciter gessit*. The pestilence was also mentioned in the interpolation at this point in a similar fashion to the *HA* biography.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the author of the interpolation further emphasises the magnitude of Marcus' successes through the claim that: *sed quantum nulla umquam memoria fuit* ('[it] was greater than any in human memory').

It is also of note to compare the different references to the tribes that Marcus encountered during this campaign. According to the author of the interpolation, he defeated the Marcomanni, Sarmatians, Vandals and the Quadi, as well as liberating Pannonia (*Pannonias ergo Marcomannis, Sarmatis, V[u]andalis, simul etiam Quadis extinctis servitio liberavit*). This is different from the portrayal by the biographer of the *HA* who lists some similar tribes, such as the Marcomanni, Sarmatians and Quadi, but refers to several other groups in Section 22.1 (*gentes omnes ab Illyrici limite usque in Galliam conspiraverant, ut Marcomanni, Varistae, Hermunduri et Quadi, Suevi, Sarmatae, Lacringes et Burei et alii cum Victualis, Sosibes, Sicobotes, Roxolani, Basternae, Halani, Peucini, Costoboci*).¹⁰⁰ The reference by the author of the interpolation was intended to provide an overview of the military events from Marcus' departure in October AD 169 until his victory over the Sarmatians in AD 175. It is also important to observe the comparative brevity of the discussion of Marcus' northern successes in comparison to the lengthier representation by the *HA* biographer, which extends across Sections 21.6-22.12.

The reference to the joint triumph of Commodus and Marcus has created some differences of opinion among modern scholars. According to Magie,¹⁰¹ the statement was incorrect, in view of the numismatic and epigraphic evidence which dates Marcus' triumph over Pannonia to the thirtieth year of his tribunician power,¹⁰² which would have been between the 10th December, AD 175 and 9th December, AD 176. Commodus' triumph has been dated to the 23rd December, AD 176. However, Birley has followed this statement by the author, claiming that both Marcus and Commodus celebrated a joint triumph on the 23rd December, AD 176.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ See *Marcus*, 13.3.

¹⁰⁰ cf. Syme, 1980, *op.cit.*, p. 262.

¹⁰¹ Magie, 1921, *op.cit.*, pp. 174-5, n. 3.

¹⁰² *Marcus*, 27.3; *CIL* 6.1014.

¹⁰³ Birley, 1987, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

17.4-5

*cum autem ad hoc bellum.....vel non reddidit empta vel reddidit.*¹⁰⁴ This passage presents the character of Marcus Aurelius in a similar fashion to that of the *HA* biographer, emphasising the sacrifice that he personally underwent for the success of the Marcomannic campaign,¹⁰⁵ which was intended to highlight his fiscal responsibility.¹⁰⁶ However, the reference to Marcus' auction in the *Foro Ulpio* was not mentioned in as much detail in the *HA* biography (21.9 *et, ne provincialibus esset molestus, auctione<m> rerum aulicarum, ut diximus,*¹⁰⁷ *fecit in foro divi Traiani, in qua praeter vestes et pocula et vasa aurea etiam signa cum tabulis magnorum artificum vendidit*), which is notable in view of the comparatively extensive treatment it received in the interpolation. Instead of focusing extensively upon this episode, the biographer of the *HA* simply refers to the auction in one sentence and then returns to the discussion of the actual campaign itself. In the *HA*, this was intended to exhibit Marcus' benevolence to the provincials, whereas the author of the interpolation had a different intention.¹⁰⁸

The reference to this in the interpolation paid more attention to the extent of the auction and to the consideration that Marcus exhibited to those who actually purchased items. The differences in emphasis between these two episodes clearly epitomises the distinct intentions of the authors: the biographer of the *HA* sought to stress Marcus' fiscal and administrative responsibility (in relation to the Marcomannic War), whereas the interpolation appears to have concentrated more heavily on the sacrifice that he personally underwent. This highlights how authorial interpretation and presentation can frequently result in the distinct presentation of the same episode by two separate biographers.

17.6-7

*tunc viris clarioribus permisit.....simul exhiberet [et] sagittis interfectos.*¹⁰⁹ The distinction in the representation of Marcus Aurelius by the *HA* biographer and the

¹⁰⁴ cf. Premerstein, 1912, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

¹⁰⁵ See J. Schwartz, "La Vita Marci 17,4 et ses développements", *HAC* 1970, 1972, pp. 249-69; Rosen, 1997, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

¹⁰⁶ cf. Platner and Ashby, 1926, *op.cit.*, p. 240.

¹⁰⁷ See the previous discussion on the inclusion of *ut diximus*.

¹⁰⁸ cf. E. Hohl, "Zur Historia-Augusta-Forschung", *Klio* 27, 1934, p. 162.

¹⁰⁹ cf. Hohl, 1913, *op.cit.*, p. 422.

author of the interpolation was further highlighted in this passage. The overall intention behind this reference was quite similar to that of the *HA* biographer, which sought to emphasise the equanimity of the *princeps*, which was particularly emphasised in the initial sentence (*tunc viris clarioribus permisit, ut eodem cultu quo et ipse vel ministris similibus convivium exhiberet*). However, the second phrase (*in munere autem publico tam magnanimus fuit, ut centum leones una[m] missione[m] simul exhiberet [et] sagittis interfectos*) contradicts the overall representation of Marcus' opinion of spectacles throughout the original text. Throughout the *Vita Marci*, one of the most consistent themes is Marcus' limited appreciation for spectacles, there being references to his restriction on their expense in particular.¹¹⁰ This reference completely contradicts not only these representations, but also the initial statement in the interpolation itself, which claimed that Marcus was criticised for paying more attention to documents at the circus than to the spectacle itself.¹¹¹ Clearly the intention of the author was to exhibit the munificence and liberality of Marcus Aurelius in this passage, but it simply exhibits some of the inconsistencies in the representation instead.

Section 18

18.1-3

*cum igitur in amore omnium imperasset.....in una sede propitium deum dixit.*¹¹² The general theme of this passage highlights the similarities in the overall themes of both the *HA* biography and the interpolation, which focused primarily on the great affection that the populace held for Marcus Aurelius (compare the shared premise of this passage with Section 28 for example). It is also possible to draw some distinctions between the two methods used to discuss the popular lamentation following the death of Marcus on the 17th March, AD 180. The first aspect that is quite different is the length of the discussion, with the interpolation being comparatively brief in its scope in comparison to the biography in the *HA*.

It is also notable that the references to the popular lamentations were much more extreme in the interpolation, particularly in relation to the phrase: **18.2** *tantusque illius amor <ad>eo die regii funeris claruit, ut nemo illum plangendum censuerit,*

¹¹⁰ *Marcus*, 11.3-4, 23.5, 27.6.

¹¹¹ See Section 15.1.

¹¹² White, 1967, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

certis omnibus, quod ab diis commodatus ad deos redisset. This was then further emphasised by the author of the interpolation through the reference to Marcus as being hailed by all as a benevolent god (*propitium deum*).¹¹³ This passage possessed a similar theme to the lamentations mentioned in the *HA*,¹¹⁴ but the direct and all encompassing statement of his divinity makes the subject of the general affection for Marcus Aurelius a much more zealous representation in the interpolation.

18.4-8

*hic sane vir tantus et talis.....et omnia, quae de sacrat<is> decrevit antiquitas.*¹¹⁵

This passage was intended to emphasise the divinity of Marcus Aurelius. The initial claim that he would have been luckier if Commodus had not succeeded him (*hic sane vir tantus et talis ac diis vita[e] et morte cconiunctus filium Commodum dereliquit: qui si felix fuisset, filium non reliquisset*)¹¹⁶ was designed to highlight that the succession of Commodus was the only problem with his reign. The presentation of this sentiment in the interpolation was quite different from that of the *HA* biography, which instead placed this opinion in the thoughts of Marcus himself,¹¹⁷ whereas the author of the interpolation represents it more as a personal opinion. However, despite this differentiation in presentation, the general sentiment was the same by both authors: Commodus was an unworthy successor of such a great *princeps*,¹¹⁸ which was also mentioned by many of the other ancient sources.¹¹⁹

The author of the interpolation then continued to discuss the divinity of Marcus Aurelius, particularly in relation to the sacrilege of people who did not keep an image of Marcus in their houses (*et parum sane fuit, quod illi honores divinos omnis aetas, omnis sexus, omnis conditio ac dignitas dedit, nisi quod etiam sacrilegus iudicatus est, qui eius imaginem in sua domo non habuit, qui per fortunam vel potuit habere vel debuit*).¹²⁰ As far as the author was concerned Marcus was a god, which is to be expected because of his deification following his death in AD 180. The author of the interpolation stresses his divinity in a much more vehement fashion than was

¹¹³ cf. G. Alfödy, "Die römische Sozialordnung in der Historia Augusta", *HAC* 1975/6, 1978, p. 19.

¹¹⁴ See *Marcus*, 28.

¹¹⁵ cf. Baynes, 1926, *op.cit.*, p. 82.

¹¹⁶ cf. Baynes, 1953, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

¹¹⁷ See *Marcus*, 27.11-12, 28.10.

¹¹⁸ cf. den Hengst, 1981, *op.cit.*, p. 155.

¹¹⁹ Aurelius Victor, 16; *Epitome de Caesaribus*, 16.2.

¹²⁰ cf. Alfödy, 1978, *op.cit.*, pp. 9, 12, 32.

customary in ancient Imperial biographies. Typically the references to the deification of a *princeps* were quite simple statements, such as those in Suetonius,¹²¹ and in the *HA* itself.¹²² The representation of Marcus as an actual god in the interpolation was much more fervent, particularly in relation to the claim that he was still worshipped as a god with the *penates* at the time of its composition (**18.6** *denique hodieque in multis domibus Marci Antonini statuae consistunt inter deos penates*). Considering that the interpolation was seemingly written during the reign of Diocletian (see the discussion of Section 19.12) this is quite significant.

The general theme of Marcus' divinity was then further emphasised by the author in the inclusion of the claim that he was known by many men to have foretold things through dreams that later eventuated (**18.7** *nec defuerunt homines qui somniis eum multa praedixisse augurantes futura et vera concinuerunt*).¹²³ This was intended to highlight that the divinity of Marcus was apparent not only after his deification in AD 180, but that it was also quite apparent that he was blessed during his lifetime.¹²⁴ While the representation in the *HA* biography of Marcus stated that there were clear indications of his close connection with the gods,¹²⁵ the author of the interpolation sought to stress this association even further in order to legitimise the view of Marcus Aurelius the *god*. The majority of the specific elements mentioned in this passage were not the same as those discussed in the *HA* biography of Marcus Aurelius, which illustrates the differing perspectives of both authors as well.

Section 19

19.1-6

Aiunt quidam, quod et verisimile videtur.....ac scelerum <c>onluvione concretus:¹²⁶ The differing methods behind the composition of the *HA* biography and the interpolation are further illustrated in this episode, which explicitly indicates that Commodus was born out of adultery, which was intended to vindicate Marcus' reputation by disassociating the two of them (*aiunt quidam, quod et verisimile videtur, Commodum Antoninum, successorem illius ac filium, non esse de eo natum sed de*

¹²¹ Such as Suetonius, *Claudius*, 11.2; *Domitian*, 2.3.

¹²² *Marcus*, 26.7; *Hadrian*, 27; *Pius*, 13.2-4.

¹²³ Syme, 1968, *op.cit.*, p. 189.

¹²⁴ cf. Platner and Ashby, 1926, *op.cit.*, p. 327.

¹²⁵ See *Marcus*, 24.4.

¹²⁶ cf. Stanton, 1969, *op.cit.*, p. 584.

*adulterio, ac talem faellam vulgari sermone contexunt).*¹²⁷ The author of the interpolation then proceeds to outline the episode surrounding the birth of Commodus in detail: *Faustinam quondam, Pii filiam, Marci uxorem, cum gladiatores transire vidisset, unius ex his amore succensam, cum longa aegritudine laboraret, viro de amore confessa<m>. quod cum ad C<h>ald<a>eos Marcus ret<t>ulisset, illorum fuisse consilium, ut occiso gladiatore sanguine illius sese Faustina subl<a>varet atque ita cum viro concumberet. quod cum esset factum, solutum quidem amorem, natum vero Commodum gladiatorem esse, non principem, qui mille prope pugnas publice populo inspectante gladiatorias imperator exhibuit, ut in vita eius docebitur.*¹²⁸

In this passage the author of the interpolation is making an unambiguous statement about the questions that surrounded Commodus' parentage, which was different from the implied allusions that were included in the *Vita Marci* in the *HA*.¹²⁹ There are passing references in the *Vita Marci* to the infidelities of Faustina,¹³⁰ but the details in these episodes were by no means equivalent to the discussion by the author of the interpolation. This is particularly evident in the account of the recommendations of the Chaldeans to alleviate the passion that had inflamed Faustina. The intention of this passage by the author of the interpolation was not only to vindicate Marcus' reputation by disassociating him from Commodus, but also to explain the quite divergent tendencies between Marcus and Commodus as well. This is made explicit by the author in the claim that Commodus was born as a gladiator (*gladiatorem esse*), not as a *princeps* (*non principem*).¹³¹

The final phrase of Section 19.5 is also quite interesting (*ut in vita eius docebitur*) because it makes a cross-reference to a *Vita Commodi*. This could be interpreted as another allusion to the *HA* biography, particularly because the

¹²⁷ cf. Barnes, 1978, *op.cit.*, p. 103.

¹²⁸ Section 19.2-5. 'Allegedly Faustina, Pius' daughter and Marcus' wife, had once seen gladiators pass by and was inflamed with passion for one of them. While troubled by a long illness she confessed to her husband about her passion. When Marcus had related this to the Chaldaeans, it was their advice that the gladiator be killed and that Faustina should wash herself from beneath in his blood and in this state lie with her husband. When this had been done the passion was indeed abated, but Commodus was born a gladiator not a *princeps*; for as emperor he put on nearly a thousand gladiatorial fights, with the people looking on, as will be shown in his *Life*.' Syme attributes this rumour to Marius Maximus. See R. Syme, "Astrology in the Historia Augusta", *HAC* 1972/4, 1976, p. 292; cf. J. Schwartz, "Arguments philologiques pour dater l'Histoire Auguste", *Historia* 15, 1966, p. 458.

¹²⁹ See D. den Hengst, "Selbstkommentare in der Historia Augusta", *HAC* 1992, 1995, p. 153.

¹³⁰ *Marcus*, 23.7, 26.5, 29.1-3.

¹³¹ Syme, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

gladiatorial contests of Commodus are highlighted by the biographer,¹³² but this cannot be taken as a certainty, owing to this being a common theme in other ancient sources on Commodus Antoninus.¹³³ The intention of the author for including this episode is then explained by him: *quod quidem verisimile ex eo habetur, quod tam sancti principis filius his moribus fuit, quibus nullus lanista, nullus sc<a>enicus, nullus arenarius, nullus postremo ex omnium <de>decorum ac scelerum <c>onlutione concretus.*¹³⁴ This was the motivation of the author of the interpolation: to establish that Marcus could not be held responsible for the dishonour and criminality of his son, Commodus.

19.7-9

*multi autem ferunt Commodum.....volente Hadriano adoptatus acceperat?.*¹³⁵ This passage continues the central theme of the preceding discussion, which was intended to absolve Marcus of the responsibility for having a son such as Commodus. As mentioned previously (see Section 19.1-6), the continued discussion of Faustina's infidelities (*multi autem ferunt Commodum omnino ex adultero natum, si quidem Faustinae satis constet apud Caietam condiciones sibi et nauticas et gladiatorias elegisse*) was also mentioned by the biographer of the HA,¹³⁶ and also by other ancient sources,¹³⁷ but the emphasis in this text was much more detailed. It should also be noted at this point that this representation of Faustina was the opposite of what is said in the *Meditations* (τὸ τὴν γυναῖκα τοιαύτην εἶναι, οὕτως μὲν πειθήνιον, οὕτω δὲ φιλόστοργον, οὕτω δὲ ἀφελῆ),¹³⁸ but this would have also been in keeping with the general theme of Marcus' character: that he was very much in denial of her adulterous behaviour.

While the central theme of this presentation was to absolve Marcus of any responsibility for Commodus' wicked nature, the forgiveness he extended to Faustina was also emphasised by the author of the interpolation: **19.8-9** *de qua cum diceretur Antonino Marco, ut eam repudiaret, si non occideret, dixisse fertur: 'si uxorem*

¹³² *Commodus*, 11.12, 12.11.

¹³³ Dio, 73.10.2-3, 18.1-2, 19.1-6; .

¹³⁴ cf. Burian, 1981, *op.cit.*, pp. 626-7.

¹³⁵ cf. Hirschfeld, 1902, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

¹³⁶ *Marcus*, 23.7, 29.1-3.

¹³⁷ Aurelius Victor, *Caesaribus*, 16.2.

¹³⁸ *Meditations*, 1.17.7. 'That I was fortunate to have a wife who was so unassuming, loving and without airs.'

dimittimus, reddamus et dotem. 'dos autem quid habebatur <nisi> imperium, quod ille ab socero volente Hadriano adoptatus acceperat?'¹³⁹ It is notable that this followed the general theme of Marcus' reign in the *HA* biography, particularly in relation to *Marcus*, 23.7. However, it should also be observed that the author of the interpolation used the literary form of direct speech in this instance, which was overall a rarity for the biographer of the *Vita Marci*, who only used direct speech for Marcus on four occasions (three of these were in relation to his final words). Therefore, it is pertinent to mention that while there are similarities between the interpolation and the *Vita Marci* in the *HA*, there are clear differences in the emphasis drawn by each author on parallel episodes, which emphasises the disparity in their intentions in representing Marcus' life.

19.10-11

*tantum sane valet boni principis vita, sanctitas, tranquillitas, pietas, ut eius famam nullius proximi decoloret invidia. denique Antonino, cum suos mores semper teneret neque alicuius insusurrone mutaretur, non obfuit gladiator filius, uxor infamis:*¹⁴⁰ The veneration of the wider populace for Marcus Aurelius was a consistent theme of the interpolation, but this passage clearly contradicts the theme presented in Section 29.1-3 of the *Vita Marci*.¹⁴¹ According to the biographer of the *HA*, the wider populace ridiculed the compliance and forgiveness of Marcus Aurelius in relation to the infidelities of Faustina. This, in turn, illustrates the different authorship for these two passages, and further establishes the existence of an interpolation in the current text. But it should also be noted that this statement was largely in keeping with the wide-ranging theme of the interpolation itself, which sought to establish Marcus' credentials as a forgiving and almost perfect *princeps*.

19.12

deusque etiam nunc habetur, ut vobis ipsi<s>, sacratissime imperator Diocletiane, et semper visum est et videtur, qui <e>um inter numina vestra non ut ceteros sed specialiter veneramini ac saepe dicitis vos vita et clementia tales esse cupere, qualis fuit Marcus, etiamsi philosophia nec Plato esse possit, si rever<t>at<u>r i<n>

¹³⁹ cf. Syme, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

¹⁴⁰ cf. Burian, 1981, *op.cit.*, pp. 626-7.

¹⁴¹ See den Hengst, 1981, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

vita<m>. et quidem haec breviter et congeste:¹⁴² The final passage of the interpolation continues the basic theme of the deification of Marcus Aurelius,¹⁴³ particularly with the statement that the Emperor Diocletian himself worshipped Marcus as a deity.¹⁴⁴ This direct reference to Diocletian makes a possible statement about the period in which the interpolation was composed, namely between the years of AD 284-305. Judging from the nature of his reign, it appears evident that Marcus had indeed been somewhat of an inspiration for Diocletian,¹⁴⁵ which should largely be interpreted as the ‘idea’ of Marcus’ principate being the greatest influence.¹⁴⁶ In view of the clear influence of this text on Eutropius, who wrote the *Breviarum Ab Urbe Condita* by AD 380, a dating for it in this timeframe (AD 284-305) would appear quite likely as well. In relation to the *Vita Marci* in the *HA*, the interpolation is much more positive in its concluding statements, particularly when compared to Section 29. However, this was largely in keeping with the overall theme of the interpolation itself. But it should be noted that a negative representation of Marcus Aurelius would have hardly been well received if the Emperor Diocletian had such respect for his predecessor. The final statement (*et quidem haec breviter et congeste*)¹⁴⁷ makes it quite clear that this was the end of the interpolation and clearly establishes the intentions behind its composition: it was supposed to be a brief account of Marcus’ principate and one that was aimed to be appreciated by its anticipated audience – namely the Emperor Diocletian.

¹⁴² cf. K. Rosen, “Sanctus Marcus Aurelius”, *HAC* 1996, 1998, pp. 293-4.

¹⁴³ See Baynes, 1926, *op.cit.*, pp. 84, 94.

¹⁴⁴ See Syme, 1971, *op.cit.*, pp. 15, 24.

¹⁴⁵ cf. S. Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*, London: Batsford, 1985, pp. 9-12, 186.

¹⁴⁶ cf. Syme, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp. 302-3.

¹⁴⁷ See Barnes, 1978, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

Conclusions

Introduction

The present study of the *Vita Marci Antonini Philosophi* in the *Historia Augusta* has illustrated the difficulties and the benefits that are inherent in the biography, having shown that if the ingrained textual uncertainties are recognised, it is quite possible to discern the thematic continuity in the *Vita*. Once the interpolation is removed from the *Vita Marci* it is clear that there was a definite standpoint that was being presented by the author, which is highlighted in the intended representation of the *princeps* by the biographer, and through the overall structure of the *Vita*. Once the perspective of the *HA* biographer has been identified it has been possible to ascertain with greater certainty the historical value of the *Vita Marci Antonini*, which has been shown to have been useful for an understanding of Marcus Aurelius. It is evident that the Stoic philosophy of the *princeps* had a marked impact on how Marcus was remembered in the centuries after his reign, which has in turn affected his representation in the ancient literary sources. However, prior to discussing this effect, the thematic continuity that is present in the *Vita Marci Antonini* must be summarised.

Thematic Continuity

The difficulties in ascertaining the progression of various themes in the *Vita Marci* have largely resulted from the inclusion of the interpolation in the original biography from the *HA*. While this has created some difference of opinion about the nature of the text as a whole,¹ it remains clear from the progression of the text that the interpolation should include Sections 15.1-19.12. Once these sections have been removed it is easy to discern a high degree of thematic continuity in the *Vita Marci*, which reveals the intended representation of Marcus Aurelius by the *HA* biographer. The central character traits that were emphasised by the author of the *Vita Marci* were: moderation,² equanimity,³ self-

¹ D. Magie, *The Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Vol. 1, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1921, p. xxii; A. Enmann, *Eine verlorene Geschichte der römischen Kaiser*, *Philologus* Supplementband 4, 1884, pp. 337-501; R. Syme, "Marius Maximus Once Again", *HAC* 1970, 1972, pp. 291-5.

² See *Marcus*, 12.1-2, 12.3-4, 12.9-11, 20.5, 26.1-3, 26.10-13.

control,⁴ and responsibility.⁵ As seen in the detailed commentary on the *Vita Marci*,⁶ these elements were consistently emphasised by the *HA* biographer throughout the *Vita*.

These character traits most likely stemmed from Marcus' reputation as a Stoic philosopher,⁷ which affected the way in which he was remembered in the years following his principate. Whether these were dominating characteristics of his personality is almost impossible to determine,⁸ but judging from the evidence taken from the *Meditations* and other administrative sources of evidence,⁹ it appears likely that these were the qualities that he made every effort to aspire towards. However, the preconceived image of Marcus Aurelius that was presented by the *HA* biographer must also be noted. This should not be taken as a reason to entirely discount the appropriateness of these personality traits, but that needs to be kept in mind when considering the fashion in which Marcus Aurelius is represented by the author. In relation to the consistency of the overall themes in the *Vita Marci* it is important to discuss the passages in which the *HA* biographer diverged from the typical representation of Marcus Aurelius.

The Significance of Critical Representations

There are two sections (Sections 20, 29) in the *Vita Marci Antonini* that provide the most overt criticism of Marcus Aurelius. There are other passages in this biography that provide some indication of authorial criticism,¹⁰ but the nature of Sections 20 and 29 is striking. These passages establish a clear break from the general theme of the *Vita* and provide an interesting insight into the overall structure of the *Vita Marci*. The introduction of these critical sections is quite abrupt, which may be indicative of the shortcomings of the

³ See *Marcus*, 7.3, 10.1-2, 12.1-2, 22.4.

⁴ See *Marcus*, 8.11-13, 26.4-9.

⁵ See *Marcus*, 4.5-6, 7.5-6, 8.2-4, 9.2-3, 10.1-2, 11.1-9, 14.4-7, 21.3-5, 23.1-3.

⁶ See Chapter 3.

⁷ cf. A.A. Long, *Stoic Studies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 134-55.

⁸ For example it has been postulated that Marcus was in fact an opium user. See T.W. Africa, "Marc Aurel's Opiumsucht", in R. Klein (ed.), *Marc Aurel*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979, pp. 133-43. For a rebuttal of this view, see P. Hadot, "Marc-Aurèle, était-il opiomane?", in E. Lucchesi and H.D. Saffrey (eds.), *Antiquité païenne et chrétienne*, Geneva, 1984, pp. 33-50.

⁹ G.R. Stanton, "Marcus Aurelius, Emperor and Philosopher", *Historia* 18, 1969, pp. 570-87; "Marc Aurel, Kaiser und Philosoph", in R. Klein (ed.), *Marc Aurel*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979, pp. 358-88.

¹⁰ See *Marcus*, 3.7, 12.4, 23.4-5.

biographer, who clearly wrote in a more haphazard style than his predecessor, Suetonius.¹¹ Leaving the awkward introduction of these criticisms aside, it is important to consider *why* they were included. It seems probable that the *HA* biographer sought to include these references to Marcus' weaknesses in order to establish his presentation as being more even-handed.¹² If this was the case, it is clear that they were unsuccessful because of the severe break in the character representation of Marcus Aurelius and the biographical inconsistency in the narrative that they produce.

The introduction of Section 20 provides the clearest example of a character reversal in the *Vita Marci*. Firstly, it should be noted that this passage directly follows the removed interpolation, which may explain the break in continuity of the representation, but this is discussed in more detail below. In Section 20, Marcus is depicted as having little remorse following the death of Lucius Verus and being quite pleased to have attained sole authority. This view of Marcus was certainly nothing like the moderate and considerate description of his personality that occurred in the previous fourteen sections of the biography. Marcus' representation as moderate was certainly not evident in this passage, and raises questions about the intentions of the biographer. It is quite clear that this was intended to further emphasise the shortcomings of Lucius Verus, but the darkness of this portrayal remains quite startling in view of the previous favouritism that was so prevalent in the account.

The introduction of Section 29 presents a different form of criticism by the *HA* biographer, representing a reference to the popular criticisms of Marcus Aurelius. This passage by the biographer was highly critical of Marcus, amongst the most critical sections in the entire *Vita*, and was based on the premise that Marcus was too compliant in this regard, which was consistent with the previous critique of his character.¹³ The reference to the promotion of such inappropriate characters (Section 29.1) would have been unacceptable in the traditional Roman mindset, particularly if Marcus had been aware of such infidelities (*cum Tertullum et prandentem cum uxore deprehenderit*). It is important to note that the condemnation of Marcus' compliancy is the main feature of the initial portion

¹¹ Such as in the biographies of Galba and Titus. See D.T. Benediktson, "Structure and Fate in Suetonius' Life of Galba", *CJ* 92.2, 1997, pp. 167-73; D. Wardle, "Suetonius: the 'Change' in, and the 'Generosity' of Titus", *Antichthon* 35, 2001, pp. 64-9.

¹² cf. D. Hengst, *The Prefaces in the Historia Augusta*. Amsterdam: Grüner, 1981, p. 159.

¹³ See *Marcus*, 3.7, 12.4, 23.4-5.

of Section 29 (comprising 29.1-3), with the text then proceeding to other criticisms of his character, such as his avariciousness (29.5), insincerity (29.6) and arrogance (29.7).

The structural placement of the criticism in Section 29 in the biography of Marcus Aurelius is quite intriguing. In previous Imperial biographies, such as those by Suetonius, the placement of criticism in a ‘good’ *Vita* was typically in the middle of the text, in order that it could be used to further emphasise the excellent aspects of the central character.¹⁴ However, the *Vita Marci* was quite different, with most of the criticisms being placed in two sections of the biography: Sections 20 and 29.

Structural Significance of the *Vita Marci*

There are three key structural elements to be discussed in this section of the present study: firstly, the placement of the ‘bad’ sections in the *Vita Marci*; secondly, the presence of the interpolation in the text itself; and, thirdly, whether the structure of the *Vita Marci* can be used as a model for more *Vitae* in the *HA*. Through the discussion of these elements it is hoped to attain a better understanding of the *Vita Marci* and its similarities to, and differences from, other *Vitae* in the *Historia Augusta*. While the *Vita Marci Antonini* has been the central focus area for this study, it must always be kept in mind that it is only a single part of a larger compilation of biographies, and this should be the overall consideration.

The placement of the critical or ‘bad’ sections in the *Vita Marci* illustrates the differences between the structure of this biography and those of ‘good’ Emperors composed by Suetonius.¹⁵ The most notable aspect in this regard was the criticism that was included in Section 29, which concludes the representation of Marcus Aurelius in an entirely different fashion from the majority of the *Vitae*. The insertion of criticism around the middle of a ‘good’ biography was a common practice, which highlighted the imperfections of the character, but then emphasised the ‘good’ qualities when they were discussed. Therefore, considering that Section 20 was approximately in the middle of the *Vita Marci* its inclusion should be expected, but the magnitude of the character change that it represents is still quite striking. The inclusion of a severely critical passage in the final

¹⁴ Bradley, 1978, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

section is unusual, and clearly epitomises how the biographer of the *Vita Marci* was not following the previous conventions of biographical structure. This has been discussed further below, when the structure of the *Vita Marci* and of the *Vitae Hadriani* and *Pii* are considered.

The inclusion of the interpolation has in many ways confused the analysis of the overall structure of the *Vita Marci*. The significant break in the portrayal of Marcus' character in Section 20 apparently led Syme to consider that the actual *Vita Marci* ended at Section 19.12,¹⁶ but this seems unlikely. The critical nature of Section 20 corresponds neither with the *Vita Marci* as a whole nor the overall representation in the interpolation, which means that this break cannot be used as an explanation for a different placement of the interpolation. In addition to this, the theme of Sections 21-28 corresponds in a better fashion to the earlier Sections (1-14). The significance of the acknowledgement and removal of the interpolation can be viewed particularly in relation to the thematic continuity that is then created in the *Vita Marci*. While previous studies have recognised the existence of an interpolation, little attention was then applied to understanding the biography without this textual insertion. The removal of the interpolation makes the narrative of Marcus' life more comprehensible, and it allows for a greater appreciation of the thematic progression that was originally intended by the *HA* biographer.

The significance of the thematic structure in the *Vita Marci* also requires some analysis, in relation to its use as a representative *Vita* from the *HA*. In order to analyse the significance of the structural elements of this biography, it is here compared with the *Vita Hadriani* and the *Vita Pii* as case-studies. These two biographies have been selected as comparative texts because they are both 'major' lives from the *HA* (meaning that they deal with Emperors rather than Caesars or Usurpers), and because of the variation that they represent in regard to the length of the text itself (Hadrian: 27 Sections; Antoninus Pius: 13 Sections). These *Vitae* are considered to have been 'good' biographies, which makes the consideration of any structural similarity or difference more comparable in light of the author's partiality.

¹⁶ Syme, 1972, *op.cit.*, pp. 291-5.

When comparing these texts, it is clear that there were structural differences in the presentation of themes throughout these biographies.¹⁷ While the *Vita Marci* included two overtly critical sections (Sections 20, 29) out of twenty-four in total, which were placed around the middle and at the end of the biography, this thematic form was not replicated in either of the other *Vitae*. The *Vita Hadriani* comprised twenty-seven distinct divisions and included six sections (Sections 9, 11, 14, 15, 23, 25) that could be considered overtly critical of the *princeps*. At first glance, this appears to roughly correlate with the format used for the composition of the *Vita Marci*, with critical sections being placed in the middle and at the end of the biographies. However, after closer examination it should be noted that the negative discussion of the Emperor Hadrian by the biographer in the final sections was in relation to his mental instability just prior to his death in AD 138, which may have been close to the reality rather than an authorial predisposition.¹⁸ Therefore with this in mind, it may be more appropriate to designate only four critical sections in the *Vita Hadriani* (Sections 9, 11, 14, 15), which were all around the middle of the biography. This correlates with the Suetonian model of biographical composition, but still appears quite different from the *Vita Marci*.

The *Vita Pii* was much shorter than the previous two biographies, comprising only thirteen sections, but most remarkably, it contains almost no instances of overt criticism on the part of the biographer, which is highly unusual. This is indicative of yet another structural dissimilarity that existed in the *Vitae* of the *Historia Augusta*, and provides a clear indication that the *Vita Marci* cannot be used as a representation of the entire work. When analysing the structure of the biographies in the *HA*, the one consistent element that is apparent is the inconsistency in their thematic structures. On the basis of this narrow

¹⁷ In his analysis of the structure of the *Vita Hadriani*, Fündling (2006, *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 183-9) has noted the fragmentary nature of the thematic continuity with particular emphasis upon the repetition of various elements throughout the biography. However, he rightly points out that the inclusion of the interpolations does not seem justified for the *Vita Hadriani* because of the brevity of these repetitions. This is different to the interpolation in the *Vita Marci*, which comprises a much larger section of the text. According to Fündling the repetitive elements in the structure of the *Vita Hadriani* was either for the expansion of various themes; to highlight the contradictory nature of the biographer's sources; or to include double accounts that were often marked by phrases such as *ut diximus*. These structural dissimilarities with the *Vita Marci* also illustrates the difference between the repetitive features within the *Vita Hadriani* and the inclusion of the interpolation in Sections 15-19 of *Marcus*.

¹⁸ A.R. Birley, *Hadrian: the restless emperor*, London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 281, 289-92.

comparison with two other biographies, it is evident that the model that is exhibited by the *Vita Marci* can only be applied to this particular *Vita* in the *HA*.

Overall Representation of Marcus Aurelius

As stated previously, the general representation of Marcus Aurelius in the *Vita Marci Antonini* epitomises many of the Stoic ideals that he advocated.¹⁹ Judging from the general acceptance of the accuracy of much of the biography, it appears that the majority of the events were dealt with by the *HA* biographer in a factual sense, but that the episodes that were narrated were selected to highlight the moderation, equanimity and responsibility of Marcus Aurelius. This was largely in keeping with the idealism that was so closely connected to the remembrance of Marcus, which is almost impossible to remove from the available literary evidence. However, it is important to note the existence of such romanticism in the portrayal, in order to minimise its effect on the historical understanding of the *princeps*.

The portrayal of Marcus in an idealistic fashion by the *HA* biographer was not only accentuated through the references to his legislation and actions, but also in the comparisons that were drawn between him and other members of the Imperial household during Marcus' lifetime. The most notable example of this were Lucius Verus,²⁰ and Marcus' son, Commodus. Throughout the *Vita Marci* these less reputable characters were consistently compared to Marcus Aurelius,²¹ which has the effect of emphasising the worth of the central character. With this in mind, it is possible that their representation (that of Lucius Verus and Commodus) in the ancient literary sources has been negatively coloured because of the natural inclinations of many authors to compare them with Marcus Aurelius. This is impossible to verify, but it is nevertheless an important point to keep in mind.

While the contrast that was drawn of Marcus with Lucius Verus and Commodus was intended to accentuate Marcus' goodness, another significant comparison was alluded to by the *HA* biographer between Marcus and his predecessor, Hadrian. However, this comparison was complimentary for both Emperors, not discriminatory against one of them. When comparing the *Vitae Hadriani* and *Marci* it is quite clear that there were some

¹⁹ cf. A. Scheithauer, *Kaiserbild und literarisches Program*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1987, pp. 46-8.

²⁰ cf. T.D. Barnes, "Hadrian and Lucius Verus", *JRS* 57, 1967, pp. 65-79.

²¹ *Marcus*, 8.9-14, 12.9, 12.14, 14.4-8, 22.12, 27.11-12, 28.1-10.

intended comparisons by the author. It is notable that in the *Vita Hadriani* he also was depicted as lenient,²² respectful to the Senate,²³ and seeking to reduce taxes in the provinces,²⁴ which is comparable to the representation of Marcus Aurelius in the *HA*.²⁵ In addition to this, both are shown to have sought to avoid executing Senators,²⁶ attended the Senate meetings frequently,²⁷ and barred *equites* from criminal cases involving Senators.²⁸ Both Emperors were portrayed as acting with great responsibility,²⁹ which was an example to others.³⁰ Other similarities between their representations can be viewed in terms of their liberality,³¹ hatred for Antioch,³² passion for education and learning,³³ and a similar desire for death at the end of their *Vitae*.³⁴ Such a connection between Marcus and Hadrian was explicitly stated in the *Vita Marci*,³⁵ which demonstrates the connection that was intended to be illustrated between them. These similarities clearly show the positive representation of both Emperors, and the formulaic method by which such good characteristics were exemplified by the *HA* biographer in these *Vitae*.

The Historical Significance of the *Vita Marci*

The historical accuracy of the *Vita Marci Antonini* is good overall, despite the presence of a small number of inconsistencies, which makes its analysis as a source for the reign of Marcus Aurelius a useful undertaking. The inconsistencies, such as the reference to the limited offering of donatives for the public by Marcus throughout his principate,³⁶ were influenced by the biographer's intention to provide a consistent representation of the *princeps*. The consistency of the portrayal by the *HA* biographer was more important than historical fact in certain regards, but this correlates well with the conception of ancient

²² *Hadrian*, 5.5-8.

²³ *Hadrian*, 6.1-3, 8.1-3.

²⁴ *Hadrian*, 6.5, 12.4.

²⁵ *Marcus*, 8.1, 10.1-9, 11.7, 21.9.

²⁶ *Hadrian*, 7.1-4; *Marcus*, 25.6.

²⁷ *Hadrian*, 8.6-7; *Marcus*, 10.7-9.

²⁸ *Hadrian*, 8.8; *Marcus*, 10.6.

²⁹ *Hadrian*, 10.1-3; *Marcus*, 4.5-6, 7.5-6, 8.2-4, 9.2-3, 10.1-2, 11.1-9, 14.4-7.

³⁰ *Hadrian*, 10.4; *Marcus*, 12.1-4.

³¹ *Hadrian*, 21.9; *Marcus*, 9.7-9, 12.1-6.

³² *Hadrian*, 14.1; *Marcus*, 25.9-12.

³³ *Hadrian*, 14.8-11; *Marcus*, 3.1-9.

³⁴ *Hadrian*, 24.8-13; *Marcus*, 28.1-10.

³⁵ See *Marcus*, 11.6.

³⁶ *Marcus*, 23.1-2.

biography: it was an educational tool, rather than an historical one. Judging from the evidence, it is clear that Marcus Aurelius was a benevolent and responsible *princeps*, but the representation provided in the *Vita Marci Antonini* extends this beyond the reality of Marcus' life into an idealised presentation of an almost 'perfect' Emperor.

The biographer's presentation was not entirely consistent, which has been established through the inclusion of Sections 20 and 29 in the *Vita*. These critical depictions of Marcus make an abrupt change to the narrative and may in fact reveal some of the sentiments expressed in the sources of the biographer: there were some criticisms levelled at Marcus during his reign, which the biographer included but did not want to accentuate. These minor interruptions from the central theme of the biography [that focused heavily on Marcus' worth as a *princeps* and as a human being] could illustrate such criticisms, which would be expected during the reign of any leader, regardless of their successes. It is certain that such criticisms were not the overall intention of the biographer of the *Historia Augusta*. The *Vita Marci Antonini Philosophi* clearly epitomises the partiality of the biographer towards a positive representation of Marcus Aurelius. This favouritism, in all likelihood, stemmed from Marcus' reputation as a devotee of Stoic philosophy, which in turn produced of the idealism that has surrounded the recollection of his principate. Judging from the ancient evidence, Marcus was a worthy Emperor, but it is also important to note his eventual characterisation as an 'ideal', which is unmistakably apparent in the *Vita Marci Antonini Philosophi* in the *Historia Augusta*.