



**The twenty-third Roman
emperor, an unholy trinity:**

**Elagabalus or Heliogabalus;
Marcus Aurelius Antoninus;
Sextus Varius Avitus Bassianus.**

Leonardo de Arrizabalaga y Prado

Severan Dynasty & Interloper

193-211 Lucius Septimius Severus

211-217 Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla)

217-218 Marcus Opellius Macrinus (interloper)

**218-222 Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (a.k.a. Elagabalus,
Heliogabalus, Sextus Varius Avitus Bassianus)**

222-235 Severus Alexander

Adolescent Ruler



SACERD DEI SOLIS ELAGAB



NVDB 307; FWM: CM.YG.330-R, rev., S

ELGABAL

اله جبل

אל גבל

ALAGABAL

ELAGABAL

اله الجبل

אל הגבל

ALAGABALVS

ELAGABALVS

ΕΛΑΓΑΒΑΛΟΣ

HELIOGABALVS

ΕΛΑΙΑΓΑΒΑΛΟΣ

אלהא גבל

Elagabalus or **Heliogabalus**

after

Elagabal or **Elaiagabal**

MARCVS

AVRELIVS

ANTONINVS

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS



RIC Marcus Aurelius Antoninus 22.1

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS (CARACALLA)



RIC Caracalla 157

Claim to be Caracalla's bastard:

Implicit in his nomenclature on coins:

MARCVS AVRELIVS ANTONINVS

Explicit in his inscriptions:

DIVI ANTONINI MAGNI FILIO

ΘΕΟΥ ΑΝΤΩΝΙΝΟΥ ΥΙΕΙ



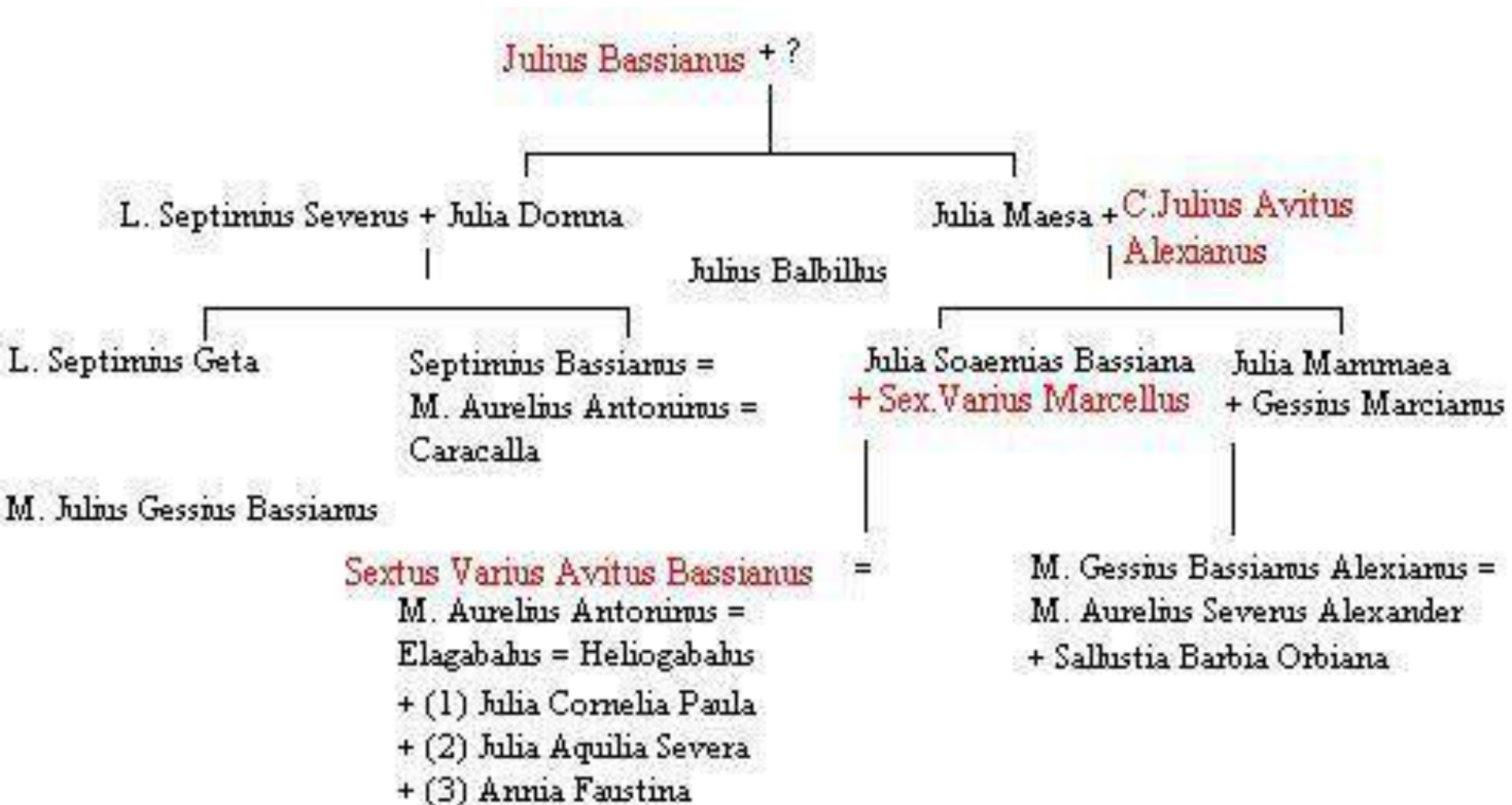
SEXTVS

VARIVS

AVITVS

BASSIANVS

Descendants of Julius Bassianus, High Priest of Elagabal in Emesa



VARIUS

Trinity: three aspects of a single individual

Elagabalus or Heliogabalus:

notional entity, based on uncritical belief

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus:

factual individual, knowable to history

Sextus Varius Avitus Bassianus:

notional entity, based on informed conjecture

Four kinds of unholiness

- (1) Elagabalus or Heliogabalus is commonly described as a monster.
- (2) Most of this monster is not fact, but may be fiction.
- (3) Marcus Aurelius Antoninus is commonly confused with this monster.
- (4) Sextus Varius Avitus Bassianus probably became Marcus Aurelius Antoninus under false pretences.



History:

study of the past based on evidence.

Fact is distinguished from:

- fiction
- conjecture
- opinion
- virtual certainty
- likelihood
- possibility

This emperor's historiography:

- invective
- invention
- pornography
- fantasy

∴ not history but myth or legend

Myth or Legend

Myth: ‘definitely non-historical personages’

Legend: ‘semi-historical traditions’

Kirk, G.S. (1974) *The Nature of Greek Myths*: 23.

The monster:

- sacrilegious priest
- murderous pacifist
 - impotent rapist
 - guileless plotter
 - witty fool
- husband of three wives and wife of one husband

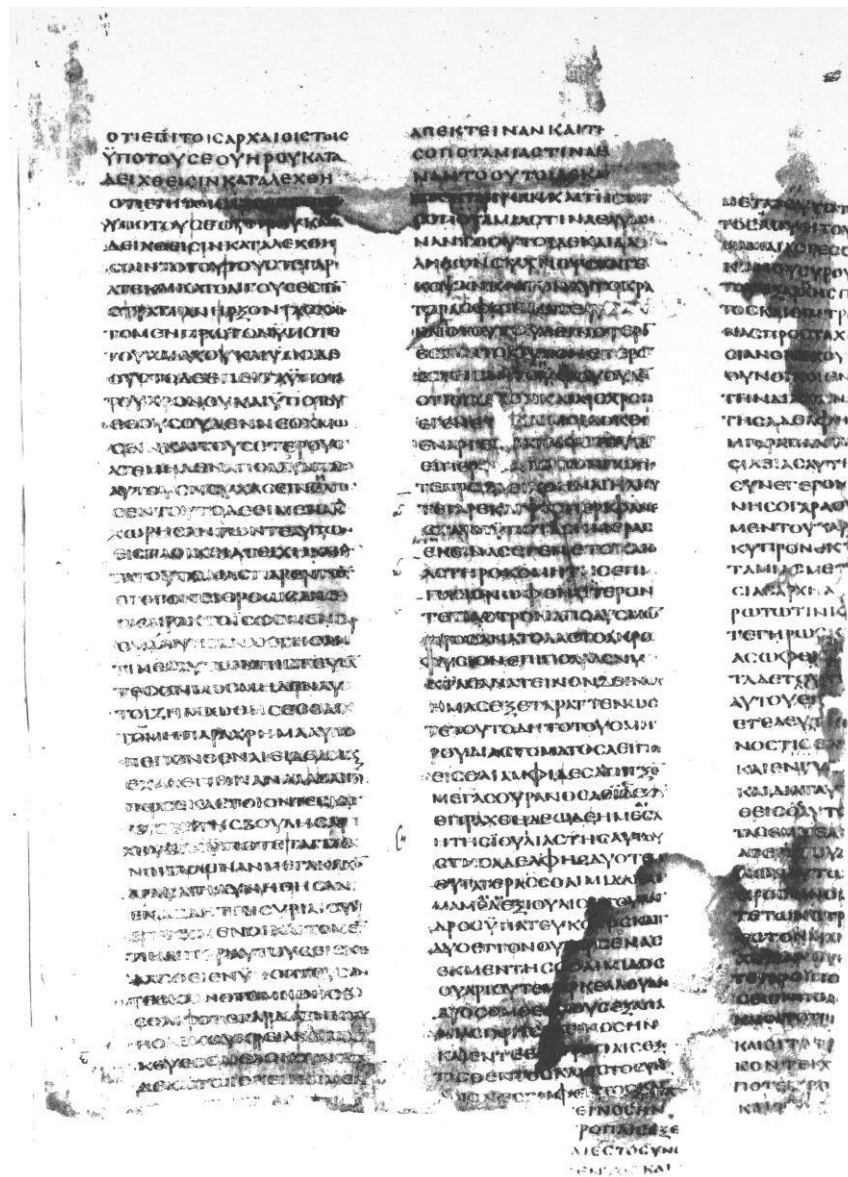
Killed by age of 18 because of:

- venality
- cruelty
- luxury
- chariot racing
- cross-dressing
- self-prostitution
 - dancing

Five main ancient sources

- ca. 222-228: Cassius Dio
- ca. 240-250?: Herodian
- ca. 360: Aurelius Victor
- ca. 390?: *Epitome de Caesaribus*
- ca. 395-410?: *Historia Augusta*

Codex of Cassius Dio's account of Avitus



MS VATICANUS GRAECUS 1266

Dio: hostile pornography:

πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἄτοπα, ἃ μήτε λέγων μήτε
ακούων ἂν τις καρτερήσειεν, καὶ ἔδρασε τῷ
σώματι καὶ ἔπαθε· τὰ δὲ δὴ περιφανέστατα,
καὶ ἃ μηδ' ἂν ἀποκρυσαιτό τις, τάδε ἐστίν· ἐς
καπηλεῖα ἐσῆει νύκτωρ περιθεταῖς κόμαις
χρώμενος, καὶ τὰ τῶν καπηλίδων εἰργάζετο. ἐς
τὰ πορνεία τὰ περιβόητα ἐσεφοίτα, καὶ τὰς
ἑταίρας ἐξελαύνων ἐπορνεύετο.

Dio, 80.13.2

Herodian: dynastic drama with wicked women and a foolish boy

ὁρῶσα δὲ ταῦτα ἡ **Μαῖσα**, ὑποπτεύουσά τε τοὺς στρατιώτας ἀπαρέσκεσθαι τῷ τοιούτῳ τοῦ βασιλέως βίῳ, καὶ δεδοικυῖα μὴ τι ἐκείνου παθόντος πάλιν ἰδιωτεύῃ, **πεῖθει αὐτόν, κοῦφον ἄλλως καὶ ἄφρονα νεανίαν, θέσθαι υἱὸν Καίσαρά τε ἀποδειῖξαι τὸν ἑαυτοῦ μὲν ἀνεψιὸν ἐκείνης δὲ ἔγγονον ἐκ τῆς ἑτέρας θυγατρὸς Μαμαίας**

Herodian 5.7.1

Victor's explanation for the name Heliogabalus

Marcus Antoninus, **Bassiano genitus**, qui, patre
mortuo, **in solis sacerdotium**, quem
Heliogabalum Syri vocant, tanquam asylum
insidiarum metu **confugerat**, hincque
Heliogabalus dictus

Aurelius Victor 23.1

The Epitome's explanation for the name Heliogabalus

1. Aurelius Antoninus Varius, idem **Heliogabalus** dictus, **Caracallae** ex Soemea consobrina occulte stuprata **filius**, imperavit biennio et mensibus octo.
2. **Huius** matris Soemeae **avus Bassianus** nomine fuerat **Solis sacerdos**; quem **Phoenices**, unde erat, **Heliogabalum nominabant**, a quo iste Heliogabalus dictus est.

Epitome de Caesaribus, 23.1-2

Sexual depravity leading to self-castration

Is cum Romam ingenti militum et senatus
expectatione venisset, **probris se omnibus
contaminavit.**

Cupiditatem stupri, quem assequi naturae defectu
nondum poterat, **in se convertens** muliebri nomine
Bassianam se pro Bassiano iusserat appellari.

Vestalem virginem quasi matrimonio iungens suo
abscisisque genitalibus Matri se Magnae sacravit.

Epitome de Caesaribus 23.3.1-3

2.9.97

HISTORIAE

AVGVSTAE

SCRIPTORES

SEX.

Aelius Spartianus,
Iulius Capitolinus,
Aelius Lampridius,
Vulcatius Gallicanus,
Trebellius Pollio, &
Flavius Vopiscus.

ISAACVS CASAVBONVS

ex vet. libris recensuit: idemque librum adiecit:

EMENDATIONVM AC NOTARVM.



PARISIIS,

Apud AMBROSIVM & HIERONYMV M DROVART,
sub scuto Solari via Iacobaea.

M. DCIII.

CVM PRIVILEGIO REGIS.

*Petro Perillaco fidelissimo Dei seruo, fraterna amicitia mihi
coniunctissimo sinceri affectus munusculum offero
Is. Casaubonus.*

Schimpfnamen

appellatus est post mortem **Tiberinus** et
Tractaticius et **Impurus** et multa, si
quando ea erant designanda quae sub eo
facta videbantur

*Historia Augusta, Vita Antonini
Heliogabali, 17.5*

Avatar

- **Pronunciation:** \ˈa-və-ˌtär\
 - 1: the incarnation of a Hindu deity (as Vishnu)
 - 2 **a:** an incarnation in human form **b:** an embodiment (as of a concept or philosophy) often in a person
 - 3: a variant phase or version of a continuing basic entity**
 - 4: an electronic image that represents and is manipulated by a computer user (as in a computer game)
- **Function:** *noun*
- **Etymology:** Sanskrit *avatārah* descent, from *avatarati* he descends, from *ava-* away + *tarati* he crosses over
- **Date:** 1784

Retrieved from Webster Online Dictionary

Elagabalus or Heliogabalus

DE ANNIS IMPERII
M. AURELII ANTONINI
ELAGABALI,

ET

DE INITIO IMPERII,
Ac duobus Consulatibus
JUSTINI JUNIORIS

DISSERTATIO APOLOGETICA

AD NUMMUM
ANNIÆ FAUSTINÆ

Tertiæ ejusdem Elagabali Uxoris.



PATAVII, Typis Seminarii. MDCCXIII.
Apud Joannem Manfrè
Superiorum Permissu, ac Privilegio.

L'EMPEREUR
ANTONIN
HELIOGABALE.

1. **J**ULIA MÆSA ^a ayeule de l'Empereur Heliogabale, & soeur de Julia Domna femme de l'Empereur Severe, estoit de la ville d'Emese en Phenicie, & Phenicienne de race. On pretend qu'elle estoit fille d'un Bassien pontife du soleil adoré par les Pheniciens [d'Emese] sous le nom d'Heliogabale: [Et c'est sans doute à cause de luy que le nom de Bassien se trouve plusieurs fois dans sa famille.

Her. l. 5. p. 562. b. c. f. Goltz. p. 98. f.

Dio, val. n. p. 111. Vict. epit. p. 539. f.

2. Mæsa epousa apparemment un Julius Avitus originaire d'Apamée [en Syrie, qui fut élevé au Consulat, [apparemment en l'an 209;] & elle en eut deux filles, Julia ^a Socemis ou Socemias, & Julia Mamæa. ^a Celle-ci qui estoit la plus jeune, fut mariée premierement à un Consulaire, & puis à un autre d'une dignité inferieure, en conservant néanmoins par une grace extraordinaire d'Antonin [Caracalla,] le rang que luy avoit

Dio, val. n. p. 111. l. 78. p. 902. a.

ibid Goltz. p. 98. f. 101. d. a Her. l. 5. p. 562. d. b Dig. l. 1. c. 9. l. 12. p. 23.

Tomme III. M don-

1. ^a Capitolin dit qu'elle s'appelloit aussi Varia: On croit qu'il se trompe.
2. ^c Les médailles l'appellent *Socemis*, & en grec *Σοκισμια*. [Dion & Herodien *Socemis*,] Lampri-de dit *Semiamira*, Eutrope *Simia Sira*, ce que Scaliger explique fort au long (*in Enf. ebr.* p. 232. 233.)

Macr. p. 96. c. Dio, val. p. 112. c Macr. v. n. C. p. 129. 1. c. n. S. p. 171. l. 2. b.



ORATIO HELIOGABALI ROMA
NORVM IMPERATORIS, HA
BITA IN CONCIONE AD
MERETRICES, QVAM
A' LEONARDO ARE
TINO COMPOSI/
TAM PLERI/
QVE CRE/
DVNT.



HÉLIOGABALE

GEORGES DUVIQUET

Héliogabale

RACONTÉ PAR LES HISTORIENS GRECS ET LATINS,
DIX-HUIT GRAVURES D'APRÈS LES MONUMENTS ORIGINAUX

PRÉFACE DE

REMY DE GOURMONT



PARIS

SOCIÉTÉ DU MERCURE DE FRANCE

XXVI, RUE DE CONDÉ, XXVI

MCMIII

To Leonardo
Am! -

A.R Birley

Die syrischen Kaiser

Heliogabalus und Severus Alexander.

Von

Robert Salzer,

Professor.

I. Abtheilung. Heliogabalus.

Beigabe zu dem Herbstprogramme des Großherzoglichen Gymnasiums
zu Heidelberg für das Schuljahr 1865-66.

Heidelberg.

Druck von A. S. Avenarius.

1866.

G. PASCIUCCO

PROFESSORE NEL LICEO-GINNASIO PAREGGIATO DI BADIA DI CAVA

INDICE

ELAGABALO

Contributo agli studi sugli " Scriptores Historiae Augustae „



acc. 1905
94



FELTRE

PREMIATA TIPOGRAFIA PANFILO CASTALDI

1905

9220

THE
AMAZING EMPEROR
HELIOGABALUS

BY

J. STUART HAY

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

PROFESSOR J. B. BURY, LITT.D.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1911

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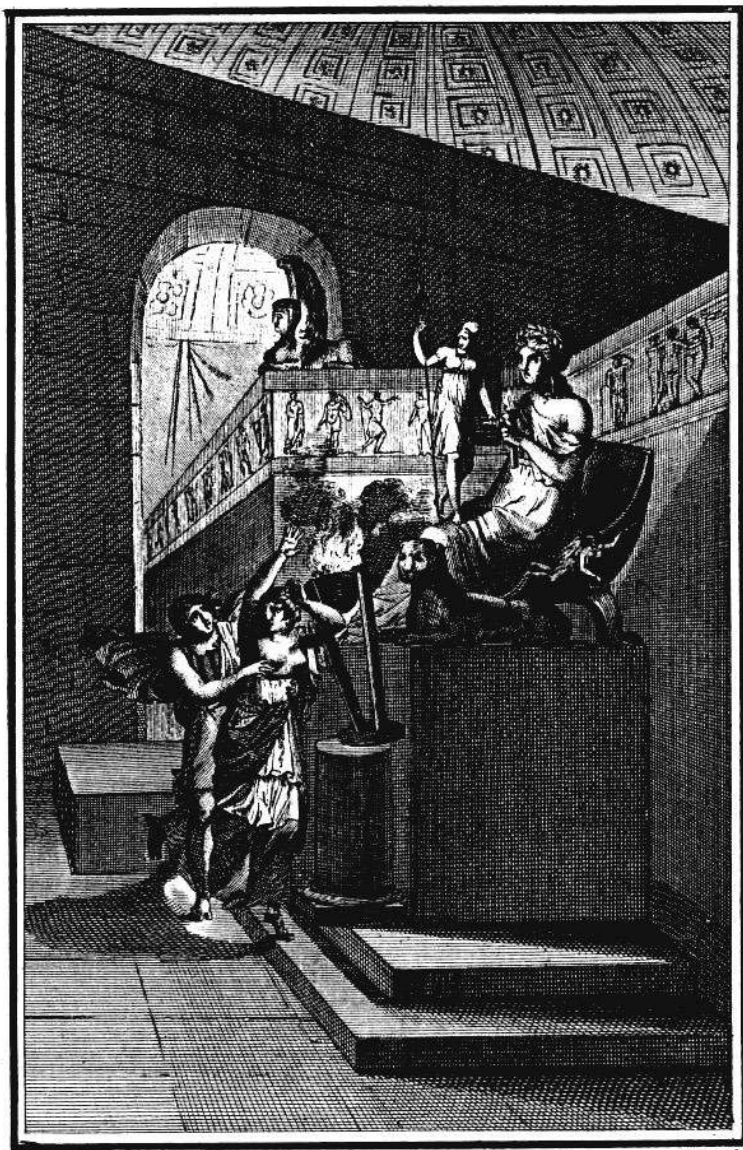
ROBERT TURCAN

HÉLIOGABALE
*et le sacre
du Soleil*



Albin Michel





Adam sculp.

Etendant les bras et m'attachant à l'autel, j'entraînai dans ma résistance le trépied sacré.

HÉLIOGABALE,

O U VI. 8-31

ESQUISSE MORALE

DE LA

DISSOLUTION ROMAINE

SOUS LES EMPEREURS.

Depictam semet aversatur pravitas. SENEC.

Il n'y a que la corruption qui s'offense du tableau de la corruption.

PARIS,

DENTU, Imprimeur-Libraire, Palais du Tribunal,
galeries de bois, n^o. 240.

AN X. (1802.)

ASSIANUS VARIUS
HELIOGABALUS,

OF DE *KW. 4489 136*

UITTERSTE PROEF

DER

TANDVASTIGE LIEFDE.

REUERSPEL.

Door G. TYSENS.



AMSTELDAM,

HENDRIK BOSCH, Boekverkooper,
tegen over het Meysjes Weeshuys. 1720.

HELIOGABALUS

A BUFFOONERY IN THREE ACTS

by H. L. MENCKEN *and*
GEORGE JEAN NATHAN



NEW YORK ALFRED · A · KNOPF MCMXX

STEFAN GEORGE

GESAMT-AUSGABE
DER WERKE
ENDGÜLTIGE FASSUNG

ERSCHIENEN BEI GEORG BONDI BERLIN

H Y M N E N
PILGERFAHRTEN
A L G A B A L

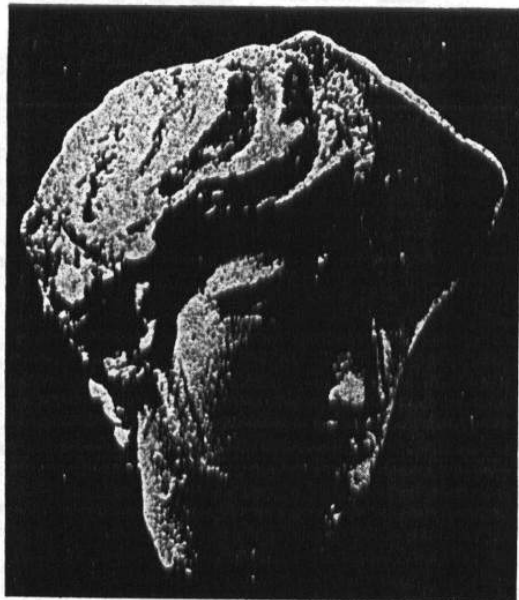


ERSCHIENEN BEI GEORG BONDI BERLIN

MAURICE DUPLAY & PIERRE BONARDI

HÉLIOGABALE

“ ORGIES ROMAINES ”



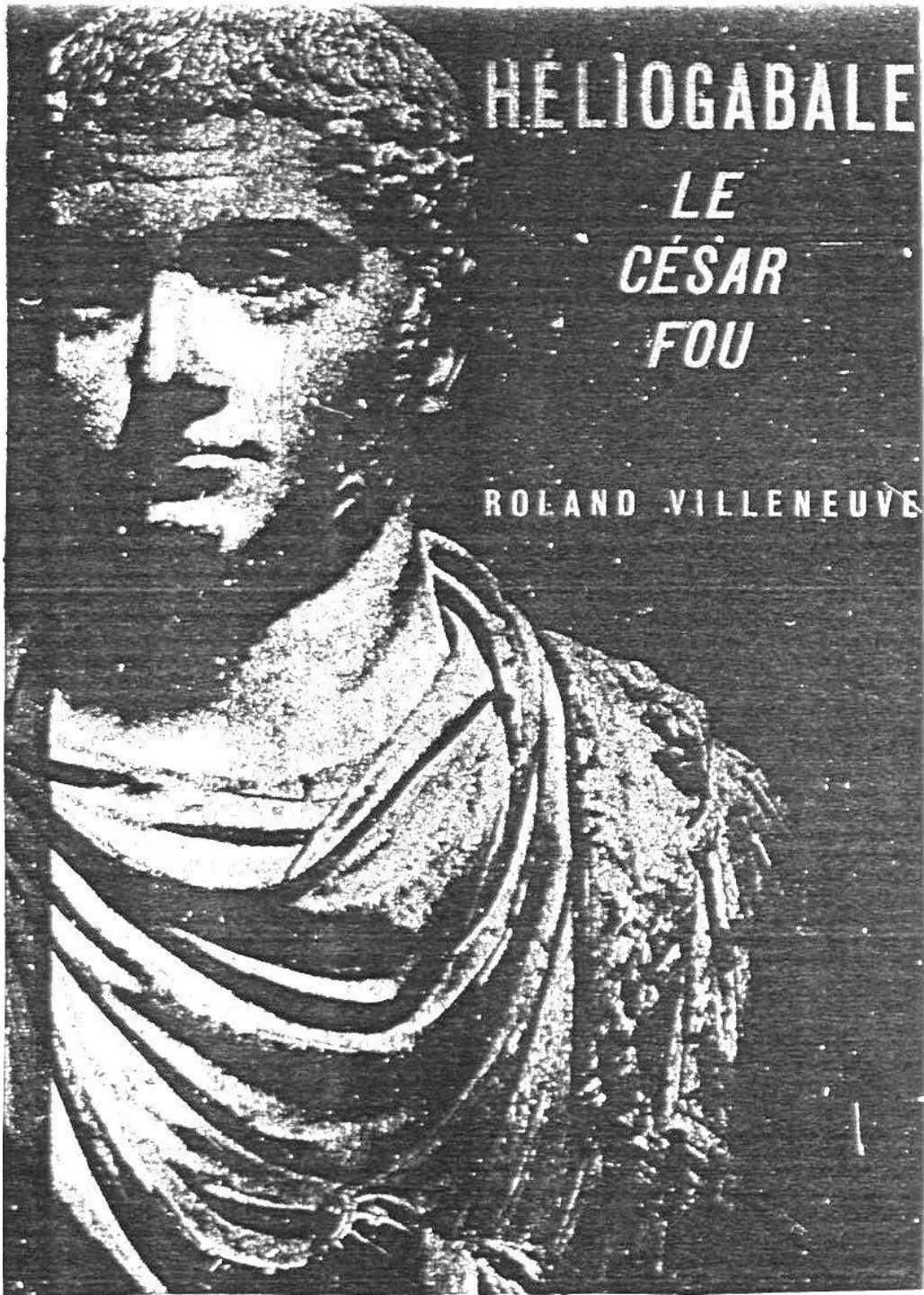
Musée du Louvre.

LES ÉDITIONS DE FRANCE

HÉLIOGABALE

LE
CÉSAR
FOU

ROLAND VILLENEUVE



Héliogabale

Poème de
EMILE SICARD

Musique de
DÉODAT de SÉVERAC

PROLOGUE

Allegretto

PIANO *f*

(marqué)

dimin. *rall.*



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Hans Werner Henze
Heliogabalus Imperator
(1971/72)

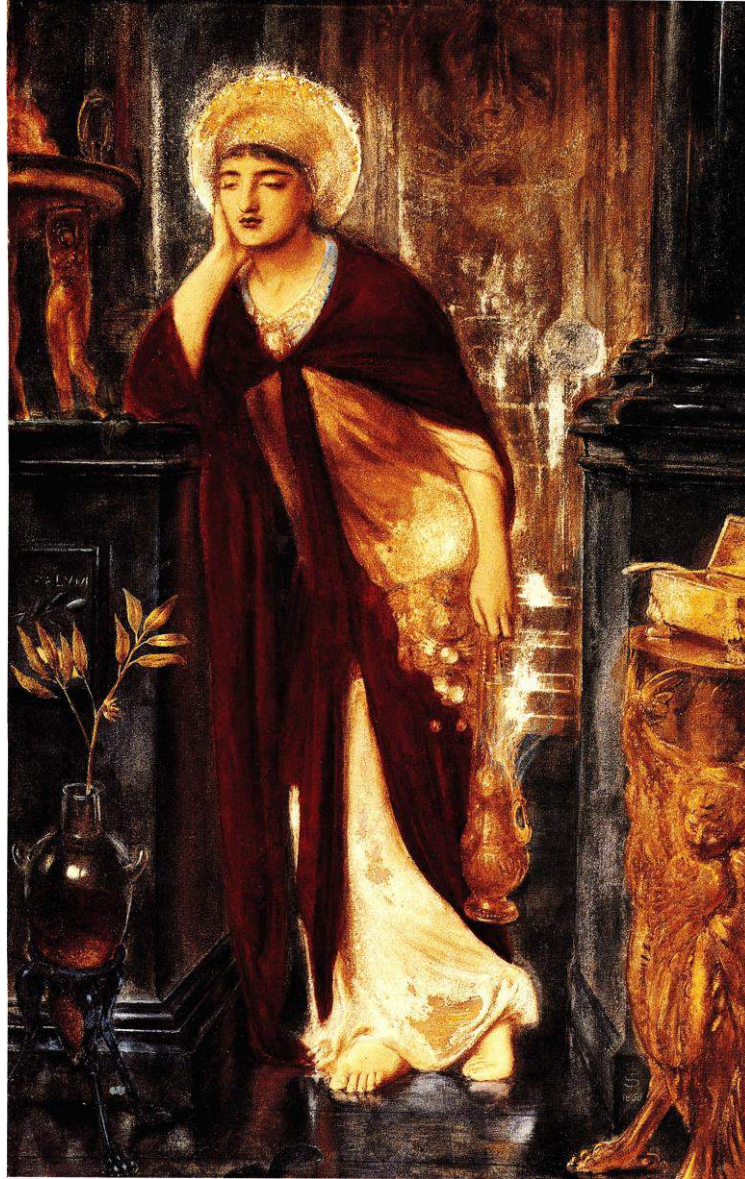
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pic. fl. 2
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c. l.
clar. picc. (in sib)
clar. 1 (in sib)
clar. basse (in sib)
fg 2
I perc.
III

V. I div.
con sord.
V. II div.
con sord.
ve. div.
sul pontic.
vc. div.
cb. div.

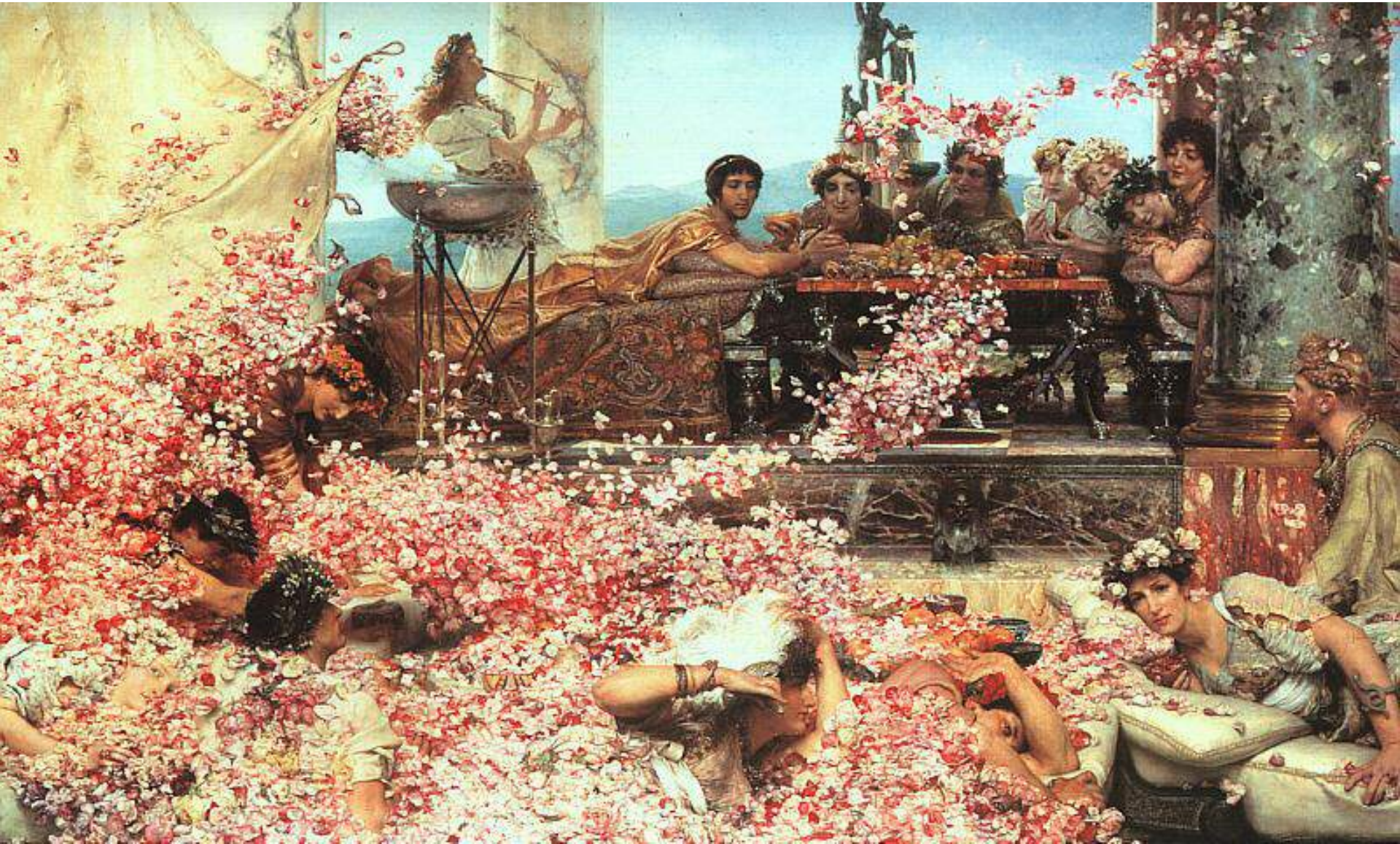


Heliogabalus, High Priest of the Sun



Simeon Solomon, 1866

The Roses of Heliogabalus



Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema, 1888

Lui



Gustav-Adolf Mossa, 1908

L'Orgie Romaine: Héliogabale



Louis Feuillade, 1911

Heliogabalus



Anselm Kiefer, 1974

L'Eliogabalo



Locurcio & Stalteri, 1979

Phaidra-Elagabalus



Silvano Bussotti, 1981

Eliogabalo



Fulvio Caldini, 1985

Varius



Wolfgang Etterich, 2000

Heliogabalus



Zan Gullo, 2003

Arabesken



Laura van den Hengel, 2004

Heliogabalus' Remorse



Matt Hughes, 2004

Eliogabalo, I lirici



Dario Fagiolo, 2006

その腕で
僕を抱いて



みなみ恵夢

1234

ANTONIN ARTAUD

HÉLIOGABALE

OU

L'ANARCHISTE COURONNÉ

Avec six vignettes de
ANDRÉ DERAÏN



DENOËL ET STEELE



S492. b. 92. 51

COINS OF
THE ROMAN EMPIRE
IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

VOLUME V
PERTINAX TO ELAGABALUS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND 97 PLATES

BY
HAROLD MATTINGLY, M.A., F.B.A., F.S.A.
ASSISTANT KEEPER IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COINS AND MEDALS



PUBLISHED BY
THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM
LONDON
1950

JEHOVAH



ELAGABALUS or HELIOGABALUS



Bust in Museo Capitolino, Rome, Inventario 470

Avatar and Emperor

- avatar: an object of belief, possibly fiction
- emperor: an object of knowledge, \therefore fact



THE EMPEROR ELAGABALUS: FACT OR FICTION?



LEONARDO DE ARRIZABALAGA Y PRADO
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2009

Historiography

hostile

inventive

∴ unreliable

Artefacts:

coins

inscriptions

papyri

sculpture

architecture

Problems with Artefacts

- Mainly imperial propaganda, so not to be taken at face value.
- Varius probably gained the principate through fraud.
- Thus his official genealogy, proclaimed by his artefacts, is most likely false.



Epistemology: Theory of Knowledge

- Knowledge must be based on evidence.
- What constitutes evidence?
- Artefacts are liable to random public verification.
- \therefore artefacts are limited in their ability to lie.
- \therefore within limits, artefacts may constitute evidence.
- Historiography is not subject to such limits.
- \therefore historiography does not constitute evidence.

Methodology: Method of Enquiry

- Historiography is not evidence
- \therefore historiography cannot give answers.
- Historiography can raise questions.
- Artefacts can raise questions and give answers.
- \therefore method of enquiry is cross-examination of artefacts by historiography, and vice-versa.

Spectrum of Knowledge:

facts

virtual certainties

greater likelihoods

lesser likelihoods

possibilities

impossibilities

Res Gestae:

what can certainly be known,
on the basis of evidence,
about the priest-emperor
Marcus Aurelius Antoninus

IMP C M AVR ANTONINVS PF AVG



NVDB 369; BNF: FG 1227, obv., AV

IMP CAES ANTONINVS AVG



NVDB 69; BNF: BEDR 443, obv., AV

IMP ANTONINVS PIVS AVG



NVDB 153; BNF: FG 1222, obv., AV

IMP ANTONINVS PIVS AVG



NVDB 513; BNF: NAC: 596, obv., A

IMP ANTONINVS PIVS AVG



NVDB 254; BNF: FG 7221, obv., D

IMP CAES M AVR ANTONINVS PIVS AVG



NVDB 307; FWM: CM.YG.330-R, obv., S



RECTOR ORBIS



NVDB 359

ADVENTVS AVGVSTI



NVDB 238

CONSVL II P P



NVDB 328

PM TR P III COS III P P



NVDB 153

PM TR P II COS II P P LIB AVG II



NVDB 141

FIDES MILITVM



NVDB 37

VOTA PVBLICA



NVDB 375

IVLIA MAESA AVG



NVDB 422

IVLIA SOAEMIAS AVGVSTA



NVDB 380; BNF: CDB146, obv., AV

IVLIA PAVLA AVGVSTA



NVDB 462 : BNF: FG 1229, obv., AV

IVLIA AQUILIA SEVERA AVGVSTA



NVDB 486 : BNF: FG 3815, obv., S

ANNIA FAVSTINA AVGVSTA



NVDB 495 : BNF: FG 3817, obv., S

M AVR ALEXANDER CAES



FWM: CM.LS.3594-R, obv., D



INVICTVS SACERDOS AVG



NVDB 259 ; FWM: CM.RI.1858-R, rev., D

SVMMVS SACERDOS AVG



NVDB 313 ; FWM: M.RI.1860-R, rev., D



Historiography's explanation:

- monotheistic zeal, due to:
 - Syrian:
 - ethnicity
 - birth
 - upbringing
 - culture
 - belief.
- Seeks to impose these on Rome, overthrowing Roman deities.

Honours other Roman gods and goddesses with coins.



IOVI CONSERVATORI



IVNO REGINA

Honours other Roman gods and goddesses with coins.



MARS VICTOR



VENVS CAELESTIS

Honours other Roman gods and goddesses with coins.



SOL



VICTORIA

Relief sculpture of Elagabal with other deities



Elagabal is not monotheistic.





Inscription from Secular Games 204,
naming Julia Soaemias Bassiana (JSB)
wife of Sextus Varius Marcellus (SVM)

E]questres: Iulia Suem[ia Vari Marcelli, ...]

PIGHI, J. B., (1965) *De Ludis Saecularibus*, 158 V.

Epitaph of Sextus Varius Marcellus: (SVM)

*Sex(to) Vario Marcello / proc(uratori) aquar(um)
(centenario) proc(uratori) prov(inciae) Brit(anniae)
(ducenario) proc(uratori) rationis / privat(ae)
(trecentario) vice praef(ectorum) pr(aetorio) et urbi
functo / c(larissimo) v(iro) praef(ecto) aerari
militaris leg(ato) leg(ionis) (tertia) Aug(ustae) /
praesidi provinc(iae) Numidiae / Iulia Soaemias
Bassiana c(larissima) f(emina) cum fili(i)s / marito
et patri amantissimo.*

Boy becomes emperor

IF:

- (A): JSB = emperor's mother (coins, inscriptions).
- (B): JSB = SVM's wife 204-SVM's death (213 +).
- (C): Emperor ca.18 when killed, 222 \therefore born ca.204.

THEN:

- (1): Emperor = JSB's & SVM's (only known) son.
- (2): Firstborn sons C3AD take father's praenomen & nomen,
 \therefore emperor's original name = Sextus Varius.
- (3): \therefore (QED) Boy becomes emperor.

SVM's epitaph as evidence of loci of Varius' upbringing:

- Varius brought up by JSB and SVM
 - SVM in Rome, Britain, Rome, Numidia
 - SVM dies after 213, before 218
 - Varius goes to Syria after SVM's death
 - Varius proclaimed emperor in Syria 218
- ∴ Varius Roman by birth & upbringing.**

THE EMPEROR ELAGABALUS: FACT OR FICTION?



LEONARDO DE ARRIZABALAGA Y PRADO
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