

*Manus do: Homoerotic Allusions and Marital Imagery in ad M. Caesarem 2.5*

The relationship of the emperor Marcus Aurelius and his tutor Marcus Cornelius Fronto has always been shrouded in mystery. For centuries, the consensus has been that their relationship was purely pedagogical, but the discovery of Fronto's corpus of letters in 1815 by the cardinal Angelo Mai changed the scholastic perception. There seemed to be an erotic relationship between Marcus and Fronto emerging from their letters.

Since this discovery, there has been spirited scholarly debate about the true nature of their relationship. On one side of the debate are Yasuko Taoka and Amy Richlin, who argue that the relationship between Marcus and Fronto was pederastic. On the other side is Christian Laes who, although not arguing that there was no erotic relationship between Marcus and Fronto, still warns against drawing conclusions that go past the evidence found in the letters.

This paper will seek to build upon these scholarly foundations and will argue that the relationship, although perhaps not homoerotic in practice, was often portrayed as such in the epistolary corpus. To do so, this paper will examine one specific letter, which features potential homoeroticism: *ad M. Caesarem 2.5*. In this letter, written by Marcus to Fronto, Marcus continuously places himself into the passive role, and sets up a competition for Fronto's affection between himself and Fronto's wife Cratia. Specific attention will be paid to the manners in which Marcus depicts this passivity, including the repetition of the verb *vinco* used to describe Fronto's conquest of him, as well as multiple allusions to marriage between both Fronto and Marcus and Fronto and Cratia.

## Bibliography

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Richlin, A. (2006). *Marcus Aurelius in Love: The Letters of Marcus and Fronto*. Chicago.