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Introduction

*Jesper Majbom Madsen and Andrew G. Scott*

Cassius Dio is best known for writing a lengthy *Roman History*, in eighty books, which stretched from the foundations of the city to the third century CE. In addition to his historical output, he was a Roman senator who led a successful political career that spanned the reigns of Commodus to Alexander Severus. His fortune as a historian has waxed and waned over the centuries; his popularity in the Byzantine period gave way to a less stellar reputation in modern times, when his work was primarily used as a mine for historical information and criticized for its shortcomings. This companion appears during a renaissance in Cassius Dio studies, when Dio’s history has begun to be appreciated for its narrative and literary techniques, historical analysis, and within the context of its cultural and political milieu. The goal of the present work is to provide a point of entry to those new to Dio and also to point to ways forward for future studies of him and his work. This introduction will provide an overview of Cassius Dio’s life, his literary output, and his reception in modern times, before concluding with an overview of the companion as a whole.

*Cassius Dio: Background and Political Career*

Cassius Dio was the son of the Roman senator Cassius Apronianus and hailed from Nicaea in Bithynia.[[1]](#footnote-1) He was most likely born around 165 CE and perhaps began his life in Rome around 180 CE.[[2]](#footnote-2) He held the quaestorship and entered the Roman Senate about a decade later, going on to hold the praetorship in 194 or 195 CE and a first consulship under Septimius Severus, perhaps around 206 CE. During the remainder of Severus’ reign and that of Caracalla, his career witnessed a bit of a lull, but it picked up steam again after Caracalla’s death. Macrinus appointed Dio curator of Pergamum and Smyrna, a post that he likely held for two to three years under the subsequent emperor Elagabalus (perhaps 219–222 CE). Under Alexander Severus, his career saw even greater advancement: he governed Africa as well as Dalmatia and Pannonia, before holding his second consulship as *consul ordinarius* alongside the emperor himself in 229 CE. This crowning achievement of Dio’s career also led to his retirement, which he took up in the same year (80[80].5.3–4 [Xiph.]).

From this brief sketch, we can see just how embedded Cassius Dio was in Roman political life, and his experiences and views as a Roman senator affected the tone and outlook of his *Roman History* in profound ways. Dio wrote his history in the traditional mode of a senatorial historian, even adopting the annalistic format in structuring his work. Yet Dio’s Greek background, expressed most obviously in the language of his history, has also attracted much attention. In the past, Dio has been seen as completely “Romanized”, a view that is a bit outdated and has been now superseded by more nuanced views of ethnicity and identity. In terms of his history, we can be certain that Dio was influenced by both Roman and Greek traditions, for example in his writing from a senatorial perspective, in his translation (and at times transliteration) of Latin terms, in his pursuit of Attic style, and in his abiding interest in governmental forms.[[3]](#footnote-3) Dio’s *Roman History*, like any other such work, was not produced in a vacuum, and a proper understanding of the author and his history must take into consideration his path to writing history and the overall considerations and concerns of the history itself.

*Cassius Dio’s Literary Career*

The Suda, a Byzantine encyclopedia compiled in the tenth century, includes an entry for Cassius Dio (δ 1239 s.v. Δίων), which contains a mixture of authentic and spurious information.[[4]](#footnote-4) Aside from giving his name as Cassius Dio, the Suda reports that Dio was also known as Cocceius or Cocceianus, an incorrect addition to his name in order to connect him to the famous rhetorician now usually referred to as Dio Chrysostom.[[5]](#footnote-5) In addition to his eighty-book *Roman History* and an *Enodia* (likely a reference to the book on Septimius Severus’ dreams and portents), the Suda falsely attributes to Dio a number of others works, including a *Persika*, a *Getika*, a *History of Trajan*, and a *Life of Arrian the Philosopher*.[[6]](#footnote-6) Although these latter works can be safely assigned to others on the basis of the confusion of the Suda’s author, the entry is a testament to Dio’s popularity in the Byzantine period and to his stature as a historian.

About Cassius Dio’s literary career, we can learn more from the man himself, who provides significant detail about its genesis and development. In an important passage that comes after his description of Commodus’ murder, Dio reports that “after this event the greatest wars and civil wars took place” (73[72].23.1 [Xiph.], πόλεμοι δὲ μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ στάσεις μέγισται συνέβησαν). He goes on to state that he composed an account of these wars for the following reason: having written a pamphlet (βιβλίον τι) about the portents and signs that foretold Septimius Severus’ rise to power, Dio received a complimentary letter from the emperor himself, to whom Dio had sent a copy of the work. Having received this letter just before bed, Dio went to sleep and had a dream in which a divine force commanded him to write history (προσέταξε τὸ δαιμόνιον ἱστορίαν γράφειν). After completing this monograph on the wars and civil wars that followed Commodus’ death, Dio again received positive feedback from Severus, as well as others. This positive response compelled Dio to undertake an entire history of the Romans, and he decided to insert (ἐμβαλεῖν) the work on wars and civil wars into this larger history.

Regarding this more expansive Roman history, Dio tells us that his goal was to record and leave behind all events from the beginning up to whatever point Fortune permitted. After praising the support and encouragement given to him by Fortune, he writes more specifically that he researched Roman history to the death of Septimius Severus over a period of ten years, then spent another twelve years in composition. After the death of Severus, he will take his composition to whatever point he can (73[72].23.4–5 [Xiph.]). Two other passages are important here. At 79[78].10.1–2, Dio reports a dream that occurred after the death of Severus. In this dream, Severus appeared to him and told him that he should also record these affairs. Since Dio reports the dream after his narration of Caracalla’s death, he appears to be discussing the recording of events after the death of Severus, referred to at 73[72].23.4–5 [Xiph.]. Finally, at the very end of the work, Dio records his retirement to Bithynia in 229 CE (80[80].5.2–3 [Xiph.]), an event that serves as a *terminus post quem* for the completion of the history as a whole.

From these tantalizing statements, we can deduce that Dio’s overall time of composition, for all three works, stretched from the mid-190s to after 229 CE. The earlier works seem to have been produced rather quickly. The first, on Severus’ signs of coming into power, was likely completed in the mid-190s, and by 200 CE at the latest. One issue is when Dio would have felt comfortable composing such a work. In 193 CE, Severus made his way to Rome, once Didius Julianus had been declared a public enemy and he had been proclaimed emperor by the Senate. This point in time was crucial for a Senate that wished to see a peaceful transition of power and for those senators who wished to ingratiate themselves with the new emperor. Dio himself records Severus’ initial entrance into Rome as an awesome, peaceful experience, and Severus probably soon after (if not already before) was publicizing the sorts of signs that foretold his rise to power.[[7]](#footnote-7) The first work might have been composed as early as 194 CE.[[8]](#footnote-8)

By the following year civil war again seemed likely, this time against Pescennius Niger, whom Severus would go on to vanquish, and by 197 CE Severus would have defeated his final rival and former Caesar, Clodius Albinus. Within this period and the few years after, Severus would also undertake two Parthian campaigns. We can surmise that these were the “wars and civil wars” that Dio decided to write up.[[9]](#footnote-9) It is attractive to think that Dio completed this work in the first years of the 200s, and perhaps presented it to Septimius Severus when he was in Rome in the years 202–204 CE, perhaps on or around the occasion of the celebration of his *decennalia* (202 CE) or the saecular games (204 CE).

In the passage described above, Dio positions these two shorter works as precursors to his *magnum opus*. His literary career began with a work complimentary to the new emperor, Septimius Severus, continued in this vein when he wrote of the wars and civil wars (in which Severus was victor), and concluded with the production of a lengthy, eighty-book history of Rome, from the city’s origins up to the time of Dio’s retirement in 229 CE. As the two earlier works must have been favorable toward Septimius Severus, Dio seems to be using the passage as an introduction to the story of Severus and his successors, which would be told with similar sympathy.[[10]](#footnote-10) Yet the final books are hardly complimentary to the Severans. Understanding how Dio’s views changed over time is an important part of comprehending the more critical tone that he displays in his final books, completed after 229 CE.

One path to answering that question is to consider the purpose of Dio’s *Roman History*, especially in comparison to the earlier, shorter works. The shorter works were written during Severus’ reign and for the emperor as the intended audience, at least in part. They seem to have succeeded in getting Severus’ attention, at least according to Dio’s own reports. These writings appear to have been encomiastic in nature and may have helped in securing Dio’s survival throughout this tumultuous period. In the *Roman History*, it is telling that Dio portrays himself, and his senatorial peers, as anxious during this period of civil wars, for example hesitating to incline to one side or another in the conflict between Severus and Albinus (76[75].4.1–2 [Xiph.]).

In comparison to these earlier works, the purpose of the *Roman History* was much more expansive. In it, Dio traces the entire arc of the Roman past, with particular emphasis on the shifts in governmental forms throughout Rome’s history. There have been various proposals about how best to segment Dio’s history, a task made difficult by the fragmentary nature of much of the history, especially the first few decades. Despite these losses, we can still glimpse important aspects of Dio’s analysis, as Rome’s democracy gives way to a period dominated by dynasts, which in turn is transformed into a monarchy by Augustus and continued (for good or ill) by his successors.[[11]](#footnote-11) Dio pairs this constitutional analysis with a Thucydidean focus on human nature and its effect on political action.[[12]](#footnote-12) Thus, competition and envy play an important part in the breakdown of the Republic, but the effects of human nature can be felt throughout the history as a whole.[[13]](#footnote-13) Like Thucydides, Dio sees *stasis* and civil war as recurring events, and for Dio they serve as major turning points throughout Roman history, even up to his own period.[[14]](#footnote-14)

As a political thinker, Dio favored monarchy for Rome, as it provided the stability that democracy could not.[[15]](#footnote-15) For Dio, monarchy corresponds to the period of Roman history under the emperors, which we frequently call imperial Rome or, more accurately, the Principate. His attention to this form of government is especially apparent in book 52. In that book Dio abandons his historical narrative and instead composes two speeches by Agrippa and Maecenas to Octavian on how best to proceed.[[16]](#footnote-16) Octavian had just defeated his rival Marcus Antonius and now had to decide in what direction to take Rome. Agrippa argues for a return to the Republic (or democracy, in Dio’s words), whereas Maecenas prefers monarchy. While the outcome of the debate is hardly suspenseful, the paired speeches allow Dio to ruminate on the nature of Roman government from two different points of view, as well as make some prescriptions for the future.

In the Augustan books that follow, Dio pairs a narrative of the first emperor’s reign with an explanation of how monarchy was finally established at Rome. Book 53 in particular explains the so-called Augustan settlements of the 20s BCE, and later books include disquisitions on the nature of imperial power (54) and debates about the control the emperor would have over social and moral issues (55). Book 56 details the death and funeral of Augustus and includes a speech of Tiberius that serves as a sort of retrospective on Augustus’ reign.[[17]](#footnote-17)

As he takes up the Julio-Claudian and subsequent dynasties, Dio pushes his narrative in a more biographical direction, though he uses biographical depictions as a way of advancing larger themes in the work.[[18]](#footnote-18) In general, Dio’s analysis of each reign is concerned with the proper functioning of the monarchy, which for Dio includes a sort of power-sharing between emperor and Senate, with the military, Roman plebs, and provinces kept properly in check. Again and again, we find that this system needs to be reset, and cyclical series of events, punctuated by decline, civil war, and renewal, follow. The bright spot of the Roman monarchy, for Dio, is surely the second century CE and the adoptive dynasty that lasted from Nerva to Marcus Aurelius. While much is lost from these books, we can safely say that in Dio’s view Marcus Aurelius represented a high point of the Principate. Dio not only praises Marcus throughout the narrative of his reign, but he also terms Marcus’ rule a “golden kingship” (72[71].36.4 [Xiph.]).

Because Dio’s history is cyclical in nature, it is clear that a golden kingship would be followed by decay, a period that Dio terms “an age of iron and rust”.[[19]](#footnote-19) This comment comes as Dio turns to the reign of Commodus, and there is much in his description of those years to support his claim. After Commodus is assassinated in a palace coup and his successor Pertinax is soon also murdered, civil war yet again ensues. What follows, however, is not the “reset” that occurred at the dawn of the Principate or following the death of Nero and the rise of the Flavians. What we find in the final books of the history, in Dio’s own day, is a degenerate monarchy, manifest in the dynasty established by Septimius Severus and continued by his unworthy heirs.[[20]](#footnote-20)

This brief survey takes us back to the beginnings of Dio’s literary career. We seem to find at the beginning a senatorial historian eager for the approval of his emperor, who later transforms into a caustic and often brutal observer of the Roman monarchy of his own day. The reason for this seems to be that Dio, whose main interest in writing history lay in tracing the governmental changes in Rome, found the monarchy of his day to be wanting, having fallen far from the more ideal versions administered by Augustus and Marcus Aurelius. But this opinion was also of course shaped by Dio’s observations of his contemporary emperors, especially Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus.[[21]](#footnote-21)

We can now return to the time of composition for Dio’s *Roman History*, perhaps one of the most debated questions surrounding Dio’s work. We noted above that Dio’s first two works were written, most likely, before 204 CE. The *Roman History* is a different story. In the same passage in which Dio discusses his earlier writings (73[72].23), he also provides three other pieces of information. First, he spent ten years researching Roman history down to the death of Severus. Second, he spent twelve years writing the work. Finally, for later events (presumably events after the death of Severus), he recorded them as far is he was able. As most scholars have taken these notices to mean twenty-two years of continuous work on the history, the sticking point in the debate around time of composition has been when Dio began his work. Generally speaking, scholars have fallen into three groups: one believes he began work in the mid-190s CE; the second places the beginning of work around 201 CE; and the third argues for a beginning of about 211 CE. There has also been proposed, especially among adherents of the second group, a first edition of the work (down to the death of Severus), which was then revised and expanded to include the content of the history as we now know it.[[22]](#footnote-22)

We cannot know definitively when Dio wrote the history or when and how it was published. We can, however, move away from the first group, as it does not seem that Dio had written his earlier works until around 200 CE or later.[[23]](#footnote-23) It is harder to decide conclusively between the second and third groups. By its very nature, however, the history was not completed until after 229 CE, when Dio retired from public life, the last event that he narrates. It thus, in its final form, stands as a work of likely the 230s CE, and was perhaps not published until after Dio’s death. When Dio moved beyond his initial endpoint of the death of Severus, he decided that more of Rome’s story needed to be written. Crucially, this final part dealt with the Severan dynasty, the aftermath of Septimius’ Severus decision to pass power to his sons, Caracalla and Geta. The history as a whole should be read in light of this material and in light of the end point, which focuses very much on Dio’s personal experiences as a Roman senator.

*Modern Texts and Translations of Cassius Dio’s* Roman History

The text of Cassius Dio’s history can be intimidating even for the expert. Referring to Dio’s work as if it were a coherent text would be misleading, as it is more of a pastiche of texts that were drawn from Dio’s history and have survived in different forms, only to be reunited centuries later. Although about a quarter of the work survives in full, for most of the history we rely on epitomes and excerpts. What follows here is meant to be a cursory introduction to these issues. More detail can be found throughout this volume, especially in chapters 5 and 8.

The books simplest to approach are the ones that survive in full, or mostly in full, namely books 36–60, most of book 79[78] (minus some significant lacunae), and part of book 80[79] (also with lacunae). Books 36–60 are transmitted in some eleven manuscripts, although not every manuscript contains the text for that entire run of books.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Our knowledge of the remaining books depends on an amalgam of epitomes and excerpts of Dio, made primarily in the tenth to twelfth centuries. For the early books, we rely primarily on Zonaras, whose *Epitome of Histories* was made in the twelfth century and whose primary source for his account of Roman history down to 146 BCE was Dio. He is most important for the reconstruction of books 1–21 of Dio’s history, and at times he supplements other sources of Dio’s text for books 44–67. Zonaras’ method of using Dio’s text was not consistent. At times he appears to reproduce Dio’s text closely, whereas on other occasions he paraphrases Dio.[[25]](#footnote-25) A second key source is Xiphilinus, an eleventh-century epitomator of Dio’s history from books 36–80. For books 61–80, we rely primarily on Xiphilinus for the reconstruction of Dio’s text. Where comparison is possible, it has been shown that Xiphilinus largely reproduces Dio’s exact words, though at times authorial comments sneak in.[[26]](#footnote-26) This faithful reproduction makes Xiphilinus’ epitome a key source for Dio’s text, but one must also keep in mind that his method of selection, which tended heavily toward biographical features of Dio’s text, has the effect of distorting our true understanding of the nature of Dio’s history, from book 61 onwards.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Another important source of evidence are texts from the *Excerpta Constantiniana*, a tenth-century project begun by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus that aimed to collect historical knowledge from the past and organize it under different topics (53 in total, of which only five survive partially or in full).[[28]](#footnote-28) These texts contain numerous excerpts from Dio’s history, under different headings: *Excerpta de Virtutibus et Vitiis* (*Excerpts on Virtues and Vices*), also referred to as *Excerpta Valesiana*, after their seventeenth-century publisher Henri de Valois, or *Excerpta* *Peiresciana*, after the tenth-century manuscript from which they are derived; *Excerpta de Legationibus* (*Excerpts* *On* *Embassies*), which is split into two parts, *Embassies of Foreign Nations to Rome* and *Embassies of Rome to Foreign Nations*; *Excerpta de Sententiis*, also known as *Excerpta Vaticana*, after their source, *codex Vaticanus Graecus* 73, or *Excerpta Maiana*, after their nineteenth-century editor, Angelo Mai. In general, the excerpts follow Dio’s text closely, though not exactly, and seem to have been taken from Dio’s text in the order in which they appeared.[[29]](#footnote-29)

The following abbreviations are used throughout this volume, which will, it is hoped, give a sense of the disparate origin of the material that now makes up the text of Dio’s history:

* Zon.: Zonaras, *Epitome of Histories*
* Xiph.: Xiphilinus, *Epitome of Cassius Dio’s* Roman History
* *Exc. Val*.: *Excerpta Valesiana* (= *Excerpta de Virtutibus et Vitiis / Excerpts on Virtues and Vices*)
* *Exc*. *UG*: *Excerpta de Legationibus* *gentium ad Romanos (Excerpts on Embassies of Foreign Nations to the Romans)*
* *Exc*. *UR*: *Excerpta de Legationibus* *Romanorum ad gentes (Excerpts on Embassies of the Romans to Foreign Nations)*
* *Exc. Vat*.: *Excerpta Vaticana* (= *Excerpta de Sententiis [Excerpts on Gnomic Statements]* / *Excerpta Maiana*)

These abbreviations follow the usage of Ursulus Boissevain, whose critical edition is most widely used today by students of Dio and was originally published in three volumes, eventually accompanied by an *Index Historicus* and *Index Graecitatis* (1891–1935). The citations in this volume are made according to Boissevain’s text, though his book numbering at times differs from that established by Leunclavius, whose translations and editions of Dio were published in 1592 and 1606. Boissevain’s re-numbering can be seen in books 61–80, where he publishes his book number atop the lefthand page of the text and Leunclavius’ traditional book number and chapter numbers atop the righthand page. Where possible, we have included both citations, as well as the source of the text. Thus, 73[72].23.1–3 [Xiph.] means that the text is from Boissevain’s book 73/Leunclavius’ book 72, chapter 23, sections 1–3 and that it derives from Xiphilinus’ epitome.

Widely used also is the Loeb edition by Ernest Cary (1914–1927), revised from a version first published by Herbert Baldwin Foster, which includes an English translation of the entire (Boissevain) text. In this edition, Cary includes an approachable introduction to the reconstruction of Dio’s text, and his translation follows the numbering system set forth by Boissevain. More recent translations of shorter sections of Dio include Scott-Kilvert’s (1987) translation of books 50–56 on the reign of Augustus and those contained within the commentaries of Rich (1990), Edmondson (1992), and Mallan (2021). French translations of selected books can be found in the Budé series, including books 36–37 (Coudry 2014), 38–40 (Courdy and Lachenaud 2011), 41–42 (Freyburger, Hinard, and Cordier 2002), 45–46 (Betrand and Fromentin 2008), 47 (Betrand and Fromentin 2014), 48–49 (Freyburger and Roddaz 1994), 50–51 (Freyburger and Roddaz 1991), 53 (Hurlet and Bellissime 2018), and 78–80 (Molin 2020).

*Modern Reception of Cassius Dio*

The reception of Dio in the twentieth century was tepid at best, and downright harsh at its worst. Two major works that shaped this perception, but were also no doubt influenced by contemporary views about which historians outranked others, were Eduard Schwartz’ 1899 article in *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (*RE*) and Fergus Millar’s *A Study of Cassius Dio* (1964). As we will see, both authors specifically tell us what historians Dio was not like, offering a glimpse into the historiographic hierarchy as they perceived it. Both works moved Dio studies ahead while also stifling them. It will be useful here to bring out some of their main judgments of Dio.

Schwartz was critical of Dio’s vagueness when it came to chronological accuracy and his inability to properly manage Late Republican events within the annalistic structure (1688). He complains that Dio’s belief in the majesty of history led him to omit too much information that he considered unworthy, such as names and dates, and Dio’s “clumsy hands” often have the effect of turning his material into a “gray, shapeless mass” (1689). His battle descriptions are rhetorical exercises devoid of value (1689–1690; cf. 1708); indeed, Dio was harmed by the “curse of rhetoric” and the vapid education of the imperial period (1690). In short, Dio “was not Sallust” (1690). In his pursuit of Thucydides, Dio’s imitation was “mindless and clumsy” as well as “annoying because you must crack nuts and find no core” (1691). One of Schwartz’ only sympathies is that the surviving state of the text has caused unkind judgments for Dio, as his reputation would surely be better had the final ten books survived in full, especially in comparison to Herodian and the *Historia Augusta* (1691).

After this initial critique, Schwartz focuses significant attention on source criticism (1691–1717), which both reflected the scholarly concerns of his times and also laid the groundwork for much future work on Dio.[[30]](#footnote-30) Interestingly, in his source analysis, Schwartz notices Dio’s rearrangement of his source material (1699), an observation that hints at Dio’s independence as a historical thinker. Schwartz also analyzes the speeches in Dio (1717–1720) and Dio’s reception in later periods (1720–1722), which includes a review of what sources were used for the reconstruction of Dio’s text. It is worth noting that Schwartz’ article appeared as Boissevain was preparing a new text of Dio, of which only the first volume had yet appeared (noted by Schwartz, 1721).

Fergus Millar’s *A Study of Cassius Dio* made its mark on Dio studies in various ways. The project was begun as Millar’s doctoral thesis under the supervision of Ronald Syme, whose own study of Tacitus had been published in 1958 and seems to have served as a model for Millar’s work.[[31]](#footnote-31) Not since Schwartz’ *RE* article had Dio received so much attention, and Millar’s monograph went in important different directions. Millar largely eschewed source criticism, recognizing, to an even greater extent than Schwartz, that originality of presentation was the hallmark of ancient history writing.[[32]](#footnote-32) He favored an approach that treated Dio as a historical figure in his political and cultural milieu and provided an analysis of his time of composition and compositional techniques, an overview of his political views, and a preliminary analysis of the contemporary books.[[33]](#footnote-33) Millar (1964, 43–44) also addressed some of the criticisms of Schwartz, namely that Dio’s speeches were meant “to create a certain emotional climate, not to reproduce particular facts”, and he recognized Dio’s professed purpose of omitting details he found superfluous so as not to weigh down his narrative

With this book, Millar set many of the parameters of future Dio studies (though it would be some time before they began to be realized). Yet Millar’s analysis was clearly shaped by the existing hierarchy of ancient historians, in which Dio did not rank very high. Even if Millar was attempting to rehabilitate Dio and raise him to the importance of a historian like Tacitus, his opinion of Dio throughout the books is tepid. One remark gives a taste of the full flavor of Millar’s feelings: “If the work is not a masterpiece, its author still deserves respect and attention” (72).[[34]](#footnote-34) For Millar (à la Polybius), it was important that Dio’s personal experiences helped shape the history (7). But beyond that, Dio’s work seemed to add up to less than the sum of its parts. For Millar, Dio “could not impose his personality on the eighty books of his Roman History with the intensity of a Tacitus” (7); his “handling of Cicero is a failure, perhaps the most complete failure in his History” (55); regarding the end of the Republic, “Dio did no more, and tried to do no more, than write down ‘what happened’ in each area in succession, in correct style and easily digestible form” (60); and his analysis of the imperial age (with the reign of Hadrian as the specific example) “is largely a collection of anecdotes, from a variety of sources, centered around the Emperor and leading men of his time” (60).

As the book progresses, Millar’s opinions of Dio seem to grow harsher. He claims that Dio’s goal was “composing the work itself and leaving his name with it to posterity” (73) and that Dio came “to formulate no general historical views whatsoever” (118). When discussing Dio’s contemporary history (to which Millar devotes the lengthiest chapter), Millar concludes: “Dio was no Polybius. In writing the history of his own times he had no conscious historical theory or framework, but was simply concerned to carry on his History as far as fate would allow. The result is inevitably disappointing” (171). Even the personal experience of Dio, seemingly so important to Millar at the outset of the study, fades in significance by the end of history: Dio “makes no attempt to step away from the standpoint which personal circumstances had given him, to avoid *studium et ira*, or to impose a pattern on his experience. Such limitations perhaps raise rather than lower the historical value of these books” (173).

Millar’s *Dio* might have opened up the field on the historian but instead it seems to have had the opposite effect. In the coming decades few wished to take up the question of Dio’s historical or literary techniques; rather, questions of time of composition and Dio’s relationship with the emperors under whom he lived dominated.[[35]](#footnote-35) In the 1980s it seemed a breakthrough on Dio was on the horizon, as a team of Canadian and American scholars undertook the task of producing commentaries on all of Dio’s history, under the name of the “Dio Project”. The nature of this project clearly underlined the belief that more had to be known about Dio’s work and that it should be afforded the treatment received by so many other ancient writers. The first of these commentaries to be published was Meyer Reinhold’s (1988) work on books 49–52. Further publications in this series, however, were slow to materialize, as it was not until 1999 that Murison’s commentary on books 64–67 appeared, followed by Swan’s (2004) on books 55–56. It would be almost fifteen years before the next volume of the series was published, Scott’s (2018) work on books 79[78]–80[80]. In the intervening years, commentaries, not part of the Dio Project, were published by Rich (1990) on books 53–55.9 and Edmondson (1992) on 58–63. Most recently, Mallan’s (2021) translation of and commentary on the Tiberian books (57–58) has appeared. In the same period, a number of texts, translations, and commentaries have appeared in the Budé series, as mentioned above, focused primarily on books 36–60, but also now including a volume on books 78–80.

Despite these inauspicious beginnings, recent decades have been much kinder to Dio, as can be gleaned from the production of commentaries, in English and French, since 1990, in addition to a surfeit of other books, edited volumes, and articles published in just the past twenty years.[[36]](#footnote-36) It is now safe to say Dio has undergone a rehabilitation as much more scholarly attention has been focused on him. Recent years have seen a veritable explosion of publications related to Dio, as will be seen in chapter 7 in this volume. Greater attempts have been made to understand the scope, message, and form of Dio’s work, generally speaking in a more sympathetic manner. More work has gone into understanding Dio’s historiographic project and less focus on judging his work as good or bad. In this companion, we aim to take into consideration this recent work on Dio and also provide important avenues for further study.

*The Plan of This Companion*

This volume aims to provide both newcomers to Cassius Dio and experts an up-to-date and analytical approach to key issues surrounding Dio’s work. As such, the volume is broken down into four sections. The first of these discusses Dio in his political and cultural context, as a Roman senator from the Greek world of Asia Minor who decided to write a history of Rome. The second part discusses the history of Dio’s text and its reception. Next comes a group of papers that cover the segmentation of his work by historical period. Finally, the fourth section discusses key themes and concepts that emerge from the text.

In this first section, we investigate Cassius Dio as a historian and historical figure. Chapters 1 and 2 examine Dio’s Bithynian background and his identity as a Roman senator of Greek extraction, respectively. Chapter 1 shows that while Bithynia was a place of significance for Dio, the historian appears distant from it as a narrator of the Roman past. Chapter 2 places Dio in the context of other Greek imperial writers, with specific focus on attention to the Greek world and *paideia*. Chapter 3 next considers Dio’s place, and self-positioning, in the Greco-Roman historiographic tradition, with a particular focus on his handling of the figure of Cicero. In the final entry to this section, chapter 4 examines Dio’s position as a senator, both in terms of its effect on his history but also by painting a picture of senatorial life in Dio’s day.

In the following section, chapter 5 takes us on an investigation of the editorial history of Dio’s text in Western Europe, which provides important insight into the reception of Dio’s history from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. This thread is picked up in chapter 6, which considers the reception of Dio in Gibbon’s monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in a paper that shows Gibbon’s attitude toward Dio as well as the manner in which he was able to access Dio’s work in the second half of the eighteenth century. In the final paper in this section, chapter 7 provides a thorough and in-depth overview of more recent Dio scholarship. This chapter attests to the explosion of Dio studies in the last twenty years and outlines the different directions in which it has traveled.

The following section presents an overview and analysis of the various temporal segments of Dio’s history. Chapter 8 treats the remains of books 1–35, which are at times scant. This chapter discusses how this part of Dio’s text has been reconstructed, how Dio structured his work, and what we can know about his sources and models. The following chapters deal with parts of Dio’s history that remain more intact. First is chapter 9’s examination of the Late Republic, which focuses on Dio’s explanation for the fall of Republican government at Rome. Chapter 10 follows with a paper on Dio’s Octavian-Augustus. As this chapter argues, Dio’s Octavian-Augustus is an idealized princeps who came at a crucial time in Roman history. As we move into the period of the Principate, chapter 11 takes up the Julio-Claudian dynasty, showing how themes of fear and hatred drive Dio’s narrative of these emperors. Chapter 12 next treats the lengthy period from the Flavians through the Antonines (69–192 CE). This chapter argues that Dio, writing from his senatorial point of view, focuses on the cyclical churn of emperors and tyrants. Finally, chapter 13 examines the contemporary books, explaining how Dio employs his firsthand experiences to highlight the key ills of his age, including dynastic succession, novel imperial representation, and a destructive relationship between emperor and Senate.

The final section of the companion deals with a number of key themes that emerge from Dio’s history. Two chapters deal with speeches, which play such a large role in Dio’s history, especially through book 52. The first of these, chapter 14, analyzes speeches in books 36 to 46, covering the years 69 to 43 BCE. This chapter argues that these speeches offer evidence for the elaborate literary shaping of the work, while also providing subtle links tying together speeches and general reflections formulated in Dio’s own voice at particular moments of the narrative. Chapter 15 then takes on the lengthy paired speeches of Agrippa and Maecenas that make up book 52. After reviewing the reception of the speeches in modern scholarship, this chapter makes the case that Dio’s Maecenas is part of a larger argument embedded in the work about monarchs and *civilitas*. The final three papers deal with funeral oratory, female characters in Dio’s work, and civil war. The first of these, chapter 16, uses two funerary speeches to show how Dio carefully controls this speech type to delineate character flaws in two speeches that serve as bookends to the political life of Augustus. Chapter 17 examines women throughout Dio’s history and argues that Dio employs women to establish moral models, to illustrate moral failures, and to trace the increasing access to political power among women of the imperial family. Finally, chapter 18 analyzes one of the key themes in Dio, namely civil war, showing that Dio is not only a historian of civil war, but also a theorist of the phenomenon.[[37]](#footnote-37)

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Chapter 1: Cassius Dio’s Bithynian Background

*Tønnes Bekker-Nielsen*

*1. Introduction*

By birth, Cassius Dio was a Bithynian. For generations, his family had belonged to the social and economic élite of his native city, Nicaea on the shore of lake Ascanius. He had landholdings in the province and visited it from time to time in the course of his career, either on his own or as part of the imperial entourage.

What imprint, if any, did his Bithynian background leave on the man and his *Roman History*? To answer that question, it is necessary to look at Bithynia, its cities, its leading families, Dio’s own family background, and, in conclusion, the degree to which Dio’s personal familiarity with Bithynia is reflected in the narrative of his *Roman History*.

*2. The Marble Sea*

Northern Anatolia is defined by the mountains that stretch from the highlands of Armenia in the east to the Bithynian Olympus in the west, aptly described by Franz Cumont as “the waves of a petrified sea”.[[38]](#footnote-38) The North Anatolian Fault forms a sinister undercurrent, invisible to the naked eye but its presence revealed by the frequent earthquakes that plague the region. At the bay of Izmit, ancient Nicomedia, the fault line continues seawards to form a deep trench separating Europe from Asia,[[39]](#footnote-39) punctuated only by a few insular stepping-stones of which the best known is Proconnesus, famous since the sixth century BCE for the marble deposits which gave the Marmaran Sea—literally, “the Marble Sea”—its name.

Thanks to the stabilizing influence of the Marmaran water mass, the region enjoys a mild climate with a moderate temperature range and its Asian shores are well watered throughout the year by runoff from the high mountains in the hinterland: a striking contrast to the frostbitten winters and scorching summers of the semi-arid Anatolian plateau. Even today, once one has passed beyond the urban sprawl of present-day Kocaeli or Bursa, one finds the lowlands of Bithynia dotted with orchards and market gardens.

Despite the natural resources of the region and its advantageous location on the sea route into the Black Sea, the urban culture of the Aegean was slow to take root on the Marmaran shores. In Apollonius’ retelling of Jason’s voyage to Colchis (*Argonautica* 1.936–946) the Marmaran coast is presented as a wild and savage landscape populated by barbarous half-humans and wild beasts. Apart from the twin cities of Byzantium and Chalcedon guarding the entrance to the Thracian Bosporus and Cyzicus straddling the isthmus of Arctonnesus, there were few urban communities of any note on the Marmaran shores before the Hellenistic period.

*3. Bithynia, the Land and the People*

To ancient writers, both shores of the Marmaran sea were known as “Thrace”. Herodotus, the earliest writer to mention the Bithynians (in a list of the subject territories paying tribute to king Dareius, Hdt. 3.90) identifies them as “the Thracians living in Asia”. Similarly, in Xenophon’s *Anabasis* Bithynia is defined as “Thrace in Asia” (6.4.1):[[40]](#footnote-40)

τὸ δὲ χωρίον τοῦτο ὃ καλεῖται Κάλπης λιμὴν ἔστι μὲν ἐν τῇ Θρᾴκῃ τῇ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ: ἀρξαμένη δὲ ἡ Θρᾴκη αὕτη ἐστὶν ἀπὸ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ Πόντου μέχρι Ἡρακλείας ἐπὶ δεξιὰ εἰς τὸν Πόντον εἰσπλέοντι.

This place, which is called Calpe harbor, is situated in that (part of) Thrace which is in Asia; this Thrace stretches from the mouth of the Pontus as far as Heraclea, lying to the right as one sails into the Pontus.

In his *Hellenica*, written later than the *Anabasis*, Xenophon employs the phrase “Bithynian Thracians” (*Hell*. 1.3.2.), perhaps inspired by the *History* of Thucydides (4.75). Not until the Hellenistic period does Bithynia acquire an identity of its own, distinct from that of European Thrace.

European Thrace was, and remained, a fundamentally agricultural economy throughout the Hellenistic period and into the Roman era. The Thracians were known for their strength, stamina and courage rather than for their intelligence or their education, and Thrace supplied thousands of recruits for the armed forces of the *Imperium Romanum*.[[41]](#footnote-41) A character sketch of the emperor Maximinus Thrax (235–238 CE) by Dio’s contemporary Herodian (7.1.2) gives a good idea of what one might expect of a Thracian.[[42]](#footnote-42)

In Bithynia, by contrast, Hellenistic urbanization produced a handful of substantial cities and a dozen smaller communities. Bithynia’s economy was more diverse than that of Thrace, encompassing a wide range of exports including marble and timber.[[43]](#footnote-43) Through their trading networks, the Bithynians were in contact with the wider world and the court of the last Bithynian ruler, Nicomedes IV, was as Hellenized as any other of its time. Among its visitors was the young Julius Caesar, who found its atmosphere so congenial that he stayed longer than planned (Suet. *Iul.* 2, 49; Cass. Dio 43.20.2). Bithynia produced intellectuals of empire-wide renown,[[44]](#footnote-44) some of whom combined—as did Dio—their vocation with careers as senators, generals and proconsuls. In late antiquity, the schools of Nicaea and Nicomedia were able to attract leading literary figures such as the sophist Libanius, who reckoned his time in Nicomedia the best years of his life (*Or*. 1.51).

*4. Bithynia, the Kingdom*

Following the death of Alexander without a suitable successor, Perdiccas assumed the regency but soon fell out with his fellow generals and died at the hands of his own troops in 321 BCE. In the settlement of Triparadeisus that followed, the territories were divided anew: Ptolemy as satrap of Egypt, Lysimachus as satrap of Thrace, Antigonus Monophthalmus as satrap of Lycia and Phrygia as well as *stratēgos* of western Asia, and Seleucus as satrap of Babylonia (Diod. 18.39–40). The treaty of Triparadeisus failed to prevent further conflicts between the Successors, but a truce was negotiated and the status quo restored in 311 BCE. In the same year, Antigonus founded a city at the eastern end of lake Askanios, naming it after himself: *Antigoneia*.

In 307 BCE, Antigonus Monophthalmus assumed the title of king and his example was soon followed by others, including Ptolemy, Seleucus and Lysimachus (Diod. 20.53). With Thrace as his somewhat unstable home base, Lysimachus allied himself with Ptolemy and Seleucus in the scramble for Anatolia. The defeat and death of Antigonus in 301 BCE gave Lysimachus control of Antigoneia, which he now renamed *Nicaea* after his queen, the widow of Perdiccas (Strab. 12.4.7).

Lysimachus was not the only one to profit from the death of Antigonus. According to a tradition preserved only through the summary of Memnon’s lost history of Heraclea in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius (224 = *FGrH* 434 12.4), a local aristocrat by the name of Bas had defeated Alexander’s satrap Calas and taken control of Bithynia for himself. In 315 BCE, his son and successor Zipoites or Zibytes had been forced into an alliance with Antigonus (Diod. 19.60.2–3). With Antigonus dead and Lysimachus preoccupied with events in Europe, Zipoites seized the opportunity and in 297 BCE proclaimed himself king of Bithynia. Taking advantage of the chaos surrounding the last years of Lysimachus’ reign and his death in 281, Zipoites extended his Bithynian dominions still further. His son and successor Nicomedes I founded a new city on the gulf of Astacus, *Nicomedia*, and made it his capital.

The Bithynian royal dynasty was not a happy family, and its history is a depressing tale of conflicts, fratricide and patricide.[[45]](#footnote-45) After the death of Zipoites in 280, Nicomedes dealt with his two brothers, in the words of Memnon, “not as a brother should, but as an executioner” (Phot. 224 = *FGrH* 434 12.6). In the mid-second century BCE, Roman mediation failed to prevent another Nicomedes from having his father, the unpopular king Prusias II, deposed and killed.[[46]](#footnote-46) During the reign of his son Nicomedes III, Bithynia was drawn into the conflict between Rome and the ambitious Mithridates VI of Pontus. By the end of the second Mithridatic War, Bithynia had come under Rome’s *de facto* control and at the death of Nicomedes IV in 74 BCE, the kingdom passed to the Romans under the terms of the king’s will and was formally incorporated as a province. A decade later, it was merged with the adjoining province *Pontus* to become *Pontus et Bithynia*.

*5. Bithynia, the Province*

After his decisive victory in the Third Mithridatic War (63 BCE), Pompey incorporated most of the former Mithridatic territories into the empire as the province of *Pontus*, which wascombined with *Bithynia*, the erstwhile kingdom of Nicomedes IV.Administering these far-flung territories posed a challenge, since the overland distance from the Thracian Bosporus to Nicopolis (Yeşilyayla) on the border with Armenia was more than 900 kilometres, a whole month’s travel. In 42 BCE or shortly afterwards, the Pontic territory under direct Roman rule was reduced to the coastal strip between the Bithynian border and the city of Amisus, present-day Samsun, while the larger part of Pompey’s Pontic province was handed over to indigenous dynasts. Though *Pontus et Bithynia* were administered by a single Roman governor and the now much reduced *Pontus* in most respects formed an appendage to its larger and wealthier sister province, it retained a separate provincial assembly, the *koinon* of Pontus, which met in Amastris, and its own Pontarch or high priest of the imperial cult. In most known cases, however, the Bithyniarchate and the Pontarchate were held by the same person.[[47]](#footnote-47)

It is far from clear what socio-economic consequences the advent of Roman rule had for the Bithynians. According to some, it led to “a radical change in the ownership of the fertile and economically attractive land between the third century BCE and the time of Augustus”;[[48]](#footnote-48) the land “was acquired by the Roman and Italian *negotiatores* either in exchange of debt or by direct purchase from the locals who sold their properties as a last resort to pay taxes”,[[49]](#footnote-49) and “the emergence of large estates owned by immigrant Roman or Italian families was widespread under Roman rule in Asia Minor”.[[50]](#footnote-50)

This picture of Thracian landowners being displaced by Italian settlers is almost entirely based on the epigraphic record and calls for some reservations. First, only the wealthy property-holders and their *oikonomoi* are recorded in the inscriptions of Late Republican and early imperial Bithynia; the smaller landowners, who may have made up a majority, are invisible in the epigraphic record. Second, if Stephen Mitchell’s assertion—admittedly a conclusion *e silentio*—that Nicaea’s eastern hinterland was “wild and unexploited before the imperial period” is correct, then settlement of Italian immigrants need not always have involved dispossessing indigenous owners.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Furthermore, as pointed out by Jesper Majbom Madsen, it cannot always be assumed that Bithynian landowners with Roman names are of Italian descent;[[52]](#footnote-52) they, or their forbears, could be members of the local Bithynian elite who have attained the Roman citizenship and exchanged their Greek or Thracian name for the *tria nomina*. Of the fifteen named landowners whom Güney records within the territory of Nicomedia,[[53]](#footnote-53) only two carry family names which would imply an Italian origin for themselves or their families.[[54]](#footnote-54) A further two inscriptions give only the Greek name, clearly identifying the person as a *peregrinus* (non-citizen) of local origin.[[55]](#footnote-55) The most common *gentilicium* (ten out of fifteen) is *Aurelius*, which would have been acquired in 161 CE at the earliest and in most cases under the *constitutio Antoniniana* of 212 CE.[[56]](#footnote-56) As elsewhere in Bithynia, most citizens bear an imperial *gentilicium*, suggesting that they were enfranchised under the empire.[[57]](#footnote-57)

# *6. Nicaea, the City*[[58]](#footnote-58)

Turbulent as the history of the Bithynian dynasty was—even by the standards of the Hellenistic monarchies—most of the violent events took place in Nicomedia, the royal residence. Nicaea seems to have enjoyed a period of stable prosperity during the third and second centuries BCE and to have recovered quickly after the ravages of the second Mithridatic war. At the end of the last century BCE, Strabo describes Nicaea as follows (12.4.7):

... καὶ Νίκαια ἡ μητρόπολις τῆς Βιθυνίας ἐπὶ τῇ Ἀσκανίᾳ λίμνῃ (περίκειται δὲ κύκλῳ πεδίον μέγα καὶ σφόδρα εὔδαιμον, οὐ πάνυ δὲ ὑγιεινὸν τοῦ θέρους), κτίσμα Ἀντιγόνου μὲν πρῶτον τοῦ Φιλίππου, ὃς αὐτὴν Ἀντιγόνειαν προσεῖπεν, εἶτα Λυσιμάχου, ὃς ἀπὸ τῆς γυναικὸς μετωνόμασε Νίκαιαν: ἦν δ᾽ αὕτη θυγάτηρ Ἀντιπάτρου. ἔστι δὲ τῆς πόλεως ἑκκαιδεκαστάδιος ὁ περίβολος ἐν τετραγώνῳ σχήματι: ἔστι δὲ καὶ τετράπυλος ἐν πεδίῳ κείμενος ἐρρυμοτομημένος πρὸς ὀρθὰς γωνίας, ὥστ᾽ ἀφ᾽ ἑνὸς λίθου κατὰ μέσον ἱδρυμένου τὸ γυμνάσιον τὰς τέτταρας ὁρᾶσθαι πύλας.

... and Nicaea, the *metropolis* of Bithynia on the shore of lake Ascanius (which is surrounded by a plain that is large and exceedingly fertile, but not healthy in the summer), a foundation of Antigonus, the eldest son of Philip, who named it Antigoneia; later refounded by Lysimachus, who renamed it Nicaea after his wife, who was the daughter of Antipater. The perimeter of the city measures sixteen stadia and its plan is rectangular with four gates. It lies on level ground with streets dividing it by right angles, so that all four gates are visible from a single stone in the middle of the gymnasium.

Not only was the agricultural land west of Nicaea fertile, but the harvest could be transported to market by water, avoiding the cost and difficulty of land transport. In one of his letters to Trajan, Pliny the younger stresses the advantages of water over road transport (*Ep*. 10.41.2):

Est in Nicomedensium finibus amplissimus lacus. Per hunc marmora fructus ligna materiae et sumptu modico et labore usque ad viam navibus, inde magno labore maiore impendio vehiculis ad mare devehuntur.

In the territory of Nicomedia there is a large lake. Across this lake, marble, agricultural produce, timber and building materials are carried by boat, with little effort and cost, as far as the main road; but from there to the coast by cart, requiring great effort and even greater expense.

If Pliny’s description of the advantages which the lake offers Nicomedia is anything to go by, then lake Ascanius must have offered even greater advantages for Nicaea. No wonder that the city prospered through the Hellenistic and into the first centuries of the Roman era, eventually outgrowing the defensive circuit described by Strabo.[[59]](#footnote-59)

*7. Nicaea, the Provincial Capital*

From the third century BCE, the Bithynian kings had their residence in Nicomedia. Where the first Roman governors of Bithynia established their residence is not known, but by the early Principate, the administrative capital of the province was at Nicaea. For lack of a technical term, Greek writers usually identify a provincial capital as *metropolis*, and that is how it is described by Strabo (above). In his narrative of events in the year 29 BCE, Cassius Dio writes (51.20.6–7):

... δὲ ἐν τούτῳ τά τε ἄλλα ἐχρημάτιζε, καὶ τεμένη τῇ τε Ῥώμῃ καὶ τῷ πατρὶ τῷ Καίσαρι, ἥρωα αὐτὸν Ἰούλιον ὀνομάσας, ἔν τε Ἐφέσῳ καὶ ἐν Νικαίᾳ γενέσθαι ἐφῆκεν: αὗται γὰρ τότε αἱ πόλεις ἔν τε τῇ Ἀσίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Βιθυνίᾳ προετετίμηντο. καὶ τούτους μὲν τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις τοῖς παρ᾽ αὐτοῖς ἐποικοῦσι τιμᾶν προσέταξε: τοῖς δὲ δὴ ξένοις, Ἕλληνάς σφας ἐπικαλέσας, ἑαυτῷ τινα, τοῖς μὲν Ἀσιανοῖς ἐν Περγάμῳ τοῖς δὲ Βιθυνοῖς ἐν Νικομηδείᾳ τεμενίσαι ἐπέτρεψε.

[Octavian] among other decisions, gave permission for sanctuaries to Rome and to Caesar, his father (whom he called the hero Julius) to be established in Ephesus and in Nicaea: for these were the leading cities of Asia and of Bithynia respectively. He ordered the Romans living in these cities to honour these two divinities and entrusted the foreigners, whom he called ”Hellenes”, with establishing sanctuaries in his own honour, the Asians in Pergamum and the Bithynians in Nicomedia.

This passage has generated a large bibliography focused on the problem of the imperial temple in Nicaea, which is attested by no other source. Leaving the temple aside, the choice of words—in this case, Dio’s own and not those of an epitomator—leave no doubt that Nicaea and Ephesus are placed at the same level in the urban hierarchy, and by the latter half of the first century BCE, Ephesus, not Pergamum, was the provincial capital of *Asia*.[[60]](#footnote-60) The phrase “whom he called Hellenes” could suggest that Dio is quoting from an official document such as an imperial rescript, but the precise context is not clear.

By the reign of Claudius, Nicomedia had replaced Nicaea as the *metropolis* of Bithynia and was using the title on its coins.[[61]](#footnote-61) The precise date of the changeover is not attested, but the visit of Germanicus to Bithynia in 18 CE provides the most likely context. By virtue of his *imperium proconsulare maius*, Germanicus held an authority equal to that of the emperor, and Tacitus writes (*Ann*. 2.54.1) that the imperial prince “revived” (*refovebat*) those provinces which had suffered under “internal discord or unjust magistrates”. He does not elaborate on the precise nature of these “revivals”, but by virtue of his *imperium* Germanicus could redraw boundaries or reassign administrative territories. The citizens of Gangra were sufficiently grateful for his intervention to rename their city in his honor: *Germanicopolis*.

That the relocation of the provincial capital took place after the death of Augustus in 14 CE finds further support in the inscriptions which were set up above the monumental arches at the northern and eastern approaches to Nicaea in 123 CE, following their reconstruction—with financial support from the emperor—after the earthquake of 120 CE which also devastated Nicomedia. Since they were later erased,[[62]](#footnote-62) the texts are difficult to read, but Sencer Şahin’s reconstruction is generally accepted (*IK* IX, 29–30):

Αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι, θεοῦ Τραιανοῦ Π[α]ρθικοῦ υἱῷ, θεοῦ Νέρουα υἱωνῷ, Τραιανῷ Ἁδ[ριανῷ] Σεβαστῷ δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας ἡ εὐσεβεστάτη〚νεω[κό]ρος [τῶ]ν̣ [Σεβα]σ̣τῶν〛ἀπὸ Διονύσου [καὶ Ἡρακλέ]ους, 〚[πρ]ώ̣[τ]η̣ [Βι]θ̣υ̣ν̣[ία]ς καὶ Πόντου, ἡ μη[τρ]ό[π]ολ̣ι̣ς̣ δ̣ὲ̣ κ̣α̣[τὰ τὰ κρίματα] τ̣ῶ̣[ν Αὐ]το[κρ]α̣[τ]όρ[ων καὶ] τ̣ῆς ἱερᾶς σ[υ]ν̣κ̣λ̣ή̣του〛

Αὐτοκράτο[ρι Καίσ]α̣[ρι, θεοῦ] Τ̣[ραια]νοῦ Παρ̣[θι]κοῦ [υἱῷ, θεοῦ Νέ]ρου[α υ]ἱω[νῷ], Τραιανῷ Ἁ[δρια]νῷ Σεβαστ̣[ῷ] δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας ἡ εὐσεβ[εσ]τ[άτη 〚νεωκόρος τῶν Σεβαστῶν]〛ἀπὸ Διονύσου καὶ Ἡρακ̣λ̣έ̣ο̣υ̣ς̣ 〚π̣ρ̣ώ̣τ̣η̣ Β̣ι̣θ̣υ̣ν̣ί̣α̣ς̣ κ̣α̣ὶ̣ Π̣ό̣ν̣τ̣ο̣υ̣, ἡ μ̣η̣τ̣ρ̣ό̣π̣ο̣λ̣ι̣ς̣ [δὲ] κατὰ τὰ κρίματα τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων [καὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς συνκλήτου]〛

To the emperor Caesar, the son of the deified Trajan, victor over the Parthians, the grandson of the deified Nerva, Trajan Hadrian Augustus, holder of tribunician power, the most pious city, temple warden of the cult of the emperors, founded by Dionysus and Heracles, first city of Bithynia and Pontus, *metropolis* by the decision of the emperors and the sacred senate [dedicated this].

Most scholars have assumed that this text stakes Nicaea’s claim to being the *metropolis*,[[63]](#footnote-63) but since the clause ἡ μητρόπολις δὲ κατὰ τὰ κρίματα τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων contains no verb, it is not *a priori* clear whether it is intended as a statement of Nicaea’s present or past status. The plural “by the decision of the emperors” cannot refer to the reigning emperor of 123 CE, Hadrian, who had no co-ruler. From 70 to 79 CE, the empire had two *autokratores*,[[64]](#footnote-64) but if Vespasian and Titus had granted Nicaea the title of *metropolis*, we should expect to find it on the city’s coinage. It seems more likely that the plural refers to consecutive rulers, who at the earliest could be Augustus and Tiberius.

*8. Nicaea, First City of the Province*

From the reign of Claudius onward, and perhaps as a reaction to their loss of metropolitan status, the Nicaeans on their coins laid claim to the title *prōtē tēs eparcheias*, “first of the province”.[[65]](#footnote-65) The phrase recurs in two inscriptions over the northern and eastern approaches to Nicaea (*IK* IX, 25–26):

τῷ σεβαστῷ τῶν Αὐτοκρατόρων οἴκωι καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ τῆς ἐπαρχείας πόλει ❦ Νεικαίᾳ ❦

M. Πλάνκιος Οὐᾶρος ἀνθύπατος καθιέρωσεν ἐπιμεληθέντος τῆς κατασκευῆς Γ. Κασσίου Χρήστου.

To the imperial house and to Nicaea, first city of the province, the proconsul M. Plancius Varus dedicated this through the agency of C. Cassius Chrestus.

At the end of the century, Nicomedia also began to call itself *prōtē*, something which aroused resentment in Nicaea.[[66]](#footnote-66) We are exceptionally well informed about the rivalry of Nicomedia and Nicaea at this time thanks to the Bithynian rhetor Dio Chrysostom. Born in Prusa shortly before the mid-first century, Dio traveled to Rome, where he made a place for himself as a sophist and a close friend of the Flavian emperors. The friendship came to an abrupt end when Dio was suspected of involvement in a plot against Domitian and forced into an exile that lasted until 96 CE. Then he returned to Bithynia and engaged himself in local politics. Fourteen of his orations in Bithynian cities have been preserved, not on account of their (mostly rather pedestrian) content, but because they were from the hand of the much-admired rhetorician. Orations 38 and 39 in the Dionian corpus are addressed to the Nicomedians and the Nicaeans respectively, and both censure the cities for their mutual rivalry and competition for titles. Dio ridicules the Nicomedians for squandering their energy on childish squabbles which create disunity among the provincials and play into the hands of their Roman masters (Dio Chrys. *Or*. 38.37–38):

.... κατεγνώκασι δὲ ὑμῶν ἄνοιαν δημοσίᾳ, καὶ χρῶνται καθάπερ τοῖς παιδίοις ὑμῖν, οἷς πολλάκις ἀντὶ τῶν μεγίστων προτείνεται τὰ μικρότατα· κἀκεῖνα διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τῶν ὡς ἀληθῶς μεγάλων καὶ διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὰ ἐλάχιστα ἡδονὴν χαίρει τῷ μηδενί·

…

τὰ γὰρ τοιαῦτα, ἐφ’ οἷς μέγα φρονεῖτε, παρὰ πᾶσι μὲν τοῖς ὀρθῶς ἐννοουμένοις διαπτύεται, μάλιστα δὲ παρὰ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις γέλωτα κινεῖ καὶ καλεῖται τὸ ἔτι ὑβριστικώτερον Ἑλληνικὰ ἁμαρτήματα. καὶ γὰρ ἔστιν ἁμαρτήματα, ἄνδρες Νικομηδεῖς, ἀληθῶς, ἀλλ’ οὐχ Ἑλληνικά, εἰ μὴ κατ’ αὐτὸ τοῦτο Ἑλληνικὰ φήσει τις αὐτὰ εἶναι, καθ’ ὅσον ἐκεῖνοι δόξης ἀντεποιήσαντό ποτε καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι.

Yet by their public acts [the Romans] have branded you as a pack of fools, yes, they treat you just like children, for we often offer children the most trivial things in place of things of greatest worth; moreover, those children, in their ignorance of what is truly valuable and in their pleasure over what is of least account, delight in what is a mere nothing.

...

In truth such marks of distinction, on which you plume yourselves, not only are objects of utter contempt in the eyes of all persons of discernment, but especially in Rome they excite laughter and, what is still more humiliating, are called “Greek failings”! And failings they are indeed, men of Nicomedia, though not Greek, unless someone will claim that in this special particular they are Greek, namely, that those Greeks of old, both Athenians and Spartans, once laid counterclaims to glory.[[67]](#footnote-67)

As for *prōtē*, Dio (*Or*. 38.23–26; 38.30) advises the Nicomedians to abandon their claim to what is nothing more than an empty title, but in the end it was the Nicaeans who stopped using it on their coinage. It is still found, however, in two Nicaean inscriptions (*IK* IX, 53–54) honoring the governor Julius Bassus, who served as governor of Bithynia in the first decade of the second century.

The thirty-ninth oration addressed to the Nicaeans is shorter and has less local color, but here, too, Dio stresses the importance of unity and concord (*homonoia*) and the dangers associated with its opposite, civil discord (*stasis*) (*Or*. 39.4–5). Needless to say, both Nicomedians and Nicaeans ignored his advice and the conflict played on throughout the second century.[[68]](#footnote-68)

*9. The Cassii, a Nicaean Family*

The inscription over the east gate of Nicaea was set up by the proconsul M. Plancius Varus “through the agency of C. Cassius Chrestus”. Over the arched niches flanking the gateway were two additional inscriptions, one “to the patron of the city, the proconsul M. Plancius Varus, [from] his friend C. Cassius Chrestus” and an almost identical one from “his friend Ti. Claudius Quintianus”.[[69]](#footnote-69)

The Cassii were one of Nicaea’s leading families in the first and second centuries CE. In theory, their ancestor may have been an Italian immigrant bearing the *gentilicium* Cassius, but it seems more likely that he was a native Bithynian who was enfranchised in 43 BCE and, in accordance with Roman onomastic practice, derived his *gentilicium* from the provincial governor of that year—none other than C. Cassius Longinus, Caesar’s assassin.

The earliest Nicaean Cassiuson record isC. Cassius Asclepiodotus, a wealthy Bithynian who during the reign of Nero was suspected of complicity in the conspiracy of Barea Soranus. Cassius Asclepiodotus escaped with his life but was punished with relegation and the confiscation of his estates.[[70]](#footnote-70) After his rehabilitation by Galba in 68 CE, the literary sources have nothing further to tell us about Asclepiodotus, but five kilometers northwest of Nicaea, we find a remarkable monument to the memory of his son. From a base nearly three meters in height, an obelisk-like stone spike rises seven metres towards the sky. Old photographs reveal that before the district was planted with the orange trees that now obscure the view, the spike was clearly visible from the lakefront of İznik.

The stone spike itself is triangular in cross-section and constructed of large marble blocks. Since at least one block is missing, the original height of the monument must have been close to twelve metres. The spike—conventionally known as the “obelisk”—was flanked by life-sized or slightly larger than life bronze sculptures. On the rear face, an inscription (*IK* IX, 85) records that it was erected in memory of C. Cassius Philiscus*,* son of C. Cassius Asclepiodotus, “who lived 83 years”. This would place the monument sometime around 120 CE. There is no mention of any municipal office held by Philiscus himself or his father. The extravagance of the monument and the combination of obelisk and bronze sculpture leave no doubt that Cassius Philiscus ranked among the wealthiest citizens of Nicaea.

Another conspicuous Nicaean monument may have been associated with the Cassii. The *Anthologia Palatina* (15.4–7) preserves its inscriptions; the structure itself has not survived, and its precise location is unknown.[[71]](#footnote-71) From the text, it appears to have borne some resemblance to the pseudo-obelisk of Cassius Asclepiodotus:

Αὔχησον, Νίκαια, τὸν οὐρανομάκεα τύμβον

καὶ τὰν ἀελίῳ γείτονα πυραμίδα,

ἃ τὸν ἐνὶ ζῳοῖς βεβοαμένον ἱεροφάνταν

κρύπτει ἀμετρήτῳ σάματι θαπτόμενον.

ἔστι Σακέρδωτος τόσον ἠρίον, ἔστι Σεουήρας

μνᾶμα τόδ’, ᾧ γείτων οὐρανός, οὐκ ἀίδας.

(...)

ἁ πάτρα Νίκαια, πατήρ δέ μοι ὀργιοφάντας

οὐρανοῦ, αὐτάρ ἐγὼ κλαρονόμος τελετᾶς:

οὗτος ὁ καὶ σεισθεῖσαν ἐμὰν πόλιν ἐξ ἀίδαο

ῥυσάμενος δώροις Αὐσονίοιο Διός:

θνᾴσκω δ᾽ Ἀσκανίας μὲν ἀπόπροθεν, ἠδ᾽ ἐπὶ γαίας

Ἀτθίδος ἀρχεγόνου πυρκαϊᾶς ἐπέβαν.

μνᾶμα δέ μοι περίσαμον ὁμώνυμος εὕρατο πάππῳ

παῖς ἐμός: ἁ δ᾽ ἀρετὰ λεύσσει ἐς ἀμφοτέρους.

Boast, Nicaea, of the tomb as tall as heaven

and the pyramid that is neighbour to the sun,

which hides the hierophant renowned among mortals

buried in its measureless monument.

This is the great sepulchre of Sacerdos, of Severa is

this memorial, to which heaven, not Hades, is neighbour

(…)

My country is Nicaea, my father displayer of the

Holy objects of heaven, and I the heir of his office.

I am the man who also saved from Hades his city

Shaken by earthquakes, by the gifts of Ausonian Zeus

I died far from Ascania, and in the Attic land

Whence my family came I mounted the pyre.

My famed memorial was devised by my son

who has his grandfather’s name: Excellence looks on both of them.[[72]](#footnote-72)

What did this “unmeasurable”—*ametrētos*—monument look like? “As tall as heaven” suggests a tall structure, “pyramid” a squat one. Perhaps the monument of Sacerdos was not triangular in cross-section like the monument of Asclepiodotus and its counterpart in Phrygian Hierapolis,[[73]](#footnote-73) but a true obelisk, in which case its apex would form a “pyramid that is neighbour to the sun”. Elsewhere in the poem we learn that the apex was gilded, as the apices of Egyptian obelisks often were. As in Hierapolis, the base of the ”obelisk” contained a sepulchral chamber.

In two recent papers, Ewen Bowie has proposed to identify Sacerdos as a member of the Cassii and the son of C. Cassius Chrestus.[[74]](#footnote-74) The sarcophagus of Chrestus has been preserved and is now on display in the museum of İznik. Its appearance is surprisingly plain: an unadorned stone box with three lines inscribed, which suggests that the sarcophagus was not intended for public display but designed to be placed within a family vault.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Γ. Κάσσιος Χρῆστος πρεσβύ̣[…]

ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ σεβαστοφάντης̣

ἐτῶν νηʹ.[[76]](#footnote-76)

C. Cassius Chrestus , *presb*[…],

*archiereus* and sebastophant,

lived 58 years.

The end of the first line can be reconstructed as πρεσβύς καὶ,[[77]](#footnote-77) ”ambassador and”, πρεσβύτερος καὶ,[[78]](#footnote-78) ”the older and”, or simply as πρεσβύτερος, ”the older”.[[79]](#footnote-79) If Bowie is correct in identifying Chrestus as the father of Sacerdos, the epithet πρεσβύτερος was presumably intended to distinguish Chrestus from his homonymous grandson “who had his grandfather’s name” and would one day be interred in the same vault.[[80]](#footnote-80) This would place Chrestus’ death after the birth of his grandson, but well before the construction of the pyramidal tomb (for which the reference to the earthquake that struck Bithynia in 120 CE provides a *terminus post quem*).[[81]](#footnote-81) It may have been the death and cremation of Sacerdos far from his homeland that provided the impetus for his son to build a new, monumental sepulchre in imitation of another branch of the Cassii to receive the remains of his forbears.

Most Bithynians embarking on a political career started as candidates for the post of *agoranomus* or overseer of the market.[[82]](#footnote-82) From here, an ambitious man might work his way up through the offices that constituted the municipal *cursus honorum*. Most of these were liturgies, which required the office holder to make a substantial contribution to the costs; e.g., an *agnothete* or “overseer of the games” might be expected to provide the prizes for the winners. Failure to live up to the expected level of generosity would entail a loss of face and social standing and scupper any chances of a further political career.[[83]](#footnote-83) The most successful, and most generous, could cap their municipal careers with an archontate. From here, a select few might pass on to the regional level, win a place on the provincial council (*koinon*) and aspire to the post of Bithyniarch.[[84]](#footnote-84)

Urban offices provided the ambitious Bithynian with an opportunity to display “proper” social behavior which increased his standing in the eyes of his peers. Offices at the level of the *koinon*, in the cult of the emperor (such as the *sebastophant*) or as leader of an embassy furthermore provided opportunities to consort with the highest authority within the province, the governor and his entourage; perhaps even to meet the emperor himself. The inscription on the sarcophagus of a Bithynian *phylarch* records how the deceased “accompanied” the emperor “on several occasions” (πολλάκις).[[85]](#footnote-85) The phylarchate was a modest, local office, but the association with the emperor raised its holder to a far higher status level.

Those who, like Dio, by birth belonged to the absolute elite of provincial society did not need to work their way up, stage by stage, through the urban *cursus*. They could, and frequently did, bypass the mundane lower offices and go directly to a top-level position as municipal *agonothete* or archon, as member of the provincial council, Bithyniarch, ambassador or as *logistes* charged with overseeing urban finances. The Domitii of Prusias ad Hypium are one example;[[86]](#footnote-86) the Cassii of Nicaea are another. There is no evidence that members of these families ever held any of the lower-ranking posts in the urban *cursus honorum*; the only offices on record as held by a Cassius are those of Chrestus, who served as high priest and *sebastophant*, of the imperial cult.[[87]](#footnote-87)

According to Cassius Dio, in 29 BCE Octavian had authorized the creation of sanctuaries to his deified father, Julius Caesar in Nicaea and to himself in Nicomedia (Cass. Dio, 51.20.5–6).[[88]](#footnote-88) The extant sources have nothing to say of an imperial cult in Nicaea, but it is well attested in Nicomedia, which from the second century CE onwards frequently employed the title *neokoros*, “warden of [the imperial] temple”, on its coins.[[89]](#footnote-89) The cult of the emperor had considerable symbolic value, both as a mark of the city’s importance and as the ideological nexus between the province and the imperial power, and the priests of the imperial cult were very much in the public eye: they were “the leading men of the province”, as Strabo (14.1.42) explains. By virtue of his role as imperial priest and confidant of the Roman governor, Cassius Chrestus was very much a “leading man” of Bithynia, where the family was still remembered centuries later.[[90]](#footnote-90)

*10. Cassius Dio, the Nicaean*

By far the most famous representative of the Nicaean Cassii is Cassius Dio, born c. 162 CE.[[91]](#footnote-91) Like his father Cassius Apronianus,[[92]](#footnote-92) and like many members of the Roman elite, Cassius Dio was bilingual. In Bithynia, the language of local administration was Greek and official documents were issued in Greek, but across the empire the language of legislation and the command language of the army was Latin. As the highest judge within his province as well as supreme commander, the governor of any province required a good working knowledge of Latin; furthermore, Dio served as governor of three Latin-speaking provinces: Africa, Pannonia and Dalmatia. The absence of obvious Latinisms from the Greek of Dio’s preserved text also indicates that he was proficient in both languages and able to switch from one to the other without difficulty.

An inscription from Beroea in Macedonia is dated by the consuls of the year 229: the emperor Severus Alexander, consul for the third time, and Κλ’ Κασσίῳ Δίωνι, consul for the second time.[[93]](#footnote-93) Dio’s *praenomen*—Lucius—is known from a military diploma published in 1985 and dated to the same consulate as the Beroea inscription: *Imp(eratori) M(arco) Aurel{l}lio Severo Alexandro Pio Felice Aug(usto) III L(ucio) Cassio Dione II co(n)s(ulibus)*.[[94]](#footnote-94) Evidently, a sloppy Macedonian stonecutter—there are other errors in the inscribed text, and the quality of the lettering is poor—inscribed ΚΛ in place of Λ.

Despite the evidence of the diploma, some scholars, such as Alain Gowing (1990) and most recently Michel Molin (2016), maintain that Cassius Dio bore the name Claudius. Gowing reads Claudius as Dio’s *praenomen*, which is impossible.[[95]](#footnote-95) By the second century CE, fewer than twenty Roman male *praenomina* were in use, and Claudius was not among them; in any case, the diploma gives his *praenomen* as Lucius. It is equally unlikely that he bore two *gentilicia*, which identify the person as either a patrician or a plebeian. Whereas the *gens Claudia* was patrician, the *Cassii* were plebeian; thus, a *Claudius Cassius* would be both one and the other.

Molin takes Claudius to be the historian’s only *gentilicium* and interprets Cassius as a *cognomen,* pointing to the parallel case of the Syrian usurper C. Avidius Cassius, son of C. Avidius Heliodorus.[[96]](#footnote-96) In his case, Cassius was clearly taken as a *cognomen*, possibly deriving from Gaius’ mother.[[97]](#footnote-97) According to this theory, Dio’s family should have borne the *nomen* *gentile* Claudius, acquired, along with the Roman franchise, no earlier than 41 CE; later, they added Cassius as a *cognomen*. In that case, the historian Cassius Dio cannot be related to the Nicaean Cassii, neither of whose branches bear the *gentilicium* Claudius. The inscription on the obelisk of Asclepiodotus and sons gives the *tria nomina* of the defunct, as does the sarcophagus of Chrestus, and Claudius is not found among them.

For the son of a provincial governor, an urban or provincial *cursus honorum* held little attraction, and to our knowledge Dio never engaged himself in the politics of his hometown Nicaea, nor those of his province, Pontus et Bithynia. His career took him to Rome, where he spent much of his working life and had access to the materials required for the writing of his *Roman History*. In 229 CE, Dio, by now in his late sixties, held a second—apparently not altogether successful—consulate together with the emperor Alexander Severus. At the end of his term as consul, he decided to go “home” (*oikida*) to spend the remaining years of his life in his *patris* (Cass. Dio 80[80].5.2–3 [Xiph.]); presumably Nicaea is meant (as in Cass. Dio 76[75].15.3 [Xiph.]), though one suspects that after a life spent among the highest circles of the empire, Dio might find the cosmopolitan milieu of Nicomedia more congenial. Of his retirement in Bithynia, or his death, nothing further is known.

*11. Cassius Dio and Dio Chrysostom*

The existence of two Bithynian intellectuals with the same *cognomen*—Dio—has given rise to confusion and to myths of a family relationship, myths that persist until the present day.[[98]](#footnote-98) According to the online edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Cassius Dio was “son of Cassius Apronianus, governor of Dalmatia and Cilicia under Marcus Aurelius, and grandson of Dio Chrysostom”,[[99]](#footnote-99) which on chronological grounds alone is impossible.[[100]](#footnote-100) This appears to be based on the resemblance between Dio Chrysostom’s *cognomen*, given by Pliny the younger (*Ep*. 10.81–82), but by no other source, as *Cocceianus*[[101]](#footnote-101) and the entry for Dio the historian in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius, where the headwords read “Cassianus Coccianus (or Coccius) Dio”. On good grounds, Gowing (1990) rejected the theory that Dio the historian ever bore the *cognomen* Cocceianus, which is attested by no earlier source than Photius. Nonetheless, some leading scholars continue to identify the historian as Cassius Dio Cocceianus.[[102]](#footnote-102)

In the early sixth century CE, John Lydus twice refers to Cassius Dio, once as “Dio the Roman” (*De mens.* 4.2) and once as “Cocceius” (τὸν Κοκκήϊον, *De mag.* 1.7).[[103]](#footnote-103) Later in the same century, Jordanes in his *History of the Goths* (2.14) mentions two British tribes, the Caledonians and the Maeatae, with a source reference to “Dio, the writer of annals”. This must be Cassius Dio, since the same tribes are named in the *History* (77[76].12). Later, however, Jordanes (9.58) refers to “Dio the historian, who entitled one of his works *Getica*”; this is clearly Dio Chrysostom, who wrote a work, now lost, under that title. Jordanes evidently—and understandably—assumed that a history of the Goths had been written by Dio the historian, not by Dio the rhetorician. This led Gowing to conclude that by the time of Jordanes, the two Dios were already being treated as one, and that this confusion persisted into Byzantine times.[[104]](#footnote-104)

In the ninth century, however, Photius has no difficulty distinguishing between the two Dios: the Prusan orator Dio, son of Pasicrates (209[165a]), and the Nicaean historian (71[35a–b]). The only problem concerns the historian’s *gentilicium,* where Photius gives several variants: Cassianus, Coccianus and Coccius, none of which is correct.

In the *Suda* (Δ 1239 Adler), compiled a century or so later, we find the correct form of the historian’s family name—*Kassios*—and two variants of what is supposed to be his *cognomen*, Cocceius and Cocceianus. We also learn that Dio the historian came from Nicaea and wrote various works including the *Getica,* which had already been (mis)attributed to him by Jordanes.

Throughout the history of the bilingual Roman Empire, the visual resemblance between Greek and Latin letters was a copious source of errors. Even in official inscriptions, the Latin letter *P* is not infrequently transcribed as *rho*. By the second century CE, the closed minuscule *sigma* had been almost completely displaced by the open or lunate *sigma*, which is visually identical to the Latin letter C. Phonetically, Latin C equaled Greek *kappa*, but there are numerous examples where its place is taken by a *sigma*, and vice versa. Thus *kedros* becomes *sedros*, in the opposite direction *Chrysotis* becomes *Chrykotis*,and even an everyday word such as τοσóυτoς gets misspelled as τοκóυτος.

In a similar way, *Kassios* would easily be misinterpreted as *Kaccios*, and Photius is clearly unsure whether Dio the historian is called Coccius, Cassianus or Coccianus, none of which is correct. In the *Suda*, Coccius has been lengthened to Cocceius and Coccianus to Cocceianus.

*12. Bithynia in Dio’s History*

Some older scholars assumed *a priori* that his Bithynian background must have had a formative influence on Dio,[[105]](#footnote-105) but as pointed out by Ameling, there is not much evidence in Dio’s preserved work to substantiate these assumptions.[[106]](#footnote-106) Dio spent most of his adult life outside Bithynia and in the first seventy-three books of his *History*—at least in the form in which they have been preserved—no passages can be shown to derive from local Bithynian sources or personal observation. The story of Caesar’s lengthy sojourn in Nicomedia (Cass. Dio 43.20.2), for instance, contains nothing that Dio could not have read in Suetonius (*Iul.* 2). That the exile of Asclepiodotus was revoked by Galba (Cass. Dio 62[62].26.2 [Xiph.]) is not recorded in any other extant narrative of Roman history, but this snippet of information may originate from a source which Dio consulted in Rome rather than from his friends in Nicaea. In book 52, Dio’s *alter* *ego* Maecenas advises Octavian, the future emperor Augustus, to curb provincial cities’ spending on grandiose building projects (Cass. Dio 52.30.3); this might reflect Dio’s memories of life in Bithynia[[107]](#footnote-107) but is perhaps more likely to derive from his experiences in later life as a provincial governor, whose remit would include the oversight of urban finances (cf. Plin. *Ep*. 10.41).

From book 75[74] onwards, Dio occasionally mentions events in Bithynia using the first person. While retelling an anecdote about Severus’ cousin and praetorian prefect Plautianus, Dio (76[75].15.3 [Xiph.]) casually mentions that it took place “in Nicaea, my *patris*”. Later, he relates how, when traveling around the empire, Caracalla would demand “gifts” (78[77].9.3–4 [Xiph.]):

… καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν τῶν πλουσίων καὶ παρὰ τῶν δήμων προσῄτει, τῶν τε τελῶν τῶν τε ἄλλων ἃ καινὰ προσκατέδειξεν (…) ἔξω δὴ τούτων ἁπάντων καὶ οἰκίας αὐτῷ παντοδαπάς, ἐπειδὴ τῆς Ῥώμης ἐξώρμησε (…) προσέτι καὶ θέατρα κυνηγετικὰ καὶ ἱπποδρόμους πανταχοῦ, ὅπουπερ καὶ ἐχείμασεν ἢ καὶ χειμάσειν ἤλπισε, κατεσκευάσαμεν, μηδὲν παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ λαβόντες. καὶ αὐτίκα πάντα κατεσκάφη.

… both from the richest of the private individuals and from the cities, in addition to the existing taxes and the new ones which he introduced (…) apart from this, lodgings of all sorts and in all sorts of places had to be provided whenever the emperor left Rome (…) furthermore, we built theatres, amphitheatres and racecourses wherever he spent a winter, or expected to spend it, without receiving a penny from him; and as soon as he had left, everything was torn down.

The first person plural reveals what the reader has already guessed: that Dio was one of the rich Bithynians who were forced to underwrite the costs of Caracalla’s stay in Nicomedia over the winter 214/215.[[108]](#footnote-108) No wonder that Dio was unhappy and bitter, and his choice of words uncharacteristically harsh, but his claim that everything was torn down upon the emperor’s departure is patently false. The Antonine baths constructed by Caracalla remained standing and according to Procopius (*Buildings* 5.3.7–8), their structure was sufficiently sound to be restored in the sixth century.

What Dio has to say about the activities and extravagances of Elagabalus in Niocomedia during the winter of 218/219 is, on Dio’s own admission (80[79].7.4), not based on autopsy but on the accounts of “trustworthy men” and whatever secondhand information was available to him in Pergamum.[[109]](#footnote-109)

*13. The Battle of Nicaea*

The one Nicaean event of empire-wide interest in Dio’s *History* is the battle of Nicaea in 193 CE, where Pescennius Niger was defeated by the forces of Septimius Severus. Our literary sources for the battle are three: the *History* of Dio; the *History* of Herodian; and the pseudonymous *Historia Augusta.* As might be expected, the accounts in the *Historia Augusta* (*Sev*. 8; *Pesc*.*Nig.* 5) are complete nonsense. Herodian’s version is more coherent (Herodian, 3.2.9):

κατὰ μὲν οὖν τὴν Βιθυνίαν εὐθὺς μετὰ τὰ ἐν Κυζίκῳ Νικομηδεῖς μὲν Σεβήρῳ προσέθεντο καὶ πρέσβεις ἔπεμπον, τήν τε στρατιὰν ὑποδεχόμενοι καὶ πάντα παρέξειν ὑπισχνούμενοι, Νικαεῖς δὲ τῷ πρὸς Νικομηδέας μίσει τἀναντία ἐφρόνουν καὶ τὸν στρατὸν τοῦ Νίγρου ὑπεδέχοντο, εἴ τέ τινες ἐκ τῶν φυγόντων κατέφευγον πρὸς αὐτούς, καὶ τοὺς πεμφθέντας ὑπὸ τοῦ Νίγρου φρουρεῖν Βιθυνίαν. ἑκατέρωθεν οὖν ἐκ τῶν πόλεων ὡς ἀπὸ στρατοπέδων ὁρμώμενοι συνέβαλον ἀλλήλοις.

In Bithynia, immediately after the events [the Severan victory] of Cyzicus, the city of Nicomedia went over to Severus and sent him envoys, receiving his army and promising to go along with him. The people of Nicaea by contrast, because of their hatred of Nicomedia, chose the other side, receiving Niger’s army and any fugitives fleeing in their direction as well as the soldiers sent by Niger to hold Bithynia. Rushing out from each of these two cities, as from army camps, the forces clashed with one another.[[110]](#footnote-110)

Dio’s account has an altogether different storyline and nothing to say about public opinion in his hometown. The focus is on the fighting itself (75[74].6 [Xiph.]):

ὁ Αἰμιλιανὸς δὲ περὶ Κύζικον συμβαλών τισι τῶν στρατηγῶν τῶν τοῦ Σεουήρου ἡττήθη πρὸς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσφάγη. καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα μεταξὺ τῶν στενῶν τῆς τε Νικαίας καὶ τῆς Κίου πόλεμος. αὐτοῖς μέγας γίνεται καὶ πολύτροπος: οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ συστάδην ἐμάχοντο, οἱ δὲ τοὺς λόφους καταλαβόντες ἐξ ὑπερδεξίων ἔβαλλον καὶ ἠκόντιζον ἐς τοὺς ἐναντίους, οἱ δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς λίμνης ἐς πλοῖα ἐμβεβηκότες τοῖς πολεμίοις ἐπετοξάζοντο. κατ᾽ ἀρχὰς μὲν οὖν ἐνίκων οἱ Σεουήρειοι, ὑπὸ τῷ Κανδίδῳ ταττόμενοι, καὶ τοῖς χωρίοις ὅθεν ἐμάχοντο, ὑπερδεξίοις οὖσι, πλεονεκτοῦντες: μετὰ δὲ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Νίγρου ἐπιφανέντος παλινδίωξις γίνεται καὶ νίκη τῶν Νιγρείων. ἔπειτα τοῦ Κανδίδου τῶν σημειοφόρων ἐπιλαμβανομένου, καὶ στρέφοντος αὐτοὺς ἀντιπροσώπους τοῖς πολεμίοις, τοῖς τε στρατιώταις τὴν φυγὴν ὀνειδίζοντος, αἰσχυνθέντες οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν ὑπέστρεψαν καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων ἀντεπεκράτησαν. κἂν πανωλεθρίᾳ τούτους διέφθειραν, εἰ μὴ ἡ πόλις ἐγγὺς ἦν καὶ νὺξ σκοτεινὴ ἐγένετο.

Aemilianus, who met some of Severus’ generals in battle near Cyzicus, was defeated and killed. After this a battle took place between the passes of Nicaea and Cius; the combat was fierce and neither side held the upper hand. Some fought in regular battle order on the level ground, some occupied the slopes and hurled stones and javelins at the enemy from above, and some sailed out in boats and shot their arrows at the enemy from the lake. At first the Severan forces under the command of Candidus were victorious, thanks to their fighting from higher ground; but later, when Niger himself appeared on the battlefield, fortunes were reversed and it seemed that the victory would go to Niger’s men. But then Candidus rounded up the standard-bearers, forcing them to turn around and face the enemy; at the same time he scolded his soldiers for falling back. His men were ashamed, went back into the fray and once more won the upper hand. In fact they would have annihilated their opponents if the city had not been nearby and the darkness coming on.

Louis Robert preferred Herodian’s account over that of Dio Cassius, whom he suspected of downplaying Nicaea’s involvement with Niger: “Dion est discret sur l’attitude de sa patrie en ce conflit … Mais nous savons par Hérodien, III, 2, 7–9 que Nicée avait pris parti ouvertement pour Pescennius Niger; son attitude avait été dictée par sa ‘haine envers Nicomédie’”.[[111]](#footnote-111) But there are obvious weaknesses in Herodian’s narrative, both as regards the Nicaeans’ motives and the topography of the battlefield,[[112]](#footnote-112) whereas Dio’s account reflects the narrator’s personal knowledge of the terrain.[[113]](#footnote-113)

*14. Conclusion*

Cassius Dio was a Bithynian, yet his *Roman History* does not have much to say about Bithynia. Since most of his work is preserved only in epitome, Dio’s original text might in theory have included local history and personal reminiscences from Bithynia which his excerptors did not consider worth passing on to posterity,[[114]](#footnote-114) but Dio’s full text of books 36–37 (dealing with the Mithridatic wars) and 78[77] (on Caracalla’s sojourn in Nicomedia 214–215 CE) is equally devoid of local Bithynian color. In short, there is nothing to suggest that Dio valued local knowledge above what he could hear and read in Rome; from his own, empire-wide perspective, the imperial capital was the best vantage point from which to observe and record current events.[[115]](#footnote-115)

Dio’s focus throughout the last books of his *History* is on the emperor(s), and when Bithynia appears in his narrative, it is almost invariably due to the presence of an emperor or a pretender to the imperial throne. Most of these scattered passages deal with events in the provincial capital Nicomedia, not in Nicaea. While Dio’s narrative of the battle of Nicaea draws on his personal knowledge of the region’s topography, it offers little local color or local history—even less than the narrative of Herodian, who was not a Bithynian. Dio’s focus throughout his *History* is on the big picture, of which his native province formed only a small part.[[116]](#footnote-116)

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Chapter 2: Cassius Dio’s Greek and Roman Identity

*Sulochana R. Asirvatham*

*Introduction*

For those who are primarily interested in Cassius Dio’s usefulness as a source for Roman history, the question of the author’s identity as “Greek” or “Roman” (or something in-between) may seem tangential or even inconsequential compared to questions concerning his historiographical method or his political philosophy. His Greek background and decision to compose a large-scale Roman history in Attic Greek have nevertheless made the question of his ethnic identity rather irresistible to Dio scholars.[[117]](#footnote-117) Scholars of imperial Greek literature, on the other hand, seem less interested in the topic. The impetus in Classical Studies to discuss the ethnic identity of an ancient Greek or Latin-language author usually comes from a strong indication, within that author’s own writings, of strong positive assessments of people, places, character traits and actions identified as Greek or Roman, in stated or implied disassociation with people, things, character traits and actions that are understood to be non-Greek or non-Roman.[[118]](#footnote-118) From the standpoint of Greek literary history, we detect a pattern, at least as far back as Plutarch (46 to c. 120 CE), in which the demonstration of a certain sort of *paideia*, or education, becomes enmeshed with Greek identity—a *paideia* thatis defined not merely as one’s possession of education in the canon of Greek greats from the classical era, but also of its exuberant public demonstration, in the form of either extemporaneous declamation or literary composition. In other words, it is by writing in Greek about Greek things that writers establish themselves as Greeks. Whether or not a writer adheres to the trend of Attic purism, the painstaking choice of his linguistic idiom is part of a generally Hellenocentric outlook: the idea that Greek culture, however it is defined geographically and temporally, is supreme over all others, including Roman. We see Hellenocentric texts in the Severan period and beyond. Indeed, it is one of Dio’s contemporaries, Philostratus, who coined the term “Second Sophistic” to describe an intellectual lineage of Greek rhetoricians stretching technically back to the Athenian orator Aeschines,[[119]](#footnote-119) a term that modern scholarship has in turn employed as a useful, if imperfect, shorthand for describing a wide variety of imperial writings. To the degree that displays of linguistic virtuosity allowed provincial Greeks to compete with one another (and, metaphorically, against Roman *vis*) in the absence of fora in which to wield actual political power, scholars have reasonably recognized them as a form of provincial political “power”.[[120]](#footnote-120)

Dio is marked as a “Greek” in the Second Sophistic mold by his Bithynian birth and by his self-conscious inclusion of Attic Greek in the *Roman History*.[[121]](#footnote-121) But he still offers radically less evidence within his text for Hellenocentrism than writers such as Plutarch and Philostratus, or Dio Chrysostom, Arrian, Aelius Aristides, Athenaeus and Pausanias. The latter all elevate the Greek cultural and political past, whether Homeric, classical, or Hellenistic, with an explicit or implied interest in the continuity of the Greek past with the present. Dio writes about Rome. Generally speaking, of course, Roman historiography is a clear exception to the notion that writing in the Greek language is, in and of itself, a meaningfully “Hellenocentric” act.[[122]](#footnote-122) But even here Dio (along with his near contemporary Herodian) stands out. Whereas Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Strabo, and Appian all wrote about Rome from the perspective of admiring (or at least somewhat admiring) outsiders who wished to account for the rise of Rome, Dio is an insider, whose self-identification as a senator is indicated by his frequent references to the senatorial body as “we” in the contemporary portions of his history.[[123]](#footnote-123) Notably, Dio never uses “we” (at least in our extant text) to describe himself alongside other Greek natives. Most important, perhaps, is the fact that Dio is himself part of the Roman power structure.

Nevertheless, I think there is more we can do to situate Cassius Dio within Greek literary history—to which he belongs just as much as he belongs to senatorial history—by measuring his work more specifically against two features that are often seen as characteristic of Greek imperial writers: nostalgia for the classical Greek past and self-promotion as *pepaideumenoi*. I pose three questions whose answers, I hope, will help give us that measure.

The first question is the degree to which Dio shows interest in Rome’s historical treatment of the Greeks (the only parts of Greek history that appear in our extant text). The second question is the degree to which he considers *paideia*—of which the *Roman History* itself is a large-scale demonstration—to refer to specifically *Greek* *paideia*. The third question concerns what I will call here “senatorial Greekness” (or “Greek senator-ness”): that is, to what degree does it matter to Dio, as a senatorial historian, that he is a *Greek* senator rather than some other type of senator? As we shall see, the second and third of these are inextricably entwined. While Dio shows a vague interest in historical contacts between Greece and Rome, his comments on Greek language-use are more pointed. His self-consciousness about Greek language-use, evidenced both by his emphasis on Greek-Latin bilingualism (his own and that of others) and the historical use of Greek in the Senate, connects him with other imperial Greek authors for whom language-use defines Greekness, and also importantly distinguishes him from them as he is speaking specifically as a senator. But one is entitled to wonder: does Dio engage in his own small power-plays as a Greek in the Senate? This study will conclude with a consideration of Dio’s apparent interest, and possible aggrandizement, of the historical role of the Greek language in the Senate.

*Romans, Greek, and Panhellenic Rhetoric in the* Roman History

Dio naturally refers to Greeks periodically within his history: they are part of Rome’s story. But the *History* does not show the same level of interest in Greece as we see in other authors. There are, for example, no digressions on particular *poleis*, a signature feature of Pausanias’s work, with orators like Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides invoking cities’ pasts frequently when addressing them. This is even the case when it comes to Dio’s native home town of Nicaea and its province, Bithynia.[[124]](#footnote-124) It is possible that the few incidental mentions are indications of Dio’s pride in his homeland: these all occur in the final, contemporary books of the *History*, so are told from the perspective of an “eyewitness”.[[125]](#footnote-125) But it is hard to equate regional pride in Dio with the “Hellenic” pride we see in other authors.[[126]](#footnote-126) Nor does Dio show an interest in the great Greek figures of the past. The one possible exception is Alexander the Great, but Dio does not endow him with an aura of Hellenic heroism. His interest in Alexander is largely confined to the ways in which powerful Romans imitated him.[[127]](#footnote-127)

A main indicator of a Hellenocentric viewpoint in Greek texts (both classical and Roman) is the invocation of “panhellenism”, our modern word for the ancient ideology of Greek unity that arose in the wake of the fifth-century Persian Wars and was periodically revived against both the Persians and the Macedonians. Panhellenism was based on the perception of shared traits, such as language and religion, that transcended the lack of political and geographical unity among the *poleis*.[[128]](#footnote-128) As is reflected in Dio’s texts, panhellenic rhetoric was exploited by the Romans themselves. It is notable, for example, that Dio is the only writer to directly mention Hadrian’s Panhellenion, one of the most famous manifestations of Roman philhellenism which is abundantly attested in inscriptions:[[129]](#footnote-129) he tells us that Hadrian allowed the Greeks to build a shrine in his honor with this name (69[69].16.1–2 [Xiph.]).[[130]](#footnote-130)

Another panhellenic trope is the idea of “Greek freedom”, which Flamininus famously proclaimed at the Isthmian games in 196 BCE after his defeat of Philip V of Macedon. Here we can compare Dio (at least what we see in Zonaras’s twelfth-century epitome) with a number of other authors who present this important moment in Greco-Roman relations in significant detail: Polybius (18.44–48), Livy (33.30–35), Plutarch (*Flam*. 10–13; 15), and Appian (*Mac*. 1.3–4), all of whom include long descriptions of the initial *senatus consultum* declaring the autonomy of the Greek cities of Asia and Europe and Flamininus’s speech at Isthmia emphasizing the freedom of the Greeks.[[131]](#footnote-131) Dio’s remarks are the briefest of them all: “Flamininus at this time set all the Greeks free, and later he summoned them together and, after reminding them of the benefits they had received, urged them to maintain friendship with Rome; he then withdrew all the garrisons and departed with his entire army”.[[132]](#footnote-132) We should not, of course, automatically take a writer’s presentation of panhellenic propaganda as an endorsement of panhellenic sentiment, but if Zonaras accurately reflects the brevity of Dio’s own rendition of events, the latter seems less invested in the story than someone like Plutarch, who repeats the motif of Greek freedom throughout his account.[[133]](#footnote-133)

A third panhellenic trope is the Greek/barbarian dichotomy. An inquiry into Dio’s use of it yields similarly questionable results. Historically, the term βάρβαρος emerged almost simultaneously with the concept of the “Hellene” in the triumphal literature of post-Persian-Wars Athens.[[134]](#footnote-134) When used by classical and post-classical Hellenocentric authors, βάρβαρος carries connotations of cultural and moral backwardness (if not always a sense of ethnic otherness) in contrast to the Greek. The meanings of the terms shift together: if to be “Greek” is to be “lawful”, to be barbarian is to be lawless; if to be Greek is to be educated, to be a barbarian is to be uneducated; and so on. Our first observation is how rarely Dio uses Ἑλλην- and βαρβαρ- terms together: a search of the *TLG* shows that the word βάρβαροι appears 129 times in the *Roman History* (referring to Rome’s *barbari*) but only three times alongside Ἕλληνες. Most importantly, in the three places where the terms appear together, the Romans join Greeks and barbarians in a tripartite scheme that covers the sum total of humanity. If anyone is privileged among them, it is the Romans. In book 44.2.2, for example, Dio uses the tripartite scheme to demonstrate a universal historical truth about the superiority of monarchy to democracy (Cass. Dio 44.2.2):

εἰ δ᾽ οὖν καὶ φαῦλός τις αὐταρχήσειεν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ γε πλήθους τῶν ὁμοίων αἱρετώτερός ἐστιν, ὥσπερ που καὶ τὰ ἔργα τά τε τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ τὰ τῶν βαρβάρων, τῶν τε Ῥωμαίων αὐτῶν, τεκμηριοῖ.

And even if a base man should obtain supreme power, he is still preferable to the masses of similar character, as the history of the Greeks and barbarians and of the Romans themselves (τῶν τε Ῥωμαίων αὐτῶν) proves.

The intensive αὐτῶν points to the Romans’ superior position: the message is that the principle is *so true* that it holds true not only for non-Romans but even for Romans. The second instance is in the speech of Agrippa in book 52 on the fate of Rome which, as Dio points out, after 725 years as a Republic, has now technically reverted to monarchy under Augustus; the latter’s decision to lay down his arms and give power to the Senate and the people came in consultation with Agrippa and Maecenas (52.1.1–2). Speaking on behalf of democracy, Agrippa notes how unpleasant the job of monarch is: that is why “in certain instances, among both Greeks and barbarians, men have refused to accept the office of king when it was offered to them” (52.10.2: καὶ Ἕλληνες καὶ βάρβαροί τινες οὐδὲ διδομένας σφίσι βασιλείας ἐδέξαντο). The third and unspoken element is the Romans, whose leadership is the subject matter of the debate; given that Augustus does not follow his advice, we can see how ineffectual the appeal to the precedent of Greeks and barbarians is at this moment. Finally, in book 56, Augustus makes a hyperbolic speech to the unmarried and childless *equites***,** chastising them for not doing their part to ensure the preservation of their nation, which he says amounts to ceding the city to “other people—Greeks or even barbarians” (ἄλλοις δέ τισιν ἀνθρώποις Ἕλλησιν ἢ καὶ βαρβάροις), with the Roman name blotted out (56.7.5). Greeks and barbarians are depicted here as enemies, but this uneven tripartite scheme is quickly resolved when Augustus poses a rhetorical question: did we not free our slaves for the purpose of making as many of them as possible citizens (56.7.6)? In Augustus’s view, all men, whether Greek or otherwise, should be Roman.

Dio’s use of the Greek-barbarian dichotomy, then, is a kind of rhetorical “tic” that is entirely divorced from its oppositional origins. Greeks and barbarians are no longer in opposition with one another. If there is an opposition, it is between Greeks and barbarians on one side, Rome on the other.[[135]](#footnote-135) But what emerges most strongly is a sense of universalism. This is even the case when Dio characterizes Greece as a traditional enemy of Rome (Cass. Dio 21.72 [= Zon. 9.31]):

καὶ ἡ μὲν Κόρινθος οὕτως ἀνάστατος γέγονε, τὸ δ᾽ ἄλλο Ἑλληνικὸν παραχρῆμα μὲν καὶ χρημάτων ἐκλογαῖς ἐκακώθη, ἔπειτα ἔν τε ἀδείᾳ καὶ ἐν εὐδαιμονίᾳ τοσαύτη ἐγένετο ὥστε λέγειν ὅτι, εἰ μὴ θᾶττον ἑαλώκεισαν, οὐκ ἂν ἐσέσωντο. ἡ μὲν οὖν Καρχηδὼν ἥ τε Κόρινθος αἰ ἀρχαῖαι ἐκεῖναι τοῦτο τέλος ἅμα ἔσχον, χρόνῳ δὲ πολλᾷ ὕστερον ἀποικίαν Ῥωμαίων λαβοῦσαι ἤνθησαν αὖθις καὶ εἰς τὴν παλαιὰν ἐπανῆλθον κατάστασιν.

Thus was Corinth overthrown. The rest of the Greek world suffered momentarily from massacres and levies of money, but afterward came to enjoy such immunity and prosperity that they used to say that if they had not been captured promptly, they could not have been saved. So this end simultaneously befell Carthage and Corinth, those ancient cities; but at a much later date they received colonies of Romans, became again flourishing, and regained their original position.

Dio’s emphasis here is on the transitory (παραχρῆμα) nature of Greek suffering in contrast with the fact that the Greeks, as well as the Carthaginians (whose fall has just been described in book 21; Zon. 9.30), ultimately benefited from being toppled by the Romans—indeed, as Roman colonies today, they are as strong as ever. (Contrast Pausanias, who laments the fate of cities like Corinth that were colonized by the Roman “kings”, i.e., the emperors of whom he disapproved.[[136]](#footnote-136)) It is not unknown for a Greek writer to praise Rome for its support of Greek culture, as does the Atheno-philic Aristides. But Dio’s coupling of Greece with Carthage at their moment of destruction and in reference to their ultimate fate reveals this as a perfectly Romanocentric moment. The emphasis is on Rome’s ability to create peace in the wake of destruction: Dio claims not only that Roman colonization caused these states to flourish again, but that it caused a reversion of those cities to their “original position” (τὴν παλαιὰν… κατάστασιν). The idea that these cities are in the same position as they were before the rise of Rome obviously cannot be taken literally; the effect of Dio’s words is to blunt the image of violent chaos brought on by Rome today with an image of the empire’s future stability.

*Paideia and Bilingualism*

If Dio’s interest in the Greek present and nostalgia for Greece past are both relatively weak, we seem to be on safer ground when we consider Dio’s identity as a writer. As a universal history, Dio’s workis an indisputable demonstration of *paideia*. Dio draws explicit attention to the ambitiousness of his writing project in book 73[72], emphasizing his status as an eyewitness of the events taking place in Commodus’s reign and beyond, as well as the role Severus and others played in encouraging Dio to compose an *ab urbe condita* of Rome and its divine sanction.[[137]](#footnote-137) Dio also alludes to the jealousy intellectuals incurred for their *paideia* from Caracalla, who resented him for having “something of an education” (τι παιδείας, 78[77].11.2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val*.]) and hated anyone with useful knowledge or who excelled in anything (78[77].11.5 [*Exc. Val*.]).

But to what extent does Dio see *paideia* (his, or that of others)as something definitively Greek? Expressions of pride in his achievements say nothing on the matter. It seems best to begin by tracing the usage of the word. Like Plutarch, Dio identifies *paideia* as a generic good in several individuals, and the reader will not be surprised—given the subject matter of the *Roman History* as well as Dio’s aforementioned disinterest in figures from Greek history—that all but one of these statesmen are Romans (the exception is Pyrrhus).[[138]](#footnote-138) But Dio does at times point specifically to Greek education. In book 37.22.1, he notes that the Younger Cato emulated his great ancestor but had a better Greek education (the Elder Cato’s reputation for being anti-Greek going without mention here). Hannibal had not only Phoenician but also Greek *paideia* (13.54.3). Dio also notes some innovative uses among Romans of Greek *paideia*: Caesar uses Greek in a message to Cicero, so that if it is intercepted by some barbarians (the Gallic Eburones) they will not be able to read it (40.9.3); and one of the many things Claudius did to incur ridicule was to make “hints” in Greek in the Senate while trying his enemies (60.16.8).

Dio also notes emperors’ support of education: Vespasian established paid teachers at Rome (65[66].12.1a [Zon.]), and Marcus Aurelius did the same at Athens (“for the benefit of the whole world”; 72[71].31.3 [Xiph.]: πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις). In only one of these two instances is the appreciation bilingual: while Vespasian supported Latin and Greek education at Rome, there is no indication that Marcus supported anything but Greek education at Athens. Taken together, these two anecdotes conform to our general understanding of bilingualism in the empire: while Greek was long part of the Roman school curriculum, Romans do not seem to have imposed the Latin language on Greeks, nor did Greeks take up the practice of formal training in Latin. Bilingualism, in other words, is a marker of status for Romans rather than Greeks.[[139]](#footnote-139) This is something to keep in mind when we consider Dio’s comments on the personal bilingual education of some emperors, a subject discussed in detail elsewhere.[[140]](#footnote-140) In Dio, such belongs to Octavian-Augustus, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Septimius Severus. While Suetonius and the *Historia Augusta* make significant reference to the Greek-Latin bilingualism of emperors,[[141]](#footnote-141) among Greek writers Dio appears to have a unique interest in it. Importantly, the historian does not present the bilingual education of emperors in perfectly positive terms—he implies, for example, that it helped make Hadrian unreasonably competitive with other intellectuals (69[69].3.3–4 [*Exc. Val*.]), and that Marcus’ body was ruined by too much study (72[71].36.2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). I also have suggested that there is something self-reflective in Dio’s view of *paideia*: as a bilingual senator who is critical of the emperors, he is not just an any senatorial observer, but one whose education in the Greek and Latin canons allows him to write something with as wide a sweep as the *Roman History*.

We shall return to Dio’s inevitably self-reflexive interest in the use of Greek in the Senate in the next section, but that his interest in bilingualism is self-reflexive is also suggested by his practice of commenting throughout the *Roman History* on issues of translation—that is, of demonstrating his own bilingual *paideia*. Like all previous Greek writers on Rome—Polybius, Diodorus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Plutarch and Appian—Dio was obliged to find ways of describing Roman institutions in the Greek language, which naturally provided imperfect analogies.[[142]](#footnote-142) The most important recent studies of Dio’s practice in this area are the monograph of Freyburger-Galland (1997) and the 2016 article of Coudry.[[143]](#footnote-143) It is impossible to review these works here in detail, but what emerges clearly from both is how much effort Dio takes to provide nuance in his handling of Roman institutional vocabulary,[[144]](#footnote-144) and how much he stands out from his peers in this regard.[[145]](#footnote-145)

But again, we can ask: what do Dio’s comments on translation issues reveal about his identity as a Greek or Roman writer? Dio (like all ancient historians) takes a competitive stance towards his literary predecessors, and these competitors are most often Greek. He sometimes presents himself as a superior example of a Greek writer—because he consciously aligns himself with Roman usage, which he also points out aligns with native usage (perhaps nodding to his “eyewitness knowledge”). In book 49.36.5, for example, he critiques “some Greeks” (Ἑλλήνων τινὲς) who are “ignorant of the truth” (τἀληθὲς ἀγνοήσαντες) for referring to the [Latin-named] Pannonians as Paeones,[[146]](#footnote-146) and concludes his brief discussion thusly: “Therefore, I also shall call the people of the latter district Paeones, but the others Pannonians, just as both they themselves and the Romans do” (ὑφ ̓ οὗπερ καὶ ἐγὼ ἐκείνους μὲν Παίονας τούτους δὲ Παννονίους, ὥσπερ που καὶ αὐτοὶ ἑαυτοὺς καὶ Ῥωμαῖοί σφας καλοῦσι, **προσαγορεύσω**). He asserts his usage of a term shared by both Romans and natives similarly in a subsequent passage (67[67].6.2 [Xiph.]:

Δακοὺς δὲ αὐτοὺς προσαγορεύω, ὥσπερ που καὶ αὐτοὶ ἑαυτοὺς καὶ οἱ Ῥωμαῖοί σφας ὀνομάζουσιν, οὐκ ἀγνοῶν ὅτι Ἑλλήνων τινὲς Γέτας αὐτοὺς λέγουσιν, εἴτ ̓ ὀρθῶς εἴτε καὶ μὴ λέγοντες.

I call the people Dacians, the names used by the natives themselves as well as by the Romans, though I am not ignorant that some Greek writers (Ἑλλήνων τινὲς) refer to them as Getae, whether that is the right form or not.

Dio’s references to the failures of *early* Greek writers are more ambiguous. Take his comments in book 37 concerning the Egyptian custom of naming the days of the week after “the seven stars called planets”: he says he wishes to describe the practice, “since it is now quite the fashion with mankind generally and even with the Romans themselves” (ἀλλ ̓ ἐπειδὴ καὶ πάνυ νῦν τοῖς τε ἄλλοις ἅπασι καὶ αὐτοῖς τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις ἐπιχωριάζει, Cass. Dio 37.18.1). The latter locution prompts us to ask: is Dio part of “all of mankind”, or “even” a Roman”? Dio subsequently says (76[75].13.5 [Xiph.]):

καὶ θαυμάσῃ μηδεὶς εἰ τὰ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις Ἕλλησιν ἄγνωστα ἐξηυρήκαμεν: πλησίον γὰρ οἱ Μακεννῖται τῇ Μαυριτανίᾳ τῇ κάτω οἰκοῦσι, καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἐκεῖ στρατευομένων καὶ πρὸς τὸν Ἄτλαντα ἀφικνοῦνται. τοῦτο μὲν οὕτως ἔχει.

Let no one be surprised, now, that we have made discoveries unknown to the ancient Greeks (εἰ τὰ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις Ἕλλησιν ἄγνωστα ἐξηυρήκαμεν); for the Macennitae live near Lower Mauretania and many of the soldiers who are stationed there go as far as Atlas.

Who are “we”, exactly?[[147]](#footnote-147)

There is, finally, one instance in which it is difficult to tell whether Dio is ignorant on a matter of Latin-Greek translation or is, conversely, showing off. This regards the name of a statue called *Fortuna Respiciens*, which he says (in convoluted fashion) is named such “on account of the fact that a man must observe and consider everything that lies before his eyes as well as behind him, and must not forget from what beginnings he has become what he is” (ἣν ἐκ τοῦ πάντα τά τε ἐν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τὰ κατόπιν καὶ ἐφορᾶν καὶ ἐκλογίζεσθαι χρῆναί τινα, μηδὲ ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι ἐξ οἵων οἷος ἐγένετο, 42.26.4). He notes that the statue has been named “in a way that is hard to describe to Greeks” (τρόπον τινὰ οὐκ εὐαφήγητον Ἕλλησι), but as Cary notes in his translation, Plutarch found an easy enough translation for this goddess: τύχη ἐπιστρεφομένη.[[148]](#footnote-148) Was Dio unaware of this possibility? Or was he simply demonstrating his superior understanding of the nuances of a Roman cultural practice? Whatever the case may be, Dio’s demonstration of pride here can only be safely described as “pride in bilingualism”. Dio’s pride in bilingualism does not simply extend to terminology, but to historiographical practice on the whole. We conclude this section with a passage in which Dio unambiguously holds himself superior to both Greek and Latin writers (Cass. Dio 39.50):

ὁ οὖν Καῖσαρ τόν τε Ῥῆνον πρῶτος τότε Ῥωμαίων διέβη, καὶ ἐς Βρεττανίαν μετὰ ταῦτα, τοῦ τε Πομπηίου καὶ τοῦ Κράσσου ὑπατευόντων, ἐπεραιώθη…. καὶ τοῖς μὲν πάνυ πρώτοις καὶ Ἑλλήνων καὶ Ῥωμαίων οὐδ᾽ ὅτι ἔστιν ἐγιγνώσκετο, τοῖς δὲ ἔπειτα ἐς ἀμφισβήτησιν εἴτε ἤπειρος εἴτε καὶ νῆσος εἴη ἀφίκετο: καὶ πολλοῖς ἐφ᾽ ἑκάτερον, εἰδόσι μὲν οὐδὲν ἅτε μήτ᾽ αὐτόπταις μήτ᾽ αὐτηκόοις τῶν ἐπιχωρίων γενομένοις, τεκμαιρομένοις δὲ ὡς ἕκαστοι σχολῆς ἢ καὶ φιλολογίας εἶχον, συγγέγραπται. ροϊόντος δὲ δὴ τοῦ χρόνου πρότερόν τε ἐπ᾽ Ἀγρικόλου άντιστρατήγου καὶ νῦν ἐπὶ Σεουήρου αὐτοκράτορος νῆσος οὖσα σαφῶς ἐλήλεγκται.

Caesar, then, at this time was the first of the Romans to cross the Rhine, and later, in the consulship of Pompey and Crassus, he crossed over to Britain….To the very earliest of the Greeks and Romans it was not even known to exist, while to their descendants it was a matter of dispute whether it was a continent or an island; and accounts of it have been written from both points of view by many who knew nothing about it, because they had not seen it with their own eyes nor heard about it from the natives with their own ears, but indulged in surmises according to the scholarly sect or the branch of learning to which they individually belonged. In the lapse of time, however, it has been clearly proved to be an island, first under Agricola, the propraetor, and now under the emperor Severus.

Dio’s discussion of the geography of Britain is both a direct critique of Greek and Roman writers (that is to say, the entire world of writers) and a meta-commentary on his own superior knowledge. Earlier writers lacked the eyewitness knowledge or ground intelligence that was established under Agricola and re-established in the present day under Severus (an interesting comment to make in book 39, which is devoted to Julius Caesar). This, of course, could hardly be helped; Dio’s real critique is that these writers made guesses based on internal biases from whatever “scholarly sect” (σχολή) or “branch of learning” (φιλολογία) they belonged to—in implied contrast to his own more objective practice.[[149]](#footnote-149) As for meta-commentary, Dio’s critique assumes that he knows the entire range of Greek and Roman historiography, and is thus also a statement on his superior, and bilingual, command of Roman historiography.

In sum, Dio’s discussions of *paideia* do not make it easy for us to pin it down as something he saw as fully Greek. It seems that the best *paideia*, at the very least, is bilingual, and bilingual *paideia* is best represented by Dio himself. And yet Dio’s comments on the Greek-learning of others, especially of Romans, tacitly puts Greek on the same footing as Latin—which remained the official language at Rome, despite its rarity in public spaces in the East. In other words, Dio seems to show some sensitivitity as a Greek-speaker. It is telling that this emerges most obviously in the context of the Senate, as we shall see in the next and final section.

*Senatorial Greekness/Greek Senator-ness*

There are four moments in the *Roman History* that address the historical use of Greek in the Senate. Two of these involve emperors—Tiberius and Claudius—who rejected Greek in the Senate on certain occasions (60.17.3). In the first case, Tiberius disallowed the use of the word ἐμβλῆμα on a decree because it was a Greek term (ὡς καὶ Ἑλληνικὸν), even though (καίτοι) there was no Latin equivalent (ἐπιχωρίως, 57.15.2), and would not allow a centurion to use Greek in court although the emperor used it on many occasions. In the second, Claudius took away the citizenship of a Lycian because he did not know Latin (τὴν διάλεξίν σφων). Versions of these incidents appear in Suetonius as well. I have compared the Dio and Suetonius passages in detail elsewhere and do not intend to repeat the arguments here; suffice it to say that, regarding Tiberius, Suetonius shows none of Dio’s mild defensiveness (Greek is disallowed even though there is no Latin equivalent; the emperor himself uses Greek in the senate), nor does Suetonius give a lack of Latin as the reason for Claudius stripping the Lycian (whose countrymen had recently revolted) of citizenship.[[150]](#footnote-150) Here I focus on two stories in which Dio (or, in one case, Dio’s epitomizer Zonaras) seems to suggest, anachronistically, that the Greek language was needed in the Roman Senate as far back as the age of kings, and also that it was present in the Senate on the day in 27 BCE that Octavian acquired the name Augustus.

In Zonaras’s version of book 2.11, Dio tells the story of how the Sibylline Books came to Rome:

Τοὺς δὲ τῆς Σιβύλλης χρησμοὺς Ῥωμαίοις καὶ ἄκων προσεποιήσατο. γυνὴ γάρ τις θεόμαντις, ἣν Σίβυλλαν ὠνόμαζον, ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην ἐλήλυθε βιβλία τρία ἢ ἐννέα φέρουσα, καὶ ταῦτα πρίασθαι τῷ Ταρκυνίῳ ἐδίδου καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῶν βιβλίων ὡρίσατο. ἐκείνου δὲ μὴ προσεσχηκότος αὐτῇ, τὸ ἓν ἢ τὰ τρία τῶν βιβλίων κατέκαυσεν. ὡς δ’ αὖθις ὠλιγώρει αὐτῆς ὁ Ταρκύνιος, κἀκ τῶν λοιπῶν ὁμοίως διέφθειρε. μελλούσης δὲ καὶ τὰ ἔτι λοιπὰ καταφλέξειν, ἠνάγκασαν αὐτὸν οἱ οἰωνισταὶ τὰ γοῦν σωζόμενα πρίασθαι. καὶ ὠνήσατο ταῦτα ὅσου τὰ πάντα κτήσασθαι ἔμελλε, καὶ δύο βουλευταῖς ἀνδράσι φυλάσσειν παρέδωκεν. ὡς δ’ οὐ πάνυ τῶν γεγραμμένων συνίεσαν, εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα στείλαντες δύο ἄνδρας ἐκεῖθεν μισθοῦ ἤγαγον τοὺς ἀναγνωσομένους ταῦτα καὶ ἑρμηνεύσοντας. οἱ δὲ περίοικοι μαθεῖν ἐθελήσαντες ὅ, τι ποτὲ τὸ διὰ τῶν βιβλίων εἴη δηλούμενον, τὸν ἕτερον τῶν φυλασσόντων αὐτὰ Μάρκον Ἀκίλλιον χρήμασιν ἀναπείσαντες μετεγράψαντό τινα. γνωσθέντος δὲ τοῦ ἔργου ὁ Μάρκος βύρσαις δύο συρραφείσαις ἐμβληθεὶς κατεποντώθη, ὃ ἐξ ἐκείνου μετέπειτα κατὰ τῶν πατροκτόνων ἐπεκράτησε γίνεσθαι, ἵνα μήτε ἡ γῆ μήτε τὸ ὕδωρ μήτε ὁ ἥλιος μιανθῇ αὐτοῦ θνήσκοντος.

Tarquin obtained for the Romans the oracles of the Sibyl quite against his will. A woman whom they called Sibyl, gifted with divine inspiration, came to Rome bringing three or nine books, and offered these to Tarquin for purchase, stating the price of the books. As he paid no attention to her, she burned one or three of the books. When again Tarquin scorned her, she destroyed part of the rest in a similar way. And she was about to burn up the others also when the augurs compelled him to purchase the few that were intact anyhow. He bought these for the price for which he might have secured them all and delivered them to two senators to keep. Since they did not entirely understand the contents, they sent to Greece and hired two men to come from there to read and interpret these books. The people of the neighborhood, desiring to learn just what it was that was revealed by the books, bribed Marcus Acilius, one of the custodians, and had some parts copied out. When this affair became known, Marcus was thrust between two hides sewn together and drowned, in order that neither earth nor water nor sun might be defiled by his death; and beginning with him, this punishment has ever since prevailed in the case of parricides.

In this telling, Tarquin refused to buy the Sybilline Books from the Sibyl, so she started burning them. When augurs urged the king to buy the remaining books before they were destroyed, he entrusted them to two senators who hired two men from Greece to translate them. In addition to another epitome of Dio’s book 2.11, that of Tzetzes, which mentions neither senators nor the Greek language, three other versions of this story are extant: those of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 4.62); Aulus Gellius (*NA* 1.19); and Pliny the Elder (*HN* 13.27). Of these four versions, only Dio and Dionysius of Halicarnassus mention “two men” to whom the books are entrusted. In Dionysius’s telling, however, these men are not Dio’s two senators (δύο βουλευταί, as is the latter’s usual Atticizing nomenclature),[[151]](#footnote-151) but merely “two men of distinction” (ἄνδρες ἐπιφανεῖς δύο). Furthermore, while Dionysius and Dio both tell us that the two men to whom the books were entrusted were accompanied by two other men, Dionysius refers to them as two public slaves (δημοσίοι θεράποντες δύο), without reference to Greece—or even to translation, which would have been necessary at this early date (*Ant. Rom.* 4.62):

ἡ μὲν οὖν γυνὴ τὰς βύβλους δοῦσα καὶ φράσασα τηρεῖν ἐπιμελῶς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἠφανίσθη, Ταρκύνιος δὲ τῶν ἀστῶν ἄνδρας ἐπιφανεῖς δύο προχειρισάμενος καὶ δημοσίους αὐτοῖς θεράποντας δύο παραζεύξας ἐκείνοις ἀπέδωκε τὴν τῶν βιβλίων φυλακήν, ὧν τὸν ἕτερον Μάρκον Ἀτίλιον ἀδικεῖν τι δόξαντα περὶ τὴν πύστιν καταμηνυθέντα ὑφ ̓ ἑνὸς τῶν δημοσίων, ὡς πατροκτόνον εἰς ἀσκὸν ἐνράψας βόειον ἔρριψεν εἰς τὸ πέλαγος.

The woman, after delivering the books and bidding him take great care of them, disappeared from among men. Tarquinius chose two men of distinction from among the citizens and appointing two public slaves to assist them, entrusted to them the guarding of the books; and when one of these men, named Marcus Atilius, seemed to have been faithless to his trust and was informed upon by one of the public slaves, he ordered him to be sewed up in a leather bag and thrown into the sea as a parricide.

When we consider Dio’s overall self-identification with the Senate, it seems significant that Dio’s is the only version of the story in which books were 1) entrusted to senators and that 2) it was those senators who sought Greek translators. This is especially the case because in Dio’s day, as had been the case since the Republic, the Sibylline oracles were in the care of priests, not senators, and were stored in the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline. Aulus Gellius makes such a reference in *Noctes Atticae* 1.19: “Three books were deposited in a shrine and called ‘Sibylline’, and whenever the immortal gods are to be consulted for public welfare, the Quindecimviri approach them as if they were an oracle”.[[152]](#footnote-152) Pliny’s very brief mention of the Sibylline Book (13.27) only says that the Sibyl burned two of them, and that a third burned on the Capitoline in the time of Sulla.[[153]](#footnote-153)

The second example is in book 53.16, where Dio claims that, when Octavian acquired the title of Augustus, the Senate decided to give him the Greek title of *Sebastos* as well.

βουληθέντων γάρ σφων ἰδίως πως αὐτὸν προσειπεῖν, καὶ τῶν μὲν τὸ τῶν δὲ τὸ καὶ ἐσηγουμένων καὶ αἱρουμένων, ὁ Καῖσαρ ἐπεθύμει μὲν ἰσχυρῶς Ῥωμύλος ὀνομασθῆναι, αἰσθόμενος δὲ ὅτι ὑποπτεύεται ἐκ τούτου τῆς βασιλείας ἐπιθυμεῖν, οὐκέτ ̓ αὐτοῦ ἀντεποιήσατο, ἀλλὰ Αὔγουστος ὡς καὶ πλεῖόν τι ἢ κατὰ ἀνθρώπους ὢν ἐπεκλήθη: πάντα γὰρ τὰ ἐντιμότατα καὶ τὰ ἱερώτατα αὔγουστα προσαγορεύεται. ἐξ οὗπερ καὶ σεβαστὸν αὐτὸν καὶ ἑλληνίζοντές πως, ὥσπερ τινὰ σεπτόν, ἀπὸ τοῦ σεβάζεσθαι, προσεῖπον.

For when they wished to call him by some distinctive title, and men were proposing one title and another and urging its selection, Caesar was exceedingly desirous of being called Romulus, but when he perceived that this caused him to be suspected of desiring the kingship, he desisted from his efforts to obtain it, and took the title of *Augustus* signifying that he was more than human; for all the most precious and sacred objects are termed *augusta*. Therefore, they addressed him also as *Sebastos*, meaning an august personage, from the passive of the verb *sebazō*, “to revere”.

No other source suggests that the Greek name arose in the Senate, let alone simultaneously with Octavian’s endowment with the title of Augustus. Dio’s presentation of the Senate of 27 BCE performing this action envisions the Senate as a Greek-Latin bilingual entity in which the double-renaming of Octavian is a given—despite the fact that Greeks did not become a regular presence in the Senate until the early-to-mid second century.[[154]](#footnote-154) Whether or not Dio believed that this was how the long-established Greek title for the Caesars came about, his implication that Greek titles were important to the Senate at the dawn of the Principate is as fanciful as the notion that it the Senate called in Greek translators for the Sibylline Books in the age of kings.

*Conclusion*

This paper has examined Dio’s identity with respect to two clichés about Greek imperial writers: on the one hand, their nostalgia for the classical past and in particular the rhetoric of panhellenism, which constructed an idea of an exalted moral, cultural, and political “Greekness” that was posited against an inferior “barbarian” opposite; on the other hand, their preoccupation with *paideia*, both as a marker of their own status as *pepaideumenoi* and as a tool by which they measured the “Hellenic” quality of others. Unlike many of his contemporaries (but similarly to other Greek historians of Rome) Dio, as far as his extant text goes, shows little interest in Greek history outside of the context of Roman politics. There are echoes to be found in the *Roman History* of a panhellenic rhetoric, but they are limited to the reflection of Flamininus’ own rhetoric of freeing the Greeks in 196 BCE and to a few instances in which an apparent opposition between Greeks and barbarians is revealed to be a tripartite scheme, in which the *tertium quid* of Rome is inevitably superior to the two other members. We are on firmer ground with *paideia*, over whichDio claims a kind of authority that aligns him, in spirit, with other Roman Greek authors. Unusually, the authority he claims over *paideia* is a specifically bilingual authority, demonstrated by his interest in the bilingualism of emperors as well as his own self-conscious demonstrations of translation between Greek and Latin throughout his text. But a few passages dealing with the historical use of the Greek language in the Senate suggest something akin to the “Greek pride” we see in other writers whose projects more obviously foreground the importance of the Greek cultural tradition to the Roman present.[[155]](#footnote-155)

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Chapter 3: Cassius Dio and Greco-Roman Historiography

*Luke Pitcher*

*History-writing in Greek and Latin before Cassius Dio*

When Dio composed his narrative of Rome, he took his place in a tradition of history-writing that already stretched back, in one form or another, for more than six centuries. The origins of historiography in Greek are now obscure; they had probably already become so by the end of antiquity itself. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing under Augustus, offers an account of these origins which, in its main lines, at least, is likely to have approached the truth.

According to Dionysius, there were many writers who, before the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE), wrote “in some cases Greek histories, in some cases foreign ones, without joining them together, but dividing them up by peoples and by cities” (οἳ μὲν τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς ἀναγράφοντες ἱστορίας, οἳ δὲ τὰς βαρβαρικάς, καὶ αὐτάς τε ταύτας οὐ συνάπτοντες ἀλλήλαις, ἀλλὰ κατ᾽ ἔθνη καὶ κατὰ πόλεις διαιροῦντες, Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 5).[[156]](#footnote-156) Herodotus of Halicarnassus, who lived on some way into the Peloponnesian War, set matters on a different level, by fusing accounts of affairs in Europe and in Asia into a single whole; Thucydides of Athens, who survived to see the end of it, wrote an account of the conflict which he did not quite finish. Dionysius asserts that Herodotus and Thucydides were gamechangers because they both presented narratives integrating multiple topics of interest, as the earlier writers on discrete and disconnected themes had not. We cannot now determine the precise accuracy of that assertion,[[157]](#footnote-157) but Herodotus and Thucydides certainly retained a consistent prestige across later ages that eluded their predecessors.

Besides offering a sketch of Greek historiography’s infancy, Dionysius—this time in his own historical work, the *Roman Antiquities*—illustrates how quickly that historiography began to grapple with the topic of Italy and its inhabitants. Early in his history (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.12.3), Dionysius quotes from the *Settlement of Italy* by Antiochus of Syracuse (*BNJ* 555), a late fifth-century BCE writer whose other work on Sicily was probably a source for Thucydides. Timaeus of Tauromenium (*BNJ* 566), the most significant of the western Greek historians, gave a summary of Roman history down to 264 BCE within his thirty-eight-book history of Sicily. The first history of Rome to be written by a Roman was that by Fabius Pictor (*FRHist* 1), who had fought in the Gallic War of 225 BCE. This, too, was in Greek, although a somewhat mysterious Latin version seems also to have been in later circulation. After Pictor, we find attestation of histories about or including Rome by both Greeks and Romans. The prime substantially extant example of a comprehensive history delineating the rise of Rome before the Principate is that written in Greek by Polybius of Megalopolis around the middle of the second century BCE. There were many others, which are now almost entirely lost or fragmentary.

Ancient historiography, whether it took its theme as Rome and Italy or elsewhere, evolved in the centuries before Dio to encompass many formats, many approaches, and many lengths. The great, genre-defining early histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, and the *Hellenica* of Thucydides’ somewhat younger fellow Athenian Xenophon, show many differences from each other, but also striking similarities. They are all of the same order of magnitude when it comes to length (nine, eight, and seven books respectively); they all deal (though not exclusively) with great themes of warfare and politics within and between states; and they all cover history over a span of at least several decades, bringing their tale of events down to the historian’s own lifetime (although probably only just so, in the case of Herodotus).

Histories in the centuries that followed Herodotus and Thucydides sometimes followed this loose model, but sometimes did not. They could be much shorter (like Velleius Paterculus’ two-book summary of Roman history, written under Tiberius), or much longer: Polybius’ work, mentioned above, was in forty books. They might manage a geographical ambit equal to or greater than Herodotus, as with the “universal history” written by Diodorus of Sicily under Augustus, or confine themselves, in one sense or another, to the minutiae of a single city, as Philochorus (*BNJ* 328) did for the local history of Athens. They did not necessarily deal with a broad chronological span, or terminate with events within the historian’s lifetime. Sallust’s *Bellum Iugurthinum*, for example, takes as its theme Roman wars against a single African monarch which concluded decades before Sallust himself was born.

The possible range of historiographical activity in Greek under Dio’s High Roman Empire may be illustrated by considering the output of the other principal extant second- and third-century Greek historians.[[158]](#footnote-158) Decades before Dio, Appian of Alexandria composed his own history of Rome’s rise to greatness, from its origins to events within Appian’s own lifetime.[[159]](#footnote-159) Appian’s history does not acknowledge events beyond about 165 CE;[[160]](#footnote-160) he probably lived to see only the opening years of the reign of Marcus Aurelius, which would obviously preclude anything comparable to Dio’s coverage of the Severans. This unavoidable difference aside, one might nevertheless expect two histories with so comparable a potential ambit to present a very similar overall aspect.

In fact, the histories of Appian and Dio display strong affinities, but also significantly different formal characteristics. Appian chooses to tell the story of Rome’s territorial expansion under the Republic area-by-area, rather than through simple diachrony, pursuing the history of each area down to its Roman annexation before repeating the whole process on a different area. For example, Appian’s fourth book covered *all* of Rome’s interactions with the Gauls, from the Gaulish sack of Rome in 390 BCE to at least as far as Julius Caesar’s campaigns and expedition to Britannia in the 50s. Once this was done, Appian turned back the clock of his narrative to the third century BCE, and did a similar thing in his fifth book for Sicily.

The proportion of narrative space that Appian allots to different periods within Rome’s existence is likewise a striking contrast with Dio. The books of Appian’s history which dealt with events after the death of Sextus Pompeius in 35 BCE are almost entirely lost, but, on the most plausible reconstruction, he handled events after the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE at length in only the final three books of his twenty-four-book history. One of these books seems to have covered an entire century of imperial history, at what must have been a breakneck pace. If one accepts the plausible conjecture that these “hundred years” compassed the period from the War of Actium in 31 BCE to the fall of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the subsequent mayhem in 69 CE, Appian (who devoted his last two books to Trajan’s Dacian and Arabian campaigns, respectively) may not have covered the Flavian dynasty to any significant extent at all.

Despite these striking formal differences, the general scope and theme of Appian’s historical work were at least broadly comparable to Dio’s. The two other principal extant Greek historians of the High Empire, Arrian and Herodian, are another story. Arrian (writing, like Appian, approximately in the middle of the second century CE), treated Roman history in works now lost (*BNJ* 156): an eight-book history of his native province Bithynia down to its Roman annexation, and a seventeen-book account of Trajan’s Parthian wars. Arrian does not seem, however, to have attempted Roman history in the round after the fashion of Appian or Dio; his other historiographical activity (partially extant) was devoted to the career and successors of Alexander the Great. Herodian, writing in the middle of the third century CE, did compose an account of Roman imperial history. This survives, and its relationship to Dio’s version of the period it covers has attracted a lively scholarly debate.[[161]](#footnote-161) But Herodian’s treatment of Roman history is much more constrained than that of Dio or Appian, in chronological scope, textual bulk, and narrative focus. Herodian covers only the period from the dying days of Marcus Aurelius in 180 CE to the accession of the boy-emperor Gordian III in 238; he does so in only eight books; and the narrator’s attention remains, for the most part, trained firmly on the persons of emperors (or would-be emperors) and their closest advisors. For Herodian, the Republic is a matter of occasional (and sometimes confused) allusion, rather than a topic to be tackled in detail. Dio’s rich cast of supporting characters is nowhere to be found.[[162]](#footnote-162)

The bulk of the history written in the ancient world does not survive. This applies as much to the historiographical activity of the High Roman Empire as to the obscure predecessors of Herodotus and Thucydides. It can be perilous to draw too many conclusions on the basis of the histories that have happened to survive, and we shall see that what we know about the ones that have vanished can sometimes illuminate, as well. All the same, this helter-skelter survey of Dio’s predecessors and contemporaries in historiography has suggested several observations.

There were many ways to write history in the ancient world: many available topics, many ways to treat those topics, and many possible lengths at which to treat them. Even two works with a broadly similar chronological and spatial sweep, like the Roman histories of Dio and of Appian, can display radical differences, both in format and in the decisions that the author makes as to how much space to allot to different periods and areas within the history. Not all of the possibilities which the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition had instantiated in the six or more preceding centuries would have been equally present to Dio’s mind as he embarked on his own additions to that tradition. Some histories, probably more than a few, fell prey to entropy in the course of antiquity itself, and this could happen fairly quickly: for example, there is no incontrovertible evidence for anyone seriously engaging with Strabo’s forty-three-book continuation to Polybius (*BNJ* 91 T 2), written at the beginning of the Principate, after the end of the first century CE. All the same, there is still mileage in mapping Dio’s historiographical practice against that of his predecessors. What affinities does Dio show with elements in the historiographical tradition he inherited? What parts of that tradition does he favor—and to what ends? In what respects is Dio’s practice apparently aberrant, or unusual?

*Thucydidean Style*

We have spoken already of the consistent prestige which Thucydides, the late fifth-century BCE historian of the Peloponnesian War who stands at the fountainhead of Greco-Roman historiography, continued to enjoy in subsequent antiquity. Dio’s history is an implicit tribute to that prestige. Much of Dio’s vocabulary bears an obvious debt to Thucydidean lexis. This is particularly obvious in his affection for some unusual words, seen for the first time in Thucydides, but very seldom in later authors. The desiderative verb πολεμησείω(“to want/to intend to wage war”), for example, appears first in Greek literature in a speech by the Corcyreans near the beginning of Thucydides’ account of the run-up to the war (Thuc. 1.33.3), claiming that the Spartans are intent on starting a conflict on account of their fear of Athens (this being the first formulation of the so-called “Thucydides trap” which, in the modern world, would become influential in the theory of international relations). After this striking debut, the word almost disappears from usage for centuries, only to be revived in the work of Dio (and also Appian—see below). Dio, for example, uses it to describe the eagerness of Marcus Antonius to begin hostilities against the assassins of Julius Caesar and their supporters in the Senate in early 43 BCE (Cass. Dio 46.30). The verb is nicely apt for its context: Antonius, like Thucydides’ Spartans (if, at least, the Corcyreans are to be believed), is spoiling for a fight with those he regards as his enemies, and looking for a good reason to begin one. Like Thucydides’ Spartans, Antonius finds that an opportunity duly presents itself. Πολεμησείω is a particularly striking instance, because the verb itself is so rare. However, a generally Thucydidean cast also marks much of Dio’s other vocabulary and turns of phrase.[[163]](#footnote-163)

It is easy to see why Dio might have regarded Thucydides as a worthy model for emulation. Dio’s own text yields evidence as to the affinities he might have perceived between himself and his Athenian predecessor. In book 38 of the history, Dio represents a meeting between Cicero, depressed and exiled from Rome in 58 BCE, and an individual called Philiscus. The discussion between the two men about the virtues (or otherwise) of exile covers several topics; one of these is the opportunity which it affords for writing history. Philiscus urges Cicero to put his enforced sojourn to good use (Cass. Dio 38.28.1–2):

“ἂν μὲν γάρ μοι πεισθῇς, καὶ πάνυ ἀγαπήσεις χωρίον τέ τι παραθαλασσίδιον ἔξω πάτου ἐκλεξάμενος, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ γεωργῶν τε ἅμα καὶ συγγράφων τι, ὡς Ξενοφῶν, ὡς Θουκυδίδης. τό τε γὰρ εἶδος τοῦτο τῆς σοφίας διαρκέστατόν ἐστι καὶ παντὶ μὲν ἀνδρὶ πάσῃ δὲ πολιτείᾳ ἁρμοδιώτατον, καὶ ἡ φυγὴ φέρει τινὰ σχολὴν γονιμωτέραν. ὥστ᾿ εἴπερ ὄντως ἀθάνατος καθάπερ ἐκεῖνοι γενέσθαι ἐθέλεις, ζήλωσον αὐτούς.”

“For if you will take my advice, you will be quite satisfied to pick out a little estate in some retired spot on the coast and there carry on at the same time farming and some historical writing, like Xenophon and like Thucydides. This form of learning is most enduring and best adapted to every man and to every state; and exile brings with it a kind of leisure that is more fruitful. If, then, you wish to become really immortal, like those historians, emulate them”.

Philiscus taps into what seem to have been two tendencies amongst those thinking about Thucydides in antiquity; both also appear in Plutarch’s musings on a similar theme in his treatise *On Exile* (Plut*. De Exil.* 605C–D).[[164]](#footnote-164) Firstly, Philiscus associates Thucydides’ historiographical production especially with the latter’s period of exile from Athens after his failure as a general at Amphipolis, to an extent rather greater than is guaranteed by Thucydides’ own remarks on the subject; Thucydides *does* note that his absence from Athens during his exile gave him enhanced opportunities to gather material from both sides of the conflict (Thuc. 5.26.5), but, equally, asserts at the very beginning of his work that he began work at the war’s inception (Thuc. 1.1.1). Secondly, Philiscus pairs Thucydides as a productive historiographer in exile with Xenophon sojourning at Scillus during *his* exile from Athens; again, the idea that Xenophon wrote history particularly during this period is not assured by Xenophon’s own extant writings, though it is an idea that turns up elsewhere in the ancient tradition about his life-story. However debatable in point of historical truth this depiction of Thucydides (and Xenophon) in comfortably productive seclusion may actually have been, it is hard not to feel that Philiscus’ remarks on how retirement (of one sort or another) might be made profitable in assuring literary immortality by writing history have a certain self-reflexive quality, when placed so prominently in a historical work the last words of which analogize the author’s retirement in Bithynia to Hector’s deliverance from battle in the *Iliad* (Cass. Dio 80[80].5.3 [Xiph.]). Dio, like his vision of Thucydides, is a politician who seems to have put periods of retirement to good historiographical use (whenever the lion’s share of his actual writing might actually have been done).

Dio’s affinities with Thucydides go beyond a perception that he was a kindred spirit in how he managed his career. As we saw above, the similarity between Marcus Antonius’ behavior with respect to the assassins of Caesar and the Senate in Dio and the Corcyreans’ depiction of the Spartans in the first book of Thucydides goes beyond a simple verbal jingle. Thucydides is, *par excellence*, the ancient historian who consistently brings out the distinction between the immediate or avowed reasons for something happening and the deeper, abiding motivations that lie behind those reasons. Marcus Antonius may well reel off various slights that the Senate has perpetrated with respect to him: Dio enumerates these in some detail. But Dio leaves the reader in no doubt that Antonius fully intends to bring about a patent breach with the Senate anyway. This doubled vision of causality—particularly with respect to the beginning of armed conflicts—is one which Thucydides visits and revisits in the course of his work. Besides the insecure bellicosity of the Spartans in book 1, one might adduce the narrator’s vision of Athenian motivation for intervening in Sicily in 415 BCE, as set out near the beginning of Thucydides book 6: “Against such a land were the Athenians eager to mount an expedition, having the attractive advertised explanation that they wanted to help their own kinsmen and their previously acquired allies, but with the true cause that they wanted to rule the whole land” (ἐπὶ τοσήνδε οὖσαν αὐτὴν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι στρατεύειν ὥρμηντο, ἐφιέμενοι μὲν τῇ ἀληθεστάτῃ προφάσει τῆς πάσης ἄρξαι, βοηθεῖν δὲ ἅμα εὐπρεπῶς βουλόμενοι τοῖς ἑαυτῶν ξυγγενέσι καὶ τοῖς προγεγενημένοις ξυμμάχοις, Thuc. 6.6.1). It would be going too far to say that Dio follows an exact Thucydidean model in his own (frequent) resort to such a doubled vision—apart from anything else, Dio’s vocabulary contrasting underlying and proffered explanations inverts the respective significations of *aitia* and *prophasis* from Thucydides’ original, as does that of most historians interested in exploring such a distinction.[[165]](#footnote-165) All the same, the vision of action, pretext, and causality which Thucydides effectively inaugurates for Greek historiography is one that Dio in many respects finds congenial.

Some would go further in seeing Dio as one who models himself as a consciously Thucydidean historian. The wholesale appropriation of a prior model which such a reading envisages does not seem to have been altogether out the question in the Greek historiography of the High Roman Empire. Cephalion, a lost historian of Assyria in the time of Hadrian, seems to have carried pastiche of Herodotus to the point of composing his history in nine books (like Herodotus) and writing it in literary Ionic (also like Herodotus).[[166]](#footnote-166) Asinius Quadratus, who wrote a lost “thousand-year” history of Rome in fifteen books under the Severans, also did so in literary Ionic.[[167]](#footnote-167) There have therefore been those who have seen Cassius Dio as a self-consciously “Thucydidean” historian, in contra-distinction to his “Herodotean” rival Quadratus.[[168]](#footnote-168)

It is prudent to be skeptical that Dio’s identification with Thucydides goes as deep as this. Apart from the basic dubiousness of the notion that there were competing “Herodotean” and “Thucydidean” schools of history in antiquity,[[169]](#footnote-169) we may note that Dio and Thucydides, while showing definite affinities of temperament and narrative style, also display significant differences. The most obvious of these is their respective attitudes towards the gods and the supernatural. Thucydides is thoroughgoing in his suppression of divine or supernatural elements in his history;[[170]](#footnote-170) Dio, the author of a work on the dreams and portents that predicted the ascension of Septimius Severus (Cass. Dio 73[72].23), is more indulgent, particularly when it comes to signs and wonders. To return to the conclusion of Dio’s history, it is difficult to imagine that Thucydides, had he been spared to finish his great work, would have capped it with a line from Homer and said that this was because *to daimonion* had told him to do so.

Dio *does* share concinnities of methodology and temperament with Thucydides, but it would not be out of keeping with the general tenor of responses to the latter in antiquity to suggest that the *primary* debt he owes this predecessor is stylistic—which is not to rule out the possibility that moments of Thucydidean allusion in Dio’s text may often make a deeper point. If we return to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (from whose essay *On Thucydides* the account of early Greek historiography at the beginning of this chapter is taken), we can see that Dionysius is fully aware of Thucydides’ sterling qualities in historical methodology (in particular, his use of autopsy and care in the choice of his informants),[[171]](#footnote-171) but nevertheless spends most of his essay about the historian discussing points of style and arrangement.

The later tradition, of which Dio is a part, shows an awareness, too, that, while Thucydides may be an admired precursor, an attempt to ape him too sedulously can easily go astray. Bathos is unavoidable, if the narrative to which a Thucydidean cast is applied is too incongruous. Lucian of Samosata, the imperial sophist and man of letters whose *How History Ought to Be Written* is an invaluable, if quirky, guide to the theory of historiography in antiquity, devotes several sarcasms to those who ape Thucydides without thought and care as to what they are doing (Lucian *Hist. conscr.* 15).

Dio may or may not have been aware of Lucian’s take on this rather different sort of “Thucydides trap”, but other pressing considerations would have suggested themselves as to why Thucydides, despite his exemplary virtues, had his limitations as a potential model for someone setting out to write a Roman history. Thucydides, for all the glories of his style and (to an extent) the congeniality of his worldview, was writing the history of a single war, albeit a long one, mostly from the perspective of a city-state the political primacy of which by Dio’s time had long since passed. Dio does not show the overt enthusiasm for downgrading Athens (and other polities of old Greece) that appears occasionally in the works of some other classical historians. He does not, like Herodian (Hdn. 3.2.8), tut that civil strife is “still very much a Greek vice” (ἀρχαῖον τοῦτο πάθος Ἑλλήνων) (which casts a rather cold eye on an celebrated passage of Thucydides book 3); he does not, like Appian, find room in his extant text for characters sermonizing about Athens’ tendency to trade on its past glories (App. *B Civ.* 2.88.368), or hold forth explicitly about how limited and short-lived its success at maintaining an expensive empire really was in the grand (and Roman) scheme of things (App. *Praef.* 8.29–30); he does not, like Sallust (whom antiquity regarded as a Thucydidean imitator), explore the theory that the achievements of Athens, while respectable enough on their own terms, have acquired a somewhat specious lustre from the talents of its chroniclers (Sall. *Cat.* 8.2).[[172]](#footnote-172) All the same, even at the simplest structural level, an (incomplete) account of a twenty-seven-year war is no model for organizing the history across almost a thousand years (and many, many wars) of the most enduringly successful polity in the Mediterranean world.

For all Dio’s debts to Thucydides in point of vocabulary, and the latter’s usefulness in providing conceptual models which the later historian could adopt, adapt, or just ignore, the overarching structure of Dio’s history finds its origins elsewhere in the historiographical tradition. Dio’s engagement with Thucydides goes beyond the parroting of his characteristic lexis. We have seen how distinctive Thucydidean vocabulary about how wars begin is redeployed by Dio to make a point about the policy of Marcus Antonius in the wake of the Ides of March; recent scholarship has uncovered other cases where Dio thoughtfully recasts a Thucydidean passage to bring out issues that serve his own agenda as an historian.[[173]](#footnote-173) When it comes to the grand scheme of Dio’s work, however, it is not in Athens, but in the Roman Republic, that we should seek the models of his history.

*Annalistic Format*

The Roman historians writing in Latin before Caesar and Sallust are now almost wholly lost, and the vocabulary which the ancient sources themselves use to talk about them is sometimes inconsistent. Later authors, when they refer to the works of these lost historians (or others) as *Annales* (“annals”) do not necessarily mean, by that designation, the same thing. A discussion by the antiquarian writer Aulus Gellius (Gell. *NA* 5.18) illustrates the range of possible practice in the ancient terminology. *Annales* might simply indicate historiographical activity, without making any particular claims about the precise format of that activity (as, for example, in the Greek *annales* which Tacitus imagines as being uninterested in the career of the chieftain Arminius at Tac. *Ann.* 2.88.3); it might be used as a contrast to *historiae*, which more narrowly concerned themselves with recent and present events (as the Augustan lexicographer Verrius Flaccus seems to have done); it might even indicate a deficient form of historiography lacking appropriate interest in matters of causality and intentionality, which seems to be the sense that the first-century BCE historian Sempronius Asellio (himself now extant only in fragments) ascribed to it in a passage rather similar to one in Dio (*FRHist* 20 F1; cf. Cass. Dio 46.34.5–35.1).[[174]](#footnote-174) The fact that *annales* could thus be used in several senses means that we need to be wary of reading too much into uses of the word that lack much in the way of explanatory context—and, in particular, of assuming from the fact that *some* writers (such as Asellio above) use it in a pejorative way that all works thus described were qualitatively inferior to subsequent *historia*.

For the purposes of looking at Dio, the most relevant sense of *Annales* is one that falls under another of Gellius’ possible definitions: a work in which the events of a span of years are covered in succession, with the order of each year being observed. Whether Fabius Pictor’s history followed such a format for some or all of its length is not altogether clear.[[175]](#footnote-175) In the case of some later lost Roman historians, however, the evidence, such as it is, makes it reasonable to suppose that they did structure their works, for at least some of their length, year by year. Livy’s note that the second-century BCE historian L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi omitted to supply the consuls for 307–306 BCE suggests that his work made use of such an “annalistic” (viz., year-by-year) framework (*FRHist* 9 F28).[[176]](#footnote-176) Of course, the idea that an historical work might be structured by enumerating events year by year, with due announcement at the appropriate points that a new year is beginning, was not an innovation of the Roman annalists. Thucydides already arranges his account of the Peloponnesian conflict year by year: a recurrent motif in his work is a phrase along the lines of “And the winter ended, and the xth year of this war of which Thucydides wrote the history” (e.g., Thuc. 2.103.2). All the same, it is easy to see how such a model could be particularly potent for structuring Roman history—a history marked (usually) by its annual succession of consuls.

Even a cursory reading of Dio’s Republican books shows that such an “annalistic” model, basing itself upon the successions of the consular year, could be a useful tool for structuring his history.[[177]](#footnote-177) Book 37 (to take an example chosen more or less at random from this stretch of the history) illustrates the technique in operation. The book opens (Cass. Dio 37.1.1) with the sentence “The year following these exploits, in the consulship of Lucius Cotta and Lucius Torquatus, Pompey engaged in warfare with both the Albanians and the Iberians” (Τότε μὲν δὴ ταῦτ᾿ ἔπραξε, τῷ δ᾿ ἐπιγιγνομένῳ ἔτει, τοῦ τε Κόττου τοῦ Λουκίου καὶ τοῦ Τορκουάτου τοῦ6 Λουκίου ὑπατευόντων, ἐπολέμησε μὲν καὶ τοῖς Ἀλβανοῖς, ἐπολέμησε δὲ καὶ τοῖςἼβηρσι). The beginning of the book thus states that the narrative has moved on from the previous year; gives the consuls of the new one (65 BCE, in this case); and then turns its attention to the deeds of Pompeius within it. At the end of Dio’s account of the year, he lists a number of disquieting portents at Rome; remarks, in a recapitulatory formula, “such were the occurrences of that year” (Ταῦτά τε ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ ἔτει συνέβη); and, finally, records a dispute between the censors as to the citizenship of the Transpadanes (Cass. Dio 37.9.3). This done, Dio moves on to another year.

Such a “year-by-year” framework has obvious potential virtues in point of narrative clarity and organization; it is worth remembering, all the same, that there was no overwhelming imperative for Dio to use such a model. Again, comparison with the other principal extant Greek historians of the Roman Empire reveals an intriguing diversity of usage. Arrian, for these purposes, is not directly comparable, so far as his extant works are concerned: Roman consular years have little relevance to the adventures of Alexander the Great. Both Appian and Herodian, by contrast, demonstrate that it was entirely possible to write a Roman history, extending over a considerable span of years, without being impelled to adopt anything approaching an annalistic framework. Appian voices his lack of concern with precise chronology as early as his general preface, noting that he considers it otiose to give the “times” for everything, and announcing that he will give them only for the most important events (App. *Praef.* 13.50). In accordance with this, the *Roman History* that follows gives absolute dates for the happenings it describes only sporadically, and shows, in the earlier extant stretches of the narrative, a disposition to use Olympiad dating in the Greek style (e.g., App. *Hisp.* 4.14) when it does so, rather than consular years. Herodian does not make such a statement of method (or indifference) in his short preface, and does record an intention, during his account of the career of Septimius Severus, to record the principal deeds of that emperor “in order” (ἐν τοῖς ἑξῆς, Hdn. 2.15.7). Due order, alone, however, is a different proposition from a “year-by-year” format; sure enough, Herodian’s narrative (and not merely during his account of Septimius Severus) tends towards vagueness in its chronology, prefers to date events (when it bothers to do so) in relation to other events rather than with reference to any absolute framework, and never uses consular years at all.[[178]](#footnote-178) Appian and Herodian, to be sure, both have obvious imperatives of their own which would tend to dissuade them from adopting the consular year as a framework for their respective endeavors. Appian, as we have already seen, is wedded to an “area-by-area” model rather than a chronological one for a substantial tranche of his work; Herodian’s tendency to focus almost exclusively on the persons of emperors, pretenders, their families, and their close advisors helps to explain his general lack of investment in who happens to be consul.

Dio’s greater disposition to interact with an “annalistic” framework is perhaps better seen, then, as a conscious compositional decision, rather than as a given for anyone writing an ambitious political Roman political history. It may even be that the eighty-book extent of his work in its final form represents a conscious homage to this tradition of historiography. Cicero, in his first-century BCE dialogue *De Oratore*, puts into the mouth of the orator Marcus Antonius the claim that the Roman tradition of “annals” began in emulation of the *Annales Maximi*, public records to which the Pontifex Maximus, the chief priest of Rome, committed to writing all the affairs of each year (Cic. *De Orat.* 2.51­–3). The nature and development of these *Annales Maximi*, and the true extent of their relationship to early Roman historiography, remain controversial questions, bedevilled by the dearth of evidence. We do know, however, that, according to the Vergilian commentator Servius (Serv. Dan. *Aen.* 1.372­–3), the *Annales Maximi* were at some point put into eighty books. It may, of course, be nothing more than a coincidence that Dio’s history and one version of the *Annales Maximi* ended up occupying exactly the same number of books. All the same, one notes that very long completed histories with such a tidy number of books seem to have been a rarity in antiquity: at lengths beyond the forty books of a Polybius, a Diodorus, or a Charax of Pergamum (*BNJ* 103 T 1), the numbers of books tend towards the straggly.[[179]](#footnote-179) Conscious emulation of how one version of the *Annales Maximi* was laid out on Dio’s part cannot, then, altogether be ruled out.

What does Dio gain by such an interaction with the annalistic tradition, beyond advantages of clarity as to lay-out? A tentative answer might be sought in Dio’s particular investment, unique amongst the extant imperial Greek historians, in the continuity at Rome of senatorial governance, and, perhaps, the role of civic piety in maintaining that continuity. Appian, to be sure, is conventionally pious (he was plausibly a priest of Rome and Venus, on Hadrian’s adlection)[[180]](#footnote-180) and interested, on occasion, in the behavior of the Senate as a body,[[181]](#footnote-181) but he lacks, perhaps, Dio the senator’s very personal stake in the triumphs and tribulations of that body down the centuries.[[182]](#footnote-182) Herodian, as we have already seen, tends towards a focus on the person of the emperor—although, once again, the Senate as a body has its moments in his narrative.[[183]](#footnote-183) Thus, the annalistic framework, articulating itself through the ordered succession of consular pairs, taking its origins (by at least one ancient account) from the records of Rome’s chief priest, and generically predisposed to set aside space for the enumeration of portents, might, perhaps, have exerted a special pull on a historian with Dio’s particular profile of receptiveness to signs and wonders, and regard for an orderly model of civic governance.

As in the case of his appropriation of Thucydidean style, however, it is prudent not to make too sweeping claims for the impact of Dio’s relationship with the Roman annalistic tradition. In the case of Thucydides, we are at least fortunate enough that the pertinent predecessor text is itself extant. In the case of the Roman annalists, a full structural comparison is hindered by the disappearance not only of the predecessor texts themselves, but also of quite large stretches of Dio. It may be that the first thirty-five books of Dio’s history, which are transmitted to us in fragments, did not, in fact, observe an annalistic structure.[[184]](#footnote-184) Even in the better-preserved parts of the history, we can see that Dio’s use of the “framework” is quite flexible, and takes different forms according to the demands of his narrative at any given point. To return to the example of book 37, we have seen that Dio does, indeed, handle the year 65 BCE in a decidedly “annalistic” way: formulaic phrases at each end of the year; the names of the incoming consuls; an account of interesting events; and a paragraph for portents. Dio’s account of 64 BCE immediately thereafter, however, is rather different. He begins, to be sure, with the names of the incoming consuls, and phraseology similar to that which accompanied the start of 65: “In the following year, when Figulus and Lucius Caesar were in office…” (Τῷ δὲ ἐχομένῳ ἔτει, τοῦ τε Φιγούλου καὶ τοῦ Καίσαρος τοῦ Λουκίου ἀρχόντων, Cass. Dio 37.10.1). Almost immediately, however, Dio’s manipulation of the chronology becomes more flexible. The convictions in 64 BCE of L. Annius Bellienus and L. Luscius are pressed into service by Dio to illustrate the inconstancy of fortune: these men, who reaped the rewards of the Sullan proscriptions, are now themselves undone. Dio uses this theme of the dramatic reverses in human affairs to segue into the story of Catiline, whose escape from judicial penalty at this point initially *seems* a contrast to the fates of Annius and Bellienus, but actually sends him down a path of grander self-destruction: “For, when Marcus Cicero had become consul with Gaius Antonius, and Mithridates no longer caused any injury to the Romans, but had destroyed himself, Catiline undertook to set up a new government” (τοῦ γὰρ δὴ Κικέρωνος τοῦ Μάρκου μετὰ Γαΐου Ἀντωνίου ὑπατεύσαντος, ὅτε Μιθριδάτης οὐδὲν ἔτι δεινὸν τοὺς Ῥωμαίους εἰργάσατο ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν διέφθειρεν, ἐπεχείρησεν ἐκεῖνος τήν τε πολιτείαν νεωτερίζειν, Cass. Dio 37.10.4). The focus on Catiline as a test-case for Dio’s moralizing theme thus rolls the narrative clock almost immediately forward to 63 (the consulship of Cicero and Antonius). Dio then undertakes to tell fully the two stories adumbrated in this sentence: the fall of Mithradates VI, and the insurgency of Catiline. The decision to tell the tale of Pompeius’ victory over Mithradates to its conclusion, in turn, introduces a narrative that stretches down to Pompeius’ triumph of 61 BCE (Cass. Dio 37.21.1). The subsequent account of the Catilinarian conspiracy and the events of 63 is thus, in fact, a chronological rewind.

Dio does not allow a strictly “annalistic” format to confine him unduly. The disquisition on human fortune suggested by the trials of Annius and Luscius, and the more story-based narration which follows, enables him to solve a narrative problem: how to wrap up the account of Pompeius’ eastern campaigns which has preoccupied him since the previous book in a satisfyingly closural fashion, while still keeping a narrative grip on the Catilinarian conspiracy, one of the most notable explosions in Roman domestic politics between the Civil Wars of Sulla and Julius Caesar. Dio does not explicitly point up at first the fate of Mithradates as a further exemplification of fortune’s whirligig, in the way he does for Annius, Luscius, and Catiline, but the scene of the Pontic king’s death reveals him to be one: “Thus Mithradates, who had experienced the *most varied and remarkable fortune*, had not even an ordinary end to his life” (Cass. Dio 37.13.4: Μιθριδάτης μὲν δὴ ποικιλωτάτῃ ἀεὶ καὶ μεγίστῃ τῇ τύχῃ χρησάμενος, οὐδὲ τὴν τελευτὴν τοῦ βίου ἁπλῆν ἔσχεν). Dio’s suspension of strictly chronological arrangement in favor of a more exemplary mode of narration as book 37 progresses makes for an easier reading experience, and a more satisfying thematic unity.

Dio’s response to annalistic form, then, is as essentially pragmatic as his attitude to Thucydidean style. The framework of the consular year is one that he can find useful, especially in light of the ground he has to cover. The ideological associations of the format, and its (possible) roots in the *Annales Maximi* are, perhaps, resonant for him. Equally, however, he demonstrably makes of this framework a tool, and not a straitjacket. In this, he is, perhaps, not much different from the other authors who seem to interact with annalistic form (and possibly the lost annalists themselves).[[185]](#footnote-185)

*Conclusion: Dio as an Ancient Historiographer*

In this chapter, we have examined two of Dio’s most obvious and extensive cases of indebtedness as regards the long tradition of historiography that he had inherited: to Thucydides in point of word-choice, and to the Roman annalists in point of structure and format. In each case, we have seen that Dio puts these debts to expressive use—but also that the debts do not define or constrain the nature of his enterprise. Dio shares some similarities of outlook with Thucydides, and his pointed use of more recondite elements in his predecessor’s recherche vocabulary can prod us in the direction of productive comparison as to how the two historians handle historical causation; at the same time, Rome is very obviously not Athens, and supernatural warnings bulk much larger in the narrative of the pious Dio than in that of Thucydides. The annalistic tradition provides a useful framework and structural model for at least some of Dio’s work; equally, however, he does not allow the succession of consular years to tie him down when he can achieve greater narrative clarity or point by other means.

Much potentially remains to be said about how Dio fits into the panorama of history-writing in antiquity. Between the micro-level of word-choice or verbal allusion, and more macroscopic considerations of overall structure and layout, there is an intermediate space. Ancient historiography evolved a characteristic idiom (or, rather, a number of closely related idioms) for handling such matters as (for example) authorial prefatory remarks, battles, siege-scenes, and formal speeches or debates. Ample consideration of where Dio stands in relation to these idioms would require a book of its own, at least. All the same, we may essay some tentative remarks, in conclusion, about how Dio’s history looks, in terms of narrative texture, when compared to what else remains of history-writing from the ancient world. In what respects does he broadly adhere to the norms of the rest of classical historiography, and in what respects is he obviously idiosyncratic?

The experience of reading Dio is broadly comparable to that of reading most historiography from the ancient world—especially the Greek historiography of the Roman empire. We have observed that Appian and Herodian have different interests from Dio and, on the macro-level, organize their narratives very differently from him in consequence. All the same, if one set representative pieces of narrative from the three historians side by side, there would certainly be stretches where it would take a very competent judge to tell them all apart. Appian and Herodian, too, like Thucydidean lexis—in fact, Appian shows the same sensitivity to the exact nuances of πολεμησείωthat Dio does (e.g., App. *B Civ.* 5.22.89).[[186]](#footnote-186)

That being said, Dio does evince certain idiosyncrasies. It is rare that a feature in Dio is entirely unexampled elsewhere in ancient historiography: there is usually *some* precedent for what he does. All the same, Dio does seem to push some tendencies from the earlier historiographical tradition rather further than seems altogether normal by the standards of other extant writers. This is most obvious in his treatment of long, direct discourse, speeches.[[187]](#footnote-187) Substantial speeches in *oratio recta* are, to be sure, a staple of classical historiography from Herodotus onward. Dio’s ones are sometimes distinctive, however, for being very, very long—and, occasionally, seemingly rather tangential to their narrative context. The speeches of Cicero and Fufius Calenus in books 45 and 46 of the history are the stand-out case here: each is at least half the length of the book that contains it, and it is challenging to find another prominent case in extant ancient historiography where two orations given in opposition to each other are so long that they have to be put in different books from each other (Theopompus *BNJ* 115 F 164 and 166 *may* be another example,[[188]](#footnote-188) but the fragmentary nature of Theopompus makes reconstruction difficult). The speeches of Cicero and Calenus, while mammoth, are, at least, very obviously geared towards the immediate political issue of the day in terms of their content; it is hard to say the same about the extended debate upon the proper attitude towards exile that Dio stages between Cicero and Philiscus. Debates in other ancient historiography *can*, of course, touch upon or discuss universals beyond their immediate context (one thinks of the debate on the relative merits of monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy at Herodotus 3.80–2); once again, however, one seldom encounters, elsewhere in extant historiography, anything quite so apparently extraneous to the demands of the immediate narrative, at such considerable length, as this. Why Dio is so prone to this is not altogether clear. Herodian (who is in other respects equally a product of high imperial sophistic culture) does not do it.

Consideration of Dio against the backdrop of the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition turns out to be, then, an instructive enterprise. The picture that emerges, perhaps not unexpectedly, is one of both tradition and innovation. Dio’s history, in its present form, turns out to be very much a product of protocols, procedures, generic standards, and even word-choices established over the course of the long centuries of historiography that precede him. At the same time, however, Dio retains the ability to surprise—even when he is seemingly at his most traditional.

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Chapter 4: The Senator’s Story[[189]](#footnote-189)

*Caillan Davenport*

*Introduction*

Sometime in the middle of 229, the elderly Cassius Dio—by now a man in his mid-sixties—traveled to Rome, and then to Campania, to make his final appearance before a Roman emperor.[[190]](#footnote-190) Earlier that year he had been honored by the twenty-year-old Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander *Pius Felix* Augustus with the distinction of a second consulship as *ordinarius* and as the emperor’s own colleague. The iterated consulship was a rare prize only bestowed on senior members of the Senate, at least a decade, but usually longer, after they had first held the *fasces*.[[191]](#footnote-191) In times of crisis and upheaval, marked by the changeover of emperors and thinning of senatorial ranks through civil wars, proscription, and execution, it was an honor that only survivors could achieve.[[192]](#footnote-192) Dio’s own knack for survival is demonstrated by the events of 229: the young Alexander, promising to pay for all his consular expenses, urged the sexagenarian senator to spend his time in office outside of the city of Rome. His reputation among the soldiery as a harsh disciplinarian, earned during his governorship of Pannonia, led the weak and largely ineffectual emperor to suspect that the sight of Dio in his consular regalia might lead to hostile action by the praetorians. And so Cassius Dio left the *sacra urbs*, probably for his villa in Capua,[[193]](#footnote-193) only returning to pay his respects to Alexander later in the year, first at Rome itself, and then residing with the emperor at one of the imperial estates in Campania. The soldiers (no doubt to Alexander’s relief) remained duly quiescent during Dio’s short sojourn at court. Having achieved the shining prize of a senatorial career from the emperor’s hands, he offered up the excuse of gout for his retirement from public life, and returned to his native Bithynia. There—and here I follow a provocative but plausible recent argument[[194]](#footnote-194)—Dio wrote his eighty-book *Roman History*, which would reach its culmination in these very events of 229.

Over thirty years before, Dio had sat in the Senate as a man of praetorian rank listening to a speech given by Septimius Severus, the founder of the dynasty, fresh from his victory over his final rival for the purple, Clodius Albinus. Severus, Dio wrote, praised the savagery of Sulla, Marius, and Augustus and lamented the clemency shown by Pompeius and Caesar towards their opponents.[[195]](#footnote-195) He then proceeded to lambast the senators for their sanctions against the memory of Commodus, claiming that the members of the *amplissimus ordo* had committed similar or worse deeds than the maligned former *princeps*. Following this speech, Severus remitted the sentence of thirty-five of his opponents, but ordered the execution of twenty-nine others, demonstrating to the Senate his capacity both for cruelty and clemency in equal measure.[[196]](#footnote-196) Dio did not suffer at Severus’ hands, taking no sides in the civil wars of 193–197, despite what he wrote in his *Roman* *History* about his dislike of the emperor’s actions and methods.[[197]](#footnote-197) Instead, in an act of simpering sycophancy, Dio penned a short book about the dreams and portents which foretold Severus’ accession and presented it to the emperor to win his approval.[[198]](#footnote-198) Dio’s natural talent for thinking one thing and saying another ensured his survival as the Severan dynasty waxed and waned, earning the second consulship of 229 as his reward for making it through alive, while other more principled senators, who resisted and spoke out against their masters, perished.

It is the twin themes established here—Dio as a member of the Senate, and the role of the Senate and senators in imperial politics in the *Roman History*—that I intend to explore in this chapter.[[199]](#footnote-199) Dio’s narrative portrays the Senate as an important *locus* of politics and government in the Roman imperial monarchy. The Senate is envisaged as a body of 600 men, drawn from the cream of Rome’s Italian and provincial aristocracies, who advised and served the *princeps* as individual and collective partners in government. Its members commanded armies and governed provinces, while as a body the Senate acclaimed emperors, received embassies, passed decrees, and sat as a court. Yet Dio’s narrative also demonstrates that the Senate was a place of intense competition, where rivalries between fellow senators, and often between emperors and senators, sometimes played out in a deadly fashion.

*One of Us*

Cassius Dio first appears prominently as a character in his own history in 192, the final year of the roller-coaster ride that was Commodus’ reign as *princeps*. The historian was then in his late twenties, not an unschooled *novus homo* unused to political life, but the son of the Bithynian senator Cassius Apronianus, who had taken the younger Dio with him on his gubernatorial assignment in Cilicia.[[200]](#footnote-200) Dio seamlessly inserted himself into his *Roman History* as a representative voice of the Roman Senate in Commodus’ gloriously unhinged last days, using the first-personal plural to denote the shared experience of the members of the *amplissimus ordo*.[[201]](#footnote-201) In a famous programmatic statement, Dio assured his readers that he had seen and heard everything that he related about Commodus’ antics in the arena, and that going forward in the *History*, he would tell a story that no one else with the talent to write history could deliver with such accuracy.[[202]](#footnote-202) This claim to authority was not without foundation: Dio did personally witness many events which he described in the contemporary books, including several pivotal meetings in the Senate itself, such as Didius Julianus’ opening address as emperor or the reading of Macrinus’ letters sent to the *curia* from Syria.[[203]](#footnote-203) But on the other hand, it must be emphasized that Dio did not quite tell the truth, as he was not the only senator to describe the demise of Commodus and the rise of Severan dynasty.[[204]](#footnote-204) The imperial biographies of his contemporary, L. Marius Maximus Perpetuus Aurelianus, *cos. II ord.* 223, essayed the lives of Rome’s rulers from Nerva to Elagabalus.[[205]](#footnote-205) Although they are now lost, these biographies underpinned many Antonine and Severan *Lives* collected in the *Historia Augusta*. It has been plausibly argued that the depiction of senators and senatorial history *Historia Augusta* was influenced by Marius Maximus’ works, and reveals a different perspective from that found in Dio’s *Roman History*.[[206]](#footnote-206) Maximus was but one contemporary senator who had the potential to rival Dio as qualified to record the vicissitudes of the times accurately.[[207]](#footnote-207)

Dio’s eyewitness perspective on senatorial meetings does give the contemporary portion of the *Roman History* a vibrancy and immediacy which is otherwise lacking in the post-Augustan books.[[208]](#footnote-208) One’s eyes can easily glaze over at the recounting of the day-to-day encounters between emperors and Senate: the oath not to execute senators, revisions of the senatorial roll, inaugural speeches, and such-like.[[209]](#footnote-209) This feeling cannot be attributed solely to the truncated narrative left to us through Xiphilinus and the *Excerpta Constantiniana*,for, as a good annalistic historian, Dio was certainly interested in chronicling such details, which marked the turning of reigns and years.[[210]](#footnote-210) But then, lo and behold, at the end of the second century, it is Dio himself who sits at the threshold of history. We can feel his excitement when, as a junior senator, he first laid eyes on the aged Ti. Claudius Pompeianus—the great marshal and son-in-law of Marcus Aurelius—who returned to take his seat in the *curia* in 193.[[211]](#footnote-211) We sense Dio’s apprehension later that same year when he and his colleagues set out for the Senate at night, made their way through the guard of soldiers, and took their places to hear Didius Julianus disingenuously justify his purchase of the empire at auction, an expensive act that cheapened the imperial office.[[212]](#footnote-212) We hang on tenterhooks as Macrinus and Elagabalus send letters to the Senate from Syria justifying their claims to imperial power.[[213]](#footnote-213)

However, for a historian who was keen to portray himself as the authentic voice of the Senate, Dio is a curiously voiceless character in his own work. [[214]](#footnote-214) Senatorial discussions and debates take place around Dio: he never gives an opinion as an individual participant in these meetings. Witty and subversive apophthegms are spoken by others, such as Fulvius Diogenianus’ outburst in response to Macrinus’ remark in a letter that no one could pray or wish him to die: “We have all prayed for it” (πάντες εὐξάμεθα).[[215]](#footnote-215) Dio reserved his thoughts for his role as narrator of the *Roman History* itself. But—and this is an important qualification—Dio would have lent his voice to the acclamations delivered by all senators in honor of emperors in the *curia*. One cannot help but be chilled by the senatorial cries of “All do all things well since you rule well!” (πάντες πάντα καλῶς ποιοῦσιν, ἐπειδὴ σὺ καλῶς ἄρχεις), which were shouted in honor of Septimius Severus following the murder of Fulvius Plautianus and the condemnation of his friends and allies in 205.[[216]](#footnote-216) Dio certainly joined his colleagues in these acclamations, which endorsed the destructive actions of Severus and of other harsh and unforgiving *principes*.[[217]](#footnote-217)

We should not underestimate the significance of such performances in the political culture of the Roman imperial state.[[218]](#footnote-218) They articulated both the unity of the Senate and the collaboration between that body and the *princeps*.[[219]](#footnote-219) Dio himself placed great emphasis on instances of collective action by the Senate in his contemporary narrative. Some of these were in the form of important acts pivotal to the safety of the *res publica*. We read how the Senate, summoned by the consul, assembled together in the Athenaeum on June 1, 193, to condemn Didius Julianus to death, proclaim Septimius Severus emperor in his place, and deify Pertinax.[[220]](#footnote-220) This was an important decision on the part of the *curia*, which overrode Julianus’ earlier plea that the Senate make Severus co-emperor.[[221]](#footnote-221) It could be said that the Senate had little choice, given that Severus was bearing down on Rome with an army, but their judgement was still significant, as it represented the formal ratification of Severus’ rule. The continuing power of the *senatus consultum* in the Roman monarchical *res publica* was founded on the belief that the united voice of the Senate still mattered.[[222]](#footnote-222)

Many other instances of collective action recounted by Dio are more disturbing, in that they show senators coldly turning on their colleagues. After the demise of Caracalla, the Senate wrote to his successor Macrinus to discover which of their number had become *delatores* for the emperor.[[223]](#footnote-223) Macrinus, perhaps sensing the appetite for blood, gave them only three of the most serious offenders, who were duly punished. In the case of a certain Flaccus, he received the same post of *curator aquarum et Miniciae* which another senator (Manilius) had been given for informing against him.[[224]](#footnote-224) The behavior reveals the cut-throat competition for power and office among members of the *amplissimus ordo* in the Severan period.[[225]](#footnote-225) The most unnerving example is that of Baebius Marcellinus, the senator convicted for his knowledge that the nurse of Popilius Pedo Apronianus had a dream that her charge would be emperor.[[226]](#footnote-226) Marcellinus, as Dio memorably recounted, was identified by his accuser on the grounds of his baldness. In one fell swoop, he was dragged out of the *curia*, through the forum, said goodbye to his four children, and was then promptly beheaded. As Rhiannon Ash has argued, Dio’s eyewitness narrative of Marcellinus’ condemnation has similarities with Tacitus’ descriptions of collective guilt about the wrongs committed by the Senate under Domitian, but with an important twist—Septimius Severus knew nothing of the charge or condemnation.[[227]](#footnote-227) Responsibility for his demise lay with the Senate alone.

Why does Dio record such unpalatable senatorial behavior, in which he himself participated, in his *Roman History*? I propose that there are two interrelated answers to this question. The first is Dio’s view of the important role which the Senate had in the Roman imperial monarchy. In the course of his Augustan narrative, he confessed that he was aware that some of his readers may not appreciate his close attention to constitutional detail.[[228]](#footnote-228) The vibrant portrayal of senatorial debates that Dio himself attended shows that the Senate was not a constitutional irrelevancy or a collection of superannuated mediocrities but a real, vital, and often deadly political arena.

The second reason pertains to Dio himself: the fact that he survived to record these incidents for posterity is a testament to his ability to weather such turbulent times. There is little doubt, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, that Dio preferred not to be outspoken or controversial during his lifetime. The trajectory of his official career is telling. Suffect consul c. 205–6, Dio either eschewed or was denied any administrative or provincial commands available to consulars until more than fifteen years later, when he was governor of Africa, Dalmatia, and Pannonia Superior under Severus Alexander.[[229]](#footnote-229) His political actions in the previous decades, as portrayed in the *Roman History*, were largely collective rather than individual: he attended meetings of the Senate, participated in imperial funerals and celebrations, and advised the emperors when called upon to do so.[[230]](#footnote-230) This gives the impression of Dio as a rather ordinary, one might say marginalized, senator for much of his life, even though he might have wished otherwise (a point to which I will return). But it also demonstrates that not only did Dio himself survive, but he eventually flourished, triumphing over homicidal emperors and rowdy Pannonian soldiers to earn the much-coveted second consulship in 229.[[231]](#footnote-231)

*A Real Partnership*

We shall now take a step back and look at the role of the Senate and senators in Dio’s wider imperial narrative. It almost goes without saying that emperors who maintained cordial relationships with the *curia* were rewarded with positive portrayals in Roman histories and biographies, and Dio’s *Roman History* was no exception in this regard.[[232]](#footnote-232) When the reader comes across Dio’s story that no tribunes or praetors dared to call a meeting of the Senate because they were terrified of Caligula’s cruelty, they know that this is a mark of a poor emperor who traumatizes the Senate.[[233]](#footnote-233) But we can move beyond tales of pro- and anti-senatorial emperors to think more broadly about Dio’s political vision. The *Roman History* shows that Augustus’ Roman imperial monarchy was founded on the principle that there was a partnership between the *princeps* and *curia*.[[234]](#footnote-234) This does not mean that Dio was an ideological fantasist who gave the Senate an outsized role in his work, for he knew that the emperor was always the senior partner in this relationship.[[235]](#footnote-235)

The speech of “Maecenas” in book 52, in which Octavian’s advisor outlined his vision for his friend’s new monarchical regime, is a natural starting point.[[236]](#footnote-236) The Senate, “Maecenas” argued, was the proper source of Octavian’s advisors and administrators.[[237]](#footnote-237) Even more importantly, he proposed that the most important aspects of government should be put before the Senate: “For interests which are shared in common should be administered in common” (τά τε γὰρ κοινὰ κοινῶς διοικεῖσθαι δεῖ).[[238]](#footnote-238) Octavian should ensure that all embassies would be heard by the Senate, all legislation would be passed through the Senate, and that all trials of senators and their family members would be held in the Senate.[[239]](#footnote-239) The subsequent account of Augustus’ Principate following the first settlement of 27 BCE shows that the principles of the speech of “Maecenas” connect with the narrative *Roman History* at large.[[240]](#footnote-240) The Senate and *princeps* worked in tandem regarding legislation, embassies, and trials—with one important proviso: “nothing was done that did not please Caesar” (οὐ μέντοι καὶ ἐπράττετό τι ὃ μὴ καὶ ἐκεῖνον ἤρεσκε).[[241]](#footnote-241) This statement is not one of bitterness or resentment, but an acknowledgement of the political reality. Moreover, this was a reality of which Dio approved. The establishment of the imperial monarchy represented the end of civil war, the coming of peace, and the restoration of effective government.[[242]](#footnote-242)

We can take this a step further. It is clear from Dio’s selection of anecdotes about the Senate in the Augustan books that he believed the Roman state needed the firm hand of the *princeps*.[[243]](#footnote-243) This is demonstrated by the dispute regarding the elections for the consulship of 21 BCE, which took place when Augustus was in Syria. The competition between the candidates Quintus Lepidus and Lucius Silvanus, which was stoked by the people, was such that the rivals ended up being summoned before the *princeps* in Syria, and the elections held in their absence.[[244]](#footnote-244) Similar events occurred regarding the consulships of 19 BCE, although on that occasion Augustus did not allow elections to proceed, instead appointing a consul to fill the vacant spot.[[245]](#footnote-245) Augustus emerges from Dio’s narrative as a leader who set the Senate to rights, reducing and pruning the senatorial roll, establishing the census for membership at 1 million sesterces, confirming necessary procedures regarding the days on which the Senate should sit, enforcing fines for absences, and establishing a quorum for the passing of *senatus consulta*.[[246]](#footnote-246) This perspective is endorsed in Tiberius’ eulogy for Augustus, in which the *princeps* is praised for strengthening the position of the Senate and its members within the *res publica*.[[247]](#footnote-247)

The narrative of the relationship between emperor and Senate in the subsequent imperial books of the *Roman History* is founded on the idea that both parties were supposed to work together for the common good of the state.[[248]](#footnote-248) Dio always praised an emperor who treated the Senate with respect and valued their opinion, even if their reign was wanting in other respects.[[249]](#footnote-249) Some examples of genuine partnership can be found, such as Marcus Aurelius asking the Senate for the necessary funds to support his second German expedition in 177.[[250]](#footnote-250) Moreover, it is clear from Dio’s narrative that there was still scope for the Senate to make some political decisions. Two examples relating to imperial memory are worth mentioning. In 38, at the beginning of Caligula’s reign, oaths were taken to uphold the acts of Augustus and Caligula, but not of Tiberius. This decision had long-lasting ramifications, since even in Dio’s own day, the Senate did not swear to support Tiberius’ deeds.[[251]](#footnote-251) The second example relates to Caligula’s memory. There was no official *damnatio memoriae* of Caligula, since Claudius prohibited it, instead preferring to remove his predecessor’s images furtively.[[252]](#footnote-252) However, in 43 the Senate nevertheless voted that all Caligula’s bronze coinage should be recalled and melted down.[[253]](#footnote-253) Imperial knowledge that the Senate could make such decisions is shown by Macrinus’ reticence to condemn Caracalla as a *hostis publicus* in his letter to the Senate from Syria. Dio reasonably thought that this was because Macrinus preferred to have the Senate pass judgement on his predecessor rather than incur the blame for this himself.[[254]](#footnote-254) Through these anecdotes, we can see that Dio wished to emphasize that the Senate remained a vital political institution within the parameters established for it by Augustus. As I have noted above, the issuing of senatorial decrees meant that the *curia* still retained its power as the collective voice of Rome’s aristocratic elite.[[255]](#footnote-255)

Of course, not all emperors were prepared to treat the Senate or its decisions with proper respect. It is always tempting to concentrate on the most extreme examples, which show the relationship breaking down, such as when Caligula vowed to execute the entire *amplissimus ordo* because they had failed to vote him divine honors after his campaign over the Ocean, or when Domitian wilfully ignored senatorial decrees that emperors should not put senators to death.[[256]](#footnote-256) Although Dio did not shy away from highlighting the greatest hits of the tyrannical emperors, it is important to emphasize that they are not the sum total of his account of the Senate. Much more interesting, and more significant for our understanding of Roman imperial politics, is the way in which tensions and disagreement—a feature of any political partnership—were negotiated. The reign of Tiberius provides instructive examples.[[257]](#footnote-257) When the Senate wanted to propose a new law punishing immoral behavior, Tiberius declined to enact it, “explaining that it is better to correct them privately in some way or other than to inflict any public punishment upon them” (προσεπειπὼν ὅτι ἄμεινόν ἐστιν ἰδίᾳ τρόπον τινὰ αὐτοὺς σωφρονίζειν ἢ κοινήν σφισι τιμωρίαν ἐπιθεῖναι).[[258]](#footnote-258) In 21, the Senate voted to execute the *eques* Clutorius Priscus for a poem he had written about the ailing Drusus, as if he were hoping for the prince’s demise.[[259]](#footnote-259) Tiberius was furious that the Senate had authorized the motion without consulting him, and thus ordered a decree to be passed to ensure that in future he would review all such death penalties.[[260]](#footnote-260) These incidents show the emperor serving as a check on the Senate, particularly its desire to discipline and punish other citizens.[[261]](#footnote-261) This represents what Dio saw as the proper functioning of Roman government, which entailed a working relationship between the Senate and the *princeps*, with the proviso that the emperor had the final say.

*The Greasy Pole*

Cassius Dio was not a *novus homo*, but nor was he from an illustrious senatorial dynasty replete with ordinary consulships or patrician forefathers.[[262]](#footnote-262) In fact, it was Dio’s own ascent to the iterated consulship in 229 that represented his family’s greatest success, and paved the way for subsequent generations to achieve similar feats.[[263]](#footnote-263) Having gained senatorial and consular status in a respectable manner, Dio had firm views about the sort of people who could—and could not—enter the *amplissimus ordo*. These principles are firmly established in the speech of “Maecenas” in book 52, and then recur in Dio’s comments on individual careers in the subsequent imperial narrative.

The first issue is the admission of qualified individuals to the Senate. Dio’s “Maecenas” advised Octavian to undertake a wholesale revision of the Senate, whose numbers had grown to more than one thousand since the time of Julius Caesar.[[264]](#footnote-264) The necessary quality for remaining in the *curia* was *aretē*, or personal excellence, for even a shortfall in the financial wealth required could be made up by Octavian. “Maecenas” counselled that new senators should be drawn from “the noblest, best and wealthiest men” (τούς τε γενναιοτάτους καὶ τοὺς ἀρίστους τούς τε πλουσιωτάτους) of Italy and all the provinces.[[265]](#footnote-265) *Leges annales* for admittance (minimum age 25) and advancement to magisterial office (no praetorship before age 30) should be strictly followed.[[266]](#footnote-266) Ex-praetors and ex-consuls would then constitute the body from which provincial governors, military commanders, and other leading officials would be drawn, enabling senators to play an important role in the new monarchical regime.[[267]](#footnote-267) In addition to the Senate, “Maecenas” envisaged that members of the *ordo equester* would have their own separate, but still significant, place in the Roman government with a range of necessary administrative and military posts open to them.[[268]](#footnote-268)

Dio himself paid great attention to these constitutional arrangements. The imperial books of the *Roman History* contain many references to changes to existing provisions, such as temporary increases in the number of praetors or the length of the terms of provincial governors, and Dio usually explained the reasons why they were implemented.[[269]](#footnote-269) Most importantly, Dio was personally attached to the idea that dedication to the *res publica* and *princeps* brought glory to senators as individuals and as a collective.[[270]](#footnote-270) This was the same ethos of service that generated the creation of inscriptions featuring the *cursus honorum* as a form of commemoration in the imperial period.[[271]](#footnote-271)

However, the ideology that senators should excel in their military and administrative commands resulted in a certain level of tension between senators and emperors, because it meant that the very best senators were potential rivals for the imperial purple. When the imperial *statio* fell vacant, and no dynastic successor was readily apparent, it was these great commanders who formed the repository of excellence to which the Senate would turn for their next *princeps*. But imperial paranoia meant that many emperors regarded these senators as genuine rivals during their lifetime. It was this suspicion that saw Nero slay Cn. Domitius Corbulo and Commodus the Quintilii brothers, because they feared their military abilities and popularity.[[272]](#footnote-272) Commodus also put to death Salvius Iulianus, one of his father’s generals; Iulianus had refused to lead his army against the emperor because of his admiration for Marcus Aurelius.[[273]](#footnote-273) He formed part of a line of noble senators, extending back to Verginius Rufus, who declined to revolt even against tyrannical emperors.[[274]](#footnote-274) Dio’s *Roman History* meticulously recorded the fates of these and other senators as proof of imperial cruelty: his original text even noted the names of all Caracalla’s victims, though they were omitted by Xiphilinus.[[275]](#footnote-275) When emperors executed senators whom they perceived to be rivals, they violated the system espoused by “Maecenas” and subsequently put in practice by Augustus, which had allowed members of the *amplissimus ordo* to achieve great deeds within the parameters of Rome’s monarchical *res publica*.

The Senate was never an hereditary body, because aristocratic families failed to replicate themselves in subsequent generations.[[276]](#footnote-276) The most important reservoir of new members was the *ordo equester*, whose ranks probably numbered some 20,000 in the age of Augustus.[[277]](#footnote-277) Dio’s “Maecenas” had a high opinion of the *equites* and their public standing, and thus endorsed their suitability for entrance to the *amplissimus ordo*, including memberswho had been commissioned as centurions (*ex equite Romano*).[[278]](#footnote-278) But—and this was an important qualification—soldiers who had not achieved the centurionate were not fit for senatorial status.[[279]](#footnote-279) The contemporary books of the *Roman History* contain many criticisms of men inappropriately advanced to senatorial status and high office, which demonstrate that these particular views espoused by “Maecenas” are Dio’s own.[[280]](#footnote-280) The real crisis point occurred during the reign of Macrinus, the equestrian praetorian prefect elevated to the purple. It was Dio’s firm opinion that Macrinus should not have accepted the imperial office because of his status as an *eques*, regardless of his other considerable merits.[[281]](#footnote-281) The new *princeps* proceeded to appoint a number of individuals, who did not meet Dio’s minimum status for senatorial entrance, to high political office. A former slave, Marcius Claudius Agrippa, and an ex-soldier, Aelius Triccianus, were elevated to consular governorships on the Danubian frontier, and M. Oclatinius Adventus, who began his career as a *frumentarius*, became urban prefect and ordinary consul for the second time in 218 CE.[[282]](#footnote-282) These and other appointments of Macrinus were actually part of a concerted effort by the new emperor to remove associates of Caracalla from key strategic positions and replace them with men loyal to himself.[[283]](#footnote-283) In Dio’s mind, however, they represented the breakdown of accepted norms of senatorial admission and promotion.

The competition for provincial governorships and key administrative posts such as the urban prefecture was intensified by the fact that it was relatively easy to achieve magisterial office by the third century CE. Providing one survived to the minimum age, every senator would become praetor, and 70–75 percent of the Senate would achieve a suffect consulship.[[284]](#footnote-284) This has the effect of making Dio’s early career before the reign of Severus Alexander seem rather mediocre, a reward for survival rather than achievement (returning us to the theme of the first section).[[285]](#footnote-285) In these circumstances, it is easy to understand the historian’s resentment towards—in his view lesser—contemporaries who achieved governorships and other offices through imperial preferment.[[286]](#footnote-286) One man about whom Dio complained was L. Lucilius Priscilianus, who was promoted to the rank of ex-praetor and then made proconsul of Achaea by Caracalla, “in violation of precedent” (παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον).[[287]](#footnote-287) Another was P. Aelius Coeranus, a former intimate of Plautianus, whom Caracalla made consul without having held any other senatorial magistracy.[[288]](#footnote-288) I have argued elsewhere that Dio’s account of these and other new men under Caracalla should be tempered by the fact that they have not left us their version of events, save for inscriptions recording their *cursus*, municipal offices, and relatives. These epigraphic texts tell a very different story from that found in Dio, revealing their desire to acquire respectability for themselves and their families.[[289]](#footnote-289) After all, Coeranus was a trailblazer in his own right, as the first Egyptian to become a member of the Senate of Rome (this had previously been forbidden by Augustus).[[290]](#footnote-290) In Dio’s work*,* this landmark moment in senatorial history is overwhelmed by the historian’s carping about inappropriate promotion. The portrayal of Dio’s senatorial rivals should remind us that his version of events is but one senator’s story, not *the* Senate’s story.[[291]](#footnote-291)

*Conclusion*

Cassius Dio approved of the return of monarchy to Rome under Augustus, and the place that the first *princeps* created for the Senate and its members in the monarchicalstate. He provided his readers with a vision of a partnership between emperor and Senate, in which the *princeps* held the upper hand, but the *curia* and its members nevertheless retained a vital and important role. Of course, Dio knew that the relationship between emperor and Senate would never be smooth or without its problems, but the key to its success was negotiation and compromise, with both parties working together for the good of the *res publica*. The collective decisions of the Senate endorsed emperors and condemned traitors, its praise and blame taken seriously as the verdict of the best men from across the empire. The ideal of Augustus’ new monarchy was that senators could still achieve individual excellence as their Republican forefathers had done, climbing the *cursus honorum* in the service of the state and being rewarded with honors and perquisites through healthy competition.

This vision did not always work in practice. Emperors might ignore the wishes of the Senate, or worse, persecute and execute its members. Individuals lacking the necessary status and breeding (in Dio’s view) could be advanced to high office at the whim of an emperor who ignored the principles laid down by Augustus. Mere survival might guarantee a man the praetorship in the third century, but that did not mean that the wrong sort of people should be allowed to advance to this point more quickly. Despite the ease with which most magisterial offices were gained, there were still numerous other honors to compete for—governorships, priesthoods, advancement to patrician status, the honor of an ordinary consulship. [[292]](#footnote-292) Competition could turn ugly, as senators gained preferment with emperors by informing on their peers, a turn of events often followed by uncompromising witch-hunts to discover those who had collaborated with tyrannical *principes*. It is a signal merit of Dio’s *Roman History* that he has provided a rich picture of the imperial Senate in all its colors, which does not shy away from its unsavoury actions. This, I would argue, was motivated by his firm belief that the Senate was not to be dismissed, but functioned as an important political arena in all periods of Roman imperial history. For it was an arena in which Dio himself competed throughout his whole life, as he watched his peers led off to execution and rivals promoted above him. During his own lifetime, Dio was usually reluctant to choose sides, surviving a seemingly endless succession of emperors until he finally achieved the great honor of a second, ordinary consulship in 229. The *Roman History* is the work of a senator who saw it all, but who only spoke out after he had played his part.[[293]](#footnote-293)

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Chapter 5: From Deconstruction to Reconstruction: Cassius Dio’s *Roman History* in Western Europe, 1421–1750

*Christopher T. Mallan*

*Introduction*

The text which we conveniently call Cassius Dio’s *Roman History* is a confection of several texts, written by different authors at different times, which have then been put together by a succession of editors from the sixteenth century onwards. Indeed, only a core of Dio’s original history survives, just over a quarter of his original eighty-book history.

The story of the reconstruction of Dio’s history is essential for our understanding of the text. It is also a story which opens up various lines of enquiry with respect to the reception of the text across different cultures and times: from medieval Byzantium, to the Italy of the Humanists, thence to the environment of Northern Europe of the Reformation, then to the European Enlightenment. It is this story of transmission and reception that this study intends to survey.

This study is bookended by two individuals: Giovanni Aurispa and Herman Samuel Reimarus. The former was the first individual known to have possessed a copy of Dio’s history in Western Europe during the Renaissance, the latter was the editor of the most ambitious edition of Dio’s *Roman History* up to that time. Both represent very different ways of approaching the text and are therefore representative of the changing ways in which readers and scholars approached classical texts during the three hundred or so years that separate the two.

By necessity, my focus is selective, and my approach is more descriptive than analytical. It is hoped that this survey will update and augment the partial catalogue of manuscripts and early printed editions of Dio compiled by the great Dutch scholar U.P. Boissevain in his *editio maior* of Dio’s *Roman History*, while suggesting further lines of inquiry in the post-Byzantine reception of Dio’s work.[[294]](#footnote-294)

Yet before we turn to the textual history of Dio in Western Europe, it is necessary to make some general comments about the fate of Dio’s *Roman History* in the Byzantine middle ages, and to introduce some of the key manuscripts and epitomes, which will play roles in this narrative that are as important as the men who copied and read them.

*Prolegomenon: The Byzantine Background*

The hundred and fifty years between the accession of Constantine VII and that of Manuel Comnenus are perhaps the most important for the textual history of Dio’s *Roman History*. This period is marked by two trends: the move to preserve Dio’s work in the tenth century, followed by the move towards the abridgement or epitomization of Dio’s history in the eleventh and twelfth.

Three of the four most important manuscripts containing the direct transmission of Dio’s history date from the tenth century: *Marcianus gr*. 395 (the “Venetian codex”), *Laurentianus Plut*. 70.8 (the “Florentine codex”), and *Parisinus* 1379A (containing the so-called “Paris fragments”).[[295]](#footnote-295) The fourth codex, *Vaticanus gr*. 1288 (late fifth century), containing books 79[78]–80[79] is not part of the medieval Byzantine tradition, but plays an important role in the reconstruction of Dio’s history from the sixteenth century onward.[[296]](#footnote-296) The Venetian codex and the Paris fragments were copied by the same hand, and are likely to be from the same copy of the *Roman History*. All three manuscripts are deluxe productions, copied onto vellum, and may be dated to the middle decades of the tenth century. Indeed, as has been indicated by Mazzucchi, the Venetian manuscript of Dio was likely to have been copied by the same scribe as the famous Ravenna codex of Aristophanes.[[297]](#footnote-297)

The tenth century also saw the production of the *Excerpta Constantiniana*, so named because it was carried out on the initiative of Constantine VII.[[298]](#footnote-298) This project saw the systematic “appropriation” (sc. οἰκείωσις) of material from almost two dozen historians to create a set of histories arranged under fifty-three thematic rubrics. In truth the project was a scholarly white-elephant. With the exception of the compilers of the *Suda*, the work had very little influence on subsequent generations of Byzantine scholars. As we shall see later in this chapter, it was only in the sixteenth and succeeding centuries that the work gained value for reasons very different from that conceived by Constantine and his excerptors.

A full copy of Dio’s history must have been very rare in this period. The cost of copying it would have further limited ownership and circulation. Less expensive paper (as opposed to vellum) codices of the *Roman History* may have been produced at this time, but if they were, they have not left any definite trace. Dio’s history was never a school text, nor was it a technical handbook, nor yet a work of theological significance. As such, Dio’s readers would have been limited to a narrow intellectual elite, concerned with history and Roman antiquities only in so far as could be used to exhibit their erudition,[[299]](#footnote-299) or as a way of casting light on their own political institutions.[[300]](#footnote-300) Such factors were inimical to the survival of the full eighty-book work.

The compositions of Xiphilinus and Zonaras were attempts to rework Dio’s history in ways that enhanced its utility for contemporary audiences.[[301]](#footnote-301) In both cases they were successful. Following the strong biographical trends of his age, it is likely that Xiphilinus was attracted to the distinct biographical content of Dio’s imperial books. Xiphilinus obliterated most of Dio’s annalistic structure and transformed his history into a series of imperial lives.[[302]](#footnote-302) Zonaras, by contrast, synthesized Dio’s work into a broader historical framework, that took in history from Creation down to the death of Alexius I Comnenus in 1118.

This is not the place to discuss either of these authors in detail, but one could argue that it was Zonaras’ *Epitome of Histories*, not Xiphilinus’ *Epitome*, that rendered Dio’s *Roman History* largely redundant. For a reader interested in history, Zonaras’ work was of far greater utility than either Dio or Xiphilinus, not least because it incorporated Jewish and Christian history into its vast chronological sweep and thus was more consistent with the Byzantine conception of their past. Unsurprisingly, the manuscripts of Zonaras far outnumber those of Dio and Xiphilinus.

In contrast to the Macedonian and Comnenan periods, the history of the transmission and reception of Dio’s *Roman History* in the period between the recovery of Constantinople by Michael VIII Palaeologus in 1261 to the fall of the city to the Turks in 1453 is one about which we know very little.[[303]](#footnote-303) The manuscript tradition offers few clues to the fate of Dio during these centuries. No manuscripts of Dio’s history survive from the period between the end of the tenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries. In fact, it is possible that the last time a full version of Dio’s history was copied was in the tenth century. Certainly, there is evidence that some books had been lost by the following century. By the third quarter of the eleventh century, portions of Dio’s imperial history were not available to Xiphilinus.[[304]](#footnote-304) By the mid-twelfth century, Zonaras found himself in much the same position, as he was unable to obtain a copy of that part of Dio’s history that followed the sackings of Carthage and Corinth in 146 BCE.[[305]](#footnote-305) As with so many texts, it is likely that books 1–35 and 61–80 were lost in the wake of the Venetian sack of Constantinople in 1204, if indeed they survived up to that point.[[306]](#footnote-306)

We do, however, have evidence of readers in this later period following the restoration of Roman (Byzantine) power in Constantinople. Two of these readers, Maximus Planudes and Nicephorus Gregoras were associated with the Chora Monastery, situated outside the walls of Constantinople.[[307]](#footnote-307) Planudes was familiar with Dio through Xiphilinus’ *Epitome*, as preserved in *Iviron* 812, a paper codex containing (aside from Xiphilinus) selections from Eutropius (in Paeanius’ translation) and John of Antioch.[[308]](#footnote-308) Gregoras, who was also the librarian at the Chora Monastery, read the texts in *Iviron* 812, but we know he also had access to Dio via *Marcianus gr*. 395, from the identification of his handwriting in the marginal notes in the codex.[[309]](#footnote-309) A third reader from this period, the astronomer John Pediasimus, made two excerpts from Xiphilinus, the first dealing with the seven planets (37.18–19), the second with Caesar’s calendar reform (43.26).[[310]](#footnote-310)

Despite this interest, it is clear that Dio was not a beneficiary of the so-called Palaeologan Revival of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The fact remains that he was little read and little used by the Byzantine intelligentsia after the twelfth century.

The last act of the history of Dio in Byzantium occurred at a time when the text was first being circulated in Italy. The 1420s produced what might be loosely termed the first “edition” of Cassius Dio, in so far as it attempted to reconcile authentic manuscript tradition with that of Dio’s epitomators. Georgios Chrysococces, who copied *Laurentianus Plut.* 70.10, utilized *Marcianus gr*. 395 as well as a copy of Xiphilinus to fill in the lacunae in the older manuscript.[[311]](#footnote-311) We may note that the sort of editorial work undertaken by Chrysococces anticipates the approaches of scholars from the sixteenth century and later. Even so, it is with Chrysococces that we leave Constantinople. Chrysococces had been a teacher at Constantinople (one of his pupils was the future Cardinal Bessarion, a man who plays an important role in our story). Chrysococces was a competent, even skilled copyist. Yet his labors were, more often than not, intended for Italian, not Byzantine patrons.[[312]](#footnote-312)

*The Fifteenth Century: Giovanni Aurispa to Giorgio Merula*

One of the Italian patrons of Chrysococces was Giovanni Aurispa. Aurispa visited Constantinople on two occasions while in the employ of the Gonzagas of Mantua. The first of these missions was in 1413, the second, and most productive (in terms of his acquisition of Greek manuscripts) between 1421 and 1423. It was after his first visit that Aurispa acquired his copy of Dio, for it is mentioned in a catalogue of his books dated 30 June 1421, compiled when he was staying at Rome.[[313]](#footnote-313) In this particular catalogue, Aurispa has the following to say about his manuscript of Dio’s *Roman History*: *Dio Nicensis omnes res Romanas centum libris descripsit, in quo sunt plurime orationes; quem qui habet Livium non desideret* (“Dio of Nicaea wrote about all the Roman affairs in one hundred books, in which there are many orations: he who has Dio would not desire Livy”).[[314]](#footnote-314) Perhaps no subsequent critic has been so positive about the quality of Dio’s speeches.[[315]](#footnote-315)

Aurispa’s interest in Dio’s speeches is important, and it points to how Aurispa and other readers of Dio would engage with Dio’s history in the fifteenth century. Yet it is also worth noting the obvious inaccuracy in Aurispa’s description of the work. Aurispa’s ‘hundred-book’ edition of Dio must be a mistake, or an exaggeration. Aurispa’s manuscript of Dio has never been identified, although a good case could be made for it being *Laurentianus Plut.* 70.10, the manuscript copied by Chrysococces. At any rate it is unlikely that Aurispa’s copy contained more than twenty-three books, as most fifteenth-century manuscripts of Dio’s work contained at best books 36–58 (i.e., 36–60).[[316]](#footnote-316)

The appearance of Dio’s *Roman History* in Italy provoked interest among Aurispa’s circle. We have part of a letter from Franciscus Barbarus from 1424 asking Aurispa for copies of Dio and Xenophon (presumably the treatise *On Horsemanship*).[[317]](#footnote-317) The interest in Dio would provide the opportunity for Aurispa to produce one of his first translations of a classical author.

Over the course of his career Aurispa showed himself to be an energetic translator. Lucian was perhaps his favorite among the ancient authors. In 1425 Aurispa translated one of Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Dead* (25 [12]), featuring Scipio, Alexander, Hannibal, and Minos.[[318]](#footnote-318) In 1429 or 1430 he produced a translation of *Toxaris, or On Friendship*. It was in the same year as Aurispa’s translation of Lucian’s *Dialogue of the Dead*, that he also excerpted and translated the Cicero-Philiscus dialogue from book 38 of the *Roman History*.[[319]](#footnote-319)

Aurispa’s decision to excerpt and render into Latin the Cicero-Philiscus dialogue requires some comment. We have already seen that Aurispa was impressed by Dio’s speeches. The dialogue is one of the few speeches in Dio that can be easily lifted from its narrative context and still function as a stand-alone piece of writing. Indeed, Aurispa’s interest in this particular speech is paralleled elsewhere. *Codex Laurentianus Plut.* 70.10, the text copied by Chrysococces, contains an excerpt of the dialogue on ff. 360v to 361.[[320]](#footnote-320) Aurispa’s translation of the Cicero-Philiscus dialogue continued to find new audiences as the fifteenth century progressed. Its subject matter (exile) and speaker (Cicero) commended it to fifteenth-century audiences. Moreover, the work continued to find readers. It is preserved in several manuscripts and was printed in Paris in 1510.

From Aurispa we may turn to a contemporary, Guarino Veronese. Like Aurispa, Guarino was a keen collector of Greek manuscripts, and had been a one-time resident in Constantinople, and was a former pupil of Chrysoloras.[[321]](#footnote-321) In a catalogue from the middle of the fifteenth century of fifty-four Greek books in his possession,[[322]](#footnote-322) Guarino notes a *Dionis historia* (no. 38) as well as *Imperatorum uitae: Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Nerva, Trajanus, Adrianus* (no. 51).[[323]](#footnote-323) The second of these is likely be an edited copy of the relevant sections of Xiphilinus’ *Epitome*.[[324]](#footnote-324) The former is seemingly a text of Dio’s history (rather than that of Xiphilinus),[[325]](#footnote-325) although, as is the case with Aurispa’s copy, the codex is now either lost or not identified. Alas, there is no indication of how many books were contained in his copy of Dio, but it would be reasonable to suppose it did not exceed the then standard twenty-three book copy of the *Roman History* mentioned above. At any rate, it is with Guarino that we see an Italian writer engage with the historical (rather than rhetorical) content of Dio’s history. In his work on Caesar, Guarino used Dio’s account for Caesar’s supposed involvement in the Catilinarian conspiracy of 63 BCE.[[326]](#footnote-326)

In the second half of the fifteenth century, Chrysococces’ one-time pupil, Basil Bessarion, played an indirect role in the reception of Dio’s *Roman History*. The value of Cardinal Bessarion’s bequest to the library of St Mark’s in Venice can scarcely be calculated—at least in cultural terms.[[327]](#footnote-327) Among the 482 Greek codices Bessarion donated to the library, two contained texts of Dio’s history.[[328]](#footnote-328) Prima facie, the first of these (n. 320) looks the more intriguing. The catalogue entry describes it as follows: *Item Dionis Romanarum historiarum a trigesimo usque ad quinquagesimum octavum librum* (“also, Dio’s *Roman History* from the thirtieth through to the fifty-eighth book”). This cannot be correct, as books 30–35 were lost long before the copying of this codex, which we may identify as the fifteenth-century *Codex Marc. gr*. 396. Like other codices of the fifteenth century, *Codex Marc. gr.* 396 contains the familiar twenty-three books, and is of limited value for the reconstruction of the text, being a copy of *Parisinus* 1689. The second entry on Bessarion’s catalogue is of far greater importance (n. 321). *Item Dionis Romanarum historiarum a quadragesimo quarto usque ad quinquagesimum nonum, in pergameno* (“also, Dio’s *Roman History* from book forty-four to book fifty-nine, on vellum”). This book is, in fact, the precious tenth-century *Marcianus gr.* 395, which is one of the two most important witnesses for Dio’s history (a fact not realized until the advent of modern textual criticism).[[329]](#footnote-329)

The other items of note from Bessarion’s inventory are copies of the works of Zonaras. Four of Bessarion’s codices contained works by Zonaras. It is likely that at least two of these are the *Epitome of Histories* (n. 326 and 337). One of these (n. 337) also contained the history of Nicetas Chroniates, which covers the period 1118–1204. This makes sense as Chroniates’ history forms a continuation of Zonaras’ *Epitome* which ends in 1118. The two other entries for Zonaras are less certain. The first (n. 319) simply states, *item cronica Zonarae, in papyro* (“also, Chronicle of Zonaras, on paper”), which may be the *Epitome*;[[330]](#footnote-330) the other (n. 341) *item Zonarae pars, in papyro* (“also, part of Zonaras, on paper”), could refer to any number of Zonaras’ works (or an excerpt from his works).

By the second half of the fifteenth century we have evidence of the works of Dio in the papal collection as well. The library of Pope Sixtus IV contained two codices of Dio,[[331]](#footnote-331) probably *Codex Vaticanus gr*. 993 and *Codex Vaticanus gr*. 144.[[332]](#footnote-332) Like Bessarion, Sixtus IV also possessed a number of copies of Zonaras’s *Epitome of Histories*. Sixtus’ papal predecessor, Paul II also possessed a codex of Dio’s history, though we do not know anything about this volume save a reference to it in a letter by Filelfo from 1469.[[333]](#footnote-333)

We have some evidence of the activities of readers and translators of Dio’s history during the second half of the fifteenth century. Politian shows familiarity with parts of Dio’s history in his *Miscellanies.* These citations include excerpts and translations of Dio’s definition of *auctoritas* (55.3.4–5 = Politian *Misc*. 2.12.2) and Dio’s digression on augury (37.24.1–25.1 = Politian *Misc*. 1.13.1).[[334]](#footnote-334) Other authors’ engagements with Dio in this period betray rhetorical rather than antiquarian preoccupations. It was under Sixtus IV that a portion of Dio’s text appeared in print.[[335]](#footnote-335) Andreas Brentius of Padua produced a loose Latin paraphrase of Caesar’s speech to the Vesontio mutineers (38.36–46), with additional material from Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico* (1.40).[[336]](#footnote-336) The work was printed at Rome *circa* 1481 and was dedicated to Sixtus IV. As with Aurispa’s Cicero-Philiscus dialogue, again we see a Humanist choose one of Dio’s speeches to replicate. It may appear odd that such a speech, with its theme of martial discipline, should be dedicated to a Pope, until that is we remember that Sixtus was embroiled in a crusade against the Turks during these years. Indeed, the southern Italian city of Otrano had fallen to the Turks in 1480 and was not recovered until 1482.

The history of the transmission and reconstruction of Dio’s *History* cannot be told without proper consideration of the transmission of Xiphilinus’ *Epitome*. In contrast to Zonaras’ *Epitome of Histories*, Xiphilinus’ work is far less visible in the works or collections of the fifteenth-century Humanists. The first known appearance in Italy of a manuscript containing a full copy of Xiphilinus’ *Epitome*, as opposed to Guarino’s selection, is c.1448, with the copy of the *Epitome* (*Vaticanus gr.* 145) made by the Cretan scholar Tribizias, a copyist in the employ of Bessarion.[[337]](#footnote-337) By the end of the century, Xiphilinus was attracting greater attention. Before the end of 1493, Bembus produced a translation of Xiphilinus’ lives of Nerva and Trajan, which was printed at Rome.[[338]](#footnote-338) Giorgio Merula produced a Latin translation of the epitomator’s lives of *Nerva*, *Trajan*, and *Hadrian*, as well as Xiphilinus’ treatment of the eruption of Vesuvius, which was then printed in 1493.[[339]](#footnote-339) Both Merula’s and Bembus’ translations must have been based on Greek texts in their possession.[[340]](#footnote-340)

Of these two translations, Merula’s would have the more interesting afterlife. Merula’s translation would be incorporated into the Venetian Johannes Baptista Egnatius’ (Giovanni Battista Cipelli) collection of (mainly) imperial lives, published by the Aldine press in 1516 then again in 1519.[[341]](#footnote-341) Egnatius’ work is itself a curiosity. Egnatius used Xiphilinus to fill in the lives of Nerva and Trajan not found in the *Historia Augusta*, and thus can be seen as a bridge between Suetonius and the *Historia Augusta*.[[342]](#footnote-342) Egnatius’ work is that of an author interested in historical or biographical detail, and as such it shows a departure from the approach of Aurispa, who, like many of his fellow Humanists, was more interested in the rhetorical treasures Dio’s history contained. There are no rhetorical treasures in Xiphilinus’ accounts of these emperors. Yet in terms of historical content, Xiphilinus’ *Epitome* far surpasses any other extant account of the reigns of Trajan, Nerva, and even Hadrian.

Symbolically, these early engagements with Dio tell an interesting story and we may discern a shift towards the imperial books. This seems to reflect general interests. By the end of the fifteenth century there is a more pronounced interest in imperial lives and imperial virtues. The *editio princeps* of Suetonius was published in 1470 at Rome, the *Historia Augusta* five years later, edited by Bonus Accursius and printed in Milan. Tacitus’ *Annales* 11–16 and *Historiae* were printed around 1470, and *Annales* 1–5(6) a little later in 1515.

By the end of the fifteenth century, interest in Dio’s work was considerably less than what it might have been had there been more Humanists like Aurispa. It is true that we have evidence of the circulation of some manuscripts of Dio’s *History*, as well as the appearance of Xiphilinus’ *Epitome*. Few appear to have shared Aurispa’s enthusiasm for Dio. Fewer still adhered to his claim that “whoever has Dio does not desire Livy”. A Greek text of Dio or Xiphilinus would have been unthinkable in this period, owing to the difficulties involved in the printing of Greek text. But unlike the works of Appian, Polybius, and Diodorus Siculus, or even Herodian, Procopius, and Agathias, there had been no concerted attempt to translate the surviving books of Dio’s *Roman History* or Xiphilinus’ *Epitome* in extenso.[[343]](#footnote-343) No doubt this was due, in part, to the daunting length of the texts of Dio and Xiphilinus, rather than in the difficulties posed by Dio’s Greek. Even in its lacerated or abridged form, the text was considerably longer than those of the aforementioned authors.

*The Sixteenth Century: Towards an Edition of Cassius Dio, 1526–1600*

In a letter from Marcus Musurus to Grolier dated 1515, Musurus put forward a list of authors and works he believed needed to be printed in order to ensure their survival. Among the authors named by Musurus was Dio.[[344]](#footnote-344) Musurus’ wish would not be immediately fulfilled. Nor would the work be carried out by the Aldine press, a firm with whom Musurus was closely connected. The *editio princeps* of Dio would not appear until 1548, and Xiphilinus’ *Epitome* three years later in 1551. Neither of these editions was published in Venice; rather, they were published in Paris under the direction of Robertus Stephanus (Robert Estienne). Yet before we turn from Italy to France, we must note one final contribution from an Italian scholar nurtured in the environment of the quattrocento, Nicolò Leoniceno (1428–1524).

Leoniceno possessed one of the more versatile minds of his generation.[[345]](#footnote-345) A man with a keen interest in medicine, mathematics, and philosophy, Leoniceno taught at Ferrara for some sixty years where he met Erasmus.[[346]](#footnote-346) Leoniceno was also involved with the Aldine press, and he helped with the production of editions of Greek authors including Galen, Aristotle, and Theophrastus.[[347]](#footnote-347) Importantly for our story, Leoniceno possessed a significant collection of manuscripts of Greek authors, including Cassius Dio. Leoniceno was an active translator, especially in the last decade of his life. Latin translations of Greek medical texts (Galen and Hippocrates), astronomy (Ptolemy), were followed by translation into the vernacular of some of Lucian’s dialogues, and finally Cassius Dio. Leoniceno’s Dio appeared in print only posthumously, but it ran through several printings, first in 1526, then again in 1533 and 1542. It was also rendered into French by Claude Deroziers. It was a significant work, not least because it represented the first full translation of the extant “twenty-three” books of Dio’s *Roman History*.

It was in Paris where Musurus’ wish for an edition of Dio was fulfilled. The appearance of a printed edition of Dio’s Greek text at this time is consistent with a movement which saw the printing of the major works of post-Classical Greek historiography. The Greek text of Polybius appeared for the first time in 1530, Diodorus in 1539, Josephus in 1544, Eusebius in 1544, Dionysius of Halicarnassus in 1546–7, and Appian in 1551. These editions, it must be said, came almost a generation after the editions of the triumvirate of Classical Greek historians, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon’s *Hellenica* (1502, 1502, 1503) and of course the ubiquitous Plutarch (*Lives* 1517, *Moralia* 1509), which were all printed in Venice.[[348]](#footnote-348)

The publication of the post-Classical Greek historians was conducted outside of Italy, and is representative of the shift in the center of scholarly gravity from Italy to central and northern Europe. Indeed, of the major authors awaiting *editiones principes*, only Arrian (*Anabasis*) was published in Venice (1533). Polybius and Diodorus were printed at Haguenau under the auspices of Johann Setzer; Josephus was printed at Basel, and Eusebius, Dionysius, and Dio in Paris by Robertus Stephanus, and Appian also in Paris by Robert’s brother, Charles.

Stephanus’ edition was based on one codex, *Codex Parisinus gr*. 1689, a fifteenth-century descendant of the tenth-century *Codex Laurentianus* 70.8, containing the familiar twenty-three-book copy of Dio’s history.[[349]](#footnote-349) As would be expected, Stephanus notes in the introduction the incomplete nature of the text, and cites *Sudias* (sic) as his authority for the original eighty-book work. Stephanus was also fully aware of the problem of the lacuna at the start of book 36.[[350]](#footnote-350)

1551 saw the appearance of Stephanus’ edition of Xiphilinus, with an accompanying Latin translation by Guillaume le Blanc. The work was dedicated to the Cardinal, and insatiable busybody, Georges d’Armagnac. The work on Xiphilinus was made easier by the input of le Blanc, the sometime assistant to d’Armagnac, who had found two manuscripts of Xiphilinus’ *Epitome* while accompanying the Cardinal to Rome.[[351]](#footnote-351) A copy of Xiphilinus was made for the cardinal by a certain Christopher Auer in 1548 at Rome, as we know from a *subscriptio* from the codex.[[352]](#footnote-352)

The third great development in the history of the text of Dio also took place in the 1550s. Hieronymus Wolf, “the founder of modern Byzantine scholarship”,[[353]](#footnote-353) produced a text and Latin translation of Zonaras’ *Epitome of Histories* in 1557, while he was in the employ of the Fuggers of Augsburg.[[354]](#footnote-354) Wolf’s Zonaras was printed in Basel by Johannes Opornius. At the time, Zonaras’ value lay in the breadth of his narrative, that is, Zonaras’ incorporation of Jewish, Roman, and Christian material from the Creation to the twelfth century. The impact of Wolf’s labors was almost immediately apparent: translations into Italian and French followed in 1560.

By the end of the 1550s scholars had the basic materials at hand to produce what we would think of as a modern edition of the *Roman History*. The publication of Greek texts of Dio and Xiphilinus represents the moment when it became possible to create a restored edition of Dio’s *Roman History*. The value of Zonaras’ history for the reconstruction of Dio’s lost narrative was not immediately apparent to scholars of Wolf’s generation. Indeed, it was only with the publication of the *Excerpta Constantiniana*, and developments in nineteenth-century *Quellenforschung* that Zonaras’ dependence on Dio for his early narrative of Roman history would become clearer.[[355]](#footnote-355)

The combination of the texts of Xiphilinus and Dio resulted in the edition of Xylander (William Holtzmann) in 1558, which, like Wolf’s Zonaras, was printed by Opornius in Basel. Wolf and Xylander were friends, and had worked together in Augsburg, where Xylander also entered the orbit of the Fuggers.[[356]](#footnote-356) Xylander’s Latin translation was based on Stephanus’ Greek edition of 1548. It took him just seven months to complete.[[357]](#footnote-357)

By any estimation, 1558 was Xylander’s *annus mirabilis*. It was in that year that he was appointed Librarian and Professor of Greek at Heidelberg, and when he would complete his translation of Marcus Aurelius which appeared in the edition prepared and printed by Conrad Gesner in 1559.[[358]](#footnote-358) As is clear from his works on Marcus Aurelius and Xiphilinus, Xylander’s brand of scholarship combined translation with (often) acute textual criticism. For his edition of Dio from 1558, he appended to his work le Blanc’s complete translation of Xiphilinus and his own annotations. Xylander’s critical notes to Dio represent an important contribution to Dio-studies. Xylander is the first editor to take proper account of the lacunae between books 57 and 58 and books 59 and 60, and to produce an edition of Dio in twenty-five books, rather than twenty-three. Xiphilinus was used to fill the gaps in the text of Dio for books 36–60, a fate to which Xiphilinus has been consigned almost ever since.

At the end of the century, Xylander’s translation (and critical notes) would make a reappearance in an edition printed by Robert Stephanus’ son, Henricus Stephanus (Henri Estienne) in 1591. The edition is important for a number of reasons, not least because of its contribution to the history of the English stage. Stephanus’ Dio was the edition used by Ben Jonson in controversial play, *Sejanus: his fall*, first performed in 1603, and first printed in 1605.[[359]](#footnote-359) This is made explicit in Jonson’s own preface to the first printed edition.[[360]](#footnote-360) Most of Jonson’s material for *Sejanus* is derived from Tacitus, with the exception of the scene of Sejanus’ denunciation in the Senate where Jonson adapts and elaborates on Dio’s already dramatic testimony.

*Interlude: The Recovery of the Excerpta Constantiniana*

Portions of Dio’s history appear in only three of the four surviving collections of the Constantinian *Excerpta*: *De Legationibus* (“Concerning Embassies”), *De Sententiis* (“Concerning Maxims”), and *De Virtutibus et Vitiis* (“Concerning Virtues and Vices”).[[361]](#footnote-361) The first portion of the *Excerpta Constantiniana* to be published appeared in 1582 (*Excerpta Ursiniana*), containing the *De Legationibus*. Fulvio Orsini had obtained a copy of *Scorialensis B.I.4* (Θ.1.4), a codex from which all copies of the *De Legationibus* are derived.[[362]](#footnote-362) The Escorial manuscript had been in the possession on Juan Paez de Castro whose collection passed into the hands of the Escorial library upon his death in 1570.[[363]](#footnote-363) The first mention of the codex is in 1573 in a letter from the Archbishop of Tarragona, Antonius Augustinus (Antonio Agustín), who mentions that he is having a copy made by Damarius.[[364]](#footnote-364) Augustinus, in 1574, sent an abridged copy (also made by Darmarius) to his friend Fulvio Orsini,[[365]](#footnote-365) which then formed the basis of his 1582 edition of the *De Legationibus*.[[366]](#footnote-366)

Orsini is important to our story for another reason. Orsini owned the precious late-fifth-century manuscript of Dio’s history (*Vaticanus gr.* 1288), which contains a continuous fragment from books 79[78]–80[79]. Orisini appended an edited text of this fragment to his edition of the *De Legationibus*.

The publication of the two other parts of the *Excerpta* containing portions of Dio’s history belong to the following centuries. The *Excerpta de Virtutibus et Vitiis* came to the attention of scholars in 1627 but was not published until 1634. The work was obtained in Cyprus for Seigneur de Peiresc, Nicolas-Claude de Fabri, and was edited for publication by Henricus Valesius (Henri Valois)—hence its occasional designation as the *Excerpta Valesiana*. The *Excerpta de Sententiis* was not recovered until the nineteenth century when the text was discovered in a palimpsest by Cardinal Mai (*Vaticanus gr.* 73). Alas, as was also the case with Mai’s recovery of the *Letters* of M. Cornelius Fronto, his use of chemical reagents rendered many leaves of the manuscript illegible to the naked eye. It is only now with the advent of multispectral imaging technology that the codex can again be read. At any rate, Mai’s text was published in 1827.

*Leunclavius to Reimarus*

The work of Leunclavius (Johannes Löwenklau) marks an important point in the textual history of Dio’s work. Given its impact, its significance is on a par with the *editio princeps* of Robert Stephanus. Leunclavius was a powerful scholar, known most of all for his juristic and orientalist interests. His *Historiae Musulmanae Turcorum de monumentis ipsorum exscriptae* (“Muslim Histories of the Turks, written from their own monuments”) appeared in 1591, a generally remarkable work of scholarship, which attempted to make sense of the power wielded by the Turks.[[367]](#footnote-367) What made the work remarkable was Leunclavius’ willingness to engage with Turkish sources.

Leunclavius was well equipped to tackle Dio. He was by no means a philological novice. He had produced an edition of Zosimus in 1576, as well as various Byzantine texts.[[368]](#footnote-368) Leunclavius’ *Dio* first appeared in 1592 and then in a second, augmented edition printed posthumously in 1606. Like any good editor, Leunclavius made full use of the resources available to him: Orsini’s text of the *De Legationibus* and his transcription of *Vaticanus gr.* 1288, in addition to the texts of Xiphilinus and Dio.

The edition of 1592 comprises a translation of Dio, based on the editions of Dio and Xiphilinus by Stephanus, which is followed by Greek texts of the *De Legationibus*, and critical notes. Not only did Leunclavius use Xiphilinus to fill the gaps in Dio, but he also used the *De Legationibus* to augment his text of Xiphilinus, and to supply material from the early books of Dio’s work. There is an impressive precision to the way Leunclavius dealt with his various authorities. He is careful to note the provenance of each passage: “Dionis, e Xiphilino” or “Dionis, e Theodosio”, the latter referring to Theodosius the Younger (or the “Small”), the compiler of the *De Legationibus*.

The work of Leunclavius is important for another reason. Although it may be more accurate to describe Leunclavius, like his older contemporary and acquaintance, Xylander,[[369]](#footnote-369) as a translator rather than editor of Dio, it is also true that his work shows considerable editorial activity. Leunclavius attempted to reconstitute the eighty-book format of Dio’s original history. His efforts are confined to books 61–80, but the early material (what he saw as books 1–34) he placed in chronological order. Leunclavius even equipped each book with paratextual material in the form of indices, similar to those which appear in the manuscripts of Dio’s history. Yet in respect of the book divisions, Leunclavius’ work has left a lasting impression, as his book numbering has been retained in all subsequent editions—much to the confusion of the unwary reader of Boissevain’s *editio maior* or Cary’s Loeb.[[370]](#footnote-370) We may note that this impulse to reassign material to their original places in Dio’s history may be seen in one of Leunclavius’ earlier works. In 1575, Leunclavius produced an edition and translation of the tenth-century *Synopsis Basilicorum Maior*, yet rearranged the work so that it conformed to the book divisions of its source text, the *Basilica* of Leo the Wise.[[371]](#footnote-371) Similarly, this sort of editorial flair can be seen in Leunclavius’ last great work (not counting the 1606 bi-lingual edition of Dio), the posthumously published *Ius Graeco-Romanum* (1596), where he attempted to reconstitute a putative *Liber Leonis et Constantini* from material from other texts.

Save for the publication of the *Excerpta de Virtutibus et Vitiis* by Valesius in 1634 and the second edition of Leunclavius’ work in 1606, the seventeenth century saw no substantial new edition history of Dio’s *Roman History*. The final phase of this story takes place in the eighteenth century. It is essentially the story of the triumph of a particular editorial approach to Dio.

At the turn of the eighteenth century, all editions and translations of Dio were still essentially based on Stephanus’ *editio princeps* of 1548. However, if scholars were to follow the lead of Leunclavius, it was now necessary to incorporate the material from the *Excerpta de Virtutibus et Vitiis*. New readings, and conjectures had also been proposed in the latter part of the seventeenth century by the likes of Gronovius and Palmerius.[[372]](#footnote-372) These too needed to be taken into consideration for any future edition of Dio’s history. By the opening decades of the eighteenth century there had been positive movements towards this goal, with various new editorial projects underway or at least announced in learned periodicals.[[373]](#footnote-373)

We may note the rare intrusion of two Englishmen into the Continental world of Dio scholarship during this period. Francis Manning produced a translation of Xiphilinus into English in 1704—a work, it must be said, closer to a prize essay, than an enduring monument to scholarship.[[374]](#footnote-374)

In that same decade, we hear of a certain Obadiah Oddy who was preparing an edition of Dio. Oddy’s work is something of a mystery. In a letter dated 10 April 1708 addressed to a friend, the Oxford antiquary and sometime Assistant Keeper of the Bodleian Library, Thomas Hearne, Oddy remarks that his edition of Dio was almost complete, save the index.[[375]](#footnote-375) Confusingly, a year later, in 1709, we have another letter from Oddy to Hearne, stating that he was intending to collate three manuscripts of Dio—the Florentine (presumably *Laurentianus Plut*. 70.8), the Neapolitan (unidentified) and the Vatican (perhaps either *Vaticanus gr.* 144 or *Vaticanus gr*. 993).[[376]](#footnote-376) Another letter (not dated) asks Hearne whether rumors of an edition of Dio produced by “a gentleman of Lincoln College” were true.[[377]](#footnote-377) Seemingly they were not, as no edition emerged from that college or any other. Disaster seems to have then intervened before Oddy’s labors concluded. In another letter to Hearne dated 15 February 1711/2, Oddy seems to imply that his manuscript of Dio was destroyed by brigands.[[378]](#footnote-378) It is unclear whether Oddy was ever able to resume his work on Dio, but at any rate by 1714 he seems to have lost interest in Dio and had turned his attention first to the *Greek Anthology*, then to Appian and Apollonius.[[379]](#footnote-379) As with Oddy’s unfinished Dio, it appears that nothing came about from his work on Appian and Apollonius. Indeed, it was probably in that year that Oddy committed suicide in London by throwing himself from a window.[[380]](#footnote-380) What we do have from Oddy’s labors are three notebooks containing a few passages from Dio and notes on topics pertaining to Roman history which are currently preserved in the British Library.[[381]](#footnote-381) Notwithstanding the evidence from his notebooks, it is almost impossible to assess Oddy as a scholar. Yet we may guess from his willingness to track down manuscripts of Dio that he was a “modern” when it came to the Battle of the Books. Indeed, Oddy was a disciple of Bentley.

Yet meaningful contributions to Dio scholarship would take place, not in Oxford or in England, but on the Continent. The last act in this brief overview is the edition of Herman Samuel Reimarus.

Like Leunclavius before him, Reimarus was a scholarly all-rounder. Reimarus was based in Hamburg, where he was Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages at the Hamburg Gymnasium. For many years a student then a collaborator with his father-in-law, Farbricius, Reimarus was one of the new generation of hard-headed textual critics. Reimarus’ approach was ultimately much influenced by the methods of Bentley. Like the ill-starred Oddy, Reimarus attempted to collate some of the more important copies, including codices from the Vatican (*Vaticanus gr*. 144, *Vaticanus gr*. 993) and the Laurentian library (*Laurentianus* 70.8 and 70.10).[[382]](#footnote-382) In this light it is interesting that he tried to obtain Oddy’s notes on Cassius Dio from the physician Richard Mead, who was also an intimate of Bentley. At any rate, Reimarus’ request was successful, and the *apparatus criticus* to his edition records his adoption of several of Oddy’s conjectures.[[383]](#footnote-383)

This is not the place to assess the merits of Reimarus’ edition.[[384]](#footnote-384) Although it would not be until the nineteenth century that scholars had all of the tools at their disposal to reconstruct Dio’s *Roman History*, Reimarus’ approach to the text would set the tone for what a critical edition of Dio should look like.[[385]](#footnote-385) The other important feature of his work is the nature of his notes. Reimarus’ commentary on the text reveals an editor interested in the historical details. His approach is less about using Dio to explain Roman history, than using his knowledge of Roman history to explain Dio’s text. In this, Reimarus may be regarded as the grandfather of many of Dio’stwentieth-century commentators.

*Conclusion*

This history of the transmission of the *Roman History* presents us with a history of scholarship in microcosm. The re-emergence of Cassius Dio in Western Europe in the fifteenth century continued the Byzantine mode of reading Dio, where Dio’s Humanist readers produced excerpts from the text of memorable or edifying passages. Translations of the text during this period were rare, but those which were made revealed the Humanists’ interest in both the rhetorical aspects of Dio’s work as well as the historical content.

The sixteenth century represents a watershed in the scholarly approach to the text of Dio’s history. No longer was the approach one of appropriation and excerption. Rather, the focus of scholars was now increasingly directed towards the reconstruction of the lacunose *Roman History*. The function of other texts also changed at this time. From the publication of Orsini’s edition of the *De Legationibus* it was almost universally (if tacitly) recognized that the primary value of the *Excerpta* lay in the fact that it provided access to lost or incomplete texts, of which Dio’s *Roman History* was one. This was very different from the original intentions of the tenth-century excerptors. But it was also very different from the aims of men such as Aurispa and Andreas Brentius who were content to excerpt passages from Dio that were congenial to their own literary rather than historical agendas. The main challenge facing scholars was that of reassembling the various pieces of the textual puzzle that was Dio’s history.

If the history of the transmission of Dio’s *Roman History* tells us one thing it is that the text never was static. Scholars have periodically transformed the text in some way, whether by translating it, excerpting it, summarizing it, or reassembling it. Yet we may wonder whether the tide is turning against the impulse to reconstruct the text, or indeed, for scholars to accept a reconstituted text. Editorial practices change, and the goal of producing something which represents a simulacrum of the original is less desirable than it was last century. As scholarship is taking more interest in the production of epitomes or florilegia, the various agendas which lie behind the creation of such texts, and the internal rhetoric or logic of such texts, a reconstructed Dio is now a less obvious goal for future textual critics. It is yet to be seen how the editors of the ongoing Budé edition of Dio’s history will tackle the fragmentary books, but it is not inconceivable that future editors of Dio will choose to reassert or even embrace the fragmentary nature of the text. Whatever course may be taken, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that by knitting together the various strands of the diverse Dionian tradition to meet the needs of the modern historian, the works of post-Renaissance editors have transformed Dio’s *Roman* *History* in ways just as profound as those medieval epitomators and excerptors who had sought to refashion it to meet the needs of their age.[[386]](#footnote-386)

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Chapter 6: Cassius Dio in Gibbon

*Josiah Osgood*

In surveys of the history of the Roman Principate, the year 180 CE is often seen as a turning point. A clear instance is Cary and Scullard’s classic textbook, *A History of Rome* (third ed., 1975). It marks the divide by allocating two chapters to “The ‘Five Good Emperors’” (chapters 37 and 38, covering respectively general administration and external affairs) and a subsequent one to “Commodus and the Severi” (chapter 40).[[387]](#footnote-387) Colin Wells ends his *The Roman Empire* with a chapter entitled “The Age of Transition: Commodus to Maximinus the Thracian” (second ed., 1992). And more recently, David Potter’s illuminating survey *The Roman Empire at Bay,* part of the Routledge History of the Ancient World, takes as its dates 180–395 CE (second ed., 2014).

It is doubtless Edward Gibbon, among modern writers, who is most responsible for making the death of Marcus Aurelius and the accession of his son Commodus so significant a moment. Not only did Gibbon select this as the starting point for his narrative of the Roman empire’s decline and fall. He entrenched it in what must be his most memorable sentence: “If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus”.[[388]](#footnote-388)

Intriguingly, so far as I know, Gibbon never actually quotes Cassius Dio’s famous pronouncement on reaching the death of Marcus: “For our history now descends from a kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust, as affairs did for the Romans of that day” (72[71].36.4 [Xiph.]: ἐς σιδηρᾶν καὶ κατιωμένην τῶν τε πραγμάτων τοῖς τότε Ῥωμαίοις καὶ ἡμῖν νῦν καταπεσούσης τῆς ἱστορίας).[[389]](#footnote-389) Yet, as I shall show in this chapter, Dio’s *History*—as reconstructed in the brilliant edition of Hermann Samuel Reimarus—was a source frequently consulted by Gibbon and it influenced his thinking significantly, even though he ultimately passes a very harsh verdict on Dio. Indeed, rather surprisingly, Dio emerges in Gibbon’s account not just as a witness to decline and fall, but one of its architects.

More work needs to be done to assessing just how influential Dio has been on modern understandings of the whole shape of Roman history. More work also needs to be done studying Gibbon’s use of ancient sources and modern editions of them. This chapter aims to make steps in both these directions. It also offers readers the pleasure of seeing Gibbon, a highly creative historian with immense literary talent, confronting his great predecessor, as each tries to evoke, and explain, the years after 180 CE, when relations between the emperor and senators grew badly frayed.

*Dio as a Source for Gibbon*

Gibbon made extensive use of Cassius Dio’s *Roman History* in writing *Decline and Fall*. Dio is cited around 170 times in the footnotes, with particular frequency in chapters 4–6—the narrative of the history of emperors from Commodus onwards that follows the opening survey of the age of the Antonines. Chapters 4–6 is, therefore, where our analysis begins.

As the footnotes make clear, while Gibbon relied on modern scholarship, including Wotton’s *History of Rome* published in 1701 and Tillemont’s *Histoire des empereurs* first published in 1707, he made his own study of the three principal sources for the period from 180 to 235 CE: the *Historia Augusta,* Herodian, and Dio.[[390]](#footnote-390) All are regularly cited, often in footnotes with a bare reference to one, two, or all three at once.[[391]](#footnote-391) Of course, as elsewhere in *Decline and Fall*, Gibbon is not afraid to interject his comments on these sources or other opinions, as for instance in this note: “Commodus killed a camelopardalis or Giraffe (Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1211), the tallest, the most gentle, and the most useless of the large quadrupeds”.[[392]](#footnote-392)

A major goal of Gibbon in this part of his *History* was to produce a fluent narrative, with memorable scenes. A good example is the account of the first night Didius Julianus spent in the palace after usurping power: “[a] magnificent feast was prepared by his order, and he amused himself till a very late hour…[y]et it was observed, that after the crowd of flatterers dispersed, and left him to darkness, solitude, and terrible reflection, he passed a sleepless night”.[[393]](#footnote-393) The relevant footnote cites Dio and the *Historia Augusta* and then states: “I have endeavoured to blend into one consistent story the seeming contradictions of the two writers”.[[394]](#footnote-394) In general, this is a fair description of Gibbon’s procedure in chapters 4–6. There are plenty of moments where he simply blends the sources together to create a smooth account.[[395]](#footnote-395) At the same time, he also occasionally uses one source without feeling a need to compare it critically to others. A good example of this occurs at the beginning of chapter 4, where Gibbon is discussing Marcus’ indulgence of his wife Faustina: “The grave simplicity of the philosopher was ill-calculated to engage her wanton levity, or to fix that unbounded passion for variety, which often discovered personal merit in the meanest of mankind”.[[396]](#footnote-396) The source is the *Historia Augusta,* quoted, as often with this source, in Latin: *Faustinam satis constat apud Cayetam conditiones sibi et nauticas et gladiatorias, elegisse*.[[397]](#footnote-397) To be fair, Gibbon does later cite the contradictory evidence of the *Meditations,* but dismisses it, writing in a particularly arch footnote: “The world has laughed at the credulity of Marcus; but Madam Dacier assures us (and we may credit a lady), that the husband will always be deceived, if the wife condescends to dissemble.”[[398]](#footnote-398)

It has been argued that Gibbon was not so exacting in his use of sources as even some of his scholarly contemporaries were, much less his modern peers.[[399]](#footnote-399) But in fact, for all the blending, we do often see him trying to weigh one source against another in his notes.[[400]](#footnote-400) To Gibbon’s credit, he constantly sees problems with the various lives of the *Historia Augusta* in particular, which he of course assumed were written by a series of authors (rather than, as modern research has shown, one impersonator). Sometimes he simply thinks the biographer has unthoughtfully reproduced gossip or is careless.[[401]](#footnote-401) But here is a footnote that reflects a deeper, and very sound, judgment on the source as a whole:

Spartianus, in his undigested collections, mixes up all the virtues and all the vices that enter into the human composition, and bestows them on the same object. Such, indeed, are many of the characters in the Augustan History.[[402]](#footnote-402)

And here is Gibbon’s keen assessment of the sources for Alexander Severus:

The life of Alexander, in the Augustan History, is the mere idea of a perfect prince, an awkward imitation of the Cyropaedia. The account of his reign, as given by Herodian, is rational and moderate, consistent with the general history of the age; and, in some of the most invidious particulars, confirmed by the decisive fragments of Dion.[[403]](#footnote-403)

Gibbon values Dio for the evidence he provides that Alexander was fundamentally weak, dominated by his mother Mammaea, a woman of “manly ambition.”[[404]](#footnote-404) Gibbon especially values Dio for information on the slaughter of Ulpian by the Praetorian Guards, concealed by the author of the *Historia Augusta,* “as it might discover a weakness in the administration of his hero”.[[405]](#footnote-405)

A number of times, Gibbon recognizes Dio’s account as more valuable, and two main reasons for this are given. First, Dio strikes Gibbon as less rhetorical, as he notes here: “Dion gives a much less odious character of Perennis, than the other historians. His moderation is almost a pledge of his veracity”.[[406]](#footnote-406) Throughout *Decline and Fall,* Gibbon criticizes historians who are too “rhetorical”, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Lactantius, and Zosimus. He is especially suspicious of “Greek rhetoric”. Rhetoricians exaggerate, even make things up.[[407]](#footnote-407) While Gibbon values Herodian far more than the *Historia Augusta*, he does see Herodian as somewhat prone to this fault. Herodian is, at one point, dismissed as a “grammarian of Alexandria”.[[408]](#footnote-408)

This points to Dio’s second strength in Gibbon’s eyes: Dio was a senator. This could sometimes lead to bias. For instance, in a discussion of Pertinax’ funeral, Gibbon notes: “Dion, who assisted at the ceremony as a senator, gives a most pompous description of it”.[[409]](#footnote-409) But overall Dio’s status conferred on him a privileged vantage point that should command respect. Commenting on the ridicule heaped on Pertinax’ frugal entertainments by those “who remembered and regretted the luxurious prodigality of Commodus”, Gibbon then adds a footnote: “Dion... speaks of these entertainments, as a senator who had supped with the emperor. Capitolinus…like a slave, who had received his intelligence from one of the scullions”.[[410]](#footnote-410)

Gibbon clearly prefers the perspective of Dio, who remarks on the modesty of Pertinax’ hospitality: “For this the wealthy and vainglorious made great sport of him; but the rest of us, who valued virtue above licentiousness, approved his course” (74[73].3.4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]: καὶ αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τούτῳ οἱ μὲν πλούσιοι καὶ μεγάλαυχοι διεγέλων, οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι, οἷς ἀρετὴ ἀσελγείας προτιμοτέρα ἦν, ἐπῃνοῦμεν). Dio has a discernment almost totally lacking in the biographies of the *Historia Augusta*.

We shall return to Gibbon’s portrayal of Dio more fully later. First, we should say more about his actual citations of Dio. I said that Gibbon cites Dio about 170 times, but it is more precise to say that Gibbon is actually citing Hermann Samuel Reimarus’ two-volume edition of Dio published in 1750 and 1752, a scholarly masterpiece that took almost fifteen years of continuous labor to produce.[[411]](#footnote-411) When referring to Dio, Gibbon always uses page numbers from this work, and he sometimes mentions notes by “Reymar” or the like. Reimarus, indeed, gets the first footnote in the whole work. Discussing, in chapter 1, Augustus’ moderation, Gibbon refers to “the honorable” treaty by which Augustus regained “the standards and prisoners” taken by Parthia when Crassus was defeated. The pertinent note reads:

Dion Cassius (l. Liv. p. 736.), with the annotations of Reymar, who has collected all that Roman vanity has left upon the subject. The marble of Ancyra, on which Augustus recorded his own exploits, asserts that *he compelled* the Parthians to restore the ensigns of Crassus.[[412]](#footnote-412)

Clearly Gibbon is glad to have Dio’s realistic assessment of Augustus’ great “victory” and he especially appreciates Reimarus’ comparison with the more boastful account in the *Res Gestae*. It is worth noting here, in passing, that Gibbon read widely across Dio’s imperial books via Reimarus. Gibbon cites many passages of Dio’s narration covering events prior to Commodus—even, sometimes, as background information within chapters 4–6.[[413]](#footnote-413)

Much more comfortable in reading Latin than Greek, Gibbon heavily relied on the Latin translation in Reimarus’ edition. This can be demonstrated by the way Gibbon sometimes transmogrifies Reimarus’ Latin into English. A striking example occurs in Gibbon’s remarks on Elagabalus’ unfortunate habits of cross-dressing and distributing “the principal dignities of the empire…among his numerous lovers”.[[414]](#footnote-414) One of these lovers “was publicly invested with the title and authority of the emperor’s, or, as he more properly styled himself, the empress’s husband”. Gibbon then adds in a footnote:

Hierocles enjoyed that honour; but he would have been supplanted by one Zoticus, had he not contrived, by a potion, to enervate the powers of his rival, who being found on trial unequal to his reputation, was driven with ignominy from the palace.[[415]](#footnote-415)

Compare this with Reimarus’ Latin:

*At vero Hierocles veritus, ne plus, quam ipse fecisset, illum sibi Zoticus manciparet; neve sibi per eum, ut fit inter rivales, gravius aliquid accideret; data per pincernas, quos habebat amicos, potione, vires ejus enervavit. Itaque illum, quum non potuisset arrigere tota nocte, privatus est iis rebus omnibus, quas antea fuerat consecutus, ejusque e Palatio, & Roma, post etiam ex coetera Italia expulsus est.*[[416]](#footnote-416) (emphasis mine)

Another example comes with Gibbon’s assessment of Commodus:

Nature had formed him of a weak, rather than a wicked disposition. His simplicity and timidity rendered him the slave of his attendants, who gradually corrupted his mind. His cruelty, which at first obeyed the dictates of others, degenerated into habit, and at length became the ruling passion of the soul.[[417]](#footnote-417)

*Commodus minime vafer a natura erat, sed ita simplex ut qui maxime. Ob nimiam vero simplicitatem, and timiditatem, serviebat iis, cum quibus versabatur: ab iisque inductus in errorem, ignorantia primo meliorum in malam consuetudinem, post ad flagitiosam, & cruentam indolem profectus fuit.*[[418]](#footnote-418)

A final point to be made here is that Gibbon paid some attention to Reimarus’ reconstitution of Dio’s text. Among other signs of this is the note on Julia Domna’s suicide after the death of Caracalla: Gibbon cites Dio but then writes: “The abridgment of Xiphilin, though less particular, is in this place clearer than the original”.[[419]](#footnote-419) In fact, Xiphilinus’ account (as opposed to the lacunose manuscript of Dio) is really not so critical to what Gibbon writes here, but Gibbon has read, and to a degree reproduces, a specific note of Reimarus that includes an extract from Xiphilinus, with this explanation: *Quoniam lacera haec vix integrari poterunt, Xiphilini breviora, sed cohaerentia tamen dabo.*[[420]](#footnote-420)

Xiphilinus plays a small but important part in Gibbon’s account of the relations between the Christians and the Roman government in chapter 16. There Gibbon points out how little Christians figure in even the most detailed “of the Pagan writers” and then includes in a note: “nor has the diligence of Xiphilin discovered their name in the large history of Dion Cassius”.[[421]](#footnote-421) Later in the chapter, though, Gibbon does rather mischievously note the support that Commodus’ concubine Marcia allegedly gave the Christians, and he supplies a footnote: “Dion Cassius or rather his abbreviator Xiphilin, l. lxxii. p. 1206”.[[422]](#footnote-422) This note figured in the controversy that erupted following publication of book 1 of *Decline and Fall*. Gibbon’s critic Henry Edwards Davis claimed that Gibbon failed to include any mention of Dio’s reference to Marcia in *Decline and Fall*, and so the claim of footnote 24 in chapter 16 was inaccurate. Gibbon gave an excoriating response in his *Vindication*. He had included the reference “in its proper place” (that is, footnote 107).[[423]](#footnote-423) What is far worse, Davis, in quoting Gibbon, failed to include the important words *or rather his abbreviator Xiphilin*. Gibbon is triumphant:

The reference is fairly made and cautiously qualified: I am already secure from the imputations of fraud or inconsistency; and the opinion which attributes the last-mentioned passage to the Abbreviator, rather than to the original Historian, may be supported by the most unexceptionable authorities. I shall protect myself by those of Reimar (in his Edition of Dion Cassius, tom ii. p. 1207 note 34.), and of Dr. Lardner.[[424]](#footnote-424)

Indeed, Reimarus had sagely commented *Haec de Marcia Christianis favente, non Dionis esse, sed Xiphilini, suspicor* and then supplied several good arguments for this view. The skepticism of Reimarus—who would later go on to produce critical research on the history of early Christianity—held deep appeal for Gibbon. Whether commenting on Augustus or on Christianity, Reimarus showed a keen critical ability and independence of mind.[[425]](#footnote-425)

*Differences in Interpretation*

While Gibbon consulted the major sources for political history from Commodus onwards and often cites them simply for their piquant details, he is selective. Some themes interest him more than others. One of Gibbon’s major preoccupations is civil war.[[426]](#footnote-426) In chapter 5, he makes the interesting decision not to give a “minute narrative” of the civil wars that brought Septimius Severus to power; rather “as the two civil wars against Niger and against Albinus, were almost the same in their conduct, event, and consequences, I shall collect into one point of view, the most striking consequences”.[[427]](#footnote-427) This is a clear divergence in approach from Herodian and Dio and even the *Historia Augusta*. It allows Gibbon to tighten his narrative, thus sparing readers from details he clearly found of little interest.[[428]](#footnote-428) What is even more important, it also allows him to be both more theoretical and analytical.

In lieu of a detailed military history, Gibbon first offers a rather Machiavellian defense of the greater permissibility of “falsehood and insincerity” in public, as opposed to private, life. That point granted, “…the arts of Severus cannot be justified by the most ample privileges of state reason”.[[429]](#footnote-429) And yet, Severus’ “arts as well as arms” were effective, and there is a hard lesson in the fate of the “too credulous Albinus”.[[430]](#footnote-430) Gibbon then goes on to argue that “the military labours of Severus seem inadequate to the importance of his conquests”—in other words, his victories were too easy.[[431]](#footnote-431) That perception, in turn, prompts Gibbon to cite some reflections from Montesquieu (in his *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur et la décadence des romains*) on the greater ferocity and perseverance of civil wars in modern Europe; Romans “combated only for the choice of masters”, not (say) religion, and soldiers joined mainly to enrich themselves and easily deserted a losing side.[[432]](#footnote-432) Montesquieu’s comments were made in reference to the civil wars of the 40s and 30s BCE, in a section of his work where he cites Dio several times. It is hard not to think that Montesquieu has been influenced by Dio’s famous verdict that, after Philippi, civil war “was for the purpose of finding out what master they should obey” (47.39.2), and so, indirectly, Dio has made it into Gibbon here.[[433]](#footnote-433)

If Septimius’ civil wars were easier won than modern struggles, they still, in Gibbon’s view, had profound consequences: armies grew in power, and this weakened imperial government. Using a favorite metaphor, Gibbon states: “[a]lthough the wounds of civil war appeared completely healed, its mortal poison still lurked in the vitals of the constitution”.[[434]](#footnote-434) Julius Caesar and Augustus, as Gibbon saw it, were barely able to tame “the insolence of the victorious legions”. Severus was unable: “By gratitude, by misguided policy, by seeming necessity, Severus was induced to relax the nerves of discipline”. He piled on honors, privileges, and pay, with fatal consequences: a constant demand for donatives afterwards, a strain on the budget, a refusal to obey orders, and a collapse in military capability.

Gibbon’s major theme in the opening of *Decline and Fall* is the growth of “the dangerous power of the army”.[[435]](#footnote-435) In narrative terms, the barbarians only come later, with the famous accounts in chapters 8 and 9 respectively of the Persians and the Germans. Gibbon is clear about his theme and he relates it precisely to his starting point in 180 CE. As he writes in chapter 6, it was not just Severus’ wars and the new policies of the Severan dynasty but also “the dissolute tyranny of Commodus” along with the wars following his death that empowered the army and “obliterate[d] the faint image of laws and liberty that was still impressed on the minds of the Romans”.[[436]](#footnote-436)

Indeed, when we grasp that this is Gibbon’s major theme, many of his historiographic choices make sense. Looking just at chapter 4, we see that Gibbon highlights episodes that already point to the growing danger of the soldiers and the government’s weakened grip. He makes much of Herodian’s story of Maternus, the soldier “of a daring boldness above his station” who gathered bands of disgruntled soldiers to form “a little army” with which he plundered “the rich and defenceless cities of Gaul and Spain”.[[437]](#footnote-437) Similarly, when the legions of Britain sent 1500 men to Rome to complain about the minister Perennis to Commodus, there is a clear foreshadowing in “[t]his presumption of a distant army, and their discovery of the weakness of government”.[[438]](#footnote-438) Even the structure of chapter 4 reinforces Gibbon’s theme: by ending with Pertinax’ accession, his unsuccessful efforts at reform, and his assassination by the Praetorians, Gibbon attaches deeper meanings to the “follies” of Commodus: the Praetorians had no patience for Pertinax’ discipline after “the license of the former reign”.[[439]](#footnote-439) The chapter ends with the memorable image of Pertinax’ head detached from his body, placed on a lance, and carried in triumph to the Praetorian Camp*.*[[440]](#footnote-440)

In the very important passage on “the mortal poison” that lingered after Septimius Severus’ civil wars, Gibbon relies heavily on Herodian and the *Historia Augusta* to show the collapse of discipline. But clearly he also has been shaped by Dio’s perception of historical developments from Commodus onwards. A major feature of Dio’s “age of iron and rust” is precisely the growing power of the army: soldiers had become the maker and breaker of emperors; they treated civilians poorly; they were a huge problem for commanders.[[441]](#footnote-441) Dio claims to have experienced this last difficulty firsthand when he served as governor of Pannonia—and indeed, he more or less ends his whole epic history on the problem of the soldiers (80[80].1–5).[[442]](#footnote-442) Under Alexander Severus, the Praetorians terrorized the civilian population of Rome, even threatening to burn the city down. The new Persian king Artaxerxes, meanwhile, was threatening to win back “everything that the ancient Persians had once held, so far as the Grecian Sea, claiming that this was his rightful inheritance from his forefathers” (80[80].4.1 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). It is not the vaunting that Dio finds alarming, but “the fact that our armies are in such a state that some of the troops are actually joining him and others are refusing to defend themselves. They indulge in such wantonness, license, and lack of discipline, that those in Mesopotamia even dared to kill their commander, Flavius Heracleo” (80[80].4.2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). Clearly this was an important section of Dio for Gibbon; it was these “decisive fragments of Dion” that allowed him to dismiss the *Historia Augusta* on Alexander Severus.[[443]](#footnote-443)

Unlike Dio, Gibbon, of course, was not writing under Alexander Severus. He had no need to hold back and he could judge Alexander from hindsight. The verdict is damning: “The abilities of that amiable prince, seem to have been inadequate to the difficulties of his situation, the firmness of his conduct inferior to the purity of his intentions”.[[444]](#footnote-444) Gibbon pours scorn here on a fanciful story from the *Historia Augusta* about Alexander’s suppression of a military sedition in Antioch (*Alex. Sev.* 53–54). Gibbon wishes it had been “investigated by the penetration of a philosopher” and “related by a judicious historian”.[[445]](#footnote-445) These are the roles Gibbon himself aspires to, and in the record of Alexander Severus’ reign he uncovers a growth in “the insolence of the troops” that he attributes to, first, Alexander’s “weakness and effeminacy”; second, ridicule arising from his mother’s dominance; and, third, the Persian war, which exhausted soldiers and harmed his own reputation as an emperor and soldier.[[446]](#footnote-446) The combination of a leader like Alexander with the underlying problem of military indiscipline is, for Gibbon, fatal.

While Gibbon often adheres to his sources—even as he uses them selectively to suit his interests—by no means does he swallow them whole. As much as he professes to value Dio and his judgments in particular, there is at least one major difference between the two historians. As Jesper Majbom Madsen and I argued, from different perspectives, in our papers in Lange and Madsen’s *Cassius Dio: Greek Intellectual and Roman Politician,* what really defines Dio’s age of iron and rust is the return to dynastic rule.[[447]](#footnote-447) Dio satirizes it, through a use of nicknames and vivid anecdotes among other devices, but he has a deadly serious point to make. The strengthening of dynasty—and with it, hereditary principles of succession—is, for Dio, highly corrupting. It allows men, or boys, to come to power who surround themselves with the most unsuitable companions, to overturn on a whim well-established practices, and thereby to do long-term harm to the imperial office. Not just the obedience of soldiers, but the morale of Senators is undermined.

Gibbon lays out a drastically different view of hereditary monarchy at the start of chapter 7.[[448]](#footnote-448) He argues that, while easy to ridicule, hereditary monarchy is a useful practice once it is well-established, eliminating intrigues over the succession and civil wars. By making the monarch feel more secure, it disposes him to be less cruel.

Gibbon’s views lead him to highlight the devastation caused by intrigues over the imperial throne. For instance, in describing the succession of Caracalla, he takes the view that there was a “latent civil war”.[[449]](#footnote-449) Caracalla had to murder Geta, but the crime haunted him: “he confessed, in the anguish of a tortured mind, that his disordered fancy often beheld the angry forms of his father and his brother rising into life, to threaten and upbraid him”.[[450]](#footnote-450) Gibbon relies here on a passage of Dio that actually comes much later in Dio’s narrative (78[77].15.3–4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]), and by moving it forward, he is highlighting the problem of a lack of rules for succession. In Dio, the murder of Geta is not a turning point—rather, it is just another instance of Caracalla’s already well-established character. In Dio, immediately after the murder, Caracalla runs to the Praetorian Camp and cries out: “Rejoice, fellow-soldiers, for now I am in position to do you favors” (78[77].3.1 [Xiph.]).

In sum, for Gibbon, the problem of the Severan dynasty—and even the Roman constitution more generally—was *not enough* hereditary monarchy. For Dio, there was *too much* of it.[[451]](#footnote-451) Both agree there was a problem with the transmission of power—as would many modern historians. Dio’s solution was for emperors to choose the best man of the Senate, with the Senate’s approval. Gibbon has not ignored Dio’s senatorial perspective but sees a problem with it: in a non-hereditary elective monarchy, Gibbon believes, ultimately it is only the army that will be able both to concur on a choice for ruler *and* enforce its decision. The rising power of the army is not, for Gibbon, bound up with the emergence of the Severan dynasty as a dynasty; in truth, it is interwoven with all of Roman imperial history. It may be in part for this reason that Gibbon later came to regret the starting point for *Decline and Fall,* thinking that he should have started with the fall of Nero, or even the rise to power of Augustus.[[452]](#footnote-452)

*Aesthetics and Morals*

Gibbon, though, has even greater problems with Dio. For Gibbon, the paragon of Roman historians was Tacitus.[[453]](#footnote-453) Tacitus was the “philosophic historian”, able to relate historical developments to more general causes, with an eye to moral development. And he was the master of expression. Gibbon uses Tacitus as a touchstone in his own ethnography of the Germans in chapter 9, which ruthlessly punctures the gauzy tales of poor antiquarian scholarship and vividly describes the rough lives of primitive, but freedom-loving, people.

Gibbon pays tribute to Tacitus for applying “the science of philosophy to the study of facts” and for the “expressive conciseness of his descriptions” at the start of chapter 9.[[454]](#footnote-454) Later in the same chapter he adds another compliment that deepens his identification with Tacitus. Contemplating the laziness of German warriors, Gibbon then writes:

And yet, by a wonderful diversity of Nature (according to the remark of a writer who has pierced into its darkest recesses), the same barbarians are by turns the most indolent and the most restless of mankind. They delight in sloth, they detest tranquility. The languid soul, oppressed with its own weight, anxiously required some new and powerful sensation; and war and danger were the only amusements adequate to its fierce temper.[[455]](#footnote-455)

There is direct translation of Latin here, even almost transliteration: “wonderful diversity of nature” = *mira diversitate naturae* (*Germ.* 15.1). What allows Tacitus to be so keen a historian is his powers of observation, which can as easily penetrate the gloomiest forests of Germany as the dark corners of the soul. For Gibbon, unflinching awareness of the nature of human beings is an essential historical tool that helps fill out the picture when evidence is lacking. Trying to write the history of the third century CE, “[s]urrounded with imperfect fragments”, one can turn to “the knowledge of human nature…the sure operation of its fierce and unrestrained passions”.[[456]](#footnote-456)

A notable feature of Gibbon’s own political narrative in book 1 of *Decline and Fall* is his attempt to provide what we could call psychological profiles of the emperors. We have already mentioned the “guilty victory” of Caracalla and the weight Gibbon gives it. There are other striking examples, such as Maximinus the Thracian, whose cruelty derives from a fear of contempt, the consciousness of his mean origin, his savage appearance, and his total ignorance of the arts.[[457]](#footnote-457) Or there is Septimius Severus, whose driving force, from start of finish, was ambition, the satisfaction of which led him into melancholy later in life. “He had been all things, as he said himself, and all was of little value”.[[458]](#footnote-458)

Dio is not without interest in the mindset and motivations of his characters. Indeed, it is Dio who rescues Gibbon from the *Historia Augusta* and allows him to pronounce Commodus’ main defect as weakness: “Nature had formed him of a weak, rather than a wicked disposition”.[[459]](#footnote-459) Yet any real admiration by Gibbon for Dio as a historian able to plumb the minds of men or perceive the deeper reality of events is conspicuous by its absence. It is the commentator Reimarus who is “judicious”, not Dio himself. And there is no comment on the loss of Dio as a source when Gibbon embarks on the reign of Macrinus at the start of chapter 7—an obvious place for some kind of compliment.[[460]](#footnote-460) Dio’s narrative may at times be preferable to the rhetoric of Herodian, the confusing mélange of the *Historia Augusta,* but still in Gibbon’s view it has none of the of penetration or philosophy of Tacitus. Dio is not given credit for his analysis of the nature of civil war after Philippi, even though Gibbon has borrowed it from Montesquieu.

To be sure, Dio has not struck later readers, as Tacitus has, with memorable epigrams on human nature or delineations of character. Dio was more interested in forms of government than individual historical actors.[[461]](#footnote-461) But Gibbon’s view of the Severan historian also reflects a general prejudice he had against the Latin and Greek writers of the third century and later. As John Matthews has argued, “Gibbon’s conception of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire is bound up with a judgment of the quality of its literary sources”.[[462]](#footnote-462) The judgment, as Matthews notes, is implied in Gibbon’s famous account of the extensive, years-long research he undertook for *Decline and Fall*:

The Classics as low as Tacitus, the younger Pliny and Juvenal were my old and familiar companions: I insensibly plunged into the Ocean of the Augustan history and in the descending series I investigated, with my pen almost always in my hand, the original records, both of Greek and Latin, from Dion Cassius to Ammianus Marcellinus, from the reign of Trajan to the last age of the western Caesars.[[463]](#footnote-463)

One might almost say that to prove his thesis of Decline and Fall, Gibbon had to find faults in Dio.

And faults he finds, aesthetic and substantive, as various snide footnotes in particular reveal:

1. On Augustus’ speech before the Senate in 27 BCE: “Dion…gives us a prolix and bombast speech on this great occasion. I have borrowed from Suetonius and Tacitus the general language of Augustus”.[[464]](#footnote-464)
2. On the constitution of the Roman empire: “Dion Cassius…has given a very loose and partial sketch of the Imperial system. To illustrate and often to correct him, I have meditated Tacitus, examined Suetonius, and consulted the following moderns…”.[[465]](#footnote-465)
3. On the accession of Claudius: “It is much to be regretted, that we have lost the part of Tacitus, which treated of that transaction. We are forced to content ourselves with the popular rumours of Josephus, and the imperfect hints of Dion and Suetonius”.[[466]](#footnote-466)
4. On the rumor that Nero burnt down Rome himself: “We may observe, that the rumour is mentioned by Tacitus with a very becoming distrust and hesitation, whilst it is greedily transcribed by Suetonius, and solemnly confirmed by Dion”.[[467]](#footnote-467)

Of course, Gibbon was often relying on later epitomes of Dio—not Dio—but his judgment of the extant Augustan books is harsh. We shall see another example shortly.

First, though, we need to think more about weakness. For Gibbon, this was the cardinal sin. It is Commodus’ vice, and the chief fault of Alexander Severus too, but it also leads to severe judgment on a range of others, including Marcus Aurelius, Christian monks, and even, more abstractly, the “civil government” of the Roman empire.[[468]](#footnote-468) Activity, by contrast, is the highest virtue—resulting, famously, in some unlikely heroes in *Decline and Fall,* such as the Persian Artaxerxes (Ardashir I), Athanasius the bishop, Attila the Hun, and even the people of Aquileia when Maximinus marched on them in 238 CE: “the firmest defense” of the North Italian town “consisted in the constancy of the citizens.”[[469]](#footnote-469)

Now a striking feature of Dio’s contemporary history, from the accession of Commodus onwards, is how at every moment he emphasizes the total helplessness of members of the Senate. They are not fools, but they are powerless. Everyone who has read the *Roman History* remembers the picture of the senators quaking in terror as Commodus brandishes the severed head of the ostrich and the bloody dagger with which he severed it (73[72].21.1 [Xiph.]). The Senators were seized with fear of Didius Julianus and the Praetorians after the assassination of Pertinax (74[73].12.2–3 [Xiph.]); seized with fear again, after Clodius Albinus was declared a public enemy by Septimius (76[75].4 [Xiph.]). They were terrorized during the reign of Caracalla. There was the extensive purge following the death of Geta (78[77].4–6.1 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). On another occasion, Caracalla rebuked the senators because they asked nothing of him (78[77]16.6 [*Exc. Vat*.]). And during Caracalla’s absence in the East, senators were dominated by a eunuch, a favorite of the emperor from Spain named Sempronius Rufus with skills in sorcery and juggling (78[77].17.2 [Xiph.]). Collectively the Senate does nothing but hypocritically support one unworthy emperor after the next. It is only the people of Rome at their games or the soldiers who get to express their true feelings.

On top of all this, Dio sprinkles his contemporary books with sketches of senators who have strange vicissitudes of fortune—scrapes with danger, miraculous escapes, even the occasional act of boldness that is the exception to the rule. One might mention: Sextus Condianus, a highly-educated man sentenced to death by Commodus, who drank the blood of a hare, then staged a phony fall from a horse and vomited up the blood, allowing everyone to think he was safely dead (73[72].6 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). Or Victorinus, so sick of the rumors that he had been put to death that he became emboldened to approach Commodus’ minister Perennis and ask what the delay was—after which he took his own life (73[72].11 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). Or Auspex, whose acerbic tongue somehow protected him; among his best lines was his crack on Septimius Severus’ adoption into the family of Marcus Aurelius, apparently made to Severus’ face: “I congratulate you, Caesar, on finding a father” (77[76].9.3 [Xiph.]). Or Julius Paulus, the ex-consul who was also a “gossip and jester, sparing not even the emperors themselves” (78[77].11.1a). His quick wit saved him from the anger of Caracalla.

Gibbon has little interest in the stories of these unconventional heroes and few make it into *Decline and Fall*. He does pick up the vignette of Claudius Pompeianus, the only one of the Senators who refused to watch Commodus participating in the games.[[470]](#footnote-470) Gibbon praises his “manly resolution,” but then undercuts it in a footnote, based on Dio, that registers the odd coincidence that the alleged infirmities that forced Pompeius to skip the games (advanced age and the weakness of his eyes) suddenly left him with the accession of Pertinax, and suddenly returned after Pertinax’ death.

Much more to Gibbon’s taste is the story of the death of Papinian, as transmitted in the panegyric of the *Historia Augusta.*[[471]](#footnote-471) A valued minister of Septimius, Papinian was asked by Caracalla after the murder of Geta to produce an apology for the deed, as Seneca had for Nero. He refused, with the “glorious reply” that “it was easier to commit than to justify a parricide.” Here is the “intrepid virtue” that Gibbon thirsts for. But the fantasy of the *Historia Augusta* is getting the better of him. Gibbon has little inclination to describe what it was really like to be a senator in the Severan age. He understood the sort of dilemmas faced. Recounting the struggle the Roman Senate faced as war loomed between Julian and Constantius II in 361, Gibbon writes in a footnote: “It is amusing enough to observe the secret conflicts of the senate between flattery and fear”. And how does this footnote end? “See Tacit. Hist. i.85”.[[472]](#footnote-472)

*“That Slavish Historian”*

And so we come in conclusion to the condemnation of Dion Cassius. Dio gets a brief walk-on role in the main narrative of chapter 6, immediately following the murder of Ulpian by the Praetorians—yet another illustration of “the deplorable weakness of government”.[[473]](#footnote-473) The “tyranny of the army” was getting out of hand, threatening especially those suspected of trying to correct it. Here is Gibbon:

The historian Dion Cassius had commanded the Pannonian legions with the spirit of ancient discipline. Their brethren of Rome, embracing the common cause of military license, demanded the head of the reformer. Alexander, however, instead of yielding to their seditious clamours, shewed a just sense of his merit and services, by appointing him his colleague in the consulship, and defraying from his own treasury the expence of that vain dignity: but as it was justly apprehended, that if the soldiers beheld him with the ensigns of his office, they would revenge the insult in his blood, the nominal first magistrate of the state retired, by the emperor’s advice, from the city, and spent the greatest part of his consulship at his villas in Campania.[[474]](#footnote-474)

Gibbon, of course, is relying here on Dio’s own account at the very end of the *Roman History* (80[80].4.2–5.2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*])but he recasts it to point a moral. The consulship—once the highest office in a free Republic—is now a “vain dignity”, its holder merely “the nominal first magistrate of the state”. Moreover, it is only Gibbon’s imagination that suggests that Dio wallowed away in his villas for most of his term of office. Dio himself simply writes he was advised to spend his term of office in Italy, but outside of Rome. In Gibbon’s hands, Alexander comes out looking very weak, and Dio pathetic: the soldiers had grown so powerful they were able to cow emperor and consul alike.

But it is worse than that. Dio is, for Gibbon, not an innocent victim. Septimius, with his favoring of the army, may be the “principal author of the decline of the Roman empire” but he had collaborators: “In the reign of Severus, the senate was filled with polished and eloquent slaves from the eastern provinces, who justified personal flattery by speculative principles of servitude”.[[475]](#footnote-475) There were “new advocates of prerogative” who “inculcated the duty of passive obedience, and descanted on the inevitable mischiefs of freedom”.[[476]](#footnote-476) Lawyers and historians alike agreed in promulgating a series of dangerous doctrines, such as: “[i]mperial authority was held, not by the delegated commission, but by the irrevocable resignation, of the senate”.[[477]](#footnote-477) And then, a devastating footnote that explains so much about Gibbon’s view of the historian: “Dion Cassius seems to have written with no other view, than to form these opinions into an historical system”.[[478]](#footnote-478)

One of these opinions is that the emperor was “freed from the restraint of civil laws”. Gibbon returns to this particular prerogative in his discussion of Roman law in chapter 44, where he argues that it was the outcome of a long process: at first, Senate and People granted occasional exemptions to the Caesars from particular laws, and only later did it become the “prerogative of a tyrant”.[[479]](#footnote-479) The reader looks down here to another devastating footnote. It begins: “The constitutional style of *Legibus Solutus* is misinterpreted by the art or ignorance of Dion Cassius”.[[480]](#footnote-480) Gibbon duly cites, but does not quote, a passage of Dio’s fifty-third book, and then remarks: “On this occasion his editor, Reimar, joins the universal censure which freedom and criticism have pronounced against that slavish historian”.

The problem, seen already by Reimarus and noted by Reimarus himself, is that, as various evidence including the senate decree on the powers of Vespasian shows, Augustus cannot have been freed from the laws in the sense the phrase later had. In fairness, in the passage from book 53 of Dio that Gibbon cites along with Reimarus’ commentary, Dio only comments that the emperors “have been released from the laws, as the very words in Latin declare” (53.18.1). But a slightly later passage in the *History* does claim that Augustus received the exemption in 24 BCE: 53.28.2. Efforts to interpret Dio as saying Augustus was only freed from some laws, or—even worse—to have Dio misunderstand the Latin expression, were misguided, as Reimarus rightly insists. Reimarus goes on to offer a more sympathetic interpretation of Dio’s claim, but Gibbon has no time for this. Gibbon is suggesting that either deliberately, or by a kind of blindness, Dio has monarchy spring forth fully-formed early in the age of Augustus. We are given little sense that this was a much more gradual process, resisted by senators, and looked upon with disgust by at least some of them, as the pages of Tacitus show. Gibbon’s Augustus preserved the *image* of a Republic, and that mattered. In fact, Dio’s Augustus also preserved the image of the Republic, but for Gibbon to concede this would weaken his conception of Dio as not just expounding but embodying decline and fall.

So to conclude: what is the value of examining Dio in Gibbon? We have seen that Gibbon makes ample use of the Severan historian in constructing the early part of his narrative. And because of Gibbon’s enormous influence, Dio’s picture of decline setting in with Commodus and continuing under the Severan emperors has entrenched itself in many understandings of Roman history since. Gibbon is more critical of Dio than most modern historians would be, bringing in moral judgments that the professional scholar now shuns. In fairness, he might have noted Dio’s comment (53.19) that while the change of government under Augustus was for the better, it had troubling implications for the dissemination of information and the writing of history. He also might have paid more attention to Dio’s view that if an emperor failed to consult the Senate and went his own way, there was little the Senate could do. There are limitations to Gibbon’s understanding of Dio, and Gibbon wants to use Dio as a foil for himself, and Tacitus. Still, Gibbon is essentially right that Tacitus writes with a commitment to liberty, Dio to monarchy. For Dio, the question is how to get monarchy right. Gibbon wished to explore different questions.[[481]](#footnote-481)

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Chapter 7: A Survey of Recent Scholarship on Cassius Dio

*Adam M. Kemezis*

*1. Introduction*

Most of the scholars cited in this article, including its author, began their engagement with Cassius Dio in the decade of the 2000s. Things were simpler then, at least bibliographically. There was, to be sure, a good deal of high-quality and still foundational scholarship, and several important monographs had come out in the 1980s and 1990s, but Dio remained, in proportion to his enormous and varied corpus, an understudied author with one or two main reference points for most topics. The last decade, however, has produced a volume of scholarship that equals or exceeds the entire modern scholarly output on Dio down to 2010. This companion volume is in many ways a distillation of that work, and the present article is a guide to the scholarship that lies behind it. My aim is to present the most complete bibliography possible of specialist scholarship on Dio from 2010 to the time of writing.[[482]](#footnote-482) This seems worthwhile not simply to provide a (temporarily) up-to-date list of publications but to assist readers in finding their way around a body of literature that has come out very quickly in a wide range of venues, so that even we who are busily producing it strain to keep track of one another’s work. That work is certainly not at an end, but this volume does in some ways represent the end of a particular stage of it. Even when this research is no longer the latest word on Dio, it will still represent a discrete corpus, given the particular circumstances of network collaboration and general proliferation under which much of it was undertaken. As such, this volume is a good vantage point from which to survey a scholarly landscape on which the dust is settling.

This dust has been kicked up since the mid-2010s through the publications of two separate networks that, while not including by any means all scholars now working on Dio, are major driving forces of contemporary specialist scholarship. The two overlap in personnel to a degree, but are distinct both in national-linguistic character and in scholarly emphasis. They both aim at a holistic approach to Dio that takes him seriously as a historical thinker, a literary artist and a document of his own cultural-historical environment, rather than simply a fund of factual information about the periods he describes, or a conduit for sources from earlier periods. One of them is based in France and includes many scholars connected with the ongoing Budé edition of Dio. It is responsible for one massive two-volume article collection (Fromentin *et al.* 2016) encompassing a full range of Dionian topics. Particular areas of emphasis for the French network include philological aspects of textual transmission; Dio’s relationship to earlier historians (as sources and models); political thought, especially the formal aspects of institutions and vocabulary; the literary form and structure of the *History*; and Dio’s views of geography and Roman imperialism. The other is based in Denmark but includes mostly Anglo-American scholars, including the editors of and many contributors to this volume, among them myself. It has produced five published or forthcoming volumes on various periods or thematic aspects of Dio (Lange and Madsen 2016 on Greek and Roman background; Osgood and Baron 2019 on the Late Republican narrative; Lange and Scott 2020 on war, violence and civil war; Madsen and Lange 2021 on sources and methods; Kemezis *et al.* 2022 on intellectual background). These scholars are often influenced by the literary-rhetorical approaches characteristic of Anglophone scholarship on historiography for the last few decades, and the collections include many close readings of particular episodes, but often from a still historicizing perspective. Other significant focuses of their work include Dio’s ideological background in the Severan period and his large-scale view of historical developments in the Late Republic.

These volumes, substantial as they are, are by no means the whole story. In the same period three significant English-language edited volumes (Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer 2019 on the fragmentary early narrative; Davenport and Mallan 2021 and Burden-Strevens *et al.* 2020, both on the imperial period) have been published independent of these networks (although the editors and contributors include several of their members), along with two monographs, one a non-specialist introduction focusing on political thought (Madsen 2020b) and the other an analysis of Dio’s Late Republican narrative, emphasizing the speeches and the role of rhetoric (Burden-Strevens 2020). In short, Dio is undoubtedly no longer an under-studied author. Neither, however, is he yet a canonical figure among the historical or political thinkers of the imperial period, on a footing with Livy, Tacitus or Ammianus. It is to be hoped that this and further work will move him toward that status.

It follows from the above that this article is not a complete guide to Dio bibliography on any given subject, or to its historical development. For the former, I refer readers above all to the various topical articles in this volume, which include the crucial older literature. In addition, an exhaustive guide to twentieth-century scholarship can be found in Martinelli 1999.[[483]](#footnote-483) For historical development, Fromentin 2021 and Pelling 2021 give two complementary and invaluable perspectives.[[484]](#footnote-484) Those interested particularly in the recent Anglo-Danish work on Dio and the Republic should consult the thorough and thought-provoking review essay of Bono 2020a. I have restricted myself mainly to works published from 2010 onward, but have included (usually in footnotes) works from the 2000s that seemed particularly pertinent to a given topic, often because no more recent publications have appeared on that topic. I have tried to include all publications that deal primarily with Dio’s writings (or include him in comparative analyses with other historians), but have not typically included historical publications that deal with Dio as one among many sources for a given event or period.

I have grouped the literature into what I hope are intuitive categories. Their order reflects what I take to be the areas in which the most advances have been made by recent scholarship. Thus I begin with Dio’s Severan context, his political thought, and the speeches in his history. There then follow sections on text and transmission; sources and models; literary technique and structure; particular historical characters and events; thematic and cultural topics; and readership and reception. Anticipating that readers will approach these sections selectively, each of them is intended to be as complete as possible in itself, though this has meant that many references appear more than once in different sections. While I have tried to give some idea of the contrasting views on some key questions, it is impossible in this space to capture the diversity of approaches and viewpoints, and equally impossible that all readers will share or benefit from them all. Thus I ask readers’ pardon for downloading the work of selection on to them, but trust that it will at all events be useful to be presented with the range of available perspectives.

*2. Biography and Historical Contexts*

Dio talks about himself far more than most historians from antiquity, and has also left his mark on the epigraphic record. Thus it is unsurprising that biographical approaches to his work have been fruitful ever since Millar 1964. Recent scholarship, however, while not neglecting concrete detail, has used a wider variety of historicizing techniques to place Dio in a series of political, literary and cultural settings, and to make his work a document of the world that produced it as well as the world it describes. As regards the details of his political career, considered independent of his literary output, Molin 2016a is an important new overview that takes epigraphic evidence into account, and considers among other questions that of Dio’s full nomenclature.[[485]](#footnote-485) The particular aspects of his *cursus* that affect the dating of his work, especially his jurisdiction as consul, are considered by Markov 2016a and Letta 2019.[[486]](#footnote-486)

The specifics of Dio’s political career and biography are often, however, explored as evidence for questions around the dating of the *Roman History* that we now possess, and the nature of Dio’s previous literary productions. Kemezis 2014, 282–293 is a convenient summary of the then state of the dating question. There remains a split between “early” daters, who see the *Roman History* as largely complete by 220 or earlier, with later events added on to a finished text, and “late” daters, who see the text as basically a product of the 220s or even 230s, written in full consciousness of the reigns of Caracalla, Macrinus and Elagabalus. Early daters appear to be the majority, though many of them allow for a high degree of revision in the 220s such that early books may reflect the influence of later events. Recent contributions include Letta 2019, presenting updated arguments for a late date and Lindholmer 2022b, giving new considerations in favor of an early date.[[487]](#footnote-487) Kaldellis 2017, while dealing mainly with later historians, has intriguing considerations about the political stakes of Dio’s writing a critical history of a dynasty in power. For Dio’s earlier historical works, and how much trace of them remains in the existing text, the treatment of Slavich 2001 is important and neglected (in part because of its difficult publication status).

Of the various larger stories into which Dio’s career fits, one is naturally political and involves his relationship to the Severan dynasty and court. A major avenue of approach has been to see Dio’s history as a commentary on the political decline stemming from the dynastic succession from Antonine to Severan (see Molin 2016b; Madsen 2016b and the introductory essay to Galimberti and Stroppa 2018) or to see elements of commentary about particular events in the Severan period (see Scott 2013 on the Macrinus-Elagabalus succession; Bertolazzi 2022 and Pistellato 2022 on aspects of Elagabalus’ politics and Müller 2019 and Pownall 2022 on the “False Alexander” of 221). Kemezis 2014 and Zecchini 2016 incorporate Dio’s Antonine-to-Severan experience into different developmental narratives of the historical genre. Similarly, several articles (Osgood 2020; Scott 2020a and Scott 2021) have continued the tradition of reading Dio’s account of earlier events (especially civil wars) as specific comments on the Severan landscape, while Scott 2020b reads his contemporary narrative in light of earlier books. Andrews 2018 similarly looks at the later books in light of Dio’s establishing of a senatorial persona through his whole narrative. Two important recent articles, Gleason 2011 and Scott 2017b, have read Dio’s contemporary narrative reflexively, as fundamentally shaped by the very uncertainties and chaos he chronicled, while the thesis of Urrutia Muñoz 2014 reads Dio and Herodian as expressions of cultural memory. Other scholars (including Davenport in this volume) have looked at Dio’s specifically senatorial experience, often through prosopographical methods, see Kemezis 2012 (on his Antonine predecessors); Christol 2016 (comparison with Marius Maximus); Kemezis 2020 (on civil-war experience); Lindholmer 2022a (on court ceremonial); and Mallan 2021b (on Dio’s contemporary acquaintance). Bertrand 2020 examines how Severan civil wars shaped Dio’s geographical world-view.

Placing Dio in a Greek cultural context has received less attention in recent work, but Asirvatham in this volume provides an overview of questions of cultural identity. For Dio’s background in Bithynia and ongoing links with Asia Minor, see recently Madsen 2020b, 3–7 and Kuhn 2022, also Sørensen 2016 on ethnic terminology, as well as Bekker-Nielsen in this volume. Jones 2016 surveys Dio’s various affinities with the Second Sophistic and Plácido 2011 considers him as exemplifying Greek elite reaction to Severan-era crises. Burden-Strevens 2015 provides a novel perspective on Dio’s Greekness being influenced by his identity as a provincial administrator. Asirvatham 2022 examines his treatment of bilingualism and Greek education among emperors, while Malik 2021 looks at his treatment of Neronian philhellenism. Alexander the Great remained a salient figure in contemporary Greek culture, and his role in Dio is explored by Carlsen 2016 and Mallan 2017b. Links between Dio and “Second Sophistic” literature outside of his own genre are found mainly in the area of political theory, for which see Section 3 below. Dio’s writings themselves are also part of the story of the development of the historical genre, for which see Pitcher in this volume. His place in the specifically Greek tradition of writing about the Roman empire is considered by Potter 2011 (over the full Roman period into late antiquity) and Asirvatham 2017 (in the context of the Second Sophistic).[[488]](#footnote-488)

*3. Political Theory and Analysis*

The political thought and culture of monarchical Rome is only in recent decades starting to get the scholarly attention it deserves. Scholarship on Dio has responded handsomely to this new impetus, and the single most important advance in the last decade has been to establish firmly that Dio had original and intelligent things to say about the polity he lived in. This includes not just shrewd observations about the contemporary scene, but thorough analysis, embodied in narrative, speech, digression and commentary, of the entire evolution of the Roman state over the previous five and more centuries.[[489]](#footnote-489) Work on this topic falls into two major clusters and several smaller sub-divisions, and overlaps considerably with that on the speeches (see next section). The two clusters (neither one is homogenous enough to be termed a “school”) reflect not so much divergent readings of Dio as distinct viewpoints. They focus on different aspects of the text and ask different questions to reach answers that are reconcilable to varying degrees.

One of these clusters is the work of Danish scholars (all writing in English and working within an Anglophone interpretive tradition) and starts from the unusual centrality and space that Dio gives to the Late Republican period and the career of Augustus, and from Dio’s own explicit statements about the end of the Republic. A series of articles (see Lindholmer 2019b in addition to those below) and one monograph (Madsen 2020b) put forth a reading of Dio as a strong advocate of monarchy. Dio viewed the Roman Republic as an inherently flawed system from its inception. It was too democratic and given to internal strife and chaos (see Lange 2019b Lindholmer 2019a and Madsen 2019a for the early-to-middle periods). This belief stems from Dio’s deterministic, Thucydidean view of human nature (for which the unpublished dissertation of Rees 2011 is an important study, also Adler 2012). Dio tells the story of the Late Republic as a lesson about descent through systemic dysfunction (see Lindholmer 2019c for the mid-50s BCE) into the horrors of civil war (see Lange 2019a; Madsen 2019b; Lange 2020; Lange 2021) which Augustus is to be admired for ending (Madsen 2019c) and replacing with a quasi-absolute monarchy as advocated by Maecenas in book 52 (Madsen 2022).

The other consists of a series of articles by French and Italian scholars.[[490]](#footnote-490) It begins from the observation that Dio is remarkably attentive to the formal institutions of Republican government (including their origins, see Urso 2011).[[491]](#footnote-491) Several of the various contributions examine Dio’s political vocabulary, both in its technical precision (Coudry 2016d) and its theoretical approach to the vocabulary of democracy and monarchy (Bellissime 2016c). In analyzing the narrative, these scholars focus less sharply on Augustus and the civil wars of the 40s–30s, seeing rather a progressive deformation of institutions in the post-Gracchan years. This comes out particularly in episodes such as the extraordinary commands given to generals, above all Pompey (Coudry 2015; Bertrand and Coudry 2016; Coudry 2016a), in the changed trajectory of Roman imperialism (Bertrand 2019), in the breakdown of domestic government by Senate and magistrates (Coudry 2016e; Coudry 2019a) and finally in the quasi-monarchy of Caesar (Coudry 2016b; Carsana 2016; Urso 2020).[[492]](#footnote-492) The Augustan regime and the Principate are less a solution to any inherent flaws of Republican government or the problem of civil war than the re-establishment of meaningful political institutions.

Outside of these clusters, but related to them, is recent work by Christopher Burden-Strevens on Dio’s Republican speeches that examines them less as authorial statements than as representations of how political rhetoric functioned at the time. This approach is developed in a recent monograph (Burden-Strevens 2020, see also Burden-Strevens 2016 and Burden-Strevens 2017) that amounts to a full analysis of the fall of Dio’s Republic, complementary to the above.[[493]](#footnote-493) Similarly, the recent articles of Burden-Strevens 2019 on the dictatorship; Potter 2022 on the role of Pompey and Markov 2019 on the early career of Octavian point up the potential detours and way stations on Dio’s road from democracy to monarchy.

Considerable attention has also gone toward Dio’s theorization of the post-Augustan monarchy. The longstanding idea that Dio posits an “ideal monarchy” associated with Augustus and/or the Antonines has been nuanced in several important directions. For Dio’s engagement with various forms of idealized or limited monarchy, especially in the Greek tradition, see Coltelloni-Trannoy 2016a; Bono 2020b and Rodgers 2021, also (specifically on theoretical aspects of the Agrippa-Maecenas debate) Horst 2010; Roberto 2010; Gangloff 2018; Gangloff 2019, 302–353; Markov 2022; also Allen 2020 (on the “Clemency-Dialogue”); and Bono 2018 (on Tiberius specifically). The tyrannical anti-type of ideal monarchy is examined by Hose 2011 (Commodus and Caligula) and Schulz 2014; Schulz 2016; Schulz 2019a, 169–265 (Nero and Domitian). Schulz in particular looks at Dio’s engagement with the literature of praise (both prose and verse) surrounding those emperors, and Rees in this volume similarly connects him with our existing panegyrical corpus. Davenport and Mallan 2014; Madsen 2016b and Ando 2016 all provide important perspective and (in Ando’s case) qualification to the idea that Dio was ideologically committed to “Antonine-style” adoptive succession. Beek 2019 argues for Dio as pragmatist rather than traditionalist in his view of imperial legitimacy and the use of violence. Two recent articles (Havener 2020 and Davenport 2021b) consider Dio’s conception of the emperor’s role as military leader, while Lindholmer 2022a looks at the specifics of emperors’ ceremonial interactions with senators. Ash 2021 explores the various ways in which Dio associates emperors with the marvelous or miraculous.

Moving away from the imperial throne, Dio is also recognized as an important source for the self-image of his own senatorial order. Coltelloni-Trannoy 2016b; Lindholmer 2020b and Pistellato 2020 consider its function and status under the Principate. Platon 2016; Pistellato 2021 and Perry 2022 offer case studies of the *ordo* under Tiberius, Nero and Augustus respectively, while Markov 2020 examines the Senate’s role in civil wars of both Republic and Principate. Questions of imperialism, conquest and relationship of provinces to center are considered by Lavan 2013 and Bertrand 2016b. Various other aspects of Roman political culture in Dio are considered by Mallan 2016 on free and frank speech, Hellström 2021 on the political role of the urban *plebs* of Rome, Audano 2018 on commemorative statues; Urso 2013b, Kemezis 2019 and Lavan 2021 on the spread of Roman citizenship; Asirvatham 2020 on the ideology of Ὁμόνοια (“concord”); and Noe 2020 on Stoic influences.

*4. Speeches*

Another key advance in recent scholarship is acknowledging the distinctive way in which Dio uses speeches. In general they are fewer but longer than with most Roman historians, and often contain complex theoretical reflections on large thematic issues. Coudry in this volume provides a complete overview, while Burden-Strevens 2021 is a comprehensive and insightful survey of speeches up to book 53. Burden-Strevens 2020 includes readings of almost all the speeches through book 56, which treat them above all as representations of political rhetoric. Several recent works have offered general considerations on Dio’s practice in his speeches. Bellissime 2016a considers the speeches’ fictional status in light of ancient rhetorical theory, while Fomin 2016 reads Dio’s speeches as the equivalent of declamations, separable from their narrative context (see also the author’s unpublished thesis, Fomin 2015). Mastrorosa 2017 discusses early modern reception of these same speeches. Lachenaud 2016 adds theoretical considerations on the relationship of speech and narrative. The largely lost early portions of Dio were clearly abundant in speeches, and Rich 2019 has now provided a thorough examination of the remains, while Fromentin 2019 looks at their transmission by Zonaras.

Of the individual surviving speeches, the Agrippa-Maecenas debate (in most cases specifically the speech of Maecenas) remains the single most popular. Burden-Strevens in this volume provides an introduction to the critical issues. Much of the recent scholarship can be found above in Section 3, but see also Markov 2013 (on Agrippa’s speech and the vocabulary of democracy); Bono 2019b (on the possible content of the lacuna in the debate); Bakker 2020 (on Agrippa’s speech in its internal rhetorical context);[[494]](#footnote-494) Cresci Marrone 2016 (on the Augustan historical context for the debate); and France 2016 (on Maecenas’ fiscal proposals). Kuhlmann 2010 and Vielberg 2016 examine the debate’s possible links to Herodotus and Cicero respectively and Simões Rodrigues 2021 examines its place in the larger literary tradition of “best constitution” discussions.

Of the remaining speeches: for the debate in book 36 on Pompey’s command and its various speeches, see Coudry 2015;[[495]](#footnote-495) for Caesar’s speech in book 38 before his mutinous troops at Vesontio, see Kemezis 2016a; for the same speaker addressing the Senate in book 43, see Jayat 2021; for the Cicero speeches see Gotteland 2015 (with consideration of Greek antecedents); Peer 2020 and La Bua 2020, as well as the various works cited in Section 6; for the Philiscus-dialogue specifically, see Montecalvo 2010; for Octavian’s speech before Actium, see Mastrorosa 2014; for the Augustus-Livia dialogue on clemency in book 55, see Adler 2011 and Allen 2020[[496]](#footnote-496); for Tiberius’ funeral speech for Augustus in book 56, see Schubert 2018 and Kuhn 2021; for Boudica’s speech in book 62, see Gillespie 2015; for Hadrian’s speech from book 69 on adopting a successor, see Davenport and Mallan 2014.

*5. Text and Transmission*

Textual scholarship on Dio includes both the standard task of preparing a critical edition of the completely extant sections, and the more unusual one of reassembling his lost books from Byzantine excerpts and epitomes. These questions are surveyed by Mallan in this volume. The modern standard in both respects has been set by Boissevain 1895–1901, whose text is also reproduced (with some simplification of textually problematic passages) in the Loeb and Rizzoli editions of Dio. The fully extant books are benefiting from an ongoing new critical edition in the Budé series, which is also starting to cover the fragmentary sections. Five volumes have appeared in the last decade, covering books 36–37 (Lachenaud and Coudry 2014), 38–40 (Lachenaud and Coudry 2011), 47 (Fromentin and Bertrand 2014); 53 (Bellissime and Hurlet 2018) and 79[78]–80[80] (Foulon and Molin 2020).[[497]](#footnote-497) In addition to the new text, all five volumes have very full introductions and historical notes that are highly recommended to those working on Dio’s version of the periods in question. In Italian, the Rizzoli series is also now complete with Galimberti and Stroppa 2018. Recent scholarship has not included a comprehensive reconsideration of manuscripts (outside of what is in the new Budé editions), but Fromentin 2016a and Mallan 2017a both add much to our understanding of the paratextual material (including book-indices) that are important aids to textual reconstruction. Bellissime 2016b is a discussion of how the *editio princeps* of Robert Estienne approached the then-existing manuscript tradition.

For the fragmentary books of Dio, the existence of an authoritative resource in Boissevain can give readers a false sense of certainty about how close they are to what Dio actually wrote and did not write. Rich 2016 makes a powerful case for skepticism regarding the book-numbers and ordering used by Boissevain in the earlier fragments. Responsible interpreters still need to make many judgement calls about how to use Xiphilinus, Zonaras, the *Excerpta Constantiniana* and the various minor sources. There remains no systematic treatment or consensus in practice as to how one makes such calls, but recent scholarship has given us a considerably better sense of the various agendas of the transmitting authors and their Byzantine context. Simpson 2021 gives an overview of the middle-Byzantine tradition that includes all of three of our major sources of fragments. For Xiphilinus particularly, see now Mallan 2013b; Berbessou-Broustet 2014; Berbessou-Broustet 2016; Zinsli 2017 and Kruse 2021; and (for Caesar and Pompey) Biały 2017; (for Cleopatra) Juntunen 2015; (for the issues surrounding books 70–71) Juntunen 2013b. For Zonaras, see in general Bellissime and Berbessou-Broustet 2016 and Mecella 2019 as well as Fromentin 2013 (on Dio’s preface) and Fromentin 2019 and Bellissime 2020 (for speeches), while the introduction to Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer 2019 provides a valuable discussion of the practical principles of using Zonaras as a source. A comparable treatment of Dio and the *Excerpta* is still lacking, but see Mallan 2019 for the regal period.[[498]](#footnote-498) For the minor sources, see Roberto 2016b on Peter the Patrician, Roberto 2013 and Roberto 2016a on John of Antioch and Favuzzi 2013 on the *Suda*. The overall sense of this work has been that our later sources, while still relatively faithful transmitters of the text they excerpt, have agendas of their own that make them more consciously selective and thus less representative of Dio’s overall content than had been assumed in the earlier model of them as erratic compilers.

*6. Sources and Models*

While recent work on Dio, like many another ancient historian, has been marked by a turn away from source-research, the question of what historians and other authors Dio read remains an important literary question, to say nothing of modern historians who still need to know where Dio is getting his facts from and what he can tell us about lost traditions. Scholarly attitudes on these questions have become considerably more sophisticated in recent years, and Dio has benefited.

Few studies any more want to find a single source (Livy or otherwise) which Dio followed closely enough for long enough that we can use him the way one uses Zosimus to reconstruct Eunapius (or Zonaras to reconstruct Dio). Neither do we have a single comprehensive model of “how Dio used sources”, because there are reasons to suppose his methods varied between different sections of his work. Several important articles have appeared on Dio’s sources for particular periods, generally working with multiple-source models, and his relationships with individual authors, historical and otherwise, have also been considered in detail.

For the regal through mid-Republican periods, Urso 2016a and Urso 2019a offer important new overall arguments emphasizing Dio’s independence from other existing traditions,[[499]](#footnote-499) while Fromentin 2016b and Foulon 2016 consider Dionysius and Polybius respectively from a *sources et modèles* perspective as objects of emulation and conscious contrast rather than simply factual sources. De Franchis 2016, François 2016 and Simon 2016 all do the same for Livy. Simons 2009 also includes much source-discussion, positing that Dio was heavily influenced by Posidonius and the Stoic tradition. For the Late Republic and civil-war periods, where we have fully surviving Dio, several significant authors will be considered individually below, but recent case studies tied to periods rather than authors include Westall 2016 on Late Republican civil wars (favoring Cremutius Cordus as a significant source) and Welch 2019 and Urso 2019b, which see Dio as witness to lost and independent traditions on, respectively, political virtues of political leaders and the Catilinarian conspiracy. Burden-Strevens 2021 includes intriguing observations on possible sources and models for Dio’s Republican speeches. Rodríguez Horrillo 2017 gives a brief consideration of the rhetorical antecedents of Dio’s most famous methodological passage, at 53.19.

For the Augustan and Principate narratives, Devillers 2016b is a valuable new survey. On the reign of Tiberius specifically, we have now Mallan 2020 and Parat 2021. Scholars typically assume that Dio’s main sources for his non-contemporary narrative are literary works, however a major exception is Cesare Letta, who has argued in a series of articles that Dio was a documentary historian who made substantial use in particular of the *acta senatus.* For recent arguments for this view, see Letta 2016a; Letta 2016b and (in English) Letta 2021, with also Dalla Rosa 2017. For the contemporary narrative, by contrast, one often imagines source-research as unnecessary given Dio’s presumed eyewitness status. However, such assumptions can prove over-simplistic: Madsen 2018 and Madsen 2021 supply an important critical view of his testimony. On the question of informants, Moscovich 2004 offers some speculations, including the possibility of Dio’s knowing Philostratus. The other contemporary (lost) author with whom Dio’s relationship has been explored is his senatorial colleague and biographer Marius Maximus, for which see Meckler 2005 and Molinier Arbò 2009 as well as now Christol 2016. Lastly, Davenport 2017 provides a case study of Dio’s treatment of rumors about the emperor Caracalla.

If we turn to authors, historical and otherwise, who are not principal “sources” of Dio’s narrative content, but with whom the Severan historian engages through various forms of intertextuality, or to whom he can fruitfully be compared, two oddly assorted names stand out as major objects of scholarly attention: Cicero and Thucydides. Any alert reader of Dio can see that his Late Republican narrative gives the era’s greatest orator a key (and rather exaggerated) role, including two speeches by him and two others to or about him. Only recently, however, has scholarship really taken on board the idea that Dio engaged deeply with Cicero’s writings (beyond the *Philippics*) and even with the commentary and pseudepigraphic literature associated with him. Thus we now have an entire monograph (Montecalvo 2014) that considers Dio’s take on every phase of Cicero’s career from the mid-60s on. Also invaluable are the brief but dense analyses of Lachenaud and Coudry 2011, xviiii–xix and Lachenaud and Coudry 2014, xxii–xxvii. Article-length studies of Dio’s portrayal of Cicero and use of his writings include Porod 2022, exploring his overall career trajectory; Montecalvo 2010 on the literary background to the Philiscus dialogue; Peer 2020 on his two speeches as civil-war interventions; Fotheringham 2015 on his portrayal of Milo’s trial and the Year 52 BCE; Vielberg 2016, who sees Ciceronean political thought reflected in the Maecenas speech of book 52; and Andrews 2021 for Calenus’ “Anti-Philippic” as thematically connected to Dio’s portrait of Caracalla’s court.[[500]](#footnote-500)

Thucydides, on the other hand, has long been recognized as a principal reference point for Dio both in style and political thought.[[501]](#footnote-501) Recent studies have employed various models of intertextuality to understand the literary meaning behind the various correspondences. These include Kordoš 2010 on Thucydidean style and self-presentation in Dio’s fragmentary preface and Bertrand 2010 on strategies of allusion in Dio’s fifth decade.[[502]](#footnote-502) Pelling 2010 and Berdowski 2020 both consider Dio’s adaptation of Thucydidean concepts of *stasis*. Dio’s relationships to other classical Greek historians have been less explored, but for Herodotus see Baron 2021 and (on the Maecenas-speech specifically) Kuhlmann 2010.[[503]](#footnote-503) Recent work has also focused on Dio’s engagement with Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum* (Johnston 2019); Sallust’s *Histories* (Ballesteros Pastor 2018); Sallust along with Rutilius Rufus and Cremutius Cordus (Kemezis 2022); Seneca the Elder (Rich 2020a, with reference also to the “Clemency-Dialogue”); Phrynichus and Atticizing lexicographers (Matijašić 2020) and the genre of Greek novels (Allen 2022 and Jones 2022). A thorough study of Dio as possible reader of Tacitus remains a *desideratum*, though Devillers 2016b and Mallan 2020 point in promising directions, while Davenport 2014; Gillespie 2015; Devillers 2016a; Markov 2016b; Schulz 2019a; Schulz 2020a and Schulz 2020b all have extended comparisons between parallel episodes in the two authors.[[504]](#footnote-504)

*7. Literary Technique and Structure*

It is no longer necessary to defend the entire notion that Cassius Dio had a literary technique or agenda beyond linear storytelling. Recent scholarship has seen important discussions of various aspects of Dio’s artistry, though there also remain kinds of literary analysis that are now routinely applied to Livy or Tacitus but still seldom or ever to Dio. Traditionally, the major structural questions around Dio have centered on his use of annalistic form and its relationship to “biographical” techniques. Recent contributions in this area have included two important articles on annalistic technique: Rich 2016 on the one hand makes a strong case that large parts of Dio’s Republican narrative (including the post-Punic War period) cannot have retained the full year-by-year structure. Devillers 2016a on the other demonstrates that Dio’s imperial narrative shows him to have been a conscious and original adaptor of annalistic technique for a monarch-centered narrative. The curious implication is that what we think of as the characteristic Roman Republican form of narrative was for Dio mainly associated with the Principate and the dysfunctional Late Republic. Lindholmer 2021 argues that in fact Dio uses annalistic data only selectively in the Late Republic, precisely in order to highlight its dysfunction. For biographical aspects of Dio, Coudry 2016c is an illuminating study of how central figures of the Late Republic are integrated into Dio’s narrative, while Coltelloni-Trannoy 2016c makes important advances in the analysis of “biographical” structuring around emperors.

Broader issues of time, periodization and internal structure have become more prominent in recent years. Kemezis 2014, 94–104 argues for an internal periodization of Dio’s work into “narrative modes”. This formulation has met both assent and resistance, particularly on the idea of a distinct late-Republican *dynasteiai* phase, see Lindholmer 2018a for an extended counter-argument. On large-scale structure, see now also Markov 2021, who modifies Kemezis’ periodization scheme in line with a more cyclical scheme of constitutional change. Lindholmer 2018b and Lindholmer 2019c offer structural readings of books 36 and 39 respectively. Studies have also come out on more conceptual issues related to “time in Dio”: these include Bertrand 2015a on historical cycles, Bertrand *et al.* 2016 on annalistic form and thematic structure in the Late Republican books; Lachenaud 2016 on the dialectic between chronological narrative and authorial statements of opinion; and Baron 2019 on chronological discontinuity in the Late Republican narrative. The literary creation of space (as distinct from geography) has received less attention since the overview of Pitcher 2012, though see now Schulz 2020a on use of space by “bad emperors”.

Dio’s narrative personality and detailed self-portrait are a promising new area of approach.[[505]](#footnote-505) The unpublished thesis of Ward 2011 has very useful readings of Dio’s descriptions of his own viewing actions. Scott 2017b and Scott 2021 concentrate on self-portraiture in the contemporary narrative, while Kemezis 2021b looks at how he situates himself relative to contemporary public opinion in his earlier Principate books.[[506]](#footnote-506) Studies of particular aspects of Dio’s technique include Gotteland 2016 on vivid description in battle-scenes (for which see also Potter 2016); Pitcher 2018 on characterization; Davenport 2021a on the presentation of rumor and public opinion; and Makhlayuk 2009 on the use of anecdote.[[507]](#footnote-507) The use of exemplarity in Dio has received no systematic study, but the work of Gowing 2009 on Camillus; Martini 2010 on Marcus Aurelius; Mallan 2014 on Lucretia; Urso 2016b on Sulla; Jones 2021 on Teuta; and Coudry 2019b on several Republican figures suggests the topic would reward a general examination. In addition to the above, Osgood 2016 and Osgood 2019, respectively on the restoration of Ptolemy Auletes in 56 BCE and the reign of Elagabalus, are case-studies of the more impressionistic aspects of Dio’s narrative technique.

*8. Historical Characters and Events*

Dio obviously remains a key source for many historical eras and personages. As noted above, I cannot include all historical publications that use Dio as a source, though I have tried to cite those where textual interpretation of Dio is a key part of the argument. The next two sections are meant mainly as a guide for those looking for new scholarship on “Dio and X”. As such I have not in most instances included commentary. I have allowed considerable overlap with other sections, but have not included here works that focus wholly or heavily on a particular speech, source question or political-theoretical topic, since these are dealt with fully above. For all the various historical periods, readers are further directed to the relevant essays in Section B of this volume, as well as to Lange’s and Urso’s essays on civil wars and social struggles respective

a. Regal to Early-Mid Republic

This part of Dio has undoubtedly seen the greatest improvement in our understanding over recent years, due in large part (though not exclusively) to the publication of Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer 2019, whose several contributions are cited throughout this survey. The commentary of Urso 2013a on the Gracchan-to-Social-War period is also a major advance.[[508]](#footnote-508) Recent treatments of the regal period include Briquel 2016 and Schulz 2019b.

b. Late Republic

Again a dedicated essay collection (Osgood and Baron 2019) has now come out for this period, and its various contributions are cited in their proper places. For the Sullan period, see Urso 2016b; Berdowski 2020 (an original social-science approach to civil-war violence). For Pompey, see Coudry 2016a (along with the contributions of this and other authors detailed in Section 3) and Potter 2022. For Julius Caesar, see (in addition to material in Sections 3 and 4) Lindholmer 2020a.[[509]](#footnote-509) For Cicero, see the many publications detailed in Section 6 above. For Catiline, see Urso 2019b.

c. Augustus and the Julio-Claudians

For Augustus, see (in addition to material in section 3) Freyburger-Galland 2016 and (with reference to the “Settlement of 27 BCE”) Bellissime 2013; Hurlet 2016; Dalla Rosa 2021 and the introduction to Bellissime and Hurlet 2018 as well as (for Augustus’ legislative practice) Dalla Rosa 2019. Favuzzi 2016 gives brief interpretive notes on three passages of the Augustan narrative (51.2.6; 53.13.2; 53.30.4). Recent scholarship has also come to grips with the prominence Dio gives Livia in narrating the reigns of her husband and her son: see Bertolazzi 2015; Sion-Jenkis 2016 and Langford 2021. For Tiberius, see Platon 2016; Bono 2018; Mallan 2020 and Mallan 2021a. For Nero, see Malik 2021 and Pistellato 2021, also Künzer 2018. Schulz 2019a, along with several works of the same author detailed in section 3, deals with Nero and Domitian as contrasting examples of tyranny in Dio.

d. Flavians and Antonines[[510]](#footnote-510)

For Vitellius, see Davenport 2014. For the Flavian narrative as a whole, see Madsen 2020a. For Hadrian, see Cortes Copete 2016. For Antoninus see Juntunen 2013b (largely negative about recovering any of Dio’s text for this reign or much of Marcus’); For Marcus Aurelius see Martini 2010.

e. Severans

In addition to the material in section 2, for Septimius, see Rantala 2016 with Weiss 2012 (on his prophetic dreams); Scott 2017a and Rossiter and Brothers 2022 (both on public games). On Caracalla, see Davenport 2012; Scott 2012; Letta 2016c; Langford 2016; Zanin 2020; and Andrews 2021. Dio’s version of Julia Domna continues to receive significant attention, see Mallan 2013a; Scott 2017c; Bono 2019a; Langford 2022. The Macrinus-to-Alexander narrative now benefits from the historical commentary of Scott 2018. For Macrinus, see Scott 2013; Scott 2015; Molin 2016c. For Elagabalus and Alexander, see Greco 2012; Kemezis 2016b; Osgood 2016; Müller 2019; Rantala 2020; Chrysanthou 2021; Bertolazzi 2022; Pistellato 2022 and Pownall 2022.

f. Other

For Dio’s treatment of minor characters in the early 40s civil wars, see Scott 2019. For the mutiny of the Pannonian legions in 14 CE, see Parat 2021. For a possible identification in Dio of the character Maternus from Tacitus’ *Dialogus*, see Kragelund 2012; for Avidius Cassius and his revolt, see Kemezis 2021a. For Plautianus and his association with Sejanus, see Imrie 2021. For Dio’s narrative of various campaigns and diplomatic episodes on the frontiers, see (for the Parthian-Armenian zone) Juntunen 2013c; Juntunen 2013a; Juntunen 2020 and Brizzi 2016; and (for the Carrhae and Teutoburger disasters) Simons 2012.[[511]](#footnote-511) Riess 2015 examines Dio’s narrative of the bandit Bulla Felix, and Howley 2017 looks at Dio as evidence for the burning of letters and documents.

*9. Thematic and Cultural Topics*

While Dio is unusually focused on internal Roman politics (even for an ancient historian), his massive text still has much to tell us about his cultural and social environment. This section surveys such topics, except for those covered above (political theory, literary background and Hellenic culture, in their various sections).

As a product of the provincial elite and also a hereditary member of the aristocracy at the imperial center, Dio’s perspective on Roman imperialism has attracted considerable attention. Bertrand 2016b; Bertrand 2019; Rich 2020b; and Adler 2021 offer important perspectives on Roman imperialism in Dio. Jones 2019 considers the cultural dimensions of early Roman conquests. Dio’s accounts of non-Roman peoples are explored by Becker 2012 and Simons 2014 (both with particular attention to terminology) and Johnston 2019.[[512]](#footnote-512) Havener 2017 considers Dio’s treatment of the newly emerging Sasanian Persian regime to the east. On the related topic of Dio’s geographical vision, again crucial is the work of Bertrand 2015b and Bertrand 2016a along with Coltelloni-Trannoy 2018 and (for Asia Minor specifically) Kuhn 2022 and (for Italy) Carsana 2010. Dio’s portrayal of the imperial capital is considered by Gowing 2016 (who sees the Bithynian author engaging surprisingly little with the city of rome) while Imrie 2020 and Lange 2020 consider the role of the city’s population and its monuments in civil-war contexts. Devillers 2019 examines Dio’s portrayal of the Palatine as a locus of emperors’ activity.[[513]](#footnote-513) Carlsen 2021 looks at Dio as source for the Roman imperial economy.

Questions of gender in Cassius Dio are (regrettably but unsurprisingly) only now starting to come to the forefront of research. In addition to Gillespie in this volume, Mastrorosa 2019 is an indispensable survey of his portrayals of women and Bono 2019a provides a synoptic view of his treatment of *Augustae*.[[514]](#footnote-514) Treatments of the two most significant women in surviving Dio (Livia and Julia Domna) are considered in the previous section, and the studies of Mallan 2014 and Jones 2021 consider less prominent characters (Lucretia and Teuta respectively) as *exempla*. Tate 2022 considers how Dio deals with imperial women’s sponsorship of building projects. Concepts of masculinity in Dio deserve further study, though Rantala 2020 and Chrysanthou 2021 offer perspectives on Elagabalus’ transgressive persona.

The portrayal of divine and cult activity has been a subject of much recent work for other Roman historians, and is a promising angle for future Dio scholarship. Scheid 2016 provides a useful survey of the topic for the Augustan and Julio-Claudian books, and Lindholmer 2018c makes observations about its role in Late Republican politics. The one aspect of religion in Dio that has received remarkably full treatment in recent scholarship is emperor-worship. In particular the one passage (51.20.6–8) in which Dio describes the first cults of Augustus and Roma in Asia Minor has recently been explored by Madsen 2016a, Madsen 2016c and Sørensen 2016 (all looking at the specifics on Asia Minor) and Antoniou 2019 (on implications for Italy). Another case study of a particular cult is Hofeneder *et al.* 2013 on Apollo Grannos, as favored by Caracalla.[[515]](#footnote-515) Moving beyond the strictly religious, Stewart 2022 is a welcome examination of how Dio saw the relationship of astrological to political events, and Ash 2021 explores elements of the miraculous and divine. Another cultural phenomenon where Dio provides much for historians to engage with is public spectacle in Rome. Carlsen 2019 considers Dio’s accounts of Late Republican entertainments, while Scott 2017a and Rossiter and Brothers 2022 consider the various large-scale games held by Septimius Severus.[[516]](#footnote-516) Lange 2015 and Lange 2016 look at Dio’s portrayals of triumphal celebrations.

*10. Readership, Reception and Further Directions*

The study of Dio’s textual afterlife is the subject of Osgood’s contribution on Gibbon in this volume, but most studies in this area have concentrated on his Byzantine readers. Those works that deal primarily or wholly with Xiphilinus, Zonaras or the *Excerpta Constantiniana* are considered in section 5. Other recent articles include Mecella 2016 (on late-antique reception, including Herodian and the *Historia Augusta*), Roberto 2016b and Roberto 2016a, on Peter the Patrician and John of Antioch respectively, with considerations on the distribution of Dio’s manuscripts in the sixth century. Turning to the West in later periods, Mastrorosa 2017 looks at how Dio’s Republican speeches were excerpted in sixteenth-century Italy, notably by Remigio Nannini, and Bellissime 2018 examines the traces of the Maecenas debate to be found in Corneille’s *Cinna*.

This has been a minutely detailed, if not overcrowded, map of recent Dio scholarship, but it would be incomplete without a few arrows pointing off it toward further destinations.[[517]](#footnote-517) The purpose of much of the recent scholarship has been not to explicate Dio and answer all the questions, but to establish the basis for others to pose new questions. I have suggested a few in passing, and the above section on reception certainly suggests another direction. In general, one hopes that Dio scholarship will follow that on his Latin colleagues into more literary directions. There are large parts of the scholarship on Tacitus’ style, use of language, or his descriptive and storytelling technique that have little or no analogue in the study of Dio. If we turn to historicizing readings, the work cited above on Dio’s Severan context typically positions him at the end of a story, be it the assimilation of provincials into the imperial elite, the cultural moment of the Second Sophistic or the political culture of the Principate. There will be much to gain by reading Dio forward into late antiquity, as the precursor of Ammianus or Eunapius as much as the successor of Tacitus. There also remains much nuts-and-bolts work on further historical commentaries, critical refining of the text (especially in the early books, for which Budé editions are awaited) and indeed a serviceable English translation to replace the not always reliable Cary-Foster Loeb. Dio has much yet to promise, and this survey and companion are tools awaiting hands.[[518]](#footnote-518)

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Chapter 8: The Lost Books of Dio’s *Roman History* (1–35)

*Christopher Baron*

Cassius Dio is arguably best known as a historian of the age of Julius Caesar and Augustus, the end of the Roman Republic and the creation of the Principate. Indeed, for our knowledge of that period (49 BCE–14 CE) Dio is an important source—and a fascinating one, due to his position as a Roman senator during the Severan dynasty looking back at the foundational events of the imperial system of governance. The sole English translation of Dio’s *Roman History* to be published since Earnest Cary’s Loeb edition in the early twentieth century, in fact, contains only books 50–56 (from the aftermath of Actium to the death of Augustus, 31 BCE–14 CE) and is titled *The Roman History: The Reign of Augustus*.[[519]](#footnote-519) The other aspect of Dio’s work that usually receives attention is his account, as it survives in Xiphilinus’ epitome, of contemporary history, from the reign of Commodus until the end-point of the work (180–229 CE, books 73[72]–80[80]), since Dio explicitly comments upon his status as an eyewitness to some of the events of this period.[[520]](#footnote-520)

This focus on the Augustan and Severan eras, though understandable, tends to overshadow the fact that Dio’s *Roman History* is in essence a Greek version of the *Ab urbe condita* (“From the founding of the city”) model of Latin historiography.[[521]](#footnote-521) Now, the post-antiquity disappearance of large portions of Dio’s work is far from unique among the ancient historians. But unlike almost every other case, whether Greek or Latin—including Polybius, Diodorus, Dionysius, Livy, and Tacitus—it is the middle of Dio’s history that survives intact, rather than the beginning.[[522]](#footnote-522) We do not even have Dio’s complete preface to the work (see below on fragment 1.2–3), the place where so many of the ancient historians explained their reasons for writing, laid out their approach to the topic, established their authorial voice, and set the tone for the work as a whole. The surviving manuscripts of the *Roman History* begin *in medias res*, in the thirty-sixth of eighty books, with the campaigns of the Late Republican general L. Lucullus in 69 BCE.

In 1964 Fergus Millar commented, near the beginning of his seminal monograph, that Dio’s “treatment of the history of Rome to 146 BCE has never been discussed except in terms of source-criticism …. The task would repay anyone who attempted it”.[[523]](#footnote-523) It took nearly another half-century for Millar’s desideratum to receive sustained attention.[[524]](#footnote-524) But in the last decade or so, the stream of scholarly work on books 1–35 has finally begun to flow in earnest.[[525]](#footnote-525)

In this chapter, I will review what we know about these lost early books, in which Dio treated nearly 700 years of Roman history: how modern scholars have been able to delineate what Dio wrote; what sort of material survives; how Dio structured this portion of his work; and what we might be able to conclude about his sources and models for writing history.

*1. The “Text”: Establishing and Using it*

The first, most important, most obvious thing to note about Dio’s initial thirty-five books is that they do not survive.[[526]](#footnote-526) Scholars of ancient Greek and Roman historical writing use the term “fragments” to refer to the evidence that does exist for lost portions of historical works: these can take the form of quotations, paraphrases, and summaries in the writings of extant authors; extracts from the original work which were produced for Byzantine compilations; or (sadly much less common) pieces of papyrus or parchment which preserve passages from copies of the original work.[[527]](#footnote-527) For Dio’s books 1–35 we have each of these types of evidence, though only one instance of the third type.[[528]](#footnote-528)

The majority of our material derives from the *Constantinian Excerpts*, a vast project undertaken at Constantinople in the tenth century CE. A team of imperial scholars divided the works of twenty-six Greek historians (ancient and Byzantine, in our periodization) into short selections, using a set of fifty-three topical rubrics; they then copied out those selections to create fifty-three volumes, one for each topic. Only a handful of these volumes survive today.[[529]](#footnote-529) These excerpts have two major benefits for modern scholars studying the ancient and Byzantine Greek historians. First, the excerptors were largely faithful to the original text: comparison with the surviving portions of Greek historians’ works demonstrates that the excerpts are nearly verbatim quotations, normally with only small adjustments at the beginning and end of the excerpt.[[530]](#footnote-530) Second, when the excerptors copied out their selections in the new topical volumes, they not only grouped the passages by individual historian, but they maintained the order in which they had found them as they read through the historians’ works. This practice provides us with crucial evidence for the overall structure of the lost works (though without book numbers). We find excerpts from Dio’s *Roman History* in three of the extant sets:

- “On Virtue and Vice” (abbreviated *EV*) contains 415 excerpts from Dio’s work, 117 of them from books 1–35.

- “On Gnomic Statements” (now usually abbreviated *ES*, for *De Sententiis*; previously M, for *Excerpta Maiana*) contains two groups of Dio excerpts, the first of which (161 items) reaches down to events of 216 BCE.

- “On Embassies” (now usually abbreviated *EL*, for *De Legationibus*; previously U, for *Excerpta Ursiniana*), actually divided into two topics: embassies to the Romans from barbarians, and vice versa. Thirty-three of these excerpts derive from Dio’s lost early books.[[531]](#footnote-531)

In addition to these excerpts, we have fragments of Dio preserved in other Byzantine-era authors. The most important of these is a sixth- or seventh-century CE treatise *On Syntax*, which contains 141 verbatim quotations from Dio.[[532]](#footnote-532) These are very short, often not even complete sentences, and they provide no clues to the surrounding context in the original. On the other hand, they cite specific books of the *Roman History* as their source. Though book numbers are easily corrupted in the transmission of manuscripts, the citations from *On Syntax* do provide us with a sense of the overall economy of Dio’s first thirty-five books (see section 3 below).[[533]](#footnote-533)

Although all the above-described fragments present the usual problems of interpretation, and we can never be absolutely certain that we have the exact words Dio wrote, the nature of the *Constantinian Excerpts* and the *On Syntax* does provide a fairly secure basis for establishing a partial “text” for Dio’s books 1–35—certainly relative to the situation for many other fragmentary historians, whose works are often attested mainly via polemical or otherwise distorting contexts. But in the case of Dio, we also have a rarely available method of supplementing these fragments, thanks to the world history written by the Byzantine monk John Zonaras in the early twelfth century.[[534]](#footnote-534) Zonaras dedicates the portion of his work which we know as books 7–9 to the history of Rome down to the end of the Third Punic War (146 BCE). Although he is not explicit about his sources for this material, he does refer to Dio by name thirteen times in this section.[[535]](#footnote-535) Scholars over the course of the past century and a half have established that Zonaras indeed relies heavily on books 1–21 of Dio’s *Roman History* for long stretches of his narrative; his only other major source of material here appears to have been various *Lives* of Plutarch.

Thus, Zonaras provides invaluable evidence for Dio’s treatment of early Roman history. But we must always keep in mind that he did not produce an “epitome” of the *Roman History* equivalent to that of Xiphilinus for books 36–80. The exact nature of Zonaras’ use of Dio cannot always be pinpointed for a given passage.[[536]](#footnote-536) Sometimes we can see (based on comparison with the *Constantinian Excerpts*) that he stays very close to Dio’s text; elsewhere he has summarized extensively, or inserted his own authorial voice into the material; and of course, given the length of his text compared to Dio’s (three versus twenty-one books), we know that there is a great deal that Zonaras chose to compress or simply to omit.[[537]](#footnote-537)

So, at the very least, thanks to Zonaras we obtain a much greater sense of Dio’s history of Rome down to 146 BCE than we would if the “fragments” were all that we had. We can also use Zonaras’ narrative to place those fragments in a broader context (which, again, usually lies somewhere on the spectrum from difficult to impossible for lost Greek historical works); and, in the other direction, where the fragments preserve passages that do not appear in Zonaras, they help us see the sorts of things he chose to pass over. All evaluations of Dio arising from this material require the same caution as with any fragmentary historian, but the material is relatively bountiful.

However, one problem created by this bounty is the question of how to present it in a scholarly but user-friendly way. In instances where material from Dio’s *Roman History* survives both in the *Constantinian Excerpts* (or other sources) and in Zonaras, modern editors could place the texts literally side-by-side on the page, or they could choose to place the passages successively and assign the same fragment number with sub-designations (e.g., 1a, 1b). But delineating such fragments within Zonaras’ text is rarely so straightforward. If, for example, a surviving Constantinian excerpt is “nested” within a longer passage of Zonaras, how long does one continue with parallel columns (resulting in large amounts of white space)? Or does one “wrap” Zonaras’ text around the excerpt? At a more general level, however, such a procedure runs the danger of equating two different types of evidence: Zonaras’ text, over anything beyond a short sequence, does not represent Dio’s work in the same way as the excerpts do. Perhaps it would be best simply to print Zonaras’ text separately, with marginal references to fragments surviving in other sources. This avoids both a misleading presentation of the evidence and the heavy chopping up of Zonaras. But it is much less convenient for the reader and scholar. And one would still face the question of how to mark up Zonaras’ text, if at all, in order to indicate places where he may not have been following Dio.

The standard edition of Dio’s *Roman History* remains that of U.P. Boissevain (the three volumes containing the text were published between 1895 and 1901), a massive work of astounding toil and erudition. Volume 1 contains, after a 125-page preface (in Latin) to the whole set, the evidence for books 1–35 (pp. 1–358) and the text of books 36–40 (pp. 359–539). For the lost books, Boissevain divided his pages horizontally: the “fragments” of Dio appear in the upper section, Zonaras’ text in the lower section, each section supplied with its own apparatus criticus.[[538]](#footnote-538) Nearly a quarter of the pages in this volume containing material from books 1–21 (see below on the restriction to these books) consist solely of Zonaras.[[539]](#footnote-539)

Using and citing Volume 1 of Boissevain’s edition is made even more complicated because he chose not to assign new fragment numbers even when he decided to arrange the text differently from prior editors. Instead, when he re-ordered fragments, he retained the established number found in the previous edition of Immanuel Bekker (1849). Moreover, that system did not assign consecutive numbers to every fragment, but rather grouped those concerning the same “topic” under one number, with decimal-place numbers added to delineate different passages. Thus, for example, all fragments concerning the secession of the plebs in 494 BCE are designated as 17 (17.1, 17.2 … all the way up to 17.15). Longer Constantinian excerpts are often sub-divided within this scheme, so that fragments 17.6, 17.7, and 17.8 all derive from the same place (item 26 in the excerpts from Dio found in *ES*).[[540]](#footnote-540) In one of the more striking quirks of this arrangement, the remains of book 1 of Dio’s work in Boissevain’s edition begin with fragment 1.2, not 1.1—the latter, Boissevain notes, has been relocated to a spot between fragments 6.2 and 6.3! Fragment 1.2 is followed by 2.4, then fragment 5. The end result is a thick volume intimidating even to those with firm knowledge of ancient Greek, scholarly Latin, Greek historical writing, and the conventions of nineteenth-century erudite publications.

**[insert Fig. 1 here]**

In his first two volumes for the Loeb edition of Dio, containing the Greek text with English translation (based on that of H.B. Foster) on the facing page, Cary was confronted with the same difficult choices, perhaps even more: not just the layout on the page, but how much notation to provide, and how much caution to communicate about what appears to be Dio more or less securely. In general, Cary’s guiding principle was ease of use, naturally enough for the intended audience of the Loeb volumes. The problem remains, that for the scholar or reader consulting the text, it is not easy to remember (or one is not necessarily encouraged to remember) that much of this is not precisely what Dio originally wrote.[[541]](#footnote-541)

Finally, within these lost thirty-five books there is an important distinction in the quantity of our evidence. When Zonaras reaches the year 146 BCE in his narrative, in what was probably the last paragraph of the first part of his work, he laments the fact that he has been unable to find a copy of Dio’s work containing the immediately following books.[[542]](#footnote-542) Zonaras concludes by saying, don’t blame me for skipping this period; it is not out of disdain, or laziness, or hesitation,

ἀλλ’ ἀπορίᾳ βίβλων αἵπερ αὐτὰ διεξίασι, καὶ ταῦτα πολλάκις ζητήσαντί μοι ταύτας, μὴ εὑρηκότι δ’ ὅμως, οὐκ οἶδα εἴθ’ ὅτι μὴ σώζοιντο, τοῦ χρόνου διεφθαρκότος αὐτάς, εἴθ’ ὅτι μὴ φροντιστικώτερον τὴν τούτων ἴσως ζήτησιν ἐποιήσαντο οἷς αὐτὴν ἀνεθέμην, αὐτὸς ὑπερόριος ὢν καὶ πόρρω τοῦ ἄστεος ἐν νησιδίῳ ἐνδιαιτώμενος.

but rather out of a lack of those very books which cover these events, and although I have often sought them out, nonetheless I could not find them; I do not know whether this is because they have not been preserved (time having destroyed them), or because those whom I entrusted with the search for them perhaps did so not in full seriousness (I myself being in exile and far from the city, living on a little island).[[543]](#footnote-543)

As a result, for books 22–35 of Dio we lack any information beyond the fragments—in fact, the evidence for these books comes almost solely from *EV*.[[544]](#footnote-544) Thus, in the Loeb edition one will find 426 pages of English from the first twenty-one books of Dio (including Zonaras), but only forty-five pages from the next fourteen books. Similarly, books 1–21/Zonaras fill 320 pages of Greek text in Boissevain’s edition, but books 22–35 only thirty-four pages (followed by 3 pages of fragments of uncertain placement). The evidence for books 30–35 is so scanty that Boissevain elected not to attempt to divide these fragments into separate books.

*2. Accidents of Preservation*

What remains of the preface to Dio’s massive work is now fragment 1.2–3, an excerpt from *ES*.[[545]](#footnote-545)

… πάντα ὡς εἰπεῖν τὰ περὶ αὐτῶν τισι γεγραμμένα, συνέγραψα δὲ οὐ πάντα ἀλλ’ ὅσα ἐξέκρινα. μὴ μέντοι μηδ’ ὅτι κεκαλλιεπημένοις, ἐς ὅσον γε καὶ τὰ πράγματα ἐπέτρεψε, λόγοις κέχρημαι, ἐς τὴν ἀλήθειαν αὐτῶν διὰ τοῦτό τις ὑποπτεύσῃ, ὅπερ ἐπ’ ἄλλων τινῶν συμβέβηκεν· ἐγὼ γὰρ ἀμφότερα, ὡς οἷόν τε ἦν, ὁμοίως ἀκριβῶσαι ἐσπούδασα. ἄρξομαι δὲ ὅθενπερ τὰ σαφέστατα τῶν περὶ τήνδε τὴν γῆν, ἣν κατοικοῦμεν, συμβῆναι λεγομένων παρελάβομεν.[[546]](#footnote-546)

… [I have read?] everything, so to speak, which has been written by anyone concerning them; but I have not recorded everything, only as many things as I singled out. Furthermore, let no one suspect the truth of what I have written – this very thing has befallen others – on account of the fact that I have used fine language, at least as far as the deeds permit; for I earnestly sought to be equally exact, as far as I was able, on both accounts. I will begin at precisely the place whence we have received the clearest reports of what is said to have happened concerning this land in which we live.

Dio attempts to establish an expectation of both accuracy and readability. His statement of comprehensive research is balanced by his principle of selectivity; and his claim to stylistic excellence is accompanied by an affirmation that the truth has not been neglected.

More could be said about the place of Dio’s preface within the tradition of Greco-Roman historical writing. Here, however, I introduce this piece of the preface as an example of the sheer accident of preservation and how it shapes our vision of Dio’s work. We are fortunate that the volume of “gnomic statements” (*ES*) is one of the Byzantine excerpt collections which has survived, since it provides material across a number of areas.

First, we find a number of fragments on Dio’s methodology beyond the preface. Early in the work—the third excerpt preserved in *ES*—Dio elaborated on his principles of selection (fr. 2.4):

ὅτι περὶ Τυρσηνῶν φησιν ὁ Δίων “ταῦτα γὰρ καὶ προσῆκεν ἐνταῦθα τοῦ λόγου περὶ αὐτῶν γεγράφθαι· ἑτέρωθι καὶ ἄλλο τι καὶ αὖθις αὖ ἕτερον, ὅτῳ ποτ’ ἂν ἡ διέξοδος τῆς συγγραφῆς τὸ ἀεὶ παρὸν εὐτρεπίζουσα προστύχῃ, κατὰ καιρὸν εἰρήσεται. τὸ δ’ αὐτὸ τοῦτο καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἀρκούντως ἔχοντες· τὰ μὲν γὰρ τῶν Ῥωμαίων πάντα κατὰ δύναμιν ἐπέξειμι, τῶν δὲ δὴ λοιπῶν τὰ πρόσφορα αὐτοῖς μόνα γεγράψεται”.

Concerning the Etruscans, Dio says: “For it is fitting that these facts about them be recorded at this point in the narrative. Elsewhere too other facts will be noted from time to time, in their proper places, whenever the course of the history provides the opportunity to do so. The same thing will be sufficient concerning other essential facts as well. For while I will go through all the affairs of the Romans as best I can, of the affairs of the rest of the world, only those which have a bearing on them (the Romans) will be recorded”.

From the perspective of the modern historian, it is completely natural (indeed, necessary) to include the Etruscans in a treatment of early Rome. So, it is interesting to see that Dio felt the need to remind his readers that they should not expect universal history.[[547]](#footnote-547) Similarly, in a passage concerning the fourth century, Dio explains his reasons for not only digressing from his narrative in order to include a migration of some sort (a *metoikisis*), but also specifying the Olympiad in which it occurred (fr. 32). Here we find a rare indication of potential polemic on Dio’s part: his explanation is that “the time (ὁ χρόνος) of the event has escaped most men’s notice.”[[548]](#footnote-548)

Second, *ES* preserves a number of authorial asides. These are sometimes banal and general, but, given the nature of the excerpting process, they also allow us glimpses of the content Dio chose to include (fr. 5.1):[[549]](#footnote-549)

… (οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν οὔτε προϊδέσθαι πάντα ἀνθρώπῳ ὄντι οὔτ’ ἀποτροπὴν τῶν ἀναγκαίως ἐσομένων εὑρεῖν) τιμωρούς τινας τῆς ἀδικίας αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς κόρης ἐκείνης γεννηθῆναι.

… [it was necessary] (for it is impossible for one who is mortal either to foresee everything or to find a way to avoid what must happen) that avengers of his wrongdoing were to be born from that maiden.

The maxim itself (the parenthetical statement) could fit a multitude of situations. Fortunately, the excerptor also provided a tiny piece of the surrounding context, from which we can see that Dio mentioned the story of Amulius and Rhea Silvia. We might have assumed that he would include this episode (the avengers are Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome), but excerpts such as this can also reveal what attitude Dio took toward these stories: in the following fragment (5.3), Dio is quoted as saying that Remus and Romulus, “having fallen into civil conflict with one another, made it very clear that some men handle dangers together much more steadily than they do good fortune.” Sometimes, however, even that basic context is lacking (fr. 5.4):

καὶ αὐτοί τε ἐξέμαθον καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἐξεδίδαξαν ὅτι οὔθ’ οἱ τιμωρούμενοί τινας κατορθοῦσι πάντως, ὅτι προηδίκηνται, οὔθ’ οἱ παρὰ τῶν κρειττόνων ἀπαιτοῦντές τινα ἀπολαμβάνουσιν αὐτά, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ προσαπολλύουσιν.

And they themselves learned, and taught others, that neither those seeking vengeance for something are completely successful, (simply) because they have previously been wronged, nor do those making demands of their betters obtain what they demand, but rather, oftentimes, they lose in addition even what they already had.

Bekker suggested that “they themselves” should refer to the inhabitants of three neighboring towns (Caenina, Crustumerium, and Antemnae) who were overly hasty in attacking Rome after the abduction of some of their daughters, as we read in Livy (1.10: “Romulus … demonstrated that anger without strength goes for nothing,” trans. T.J. Luce).[[550]](#footnote-550) Without knowledge of the Roman historical tradition from elsewhere, we would be completely in the dark.

Still, the occasional snippets of authorial commentary can shed valuable light. In a fairly long excerpt that probably concerns the leadup to the first secession of the plebs (494 BCE, perhaps in book 4: fr. 17.1–3), Dio offers an explanation of how the Romans at this time fell into civil strife, and he goes on to note that they often suffered greater harm at each other’s hands than at the hands of their external enemies (sentiments along the lines of the *metus hostilis* theory popular with several Roman historians). The excerpt ends with Dio’s own “prophecy”:

καί μοι καὶ καταμαντεύσασθαι ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐπέρχεται ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως ἄλλως εἴτ’ οὖν τῆς δυνάμεως εἴτ’ οὖν τῆς ἀρχῆς στερηθεῖεν, εἰ μὴ δι’ ἀλλήλων σφαλεῖεν.

On this basis, it occurs to me to surmise that it is impossible for them to be deprived of either their power or their empire in any other way than if they are brought down through their own conflicts.

Excerpts such as this reveal that Dio inserted his own voice and his own day into the *Roman History* from the beginning.

The third element of Dio’s work preserved by *ES* are speeches (some evidence for which also derives from *EL*). This is a crucial set of evidence for us, since Zonaras, for the most part, omits direct speeches from his own work (with some brief but interesting exceptions), though he often alludes to their presence in Dio.[[551]](#footnote-551) A recent book-length treatment of the speeches in Dio’s Republican and Augustan books (books 3–56) argues that we should take them seriously as part of Dio’s historiographical project.[[552]](#footnote-552) This is a welcome rejoinder to the old(-fashioned) view that Dio’s speeches are merely rhetorical exercises, stylistic ornaments with little or no relation to his historical narrative, and it brings scholarship on Dio in line with that of the last forty years on the rest of the Greek historians.

A series of fragments from *ES* which come from direct speeches offer a fascinating if only dimly visible glimpse of how Dio envisioned the grand scope of Roman history and structured his work accordingly. They can be combined with a group of fragments in *On Syntax* attributed to Dio’s third book. We know that book 52, which survives in the direct manuscript tradition, marks the transition from the civil wars which brought down the Republic to the Principate of Augustus. It consists almost solely of a pair of lengthy speeches, by Agrippa and Maecenas, offering Octavian advice on what sort of government to install. The fragments from book 3 seem to indicate that this book served a similar purpose: employing a set-piece debate to mark the transition from the monarchy of early Rome (treated in books 1 and 2) to the early Republic.[[553]](#footnote-553)

The other excerpt collection that bears on Dio’s lost books is “On Virtue and Vice” (*EV*). We thus have some character sketches, including long passages on Tarquin the Elder (fr. 9.1­–4) and Tarquin the Proud (fr. 11.2–6), on Hannibal (fr. 54), and on Scipio Aemilianus (fr. 70.4–9). It has been noted that the portrayals of Hannibal and Scipio borrow elements from Thucydides’ sketch of Themistocles.[[554]](#footnote-554) But with the latter Tarquin, we perhaps see Dio’s own touch more clearly; here, he dwells at length on the various ways in which the last king of Rome mistreated the Senate, an overriding contemporary concern for the historian.[[555]](#footnote-555) As with *ES*, the excerptor’s focus can sometimes preserve, in passing, valuable information on Dio’s historical outlook.

At the other end of the spectrum, we have the quotations from *On Syntax* and Byzantine lexicographers. Even when we trust or can confidently emend the book numbers attached to them, most of these fragments are not easily placed in a specific historical context, since they often consist of quite basic sentences or phrases, sometimes from speeches. My personal favorite is fragment 6.4:

Δίων α΄ βιβλίῳ «ταῦτά τε οὖν ὁ Νουμᾶς ἐνόμισεν.»

Dio in Book 1 (says): “These things, then, Numa established.”

Ironically, perhaps, this turns out to be an important citation, since—if the book number is transmitted correctly—it shows that Dio dealt with Romulus and Numa in book 1, and (given the evidence in its totality) the rest of the kings of Rome in book 2.

*3. The Structure of Dio’s Work*

Despite the uncertainties of the book numbers, we do have some “anchor” points for Dio’s allocation of space. Occasionally, a figure will be named in a brief quotation which includes a book number, as with Numa just above. A notice concerning L. Valerius serving as an admiral (fr. 39.4) and attributed to book 9 can be placed in 282 BCE, during Rome’s conflict with Tarentum. In other cases, we can compare a preserved quotation with Zonaras’ text in order to identify the historical context. Thus, fragment 57.47, found in a Suda entry (s.v. ἐδικαιώθησαν) and attributed to Dio’s book 16, is a sentence from a direct speech in which the speaker addresses a group of prisoners. The same sentence is found in Zonaras (9.10), whence we discover that the speaker was Scipio Africanus, announcing the fate of a group of mutinous soldiers in Spain, in 207 or 206 BCE. Other suggestions can be posited based on comparison with other surviving treatments of Roman history.[[556]](#footnote-556)

The Suda reports that Dio organized his work by “decads”, that is, ten-book sets, and in fact it does appear that Dio often chose to end or begin those decads with momentous events.[[557]](#footnote-557) We can see this for ourselves in the extant books: book 40 ends with Julius Caesar and his army at the Rubicon; book 50 ends with Octavian’s victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. The evidence for the lost early books requires some scholarly supposition, but we can be fairly certain that the same held true there. Book 11 treated the outbreak of the First Punic War in 264 BCE, Rome’s first sustained venture across the water and the beginning of its long conflict with the other major geopolitical power in the western Mediterranean.[[558]](#footnote-558) Book 21 probably covered both the Third Punic War—which ended with the destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE by Scipio Aemilianus—and the simultaneous troubles in Greece, culminating in the sack of Corinth by C. Memmius in the same year.[[559]](#footnote-559) Although the remains of books 22–35 are extremely scanty, we do have a fragment attributed to book 31 (fr. 99.1a) which relates that someone was appointed against Mithridates. One likely scenario, then, is that book 30 concluded the Social War and its immediate aftermath, and book 31 began in 88 BCE with the Mithridatic War.

Dio’s first decad covered only a slightly longer chronological spread than Livy’s (down to 265 BCE, versus 293 BCE for Livy)—somewhat remarkably, given the fact that Dio needed to cover 220 more years of Roman history than Livy did, and that he chose to do so in just more than half the number of books (80 versus 142).[[560]](#footnote-560) The similar scope of each historian’s first decad partially results from Dio’s decision to devote his first two books to the regal period, and his third book to the transition from monarchy to Republic. Whereas Livy seems anxious to reach the story of Roman actions under liberty (2.1.1), Dio prefers to linger a bit longer on a form of government that had, for all intents and purposes, now returned to Rome.[[561]](#footnote-561) Even more, the decision reflects Dio’s greater interest in “constitutional” questions, not just for their own sake, but, as scholars have argued, as a structural device in thinking about how to organize Roman history.

Dio makes up the necessary ground in his second decad, which covers Rome’s expansion from central Italian power to Mediterranean empire, including nearly the entirety of her conflict with Carthage. Dio’s twentieth book probably ended in 150 BCE, on the eve of the Third Punic War; Livy did not reach the same year until his forty-eighth book. Dio does dwell on the war with Hannibal at some length—not an entire decad, as in Livy, but still five books (13–17). However, it appears that Dio explicitly passed over two periods of time in the early second century. Zonaras, after a paragraph on the death of Philip V of Macedon and Perseus’ succession to the throne (179 BCE), writes, “In the period after this, things happened; however, they were not so incredibly important as to be thought worthy of recording”. In the next sentence we are in 172 BCE, in the leadup to the Third Macedonian War. A similar sentiment appears later concerning the 150s.[[562]](#footnote-562)

Although Zonaras is writing an epitome of world history—and thus we would expect some compression—these two statements are thought to belong to Dio himself, rather than Zonaras. The loss of this portion of the manuscript of *ES* (after 216 BCE) means that we have few excerpts for this stretch of narrative. But given Zonaras’ general practice and the anchor points we do have, it does appear that Dio moved quite quickly through the first half of the second century BCE, focusing on the well-known battles, incidents, and figures—Cynoscephalae, the fortunes of the Scipios, the death of Hannibal, Pydna and its aftermath—in order to reach the Third Punic War and the destruction of Carthage and Corinth.[[563]](#footnote-563)

*4. Sources and Models*

Although Dio was reviving the *Ab urbe condita* model of Roman history writing, he did not choose simply to rewrite and extend Livy. In fact, the work of scholars beginning with Eduard Schwartz in 1899 has, it now seems, established that Dio did not follow either Livy or Dionysius—the two extended treatments of early Rome which survive today—as a “main source” for his history of the regal period or the early and middle Republic.[[564]](#footnote-564)

In a 1974 article, Jan Libourel pointed out that Dio’s account of early Roman history is more “violent and melodramatic” than the others we can read, and neither the masses nor the patricians are portrayed in a flattering light. Libourel posited that Dio took this from a unique source (unknown to us), since there are so many variants from both Livy and Dionysius. That is one possible conclusion, and in line with the tenets of traditional *Quellenforschung* research which was still, if barely, hanging on in Libourel’s day. Most scholars today would suggest another conclusion: that we take Dio at his word when he tells us, in the preface (above, fr. 1.2–3), that he read “nearly everything” anyone had written about Rome—in other words, that we treat him as a conscientious and original historian.[[565]](#footnote-565) Such an approach allows us to see that Dio was not afraid to enter into competition with his predecessors.[[566]](#footnote-566)

Libourel’s analysis, however, remains valuable; at the very least, Dio incorporated someone who was not Livy, Dionysius, or one of their major sources into his library. Scholars of Greco-Roman historiography today would emphasize Dio’s *choice* to frame his narrative in this way after his thorough reading of the sources, and (one might also argue) as a reflection of his own thoughts on, and experience of, governing Rome. Dio’s position as a Roman senator and consul may be part of the explanation for one of the features of his history of the Republic which has been highlighted recently, his attention to the origin and development of institutional governing structures. Zonaras preserves a series of excursuses on the various magistracies of the Republic, which treat those offices in a systematic manner not found in any extant historian.[[567]](#footnote-567)

Most recently, it has been argued that Dio’s originality is seen not only in his selection of events and his interest in institutions, but also at a higher-order level of historical thinking. Christopher Burden-Strevens finds that Dio differed from his predecessors, and especially from the Latin tradition, in his four “explanatory axes” for the downfall of the Republic: the deleterious effects of rhetoric; “democracy” as the moral weak point of the Republic; the role of Rome’s political institutions and particular magistracies; and imperial expansion.[[568]](#footnote-568) Mads Lindholmer proposes that, rather than following the traditional model of Roman decline from an “ideal(ized)” Republic, Dio instead seems to have seen the seeds of decay planted from the very beginning, especially via the competition for political success and honors.[[569]](#footnote-569) Overall, the impetus provided by the modern study of Greek historiography—to consider Dio as a historian in his own right, rather than a repository of lost sources—has revealed his treatment of the Republican period to be a rewriting of Roman history from a different perspective than that of his predecessors.

Of course, even if a unique and original Dio has emerged in the twenty-first century, we must remember that he was working within a dual tradition of historical writing (Greek and Latin) which only allowed so much room to maneuver. It is also undeniable that Dio modeled himself on Thucydides in various ways. Much has been written about this over the course of modern scholarship on Dio; as Emil Litsch put it in 1893, “Cassius Dio did not just read Thucydides, he eagerly collected and converted many things from him for his own use”.[[570]](#footnote-570) Thucydides’ influence on Dio is felt even in the remains of the lost early books, as Millar wrote (about the *Roman History* as a whole), “not only on his language but sometimes the whole cast of his thought”.[[571]](#footnote-571) Dio’s remarks on the outbreak of the First Punic War, for example (fr. 43.1–3), not only include the distinction between the publicly expressed reasons and the true causes, but also indicate each side’s fear of the other’s growing power as one of those true causes (cf. Thuc. 1.23 on Athens and Sparta).

But the obvious presence of Thucydidean elements in Dio’s work has dominated scholars’ attention to the detriment of other potential influences. One of the more intriguing of these is Herodotus, the other important model for ancient Greek historians. Guy Lachenaud made an initial attempt to delineate Dio’s debt to Herodotus in the extant books and Xiphilinus; I have recently argued elsewhere that it is in the lost early books in particular, as the Romans continually encounter other peoples and nations, that we might expect Herodotus’ approach to have been a useful model for Dio.[[572]](#footnote-572) Here, I can only put forward some select potential instances. A number of times in the fragments, Dio expresses amazement at the deeds he narrates. For example, in his comments on the Roman defeat at the hands of the Samnites in 321 BCE, known as the Caudine Forks, Dio begins: “One could indeed marvel at many of the things that happen to the human race, not least what happened at that time”.[[573]](#footnote-573) More marveling occurs, this time in the first person (θαυμάζω), in the story of Decius’ *devotio* turning the tide of battle against the Latins c. 340 BCE, and Dio closes his remarks thusly: “Well, the truth of the affair and the causes responsible for it shall be left to others to investigate”.[[574]](#footnote-574) Both the sentiment and the authorial tone recall Herodotus’ engagement with his material and his reader.

As a final reminder of the various influences on Dio’s historical writing, we can note that the first two direct speeches in the *Roman History*, as far as we can tell from the surviving evidence, are delivered by women: Hersilia and the Sabine women, preventing battle between their fathers and husbands; and Lucretia, just before her suicide.[[575]](#footnote-575) What would Thucydides have thought about that?

*5. Conclusion*

Given the nature of our evidence, we have not just a partial but a particular glimpse of the lost early books of Dio’s *Roman History*: instances of virtue and vice, moralizing *sententiae*, discourses public and private. Zonaras at least provides the backbone of Dio’s narrative down to 146 BCE. The loss of books 22–35 is especially sad: fourteen books covering two crucial generations of the Late Republic.[[576]](#footnote-576) The meager nature of the evidence also hinders our ability to reach conclusions about Dio’s interpretation of the fall of the Republic, especially the question of when, or whether, a transition from Republic to “*dynasteia*” occurred.[[577]](#footnote-577)

On the other hand, as Marianne Coudry has pointed out, within the evidence that does survive we find the names of most of the “great men” of Roman history.[[578]](#footnote-578) Furthermore, the work of recent scholars shows that enough material exists to demonstrate that Dio’s narrative and explanation of the rise and decline of the Republic were novel ones in numerous respects. And, if Burden-Strevens is correct that the speeches are the key to understanding Dio’s interpretation of the course of the history of the Roman Republic, then we are relatively well-served, considering the circumstances.[[579]](#footnote-579) All this taken together, combined with the fact that we have a substantial surviving portion of the work to compare with the fragmentary material, opens the door for much future, fruitful study of this uniquely placed historian of Rome.

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Chapter 9: Cassius Dio and the Last Decad(e)s of the Roman Republic: Understanding the Collapse of the Republican Regime (Books 21–50)

*Estelle Bertrand*

Cassius Dio’s *Roman History* aimed to unite past and present in a single temporal continuum, using the annalistic methods of earlier Roman historians. Within this impressive scope, the period corresponding to the end of the Republic is given pride of place. Its importance is evidenced, first and foremost, by the breadth of the narrative dedicated to it. Three decads out of a total eight (books 21–50) are reserved for the events of hardly more than one century: that is, the period between the destruction of Carthage and Corinth on the one hand (149/146 BCE; the lacunose state of the third decad precludes absolute certainty), and the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE on the other. Furthermore, the insertion of a discourse on political philosophy in book 52 concludes the Republican narrative and sets side by side the Republican constitution at the time of its demise and the monarchical regime (52.2–40).[[580]](#footnote-580) The section dedicated to the Late Republic also witnesses a change in the narrative mode adopted: Dio progressively dilutes the annalistic model into a new thematic structure, according to which a biographical focus gradually appears; this new structure coincides also with the gradual emergence of personal and monarchical power. Finally (and most importantly), it is in this period that Dio adopts a specific political lexicon which denotes the Late Republic as if it were a new kind of political regime: the *dynasteia*, a power model that Dio opposes to the Republic,[[581]](#footnote-581) and sets between the Republic and the return of monarchy under augustus. To Dio, the *dynasteia* no longer properly corresponds to the Republic but is not, strictly speaking, a *monarchia* either (52.1.1):[[582]](#footnote-582)

ταῦτα μὲν ἔν τε τῇ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ δημοκρατίᾳ ταῖς τε δυναστείαις, πέντε τε καὶ εἴκοσι καὶ ἑπτακοσίοις ἔτεσι, καὶ ἔπραξαν οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ ἔπαθον· ἐκ δὲ τούτου μοναρχεῖσθαι αὖθις ἀκριβῶς ἤρξαντο.

Such were the achievements of the Romans and such their sufferings under the kingship, under the republic, and under the dominion of a few, during a period of seven hundred and twenty-five years. After this, they reverted to what was, strictly speaking, a monarchy.

All these elements evince a profound meditation on Dio’s part concerning the importance of political changes or “*metabolai*” in the Late Republic, which also explains the marked interest it has enjoyed in modern historiography.

Dio’s account of the Late Roman Republic is one of the most studied portions of his *Roman History*.[[583]](#footnote-583) There are several reasons for the interest it has enjoyed. First, it has a markedly political complexion which reveals the historian’s fundamental analysis of political regimes and his causation of the transition from Republic to Principate;[[584]](#footnote-584) secondly, it has been preserved for the most part in the direct tradition; thirdly, aside from Appian it is the only extensive narrative of the end of the Republic, and our *only* such source for the period from 35 BCE onward. Most of the main topics regarding this portion of the *Roman History* have already been richly explored—for example Dio’s attitude toward different political regimes, his sources and models, and his narrative structure. Within these areas of enquiry, certain topics have garnered particular attention: Dio’s independence from his main literary models (especially Livy and Thucydides);[[585]](#footnote-585) the variety of his sources, including non-literary documents,[[586]](#footnote-586) and the use and transmission of non-Livian sources;[[587]](#footnote-587) the flexibility of his annalistic structure;[[588]](#footnote-588) the high reliability of his institutional information;[[589]](#footnote-589) and his innovative political analysis of the degradation of Republic into *dynasteiai*.[[590]](#footnote-590)

Attempting to account for all the work dedicated to these topics is well beyond the scope of this chapter. Twenty years ago, Andrew Lintott’s study of Dio’s narrative of the Late Republic proposed to examine “how Dio wrote history and his strengths and weaknesses”.[[591]](#footnote-591) This paper proposes a different approach. In conversation with the latest studies outlined above, I undertake a fresh reading of the role of this account in Dio’s *Roman History*, accounting for its peculiarities and originality, and focusing not only on “how” he wrote the history of the Late Republic, but also *why* he did so. I show that Dio’s decision to rupture the annalistic organization of his work—evinced also by the increasing role of prominent figures who embody *dynasteiai*—is clearly connected to institutional degradation. Such a degradation, in its turn, was in Dio’s view caused by the excessive growth of Roman imperialism, one of the main features of the end of Roman Republic in Dio’s *Roman History*.

*The Structure and Subject-Matter of the Late Republican Account: Between Annalistic and Thematic Units*

Modern historians have traditionally assigned the account of the end of the republic to books 36–50 of the *roman History*.[[592]](#footnote-592) This convention mostly arises, on the one hand, from the integral preservation of the text of these books (that of books 21–35 has been lost), and, on the other hand, from the ‘bookmark’ constituted by the Agrippa-Maecenas debate, which strictly speaking initiates the Principate as underlined at the beginning of book 52. However, the end of the Republic is not solely developed in books 36–50 but rather attains its full development across the third, fourth, and fifth decads (books 21–50). Externally, these three decads chart the hardening of Rome’s foreign policy as shown in the wars with Carthage and Corinth (149–146 BCE) and the wars of conquest in the first century, the consequences of which will weigh heavily on the stability of the Republic. Internally, they cover the outbreak of civil unrest and *stasis* which Dio, like Appian, associates with the onset of a major degradation issuing from the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus onwards. This is further signified by the first instance of the term *dynasteia* to denote the tribune’s power at this earlier point.[[593]](#footnote-593) These decads conclude with the Battle of Actium at the end of book 50, which is shown to close the Republican cycle, as confirmed by the beginning of book 51 (51.1.1):[[594]](#footnote-594)

τοιαύτη τις ἡ ναυμαχία αὐτῶν τῇ δευτέρᾳ τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου ἐγένετο. τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ ἄλλως εἶπον ῾οὐδὲ γὰρ εἴωθα αὐτὸ ποιεῖν᾽ ἀλλ᾽ ὅτι τότε πρῶτον ὁ Καῖσαρ τὸ κράτος πᾶν μόνος ἔσχεν, ὥστε καὶ τὴν ἀπαρίθμησιν τῶν τῆς μοναρχίας αὐτοῦ ἐτῶν ἀπ᾽ ἐκείνης τῆς ἡμέρας ἀκριβοῦσθαι.

Such was the naval battle in which they engaged on the second of September. I do not mention this date without a particular reason, nor am I, in fact, accustomed to do so; but Caesar now for the first time held all the power alone, and consequently the years of his *monarchia* are properly reckoned from that day.

Whole sections of that cycle are irretrievably lost: for the third decad—which would likely have covered the sixty years of events between the wars with Carthage and Corinth and the Social War (90 BCE)—we do not have Zonaras’ summary because he himself did not have those books of Dio which followed the fall of Carthage to hand, and there remain only fragments drawn from the *Excerpta Constantiniana*, whose order and context are difficult to establish. Of books 31–35, only seven fragments in total are known, out of which only one is contextualized, fragment 99.1; this mentions the Senate and the people ascribing the war against Mithridates to one unnamed individual (Sulla?) and is consequently ascribed to book 31.[[595]](#footnote-595)

These lacunae notwithstanding, it is nevertheless possible to study the way in which Dio organized the contents of those decads dealing with the end of the Republic, and to bring to light those evolutions peculiar to the Late Republican account. We can still trace the structuring role of the decad, a unit of ten books that had been adopted by most Greek historians of the Hellenistic and Roman period because it eased the stacking of ten rolls on a library shelf.[[596]](#footnote-596) Beyond the unity imposed by material considerations, each decad offers a chrono-thematic unity emphasized by the purposeful way in which it records the first and last events contained within (table 1).[[597]](#footnote-597) This highlighting of the opening and closing of a decad is patently observable in the fifth decad of Dio, preserved in its entirety. Book 41 opens in January 49 BCE with a scene in the Senate which set off the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, the first stage in the near-constant conflicts that will henceforward make up the core of Dio’s narrative, while the decad ends at book 50 with the Battle of Actium, marking the beginning of Octavian’s monarchical power. It is probably no accident that book 50 numbers only thirty-five chapters—at least ten chapters less than the average in this decad—in order to make this battle the conclusion of the Republican cycle, as also seen in the famous beginning of book 51.1.1 quoted above.

Table 1: The decade structure in Late Republican books

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decade | Begins | Ends | Period |
| 3  Books 21–30 | (Rich 2016) fr. 71.2:  Phameas deserts Carthaginians, 149  (Urso 2013) fr. 70.4–9:  Portrait of Scipio Aemilianus | Fr.100: indiscipline of the army of L. Porcius Cato | 149–90 |
| 4  Books 31–40 | Fr. 99.1: war against Mithridates  “And he has been appointed against Mithridates by both the people and the Senate” | 40.66: conflict between Pompeian partisans and Caesarians | 89/88–50 |
| 5  Books 41–50 | 41. 1–3: senatorial setting of January 49, which constrains Caesar to dismiss his legions | 50.32–35: battle of Actium | 49–31 |
| 6  Books 51–60 | 51.1.1: “Such was the battle in which they engaged on the second of September. I do not mention this date without a particular reason, nor am I, in fact, accustomed to do so; but **Caesar now for the first time held all the power alone, and consequently the years of his *monarchia* are properly reckoned from that day**”. |  |  |

Likewise, if fragment 99.1 opened book 31, we may suppose that the fourth decad opened with the unleashing of the war against Mithridates in 88 BCE, which in Dio’s view started the era of Late Republican infighting over military commands. This topic dominates the fourth decad, which ends with Pompey’s maneuvers to deny Caesar his command and his forces. Such conjectures justify the hypothesis that the third decad began with the Third Punic War (the account would have started with a portrait of Scipio Aemilianus, or with the desertion of Phameas in 149 [fr. 71.2]),[[598]](#footnote-598) and then ended with the Social War; its keynote seems to be the overturning of the Republican order linked to difficult external wars that caused a degradation of the regime, soon apparent in the initiatives of the tribune Tiberius Gracchus.

Thus, at the end of the republic, the annalistic structure—broadly observable in the Republican account by the division into consular years—is reframed by Dio within a thematic structuring by units that transcend the book-divisions.[[599]](#footnote-599) In fact, except for the moment of the arrival of Octavian onto the political scene at 45.1.1,[[600]](#footnote-600) book-divisions are rarely clearly marked out and the history breaks free from the annalistic structure. The breakdown of organization by decad instills another rhythm into the account of the end of the Republic and brings about event-driven units, which serve as milestones in the degradation of the Republican regime towards its mutation into despotism (*dynasteia*). This breakdown of the narrative into thematic units is reinforced by the recurrence of major themes specific to each decad: for example, challenges to public order in third decad and the proliferation of extraordinary commands (which themselves lead to *stasis*) in the fourth decad. In the fifth decad the ruin of the Republic takes center stage, foreshadowed by presaging comments and Dio’s personal observations. For example, Dio notes the subservience of the citizens to the victor at the outcome of the Battle of Pharsalus (41.56.1); at the end of year 44 BCE, prophecies forewarn of the ruin of the Republic (45.17.6); prior to Modena in 43 BCE, Dio similarly again notes the subservience of the citizens to the victor (46.32.1); the war’s endgame is described as the ruin of the Republic (46.34.4:); Philippi is marked out as a struggle between the defenders of the people’s freedom and tyranny (47.9.3); and before Actium, a note presages its significance in stealing democratic government from the people (50.1.1).[[601]](#footnote-601)

The more regular use of thematic units can be observed at the level of both decads and books. Thus, for example, while in the Late Republican books the account observes the annalistic convention that has “*domi*” and “*militiae*” events following each other, Dio increasingly resorts to longer chronological units unconstrained by the pattern of the consular year. He does so not only in order to sequence his narration by geographical areas but also to highlight the connection between external and internal events. Such is the case for Roman affairs between 53 and 51 BCE that are condensed in a fourteen-chapter *analepsis* at 40.44–58, after Caesar’s conquests, in order to justify Caesar’s decision not to renounce his military command or dismiss his troops, a decision that will trigger the civil war that occupies the following decad.[[602]](#footnote-602) This also applies to Brutus’ and Cassius’ Eastern operations between their departure from Rome after Caesar’s death in April 44 BCE (mentioned at 44.3.7) and the opening of the campaigns of the triumvirs Anthony and Octavian in the Spring of 42 BCE. Dio inserts their two-year military operation in the core of book 47 (chapters 20–31), which allows him to maintain the flow of the narration in book 44 uninterrupted. This also counterbalances the triumvirs’ dispositions against the citizenry, the violence of which the historian had already castigated, stressing the contrast between the triumvirs’ personalpower and Republican *dēmokratia*.[[603]](#footnote-603) In this respect, the narrative of Sextus Pompeius’ actions from 44 BCE onward, delayed to 48.17–21 and thus arriving *after* the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE, allows Dio to insert the campaign of Pompeius’ son into the list of the *dynasteiai* which prevail after the death of the “true defenders” of the Republican regime.

Interestingly, this applies also to the third decad: even if it is much more difficult to study, it remains possible to identify the use of chronological units for military operations, notably for the war against the Celtiberians and the Lusitanians retraced alongside the portrait of Viriathus their leader, and which probably included the account of preceding events starting with the onset of the hostilities in 154 (fr. 73.1–4).

So, while the annalistic conventions remain perceptible, the liberties Dio took with chronological linearity mark out the account of the Late Republic in the third, fourth, and fifth decads that are obviously dedicated to it. Notwithstanding some possible errors, duplicates, or chronological confusion,[[604]](#footnote-604) they help reinforce the thematic unity of each decad and highlight the various aspects of the degradation of the Republican regime.[[605]](#footnote-605)

*Political Figures and Dynasteiai*

The political mutations of the Late republic also find their expression in the focus of the account on the leading actors along with the gradual introduction of the biographical mode. This ‘biographical’ approach to the material, common to the later imperial books, is applied in a similar form for the first time in the fifth decad on the occasion of Caesar’s death in book 44, and upon the future Augustus’ arrival onto the political scene in book 45 (45.1–2). Nevertheless, the biographical mode is not to be reduced to the presentation of political actors according to the canons of imperial biography.[[606]](#footnote-606) Rather, in Dio’s account of the Late Republic the structure of the portraiture, or rather of biographical or necrological vignettes, underscores the individualization of the exercise of power; in other words, it highlights the cancellation of the founding principles of the Republic (e.g. collegiality) and the end of the consensus—*homonoia*—between magistrates themselves and between magistrates and Senate that epitomized the ethos of the Republic.[[607]](#footnote-607) It is more specifically in the third decad that the biographical mode becomes one of the driving components in the narrative. The portrait of Scipio Aemilianus appears three times: when war against Carthage looms (fr. 70.4–9); in comparison with Mummius Achaicus, victor of Corinth (fr. 76.1–2); and upon his death (fr. 84.1–2). The third decad also boasts portraits of Tiberius Gracchus (fr. 83.1–3) and Caius Gracchus (fr. 85.1–3), as well as an openly polemical one of Marius (fr. 89.2).[[608]](#footnote-608) Even when we account for the fact that these vestiges of the third decad reflect the choices or biases of the later excerptors who included them in their volumes dedicated to “*Vitiis et Virtutibus*”, nevertheless, major political actors will henceforth be the markers of the degradation of Republican values in political and moral terms: thus, Tiberius Gracchus’ case affords Dio the opportunity to examine the reasons for this high-born citizen’s advocacy of the people that would bring upheavals—*tarachein*—in political life. In his case, his *aretē* was perverted by *philotimia*, since it was his hope of reward, following the frustration of his success in negotiating a peace treaty with the Numantines,[[609]](#footnote-609) that led to his misconduct. The same set of circumstances operates in the case of his brother, even though in this case, the tribune’s own personality is a more direct motivation.

The way the account focuses on leading political actors more broadly serves to contrast the two power models confronting each other in the Late Republic: the Republican regime on the one hand and “despotism” (*dynasteia*), its degraded form, on the other. This approach leads to the construction of stereotyped and sometimes contradictory portraits, not for want of attention to or interest in the characters but because they are filtered through the logic of regime analysis. In this respect, the *personae* of the champions of the Republican regime, Cato the Younger, Brutus, and Cassius—whose love of the Republic shines through their speeches and their actions—enjoy a telling treatment: their struggle (not always depicted positively) is bound in the defense of the Republic; their attachment to Republican ideals is highlighted; and the author singles them out in his account to turn them into the very antithesis of the *dynasteia* they oppose,[[610]](#footnote-610) to the extent that the differences between Cassius and Brutus’ behavior, reported in all the other sources, are brushed aside by Dio.[[611]](#footnote-611) It remains the case that their struggle is a political error. Their actions cause chaos because they are unsuited to a context they have not understood, and they were doomed to fail: they would merely delay (or prolong) the fateful advent of the monarchy (44.2.5).

From this perspective, the different ways in which Dio addresses the deaths of the Republicans also deserve scrutiny. Cato the Younger’s death in book 43 is given special treatment: Dio allots it four chapters (43.10–13), thus breaking the focus of the account on Caesar, and delivering a version that diverges from other sources. In the conversation he has with his son, Cato urges him to surrender to Caesar and offers his own habit of freedom as a justification for not being able to do the same (43.10.3), an argument absent from the other accounts of the suicide. This variation makes it possible once again for Dio to evoke the love of freedom which inspires this genuine champion of the Republic and to set it against the enslavement understood to have been at stake in the contention between Caesar and Pompey (as at Pharsalus); it also translates this suicide into an admission of the Republic’s failure in 45 BCE. In contrast, the death of Cassius following the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE is reduced to the barest outline of events, while brutus’, hardly expounded at the end of book 47, stands out only for a quote stating the vanity of *aretē*. All told, Brutus’ and Cassius’ deaths are nothing more than a distillation of Caesar’s vengeance (48.1.1: “Thus Brutus and Cassius perished, slain by the swords with which they had murdered Caesar”)*.*[[612]](#footnote-612) This selective treatment of Republican figures, and the attention given to cato, seems to imply that for Dio the republic has broken down under Caesar’s power. All later attempts to restore the Republic, whether initiated by the Senate (as seen later) or by political figures—even if “true defenders” such as Brutus and Cassius—are doomed from this point.

The concentration of the narrative upon Caesar admits the same analysis.[[613]](#footnote-613) Caesar becomes the leading figure of book 43 and gradually outstrips the other contenders; the gradual accumulation of his monarchical power drives forward the narrative and culminates with book 44, its exclusive focus. The preceding books had followed step by step the implementation of *dynasteia*, a power model tainted with violence and evolving without the customary institutional framework: first episodically (e.g., Tiberius Gracchus’ laws, fr. 83.4), then following a more regular pattern, with the tribunes’ endeavors followed by the competition for control pursued by the *imperatores*, notably Pompey and Caesar. In fact, after Pharsalus, *dynasteia* ends up characterizing Caesar’s power in every detail: the power opposed by Cato; the power whose main foundations Dio theorizes as money and soldiers (42.49.4); the power which enables Caesar to confiscate the citizens’ property (42.50.4) upon returning from Bithynia in 47 BCE. But starting from book 43 and the Pompeians’ defeats in Africa and in Spain in 46 and 45 BCE, the lexicon defining Caesar’s power evolves noticeably: the term *dynasteia* disappears, and is overtaken by a form of *monarchia* as at 43.45.1. That lexical process is charted also in the stages of Dio’s narrative in books 43–44. At the beginning of book 44, the historian’s own comparative overview of the advantages and disadvantages of the Republican regime and monarchy foreshadows the debate between Agrippa and Maecenas in book 52 and concedes the impossibility of the Republic’s survival.

After the abrupt ending of Caesar’s monarchical experiment, those books which follow Caesar’s death (45–50) illustrate the return of *dynasteia*: there is nothing innocent in Dio’s transparent elaboration of that evolution as early as book 45, just as Octavian enters the political fray: “the appearance of liberty was kept up, but the deeds done were those of *dynasteia*” (45.11.2: τό τε τῆς ἐλευθερίας σχῆμα ἐφαντάζετο καὶ τὰ τῆς δυναστείας ἔργα ἐγίγνετο).[[614]](#footnote-614)

Subsequent events are the outcome of the unavoidable confrontation between the rulers and of the personal power to which they aspire: such is the case before Modena (46.34.4), before Philippi (47.39.1–2), and again after the same Battle of Philippi (48.1.2), which is worth quoting here:

χαλεπὸν γὰρ ἄνδρας τρεῖς ἢ καὶ δύο ὁμοτίμους, ἐγκρατεῖς τηλικούτων ἐκ πολέμου πραγμάτων γενομένους, ὁμονοῆσαι.

For it is a difficult matter for three men, or even two, who are equal in rank and, as a result of war, have gained control over such vast interests, to be of one accord.[[615]](#footnote-615)

Later, it is that same rivalry that in the end leads to the Battle of Actium and the complete eradication of freedom: “these two turned openly against each other and the people were actually reduced to slavery” (50.1.2: καὶ ἐκεῖνοι φανερῶς ἐπ᾽ ἀλλήλους ἐτράποντο καὶ ὁ δῆμος ἀκριβῶς ἐδουλώθη). Thus, in the Late Republican books, Dio clearly accentuates the political degradation of the Republic by focusing on dominant political figures.

*Institutional Degradation*

The analysis of *metabolē* or political change during the Late Republic leads Dio to pay singular attention to constitutional institutions: procedural details; innovation in and deviation from norms; the establishment of new offices and honors—all are given precise and often unique descriptions which, besides making Dio the most profitable source for the institutional history of the late Republic,[[616]](#footnote-616) signal his intention to reveal, through the history of institutions, the origin and the significance of political changes. The details he offers concerning the new practices in the exercise of traditional magistracies, the unfolding of elections, or of Senate meetings, aim to draw attention to turning points and to show that the customary constitutional framework has become unsuited to the regulation of political competition and the management of public affairs, so justifying the invention of new procedures. This is notably the case for the Senate, now prevented from exercising its traditional purview and from securing the balance of powers. The Senate remains the seat of political debate, marked by the abundance of orations reported in direct speech in the staged context of Senate meetings (seven out of fourteen speeches in books 36–50, including two debates); but in order to preserve its effectiveness it must invent new procedures, for example the innovation of the 7 January 49 BCE session which opens the fifth decad. On this occasion, the vote did not proceed as usual: it was not taken individually, but rather by moving as a body to one side of the chamber or the other, “lest the senators through some sense of shame or fear should vote contrary to their true opinions” (41.2.1). The effectiveness of the Senate is now weakened—or worse, it fades away as the decad progresses: in 43 BCE, during the meeting concerning the Senate’s response to Antony (at that time besieging D. Brutus in Modena), the debate between senators, notably between Cicero and Q. Fufius Calenus, was so fierce that no decision could be taken on the spot (46.29.1). Likewise, the senators’ attempts to reinstate the traditional workings of their order after Caesar’s death prove futile: when, in 43 BCE, they decide to abolish the *praefectura morum* with a view to preventing the return of personal rule (46.39.3), it will not be enough to prevent Octavian’s progressive confiscation of power.

The same necessity to invent procedures comes through at election times: Octavian’s election as consul in August 43 is a case in point. Dio outlines meticulously the unusual recourse to duumvirs, tasked with convening the Centuriate Assembly upon the death of the consuls A. Hirtius and C. Vibius Pansa. They did so under circumstances that prevented the normal proceedings of an *interregnum*—specifically, the presence of Octavian and his armies at the very gates of Rome(46.45.3–5):

τήν τε οὖν πόλιν οὕτως ὁ Καῖσαρ ἀμαχεὶ κατέσχε, καὶ ὕπατος καὶ πρὸς τοῦ δήμου ἀπεδείχθη, δύο τινῶν ἀντὶ ὑπάτων πρὸς τὰς ἀρχαιρεσίας αἱρεθέντων, ἐπειδὴ ἀδύνατον ἦν μεσοβασιλέα δι᾽ ὀλίγου οὕτως ἐπ᾽ αὐτὰς κατὰ τὰ πάτρια γενέσθαι, πολλῶν ἀνδρῶν τῶν τὰς εὐπάτριδας ἀρχὰς ἐχόντων ἀποδημούντων. τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ δύο ἄνδρας διὰ τοῦ στρατηγοῦ τοῦ ἀστυνόμου ψηφισθῆναι μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ τοὺς ὑπάτους δἰ αὐτοῦ χειροτονηθῆναι ὑπέμειναν, ὅτι μηδὲν πλέον τῶν ἀρχαιρεσιῶν ποιήσειν ἔμελλον, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο μηδ᾽ ἀρχήν τινα ἰσχυροτέραν αὐτοῦ ἐσχηκέναι δόξειν. καὶ ἐγίγνετο μέν που ταῦθ᾽ ὑπὸ τῶν ὅπλων.

Thus Caesar took possession of the city, without a blow and was appointed consul also by the people, after two men had been chosen to act as consuls for holding the elections; for it was impossible, on so short notice, for an *interrex* to be chosen for the purpose, in accordance with precedent, because many men who held the patrician offices were absent from the city. For they preferred to submit to this arrangement of having two men named by the *praetor urbanus* rather than to thee the consuls elected under his direction, because now these officials would limit their activities to the elections and consequently would appear to have possessed no office greater than his. This was of course done under pressure of arms.

The abundance of detail and the justification for such a procedure, intended to enforce compliance with the magisterial hierarchy even in troubled times, highlights the hopelessness of the latter when confronted with the force Octavian was using to become consul. Such details also draw attention to a moment Dio deems decisive in the implementation of Octavian’s monarchical power. Some favorable omens presiding over his assumption of power, and similar to those that had favored Romulus, gave him hope: this first consulship, granted to Octavian below the required age and in direct contravention of the rules—and in any case as a result of his military support—bestowed upon him a dominant position, turning the other consul into a mere “subordinate” rather than a “colleague” (46.46.1). In the narration of this first consulship of Octavian, Dio makes explicit references to the *donativum* that Septimius Severus would later award to his soldiers for services rendered, so tracing their origins back to Octavian’s gifts of 43 BCE and highlighting the political shift they represented.

Octavian’s first consulship offers a frame of reference for the scrupulous attention Dio paid to institutional procedures and innovations in the Late Republican books: rather than clinging to the memory of long-gone institutions or figuring the genesis of the political functions of his own era, the historian seeks to outline the origins of the imperial regime in its full complexity, in its distinctly Roman specificity and in its slow maturation. It is highly pertinent that throughout the three decads dedicated to the end of the Republic, Dio analyzes institutional developments through the prism of political regimes, painstakingly sorting innovations rooted in the Republican period from those identifiable as monarchical measures, whether they were still in force or had been abolished by the time Dio wrote. In this respect, book 43 offers a most comprehensive illustration since, as regards internal affairs, it focuses entirely on the institutional novelties that drove the mutation of Caesar’s power into a *monarchia* at the end of 45 BCE and the beginning of 44 BCE, following his decisive victory at Munda in 45 BCE.[[617]](#footnote-617) Dio alerts us to the first instance of the *praefectura morum*, conferred on Caesar instead of the office of censor (43.14.4); to the *appellatio imperatoris*, granted to Caesar in imperial fashion in 45 BCE (43.44.2–5); and to the consulship held less than a year, creating a suffect consulship (43.46.2–6).[[618]](#footnote-618) However, in surveying all the measures and honors granted to Caesar by the Senate Dio is keen to point out that some were not contrary to the Republican regime, whereas others made Caesar a monarch (43.45.1)—and it is the modalities of this monarchic transition that should be clearly identified.[[619]](#footnote-619) This also applies when, after Caesar’s death, Dio notes the restoration, in 43 BCE, of yearly terms of office along with the abolition of the *cura annonae* and the *praefectura morum*; these functions, as the historian himself observes, had formed the basis of the *dynasteia*, the excessive power held and exercised by Pompey and Caesar (46.39.2–3):

ἡ δὲ γερουσία πρότερον μέν, ἕως ἔτι ἄδηλον ἦν ὁπότερός σφων κρατήσει, πάνθ᾽ ὅσα ἐν τῷ πρὶν δυναστείας τισὶν ἔξω τῶν πατρίων δοθέντα παρεσκευάκει προκατέλυσαν,… τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ ἀπεῖπον μηδένα ἐπὶ πλείω χρόνον ἐνιαυτοῦ ἄρχειν, τοῦτο δὲ ἀπηγόρευσαν μήτε τινὰ σίτου ἐπιμελητὴν μήτε τρόπων (Loeb: τροφῶν) ἐπιστάτην ἕνα αἱρεῖσθαι.

But the senate had already, while it was still uncertain which of the two [Antony or Octavian] would prevail, taken the precaution to abolish all the privileges the granting of which hitherto to any individuals contrary to established custom had paved the way to supreme power [….] In the first place, they forbade anyone to hold office for a longer period than a year, and, secondly, they provided that no one man should be chosen superintendent of the corn supply or overseer of men’s conduct.[[620]](#footnote-620)

In the Late Republican books the meticulous attention paid to institutional liberties and innovations thus serves a dual purpose: it underscores the complex interaction between the political entities—magistrates, tribunes of the plebs, *imperatores,* and the Senate, too—in the degradation of the political machine; and it also demonstrates the impossibility of securing order and stability within the customary framework of Republican institutions. As a result, Dio presents the implementation of the imperial regime as a process which was at the same time both plainly unavoidable yet also built on complex experimentation over the years.

*Roman Imperialism and the End of the Republic*

It remains necessary to apprehend the underlying reasons for the political changes that, in Dio’s view, led to the ruin of the Republican regime. In this respect, one of the most striking features of the Late Republican books is undoubtedly the way in which the Severan historian links the breach of *homonoia* and the implementation of the *dynasteiai* to the expansion of the Roman Empire: twice, at 44.2.2–4 and 47.39.4–5 (that is to say before Caesar’s assassination and before the Battle of Philippi), he blames the ruin of the Republic on the vast size of the empire challenging the sound government of the regime. Admittedly, since the end of the Republic, disquisitions on Roman hegemony had become a given, indeed a convention of Roman historiography alongside the idea of decadence (Sallust, Livy),[[621]](#footnote-621) and later the idea of Rome’s *aeternitas* (Florus, Appian).[[622]](#footnote-622) In the *Roman History*, however, this idea is more than a mere *topos* drawn from Late Republican historiography, for it constitutes one building block of books 21–50, made obvious by the place given to the stages of conquest in the rhythm of the narrative, and by their close connection with political life: the breadth of the narration dealing with external wars; the recurrence of the debate around extraordinary commands; the interest in the laws regulating those offices concerned with the management of empire; the observations on the inflation of honors for military victory; the exacerbated competition between *imperatores* to achieve these—all evince Dio’s in-depth analysis of Roman imperialism and its damning consequences for Republican stability. It is worth noting in particular that, unlike Appian, who chose to begin the section of his work on Late Republic with the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus in 133 BCE, Dio makes the campaigns against Carthage and Corinth the starting point of his third decad, in which external events take up just over half of the preserved fragments (16/29).

This, as already seen, allows for the portraits of several military commanders and accentuates the connection between the onset of civil strife and the quest for honors. In this respect we must note the significant evolution present in the biopic of Scipio Aemilianus: described as “*aristos*” in his initial portrait (fr. 70.4–9), Scipio Aemilianus acquires, by the time of his death, an “excessive ambition” (“Scipio exercised a greater ambition [*philotimia pleiōn*, fr. 84.1] than was fitting or compatible with his general excellence”),[[623]](#footnote-623) which will henceforward be the hallmark of the chief Roman generals.[[624]](#footnote-624) As for the fourth decad, it opens with the Mithridatic war of 88 BCE that set off the competition to obtain military commands, a major theme in this decad which defines the intractable conflict between Caesar and Pompey; this theme leads, at the end of the decad, to the civil war which will be the subject matter of the fifth decad.

Thus, for Dio, the wars that ensured Rome’s expansion after the ruin of Carthage and Corinth lie at the root of the disruption of the regular framework of political life. Such are the ambitions of the *imperatores* and such their craving for glory that they foster the invention of new types of military command which, in both their allocation (to private individuals) and in their duration (three then five years), run counter to ancestral traditions and found the *dynasteiai*: this explanatory arc begins with the Gabinian Law that granted Pompey, amidst stormy debates, a three-year command against the pirates in 67 BCE, and with the Manilian Law of 66 BCE that granted Pompey his command against Mithridates. Caesar supported the Manilian Law in the hope of someday obtaining a similar command (36.43.4); this arc ended with the unbridled power the triumvirs obtained for five years at a time (46.55.3). Ultimately, in an attempt to control the excessive power attached to these extraordinary commands, the Pompeian Law was ratified in 52 BCE, which inserted five-year intervals between magistracy and extraordinary command, followed in 46 BCE by the Julian Law, which limited the term of governorships. Dio’s attention to this raft of legislation is telling: four mentions for the Pompeian Law (40.30.1; 40.46.2; 40.56.1; 42.20.4), and one mention for the Julian Law (43.25.3; Dio thus represents our only extant source for this important piece of legislation, barring Cicero).[[625]](#footnote-625)

Indeed, the ambition fostered by extraordinary commands drives the worsening of political competition—in normal circumstances a constitutive element of the Republican regime—and causes *stasis*, equally a genuine hazard of the Republican system.[[626]](#footnote-626) In this respect the account of the violent strife surrounding the vote of the Trebonian Law which, in 55 BCE, granted five-year commands to Crassus and Pompey upon the end of their consulship, is a case in point. Far from presenting it as the result of the agreement reached in Lucca between Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar, Dio describes at length the violent confrontations surrounding the vote. The champions of the Republic, including Cato who sought to defeat the vote, were forcefully silenced, thrown out of the assembly, assaulted the following day, and some were killed (39.35.5). the *stasis* caused by the infighting between *imperatores* prevents the traditional working of the institutions and this is borne out in Dio’s detailed account of the assembly’s proceedings.[[627]](#footnote-627) The same concept of *stasis* resurfaces in the passage reporting the vote of the *lex Pompeia de provinciis* that instituted a five-year hiatus between superior magistracies and provincial governorships, “intended to prevent rivalry for office with its consequent strife” (40.30.1). Given the recurrence of this theme, it is hardly surprising to find Maecenas in book 52 taking a keen interest in the duration of commands: given that protracted terms of office drive their appointees to rebellion (52.23.2: νεωτεροποιία), he advises against the exercise of a command following on the exercise of a magistracy (52.20.4) or of successive commands, much as Catulus had (36.31.3–4); he recommends instead the introduction of intervals of return to private life (52.23.3).

Thus, the expansion of the empire elicits no praise from Dio. Exciting the rivalry between *imperatores*, feeding their greed (*pleonexia*), and instituting the *dynasteiai*, it leads to the breach of *homonoia*.[[628]](#footnote-628) However, the extension of Rome’s territories, which accelerates from the third decad onward, is not only at the heart of political competition; it is also a challenge for the Roman authorities, forced to find and implement solutions to compensate for the shortcomings of the Republican institutions. This enforced experimentation in a context of unrest and civilian strife amounts, in Dio’s mind, to the testing ground for the reforms that plot, in the imperial books, the implementation of the Principate.

In the Late Republican books—to draw a distinction, if not the most important, between Early and Late Republic—Cassius Dio makes Roman imperialism a running thread of the narration. Imperial expansion determines a new rhythm in the narrative, founds *dynasteiai,* and causes institutional degradation. Rome’s expansion is given as the seed, the manifestation, and the cause of the decline of the Republican regime. There can be no doubt that, in the Severan context, this interpretation of Late Republican history put a meaningful complexion on the critique of the wars of conquest initiated by the new dynasty’s incumbents, and cast a light on the risks they could again visit on the stability recovered, after the ruin of the Republic, by the *monarchia* set up by Augustus.

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Chapter 10: The Almost Flawless *Princeps*: Cassius Dio’s Idealized Portrait of Octavian-Augustus

*Jesper Majbom Madsen*

Books 45–56, which focus on Rome’s first *princeps*, are the centerpiece of Cassius Dio’s *Roman History.* Like most other imperial historians, Dio saw monarchy as the only viable form of government for alleviating the ambition innate to men (44.2–3).[[629]](#footnote-629) Since it was Octavian-Augustus who put an end to the civil wars, in which members of the political elite fought for glory and personal gain, it is only natural that he assumed a particularly prominent part in Dio’s political analyses.

It is therefore with good reason that modern scholars have paid special attention to the parts of the *Roman History* that cover the life of Rome’s first monarch since the regal period. Some see a mixed portrait: Dio criticizes the acts and general attitude of the young triumvir, but praises the *princeps* as an example of an enlightened monarch. Yet others see considerable continuity in the coverage of the civil war and the Principate. In his important study of Dio’s Augustan books, Manuwald points to the historian’s concerns about Augustus as both triumvir and monarch and demonstrates the significant complexity of the books in which Dio covers Augustus’ years as sole ruler (51–56). He concludes that Dio’s criticism of Augustus and the form of monarchy he introduced suggests that Dio relied on sources that were more critical than the official version offered by Augustus and that our historian had no intention to pass on a wholly positive portrait of Rome’s first *princeps*.[[630]](#footnote-630) In his study of Dio and Augustus, Rich agrees with Manuwald that Dio at times criticizes aspects of Augustus’ rule and conduct as monarch. As Rich points out, Dio was in favor of monarchy but against despotism and was, Rich argues, critical of the violent means the triumvir used to achieve his goals[[631]](#footnote-631) But where Manuwald focuses on the negative aspects of Dio’s portrait of Augustus, Rich sees a narrative that is positive toward Augustus the monarch. Both fundamentally agree that Dio does not ignore Augustus’ weaknesses, but Rich points out that the criticism that our historian offers is less important than the many positive sides that Dio emphasizes in his coverage of Rome’s first *princeps*.[[632]](#footnote-632)

In his comparative analysis of Dio and Appian’s coverage of the civil war, Gowing examines the differences and similarities in the two historians’ treatment of that which followed Caesar’s death. Where Appian saw Octavian as a significant but far from the most important actor in the start of the civil war, Gowing shows how Dio held Octavian to be the overriding figure of the period. Though far from always positive toward Octavian, Gowing’s Dio usually favors his main protagonist, choosing favorable readings over negative whenever possible. In Gowing’s view, Dio saw Octavian’s immediate desire for supreme power from the moment of his arrival in Italy as something positive: this was necessary to introduce monarchical rule and his efforts elicited Dio’s sympathy.[[633]](#footnote-633)

In his study of Severan historiography, Kemezis redirects the focus back onto Dio’s criticism of Octavian and the role he assumed in the civil war. In Kemezis’ reading, Octavian is part of the problem that characterized the age of *dynasteiai*, the dominion of strong individuals that characterized Roman politics from the 60s to Octavian’s victory in the civil war. According to Kemezis, Dio did not allow Octavian his role in the *Res Gestae*—that of a savior figure who hurried to the rescue of the state. Instead, the historian depicts Octavian as a dynast among dynasts, driven by the same ambition for power as his enemies.[[634]](#footnote-634) There is, as Kemezis underlines, an attempt to portray Octavian as less brutal than his rivals, for instance in regard to the proscriptions. But as someone who was heavily influenced by the unstable political climate in third-century Rome, there was little room for Dio to offer a particularly celebratory coverage of any of the triumvirs or their role in the civil war.[[635]](#footnote-635)

In his focus on the civil war in the 40s and 30s, Lange emphasizes that war between citizens was always traumatic and therefore a phenomenon that balanced history writing would have to consider. Dio’s criticism of Octavian and his conduct in the war is, according to Lange, only to be expected. Yet, even if there are no heroes in civil war, Dio’s criticism of Octavian’s role in the triumviral wars should not, Lange argues, be classified as a contradiction to the overall positive approach he offers of the man who introduced monarchical rule. It is a way of showing that extreme times called for extreme measures, as is evident, Lange underlines, in Dio’s approach to the Battle of Perusia, where our historian follows a tradition that is negative towards Octavian.[[636]](#footnote-636)

Since Rich there has been consensus among scholars to see Dio as someone who, even if he acknowledged Augustus’ flaws, held a favorable view of Augustus as *princeps*.[[637]](#footnote-637) As recently pointed out by Markov, Dio was well aware that there were limits both to Augustus’ ruthlessness and his clemency: the young triumvir Dio offers his readers was considerably less idealistic than his enemies among Caesar’s murderers, but also less hypocritical than his father’s former friends. According to Markov, Dio celebrates the boldness of his pragmatic young favorite and the efficiency with which he brought about monarchical rule.[[638]](#footnote-638) In that light, Dio becomes a conscientious historian who, even if favorable towards Augustus, wrote a balanced history of the civil wars and the Age of Augustus, offering what he believed to be an accurate account of the period in question, a reading that resonates well with the conclusions reached by Manuwald, Rich, Gowing and Lange.

In this chapter I seek to add another layer to Dio’s history of Octavian-Augustus as both triumvir and monarch. My aim is to show how Dio not only endeavored to justify Octavian’s acts in the civil war, but also to demonstrate why he was the only man at the time able to lead the Romans out of the political chaos created by a century of failed Republican governance and introduce a more stable form of one-man-rule. The answer Dio gives is that Octavian was the only political protagonist in the mid-first century BCE who pursued power for the sake of the common good. His urge for supreme power was motivated not by personal gain but by a commitment to do what was in the best interests of Rome; as Caesar’s adoptive heir, he had a moral obligation to rescue Rome from the terror and enslavement brought upon it by a depraved political culture and the right upbringing to offer monarchical rule as a better alternative.

This ‘idealizing’ approach naturally raises questions of historicity. How reliable is the portrait that Dio offers of Rome’s *princeps* and how are we to use the books on the civil wars and Augustan Rome? This is not the place to enter the debate about the literary turn in ancient historiography in general, nor whether imperial historians wrote to uncover the past as well as they could or simply to display their rhetorical prowess.[[639]](#footnote-639) In the following chapter, we shall see that Dio offers assessments and analyses that differ from those available in the parallel sources. Also, *Roman History* was written from a perspective deeply rooted in Thucydidean realism, where humans are greedy, hateful, and envious by nature, where virtue was a quality mastered by few, and where modesty and harmony were unobtainable if ambition for power and glory was not tempered by a single ruler.[[640]](#footnote-640)

To use the words of Laird, historians use rhetoric, or persuasion, to construct meaning instead of transmitting it.[[641]](#footnote-641) These words apply to Dio. In the course of the *Roman History*, the reader is told that while Tiberius Gracchus was first and foremost looking for a rapid rise to power by introducing his land redistribution bill in 133 BCE, Caesar sought the same with his proposal of 59; and, when both he and Cicero advocated Pompeius’ command against Mithridates VI in 66, neither had the military situation in mind.[[642]](#footnote-642) In a similar vein, no man is said to have had the interests of the common good at heart after the formation of the so-called First Triumvirate; and Caesar was killed by a coalition of senators largely out of envy and fear that they would no longer be able to fulfil their own potential.[[643]](#footnote-643)

These are, ultimately, the characteristics of a biased approach to the period and its main actors: the preferment of monarchy over any form of democracy, and the decision consistently to show Octavian-Augustus in the guise of conscientious champion, are the hallmarks of a highly personalized approach to the Late Republican Roman. This, of course, needs to be factored in when Dio is used to reconstruct the underlying motives behind decisions and actions. Yet what is also evident when reading the *Roman History* in its entirety is the way in which Dio uses several different texts from earlier writers, historians, and authors in different genres. This suggests that even if our historian followed a specific theoretical approach as well as a distinct, independent perception of Roman history, it was still his ambition to understand and narrate the past as he believed it to be. Still, he used the opportunity to offer what is best described as a very personal take on Roman politics and of what was the best constitutional form for a state as powerful and resourceful as Rome.[[644]](#footnote-644)

*The Chosen One*

One of the central elements in Dio’s portrait of Octavian-Augustus was that the heir to Caesar was destined for greatness: he was, from the outset, a remarkably mature political mind, morally and legally entitled to reach for supreme power. Right from the opening of book 45, Dio lays the groundwork for a favorable account of Octavian’s pursuit of sole rule. As we shall see in the following, it is here, in book 45, that Dio introduces Octavian into his Late Republican narrative and emphasizes his exceptional qualities in comparison to the rest of Rome’s political elite. Dio largely follows the same narrative as Nicolaus of Damascus, Velleius Paterculus, Plutarch, Suetonius, and Appian; but he pauses over and over to offer what seems to be his own assessment of Octavian’s talents and virtues in a more idealized way than the parallel sources.[[645]](#footnote-645)

Like Suetonius in his *Life of Augustus,* Dio relates that Octavian was rumored to be the son of Apollo and that both Cicero and Quintus Catulus read signs to suggest that the young boy who appeared in their dreams would one day become their master. When Octavian tried on his *toga virilis* for the first time it fell from his shoulders to the floor, a sign that foreshadowed the Senate’s future subservience (Cass. Dio 45.1–2; Suet. *Aug*. 94.6–10).[[646]](#footnote-646) Whereas Suetonius covers the episode in passing (he moves on to describe that the omen was interpreted to mean that the Senate would one day bow to him), Dio adds another layer to the anecdote: Octavian exclaimed to those around him that he would one day have the entire Senate beneath him (45.2.6).

We cannot tell whether these words were Dio’s own invention or something he read in one of his sources, but the episode is an example of how the historian emphasizes Octavian’s obvious potential from a very early stage as well as his own awareness of his destiny.[[647]](#footnote-647) The incident and Octavian’s remark about the falling toga serve as a link to Caesar. Suetonius and Nicolaus of Damascus both describe how Caesar had Octavian join him during his commands in Africa and Spain and there came to see the qualities of his great-nephew. Dio, on the other hand, tells a more personal story: the incident with the toga piqued Caesar’s interest and made him realize the extraordinary potential of the young man.[[648]](#footnote-648) Recognizing Octavian’s potential, and the signs that foretold his promising future, a more affectionate Caesar welcomed the young man into his house, where he taught him the trade of public affairs and intended, again according to Dio, that he follow in his footsteps as Rome’s sole ruler (45.2.7–8):

ὁ Καῖσαρ μεγάλα ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ ἐπελπίσας ἔς τε τοὺς εὐπατρίδας αὐτὸν ἐσήγαγε καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἤσκει.

Being childless and basing great hopes upon him, Caesar loved and cherished him, intending to leave him as heir to his name, authority, and monarchy.

As demonstrated in Nicolaus of Damascus’ biography of Augustus, there were those who believed at the time that Octavian had a legal right to his father’s powers (Nic. Dam. 53).[[649]](#footnote-649) Dio would have known that the mandate embedded in Caesar’s dictatorship was not something to be passed on to an heir of the dictator’s own choosing.[[650]](#footnote-650) Even if Dio could have read about Caesar’s hopes for his great nephew in texts unknown to us, it remains striking that neither Plutarch, Velleius Paterculus, Suetonius, nor Appian mention that this was ever part of Caesar’s long-term planning. Another more plausible explanation is that Dio elaborated on the tradition that Nicolaus also refers to, adding his own thoughts on how Caesar would have wanted Octavian to follow in his footsteps. In any case, the anecdote of Caesar’s desire to transfer not only his name and estate but also his autocratic position to Octavian adds further weight to Dio’s overall claim that Caesar’s dictatorship was a form of monarchy and that Octavian, therefore, had a right to ‘restore’ what had fallen with Caesar’s death.[[651]](#footnote-651)

Having established Octavian’s destiny in this way, Dio moves on to demonstrate his advanced political talents. The Octavian we meet in Dio’s book 45 returns from Macedonia with an ambition to punish Caesar’s murderers and re-establish monarchical rule with himself as supreme ruler. Where Appian offers a more balanced account of the different parties in the civil war and depicts an Octavian searching for the right way forward in his public appearances, Dio describes a far more determined and politically mature man who almost immediately pursues the monarchical objective that led to Caesar’s death (45.4.3).[[652]](#footnote-652) Dio admits that such a move was bold for any man, let alone for someone as young as Octavian: the plan to follow Caesar’s lead was dangerous, liable to the envy and hatred of both Caesar’s murderers and former allies. But in his assessment of Octavian’s first entrance onto the political scene, Dio describes a subtle young man who challenges his opponents without revealing his real intention. The ambition for supreme power was dangerous, but Octavian’s maneuvering—that is, his change of alliances between Antonius and the Senate—was eventually successful. For Dio, and others with him, “he was not thought to have planned badly” (οὐ μέντοι καὶ κακῶς βεβουλεῦσθαι ἔδοξεν, 45.4.4). At first glance, this may not come across as a strong endorsement. But the assessment paves the way for Dio’s own evaluation in the following paragraphs: Octavian’s strategy may have been risky, but it was successful, and not just this; in addition to his success, Caesar’s heir managed public affairs more vigorously and more prudently than those older than him, so justifying his stewardship of the changes so desperately needed at Rome (45.5.1).

*From Brundisium to Mutina: The Battle of the Caesarians*

In this section we turn to the thirteen months from Octavian’s return to Rome shortly after the Ides of March to April the year after when he, in coalition with the Senate and Decimus Brutus, defeated Antonius at Mutina and forced the latter further into Gaul.Octavian returned toa city in chaos. Yes, a compromise had been reached between Caesar’s murderers, Lepidus—Caesar’s master of horse—and Antonius, the consul who saw peace to be in his best interests. But Antonius had seized a considerable share of the inheritance the dictator had left to Octavian; and Caesar’s funeral had turned into a riot when the people, awakened by Antonius’ funeral oration, spontaneously seized the body and burned it in the middle of the Forum.[[653]](#footnote-653) The “*liberatores*” Cassius and Brutus was no longer safe in Rome, which further improved Antonius’s position; he was now in possession of considerable funds and the support from the people, who were ashamed of having doubted Caesar’s intentions towards them in the last weeks of his life.

As we shall see in this section, Dio follows the same narrative as Plutarch and Appian. But it is a more measured, smarter, and on the whole more mature Octavian who visits Antonius to pay his respects, than the confrontational young man Plutarch and Appian depict. For example, Appian writes that outside Brundisium, Octavian, full of vengeance, met with large crowds of people who were agitated about Caesar’s death and exclaimed at his arrival in Rome that Caesar’s murderers would be punished when someone set forth the proposal (App. *B Civ*. 3.12–13), and he visited Antonius not to pay his respects but to demand that his inheritance be transferred to his house; he then criticized the consul for letting Caesar’s murder go unpunished (App. *B Civ.* 3.15, 17; Plut. *Ant.* 16).[[654]](#footnote-654) Dio’s Octavian is equally keen to avenge Caesar but knows he has to act with caution (45.3.2), and even if Antonius had lied publicly about Octavian’s hesitation to accept Caesar’s name and estate—potentially a damaging accusation—it is still a respectful young man who visits the consul (44.53.5; 45.5–6). Humiliated and insulted by the brutish Antonius at this meeting, Octavian returns without the money that is rightfully his. He now turns to the people in the hope that election as tribune will pave a legal way forward, but Antonius once again gets in the way when he uses his powers as consul to cancel the assembly (45.6).[[655]](#footnote-655)

In the narrative Dio offers, it is Antonius who repeatedly violates Octavian’s rights. When Octavian’s popularity increases, Antonius makes the first attempt to come to terms with the young Caesarian (45.7.3–45.8.4). But Dio emphasizes the way in which Antonius almost immediately tried to boost his own popularity by offering plots of land to the people as a way to check Octavian’s increasing popularity and to secure enough support to swap his allotted province of Macedonia with the politically more attractive Gallia Cisalpina.[[656]](#footnote-656) The law was passed, Dio says, with help from Antonius’ brothers, who served as praetor and tribune that year (45.9.1–4).

Dio describes how the rivalry between the two Caesarians meant that Romans were already at war even if the fighting had not yet begun. The Romans appeared to be living in freedom (ἐλευθερία) even if in reality governed by dynasts (45.11.1–4).[[657]](#footnote-657) By using the term δυναστεία,Dioturns the political hostilities and the war at Mutina into a struggle between Antonius and Octavian, mostly sidelining the Senate and Cicero (45.12.1–6). With war fast approaching, our historian describes once again the superiority of Octavian’s handling of the situation. It is Octavian who has the best strategy for recruitment when he makes a better offer to Caesar’s former soldiers and treats them more respectfully than Antonius, who loses an entire legion to his young rival when he punishes the soldiers for wanting the same pay Octavian offered his recruits (45.13.1–5).

Octavian was also the best strategist when he, prior to the battle, allied himself with Decimus Brutus, the governor of Gallia Cisalpina. In a key paragraph, Dio notes Antonius’ hopes to secure Decimus’ support, an effort frustrated by Octavian’s success. As the young heir had cleverly kept his intention of punishing Caesar’s murders to himself, Decimus had more reason to fear Antonius, whom he would have to resist in order to defend Gallia Cisalpina, which the latter was already marching north to claim. The controversy of the alliance between Octavian and Decimus is underlined by the historian’s need to justify Octavian’s remarkable choice of ally. Dio is certainly right. The hatred between Octavian and Antonius, and the fact that Cicero and other leading senators had their minds set on war against Antonius, made it difficult for the young general to act otherwise. Yet Dio underlines that while Octavian was just as determined to avenge Caesar as he had been from the outset, he also had to consider his options carefully (45.14–15.2). Dio frames what might be wrongly interpreted as Octavian foundering in the deluge—his searing hatred toward Antonius and his lack of experience—as, instead, a sign of maturity and political insight.

If we compare Dio’s version with the narratives offered by Appian and Plutarch, the positivity of Dio’s portrait becomes clear. Where Dio treats the Caesarians’ failed attempt to reach an agreement in passing, offering philosophical thoughts on how men who hated each other were unlikely to find peace, Plutarch and Appian state that Octavian was allegedly planning to attack the consul right after the first attempt to reconcile the two (Plut. *Ant.* 16; App. *B Civ.* 3.39). Also, in Appian’s version it was Octavian, not Antonius’ brothers, who secured the necessary popular support for Antonius’ change of province. This both implicates Octavian directly in the conflict on the side of the consul and suggests that he was more wavering in his search for allies than the more determined political talent we meet in the *Roman History* (App. *B Civ.* 3.30).

Thus Appian presents us with an altogether more complicated situation. The war at Mutina is not a war between Antonius and Octavian but one between the pro-consul and the Senate. Octavian has a part to play in the war, but Appian does not see the situation from his perspective. In *The Civil War,* it is the Senate that fears an alliance between the Caesarians, an assessment Appian underlines with a dialogue between Octavian and Pansa, where the latter warns the young Caesarian about what will await him should he have to face the Senate and Caesar’s murderers by himself (3.75). The Octavian Appian describes changes his alliance back to the Caesarians when he realizes, almost too late, that he would be exposed and alone if the Senate and Caesar’s murderers in the East should manage to bring Antonius and *his* allies to ruin.

*Fighting for the Common Good*

As the civil war moves into Italy, the differences in the accounts of Appian and Dio become even more pronounced. Both Appian and Dio describe Octavian’s march on Rome similarly—he used his soldiers to secure the consular appointment—and both historians offer fairly detailed reports about the so called Second Triumvirate, the proscriptions, and the battles fought at Philippi, Perusia, and Naulochus (after which Appian continues his account of the civil war in the now lost *War of Egypt*). But where Appian describes a multilateral political situation and tries to see the conflict from all perspectives of those involved, Dio seeks to demonstrate how Octavian handled the same complicated situation better than his rivals. This is not to say that Dio approves of the young triumvir’s every action; but the impression he conveys is still that Octavian had Rome’s best interests at heart, even as he fought the most brutal civil war in the history of Rome.

Whereas Appian reports that Octavian asked his soldiers to help him secure the consulship in order that they might receive their promised reward for fighting Antonius at Mutina (App. *B Civ.* 3.96–97), Dio records that Octavian sent soldiers to Rome to test whether his ambition to become consul had the required support. When one of the soldiers loses his nerve and threatens the senators to support Octavian’s election as consul, Dio assures his reader that threats of violence were never part of the plan (46.43.1–6). What appears as a coup or a successful attempt to threaten the Senate to back Octavian’s wish to become consul is here reduced to the acts of a nervous soldier acting on his own initiative; Dio even goes a step further with the exculpatory note that Octavian sorely regretted the incident.

The same effort to stage Octavian as the most righteous of the triumvirs underpins the entire civil war narrative. The triumvirate is characterized as an oligarchy through which the three dynasts are said to have enslaved the Romans (48.34.1; 46.34.4; 50.1.2). The triumvirs hated one another, and they all strived for sole rule (47.1.1; 46.54.4).[[658]](#footnote-658) But although the triumvirate as a political organ is viewed in a critical light, Octavian is repeatedly allowed a morally more virtuous posture than his two colleagues.

This positive approach to Octavian is particularly evident in Dio’s famous coverage of the proscriptions, where Octavian is said to have been less keen and therefore, unlike Antonius and Lepidus, not naturally cruel (Cass. Dio 47.7.1–3).[[659]](#footnote-659) The impression Dio offers that the proscriptions was not Octavian’s idea is to some extent supported by Suetonius’ passing remark that Octavian tried to prevent them from happening (Suet. *Aug*. 27) or Plutarch’s account of how the young triumvir wanted to save Cicero. But where Suetonius moves on to describe the brutal and uncompromising persistence of the young triumvir in pursuing the outlaws when the proscriptions had been decided, Dio moves in the other direction: he emphasizes the way in which Octavian saved many of the proscribed and even punished those who betrayed their masters or friends.[[660]](#footnote-660) Appian, on the other hand, makes no distinction between the roles played by the triumvirs, who come across as equally responsible for the terror and chaos they brought upon the state and political elite (App. *B Civ.* 4.16–30).

Manuwald, Gowing and Lange are surely right. It would have been difficult to ignore the proscriptions and there is, also when it comes to Octavian, a limit to how well one can come out of the systematic murder of political opponents.[[661]](#footnote-661) Dio deems the proscriptions more brutal than the ones planned by Sulla (who at least spared his friends), and it is worth noticing that the historian, unlike Suetonius, has nothing to say on how Octavian should have tried to prevent the proscriptions from taking place.[[662]](#footnote-662) As pointed out by Lange, civil war is difficult to ignore: Dio, like any other political commentator, saw war between citizens as an ugly affair from which all the parties involved would emerge bloodied, even the righteous ones.[[663]](#footnote-663) But it is worth noticing that, in his assessment, our historian still finds room for Octavian to appear less malicious than Lepidus and Antonius.

The Battle at Philippi is presented in the *Roman History* as the decisive struggle in the civil war. It was here in the year 42BCE that the Romans fought to settle whether they were to live in a monarchy or in a form of self-government (αὐτονομία) with the right to speak freely (Cass. Dio 47.39.1–5). In his introduction to the battle, Dio presents Cassius and Brutus as men who had the people’s true (ἀκριβής) interests at heart; one of Brutus’ officers is even said to have reminded the soldiers (many of whom in Dio’s account were not Roman citizens) that they were fighting for freedom (ἐλευθερίαν).[[664]](#footnote-664) At first glance, Cassius and Brutus come across as idealists in the positive sense of the word, who, unlike the more cynical or pragmatic Octavian and Antonius, struggle to retain freedom and democracy.[[665]](#footnote-665) But in a philosophical sequence, Dio discusses whether the Romans won or lost at Philippi. In his view, the people lost their freedom but won when they in the same instance strengthened monarchical rule; and the historian moves on to make the claim that it was beneficial for the people to have been defeated by Octavian, since victory here would in any case have led to renewed civil war and eventually ruin (47.39.1–5). Cassius and Brutus may have fought against autocracy to free the Romans—an idealistic and well-meaning effort—but Dio views the whole notion as naïve, dangerous rather than laudable, and not in the long-term interest of the common good.

Dio’s argument that monarchy was better than democracy at ensuring harmony and therefore more likely to keep the Romans free from the terror of war and political violence, serves as a bridge between the more theoretical opening of book 44—where the historian maintains that democracy, though high-sounding, cannot offer security—and the conclusion drawn in the final chapters of book 56: here, Augustus’ contemporary Romans are said to have been full of admiration of the *princeps’* success in freeing Rome from the factions that had once held the city captive (Cass. Dio 44.2–3; 56.43).

It is worth noticing that AppiaI, who is keen to see the conflict from both sides, reaches the same conclusion as Dio. In a speech set before the Battle of Philippi, Cassius explains why the coalition of senators killed Caesar and he assumes a convincing role as freedom fighter (App. *B Civ.* 4.90–100. Yet Cassius is again not a hero, but a lawless and unfaithful criminal who committed an act of treason when he murdered Caesar (App. *B Civ*. 4.134).[[666]](#footnote-666)

Dio’s narrative of the Battle at Perusia is equally illuminating, as here his generally sympathetic portrait of Octavian takes a less sympathetic turn. In the narrative leading up to Perusia’s fall, Dio describes a tense and highly dangerous political situation of which Octavian was not in control. When, in the aftermath of Philippi, Octavian faced the complicated task of settling his and some of Antonius’ veterans in colonies across Italy, Sextus Pompeius and Domitius Ahenobarbus used their control of the seas to threaten Rome’s supply lines, and Antonius’ relatives (his brother Lucius and wife Fulvia) were doing their best to stir up resistance against the veteran settlements both in Rome and in the Italian cities (48.1–13). Having won the war against Lucius and Fulvia at Perusia, Octavian pardons Antonius’ family but finds no compassion for their followers (48.14.4):[[667]](#footnote-667)

καὶ λόγος γε ἔχει ὅτι οὐδ᾽ ἁπλῶς τοῦτο ἔπαθον, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ τὸν βωμὸν τὸν τῷ Καίσαρι τῷ προτέρῳ ὡσιωμένον ἀχθέντες ἱππῆς τε τριακόσιοι καὶ βουλευταὶ ἄλλοι… ἐτύθησαν.

And the story is that they did not suffer death in a simple manner, but were led to the altar consecrated to the former Caesar and were there sacrificed… three hundred knights and other senators.

The execution of three hundred senators and equestrians is brutal but not in itself a surprising outcome of the battle. Yet the manner of their ‘sacrifice’ at the altar is shocking. Dio is not the only ancient writer who mentions the killing of hundreds of Roman nobles. In his *De Clementia* Seneca (*Clem*. 1.11) talks about Augustus’ Perusine sacrifice and Suetonius (*Aug.* 15) offers a similar account of the event. A surprising exception is Appian, who states that Octavian ordered his friends and some of his centurions to make sure that the captives were treated with respect before he ordered the killing of the Perusia’s civic elite (App. *B Civ.* 5.48).

Even if he allows some doubt as to whether the episode took place in the manner described, we may posit reasons for the lack of its explanation or justification on Dio’s part. The implicit impression is that the triumvir acted under considerable pressure. Lange must be right that Dio uses this episode to show the evil nature of civil war—this the historian knew only too well from his first-hand experiences in the 190s.[[668]](#footnote-668) Another complementary reading of the episode ties into Dio’s overall storyline of how Octavian did what was necessary to win the war and free the Romans from the factions that held them captive in their struggle for power and prestige.[[669]](#footnote-669) The killing of the Roman nobles was gruesome, but unlike Appian (who in this case seems to rely on Augustus’ autobiography), Dio provides the information he has available to allow his readers a fuller picture of what happened after Perusia’s surrender (App. *B Civ* 5.42–49).[[670]](#footnote-670) The decision to sacrifice Roman knights and senators on an altar to Caesar is inexcusable and we should not expect Dio to justify or even explain the act itself. But it is worth noticing that the historian offers no condemnation. Instead he leaves that part to the reader’s own judgement. If we pause for a moment to consider Dio’s logic, the coverage of the Battle of Perusia fits his overall approach to Octavian and the civil war. Showing no signs of sympathy for Lucius Antonius and the senators who side with him, Dio acknowledges the need to overcome the opportunistic resistance Octavian met at Perusia and to set an example for those who would in future challenge him.

Firmly rooted in Thucydidean realism, Dio describes the last decade of the civil war as a struggle to prevail. The aim is sole rule for all the warlords involved, who used every available tool, including changing sides and secret agreements, to stay ahead in the race for supremacy.[[671]](#footnote-671) It is particularly noteworthy that Dio does not criticize Octavian for the way in which he pushed for war against Sextus Pompeius and Antonius. Instead, both wars are treated as the necessary next steps forward in the effort to succeed. Sextus Pompeius continued as a threat both to the Roman corn supply and the Italian shores, challenging Octavian’s control over Italy. When Antonius and Sextus formed an alliance, Octavian had to either find a way to remove Sextus from the equation or secure his support against Antonius. As demonstrated by Lange, these repeated shifts of alliances and treaties between Sextus and the triumvirs were strategic calculations each actor made in order to stay afloat.[[672]](#footnote-672)

In Dio’s version, the alliance that Sextus, Antonius, and Octavian negotiated at Misenum in 39 BCE was largely forced upon the two triumvirs by an impatient Roman public desperate for peace (48.31.1–6).[[673]](#footnote-673) But in Dio’s view such a pact would never have lasted and he moves on to describe the imminent battle between Sextus and Octavian, feeling, apparently, no need to justify or explain Octavian’s continuous pressure for war other than by Sextus’ violation of the previous agreement.

The war between Octavian and Antonius is covered in much the same fashion. With Sextus’ fall and Lepidus out of the picture, the two remaining triumvirs were free to fight each other. With two equal dynasts, the Romans had lost their Republican form of government yet were not yet able to enjoy the peace of monarchy. In the efforts to find a justifiable pretext for war, the two triumvirs accused each other of breaching the alliance. But in Dio’s version it is Octavian’s disclosure of Antonius’ explosive will, gifting Roman land to Cleopatra and her children, that justified the war (50.3–6). By describing Antonius as a hypocrite charmed by Cleopatra, Dio walks the thin line between classifying Antonius as a traitor who sided with Egypt and a civil war combatant against an equal enemy. Once again, righteousness resides firmly in Octavian, who can assure his soldiers that they will be victorious as they have justice on their side (Cass. Dio 50.28). In comparison, what Antonius told his soldiers before fleeing the battle was that they had nothing to fear because they were numerically superior (50.15.3–4, 18.4).

By presenting Antonius as a hypocrite and a poor commander who left his army behind to their own destiny while he followed Cleopatra back to Egypt, Dio discredits every idea that Antonius could have been a viable alternative to Octavian, demonstrating to his reader the difference between fighting for the commonwealth or for personal gain. With Octavian’s victory, the Romans could finally enjoy peace and the stability of the benevolent monarchy. This Dio’s Augustus reintroduced in a form more stable and viable than anything achieved by Caesar’s dictatorship.[[674]](#footnote-674)

*Augustus: Settlement and Success*

Following his victory at Actium, the Augustus we encounter in books 53 to 56 obtained excessive but still time-limited powers after decisions of the Senate and the assembly, presumably the c*omitia centuriata* (53.11–12). With a mandate from Roman political institutions behind him, Augustus was not in Dio’s eyes a tyrant who forced his power on the Roman people, but a legitimate monarch elected for terms of ten and later five years at a time (53.16.2).

To demonstrate Augustus’ sense of duty, Dio points to the *princeps*’later (false) hesitation to accept the renewal of his powers when it is urged upon him (55.6.1). Another aspect of Dio’s benevolent Augustus is his determination to have the senators participate in the decision-making process. Here, the historian describes Augustus’ efforts to either force or encourage the senators, now losing interest in politics and public affairs, to participate in their meetings. He gave the senators little excuse for being absent, and meetings were announced well in advance on days when no other business required their presence. Fines were introduced for failing to attend meetings without valid reasons, and the requirement that meetings be quorate was introduced. Senators were also given the opportunity to inform themselves on proposals before the meetings, and Augustus kept his opinions to himself until the senators or his advisors at the *concilium principis* had been given the opportunity to speak so that he did not unduly steer the discussion with his interventions (54.18.3; 55.3–4; 55.34.1–2).

As in the account of the civil war, Augustus is not flawless; there are elements in Dio’s coverage that have rightly been read as criticism. Interestingly, Manuwald underlines that there are grounds to assume that Dio may have favored an idealistic form of monarchy over the form introduced by Augustus, and that the historian had reservations against the way in which the victorious triumvir carried out these changes.[[675]](#footnote-675) A key passage for this reading is the coverage of the Augustan settlement at the beginning of book 53, where a disingenuous Octavian offers to lay down his triumviral powers and continue as a private citizen, a move that in effect would restore Rome’s Republican constitution.[[676]](#footnote-676) In his account of the Senate meeting, Dio describes how Octavian manipulates the senators to offer him full control over the army and to grant a form of *imperium* with previously unseen powers. In order to make his point come across, Dio produces a speech, perhaps with some reference to what was said by Octavian at the meeting, in which the triumvir announces his plans to return his powers before he offers his advice for the way in which the senators were to govern after he had withdrawn himself from public life.[[677]](#footnote-677) Yet it quickly becomes clear in Dio’s coverage of the meeting that Octavian had no real intention of laying down his powers. What he wanted, instead, was for the Senate to offer him a new mandate of their own “free” will (53.11.1–53.12.3).[[678]](#footnote-678) It is a manipulating Octavian that Dio stages in the Senate, one who lures the senators into offering him monarchical powers so that he would not have to force his sovereignty upon them and the Roman people (53.2.6–7; 53.11.4; 53.12.1). Cleverly, Octavian uses the threats of chaos and new rounds of civil war to pressure the Senate on the matter.

We hear how Octavian doubled the pay of the Praetorian Guard after the Senate urged him to keep autocratic powers, which suggests that there was a limit to both the goodwill and the safety he could expect. Rome’s new monarch offered to share provincial government with the senators and promised to govern the provinces assigned until they were sufficiently pacified. Yet Dio discloses that the real intention was to disarm the Senate by gathering all of Rome’s armies under the emperor’s authority; when compared with the chaos and civil war of the previous decades, the historian believed this ruse to be a considerable improvement.

Seen in isolation, Dio’s account of Octavian’s methods may be read as unsympathetic and hypocritical.[[679]](#footnote-679) Dio shows the difference between what is said and what is done.[[680]](#footnote-680) True, the proposal to lay down his powers and allow the reintroduction of a Republican form of government was disingenuous. As Dio underlines in both the opening of Maecenas’ speech and in his coverage of the settlement in book 53 (52.14.1–5; 53.11.4–5) it had always been Octavian’s intention to retain his supreme powers. But what matters here is whether Dio censures Octavian for the way in which he introduced monarchical rule. When judging Dio’s coverage of Augustus’ settlement, we should recall that Dio held the Republican Senate accountable for the political chaos and civil unrest which naturally emerged from the political culture of ambition and cupidity they created (44.2; 46.34.1–5). The Senate of the year 27 was still the personification of that problem, even if many senators had lost their lives in the proscriptions or in the following battles. Therefore, in Dio’s eyes, the senators had to be persuaded, through violent or other means, to accept a reduced role in the decision-making process, in order for the Romans to find harmony. But it would certainly be preferable if they could be stirred towards that conclusion peacefully.

The opening of book 53 is another example of Dio’s judicious engagement with previous accounts, offering what he believed was the most accurate reading of Augustus’ settlement. In his *Life of the Divine Augustus*, Suetonius mentions that Augustus considered relinquishing his powers on two occasions: once after the civil war and again later after he had suffered an illness. Compared to Dio’s description, Suetonius presents us with a less idealistic Augustus who held onto his power for fear of his safety, even despite his other good intentions (Suet. *Aug*. 28.1). An even more favorable view of Augustus as the conscientious civil warrior who restored the Republican order of things is offered by Velleius Paterculus, who describes Rome as a city of peace, superintended by a reluctant Augustus who only accepted consular power in order to heal the wounds of Rome and its people.[[681]](#footnote-681)

Whether Dio read Velleius or Suetonius is unclear. Manuwald argues that Dio did not follow Suetonius closely or maybe not at all when writing his Augustan narrative but would have been familiar with parallel sources.[[682]](#footnote-682) But it is precisely when he combines earlier written accounts and other kinds of evidence with his theoretical understanding of human nature that Dio is at his best. Books 53–56 offer the most detailed account we now have of the Augustan period.[[683]](#footnote-683) Read in their entirety, they provide an account of Augustus’ mixed intentions: cynicism, yes, but also a genuine intention to include the Senate in the decision-making process. This is the most plausible reconstruction both of what happened and how the changes that occurred at the turn of the millennium were perceived in the Early and High Empire. By describing Augustus’ manipulation of the Senate into supporting a new mandate which transferred executive power to him, Dio provides a reading of the changes and the events that brought them about. His version lies somewhere between the excessive spin of Velleius’ *Roman History* and the *Res Gestae*, on the one hand, and the cynicism of Tacitus on the other hand (Tac. *Ann*. 1.9–10).[[684]](#footnote-684)

Dio notes that Augustus enacted as many laws as his mandate allowed him to, but also stresses his collegiality. He presented some of his measures to the assembly in order that reservations might be voiced, and Dio also emphasizes Augustus’ encouragement of the advice of magistrates, senators, and his council (the *concilium principis*, 53.21.4). The Senate also continued to transact legal business and maintain its role in foreign affairs, just as the assemblies of both the people and the *plebs* were still in session—although Dio underlines that nothing was carried out without the *princeps*’approval (53.17–21). The crafty Octavian in Dio’s account is therefore in line with the historian’s idealized portrait of a superior political talent who, by introducing monarchical rule in the best interests of the people, took such measures as were necessary to provide a safer, more modest, and more harmonious public life.

Modern scholars suggested that Augustus probably had other concerns than merely to ensure Rome’s elite a say in the decision-making process; on this view the measures he took should be read as an attempt to maintain the apparency of collaborative government.[[685]](#footnote-685) That is probably not far from the truth either. Surely, Augustus had no intention of sharing his powers or allowing the Senate the opportunity to block laws he proposed or pass one he was against. Yet Dio’s concern is here to show *how* the inclusion of the Senate’s point of view legitimizes Augustus’ supreme powers.

Another element in Dio’s portrait of Augustus’ benevolence is the sense of mercy he develops as he grows older. Dio claims that Octavian was compassionate when handling the proscriptions as a young triumvir, but it is as monarch his mildness is most pronounced—even if his temper sometimes clouded his judgement.[[686]](#footnote-686) A key moment in Dio’s portrait of the human Augustus arrives in book 55, where Dio comments on the conspiracy of Gnaeus Cornelius, the grandson of Pompeius the Great. After a dialogue in which Livia offers her advice on how to handle conspiracies more mildly, Augustus decides to pardon the alleged conspirators and even offers Cornelius a consulship. The dialogue has been read as an expression of Dio’s own thoughts on clemency, as his reminder to emperors of his own time to choose clemency over punishment, and as a strong critique of Livia and other women in power.[[687]](#footnote-687) Livia’s advice on the importance of mildness toward wavering members of the political elite (55.17.1–4; 55.21.1–4) is in line with Maecenas’ view that the emperor should not personally sit in judgement on threats to his rule (52.31.9–10). Of course, Livia’s position is ironic when we consider Dio’s later note that she was implicated in Augustus’ death.[[688]](#footnote-688)

The dialogue with Livia additionally serves to dramatize Augustus’ hesitation and provides the staging for his own reflection on his role. In the part of the dialogue attributed to Augustus, Dio portrays a leader already aware that the violent destruction of political opposition is not viable in the long run; he explains to Livia that protection from soldiers and followers will not keep him or the family perpetually secure. The advice that Livia gives in her monologue develops these opening remarks. Livia’s initial response is to tighten the security further and it is not until Augustus reminds her about the flaws in that plan that she suggests a way forward that aligns with the dilemma her husband has already described. This more hesitant Augustus featured by Dio ties into the overall question of supreme power. By reconsidering how to deal with opposition and by reaching the conclusion that he had to abandon his previously uncompromising strategy, Dio allows Augustus the role of the most civilized (δημοκρατικώτατός) monarch who searches for different ways to handle unhappy members of the political elite.[[689]](#footnote-689) In that sense, the frustrated Augustus who keeps Livia awake at night is not a tyrant who forces his will upon his unsatisfied subjects but an open minded leader who adjusts both his own role as monarch and the execution of his power (55.22.1–2).

Augustus’ clemency is also in evidence when Dio sums up his reign. After Tiberius has given his eulogy for the deceased Augustus, Dio moves on to conclude that the old *princeps* was admired for his mildness even towards those who did him wrong. In the end Dio selects only two specific examples. First, Augustus was not angry when the learned Athenodorus tested his security by jumping out of a litter with a sword; and, later, he pardoned the renowned robber Corocotta when the latter came to Augustus voluntarily after a million sesterces were offered for his capture (56.43.1–3).

But the biggest achievement, according to Dio, was how Augustus had freed the Romans from the arrogance common in democracies without taking more of their freedom away than necessary, and it was duly recognized by contemporary Romans how the changes that Rome went through could not have come about peacefully (56.43.4). As he draws his conclusion on the Augustan era, Dio describes how the emperor’s fellow Romans soon came to miss their conscientious leader because of how he had managed to combine monarchy with democracy (τὴν μοναρχίαν τῇ δημοκρατίᾳ μίξας), which accordingly allowed Romans a life free of the arrogance typical in communities ruled by the many, and of the exceeding autocracy common in tyrannies. According to Dio, Augustus’ contemporary Romans knew they had been able to live free and modest lives in harmony with each other as subjects not of a tyrant but of a benevolent king (βασιλευομένους, 56.43.4). They judged Augustus, Dio assures us, on how he governed Rome *after* he had won supreme power and recognized the necessity of the extreme measures he took (56.44.1–3).

With this conclusion, Dio reaches back to the claim that Octavian-Augustus, unlike Antonius, was not brutal during the proscriptions, nor a man without compassion. He was a reliable political actor doing what was needed at the time to serve in the best interests of the state. He did not sacrifice his friends in order to punish his enemies or surround himself with their severed heads as Antonius had done (47.8.1–5). In this fashion, Dio carefully ties the knot on his portrait of Rome’s first monarch since the regal period who, in the eyes of our historian, was the only member of Rome’s political elite at the time who was able to lead Rome towards a better future free of unregulated and unsound competition and civil unrest.

Some scholars are right to see elements of reservation in Dio’s coverage. Manuwald, for instance, acknowledges that Dio favored a monarchical form of government over what the historian refers to as δημοκρατία, but also that the critical portrait of Octavian-Augustus which Manuwald detects suggests that Dio’s ideal form of monarchical rule was not the same as Augustus’ version. According to Manuwald, Dio saw the form of monarchy that the triumvir introduced as necessary, not as the best solution possible. Similarly in the analysis of Roman historiography offered by Mehl, what the Romans really missed after Augustus’ passing was the way in which the *princeps* had managed to mix democratic and monarchical elements in a new form of government. According to Mehl, this implies that what Dio celebrates is not monarchy in a pure form but the combination of democratic and monarchical rule, and also that Dio, apparently, was less favorable towards monarchy than the sources he used in his more pro-monarchical narrative.[[690]](#footnote-690)

Another approach to the conclusion Dio draws on Augustus’ reign is to read 56.43–44 as a response to the opening of Tacitus’ *Annales* or to the critical tradition Tacitus refers to that holds Augustus to be a tyrant (Tac. *Ann*. 1.10).[[691]](#footnote-691) Here, Tacitus refers to how at the time of Augustus’ death members of the Roman community remembered Rome’s first *princeps* as someone who, led by his desire for power, bribed the legions and plotted against the dying consul Pansa before wrestling the consulship out of the hands of an unwilling Senate and then turning his legions against Antonius and the state. In this tradition, Octavian stood firmly behind the proscriptions. Caesar’s murders were killed and Sextus Pompeius, Lepidus and Antony were shrewdly defeated, moves that in the end paved the way for the Julio-Claudian dynasty (1.10).

In the previous chapter, Tacitus offers a more positive assessment of Augustus’ reign and path to power which aligns better with Dio’s views. Among other insightful men, Tacitus says it was acknowledged that the extraordinary circumstances after Caesar’s death forced the heir to take up arms against fellow citizens. It was believed he had given in conceded significant power to Antonius and Lepidus, so long as he could prosecute his father’s murderers. As Lepidus’ age and Antonius’ ruin made them unable to govern, sole rule was the only way forward.

It is possible that Dio read the opening of the *Annales*. Both traditions would have been available to Dio when he started on the Augustan books. This is not the place to discuss whether Tacitus aimed for some form of Republican rule, as was recently suggested by Thomas Strunk, or a different kind of Principate or *princeps* than Augustus and the rest of the *principes* whom the historian had either read about or experienced first-hand when senator in the reign of Domitian.[[692]](#footnote-692) Yet, the opening of the *Annales* is still relevant for the way in which we are to understand Dio’s positioning in his closing remarks on Augustus’ life. Where Tacitus in the first paragraph of the *Annales* holds monarchy to be the antithesis to liberty *([u]rbem Romam a principio reges habuere; libertatem et consulatum L. Brutus instituit*, “At the beginning the city of Rome was held by kings; freedom and consulship was instituted by L. Brutus”, 1.1), Dio on the other hand sees monarchical rule as the only way to free Romans from the factions and the enslavement that their struggle for power had brough upon the Roman people. Tacitus describes in his own voice Augustus’ accession to power in a negative tone as a coup against the state and the Roman people: Rome was unarmed when Brutus and Cassius were killed, Sextus Pompeius was crushed (*oppressus*), Lepidus discarded (*exutoque Lepido*) and Antonius destroyed (*interfecto Antonio*).[[693]](#footnote-693) Furthermore, Augustus lured (*pellexit*) the army and people into supporting him by offering them gifts and grain donations and everybody else with the pleasure of repose, and gradually embodied all functions of the state: Senate, magistracies and legislation. Most men of spirit had passed either in the wars or as part of the proscriptions while most contemporary members of the elite chose servitude as the easiest way to office and wealth.[[694]](#footnote-694) Dio, on the other hand, holds the senatorial elite to be the oppressors whose struggle for power enslaved the Roman people, allowing Augustus the role of the liberator whose victory in the civil war and enlightened one-man rule freed Rome from the tyranny of factions. This brings us to the question of why Dio goes to such lengths to justify Octavian-Augustus’ conduct as civil war general and as Rome’s first monarch since the regal period. Dio takes sides in the *Roman History* and is far from always offering a balanced account of the nearly sixty years Octavian-Augustus was at the center of Roman politics. Manuwald, Rich, Gowing and Lange are right to maintain that Dio used positive as well as critical sources in his coverage of the Age of Augustus. Our historian is not passing on Augustus’ preferred version. The coverage of what happened at Perusia, the rejection of the positive version of the Augustan Settlement recorded in the *Res Gestae,* in the autobiographyor by Velleius, the remarks about Augustus’ hot temper, and the hint at how Octavian had a legal right to Caesar’s powers, testify to a much broader perspective. But at the same time, Dio offers an idealized portrait of how Caesar’s heir came to power and introduced a more harmonious form of government.[[695]](#footnote-695) This goes further than *Realpolitik* or a purely pragmatic portrait.

It is well established that Dio follows a realist tradition firmly rooted in Thucydidean thinking and analyzes both the civil war and the Augustan settlement through the prism of *Machtpolitik*.[[696]](#footnote-696) Yet Dio’s decision to choose the most positive angle possible when assessing Octavian’s motives and how he continuously has the Romans’ best interests at heart points towards a biased and idealized coverage of the historian’s preferred political actor. As mentioned above, this preferment of Augustus has been seen as a model for emperors of the Severan age; this has led to the conclusion that Dio’s pervasive search for the ideal *princeps* makes his Augustan narrative more about his contemporary Rome than the Augustan era.[[697]](#footnote-697) Such a conclusion is too pessimistic, just as it is too narrow to see Dio’s coverage of Octavian-Augustus as a response to the ideology of the Severan dynasty and their idealization of Rome’s first *princeps*; this only works if we accept that Dio’s assessment of Caesar’s heir is reluctant*.*[[698]](#footnote-698)

The accounts of Octavian’s apparently selfless struggle for the common good in the civil wars, and of Augustus’ liberation of the citizens from the chaos of democracy, are not very useful in the assessment or reconstruction of the motives, behavior, and personality of Rome’s first *princeps*. But it is interesting to consider why Dio sticks to a continuously positive assessment of Octavian-Augustus. One way forward is to read Dio’s portrait in the light of the chaos of the Late Republic and as a response to the view that Augustus was a tyrant who won autocratic powers through illegitimate means. As a follower of Thucydidean realism, Dio firmly believed that modesty and peaceful coexistence were unobtainable if humans were free to compete for power and prestige. Because monarchy, despite its many shortcomings, represented the only form of government that regulates the competition between men of power, and because Augustus was the one to bring about a new form of constitution in which competition was reduced, he becomes the savior figure Rome needed at that specific moment. The claim that Augustus was a tyrant calls into question not only his reign but also the very nature of the monarchy that he introduced. In this reading, Dio becomes both a political theorist and a historian who seeks to demonstrate why monarchical rule is to be preferred over democracy; in consequence, Octavian-Augustus’ actions, too, are legitimized, and the end of peace justifies the severity that was his means.

*Conclusion*

A comparative reading of Dio and the parallel sources suggests that our historian was not just favorable towards the man who reinstated monarchical rule. He offers an idealized version of a savior figure who made very few mistakes in a tireless effort to punish the illegitimate murder of Caesar and to reintroduce an improved version of monarchical rule instigated when his great-uncle was awarded lifelong dictatorship. It is striking how little room there is in books 45 to 56 for actual criticism of or substantial reservations about Octavian’s role in the civil wars, nor indeed about a form of monarchical rule which deprived Rome’s political elite of the opportunity to pursue their own initiatives. Instead, the reader is presented with a portrait of a young man whose actions are explained as the effort to right what was wronged when Caesar was murdered by a coalition of irresponsible and naïve senators eager to return to what they believed to be freedom: the right to follow their own political program and reach their full potential as senators, magistrates, and generals.

In the *Roman History,* Octavian is different to the other political actors in Late Republican Rome. He is destined for greatness and aware of his own fate, and he quickly impresses Caesar, who sees him as his successor (45.2.7–8). When Octavian enters the political stage, he handles political affairs better than his rivals (45.5.1), for instance by siding with the Senate at Mutina and then changing his allegiance to Antonius and the other Caesareans to resist the Pompeians as a united front (45.14–15.2). In the coverage of the many atrocities committed during the wars, Octavian is allowed to assume the moral high ground. The proscriptions were not his initiative (47.7.1–3), the murder of Roman nobles at Perusia is not questioned, let alone criticized (48.14.4), and Octavian was in the right at Philippi and in the war against Sextus and Antonius (47.39.1–5 and 50.28).

As he turns to the Principate Dio describes a monarch who had to establish monarchical rule in order to maintain a fragile peace. He obtains his mandate from a Senate in which many were favorable and others reluctant; but this mandate and the vote of the assembly gave him a legal basis to rule not as the tyrant Tacitus refers to but as a legitimate monarch with temporary powers and support from Rome’s political institutions. The form of monarchy he introduced gave him unlimited power, which Dio saw as the only way forwards if Rome were to avoid chaos and ruinous foreign and domestic wars. In this way, Augustus becomes the conscientious ruler, who insisted that the senators, and the people, were still to have a role in politics—even when they were losing interest in public affairs. As illustrated by the Livia-Augustus dialogue, he continued to reflect on whether he was exercising his power justly.

In books 45 to 56 Dio offers his version of what he believed happened when Rome changed its form of constitution from an oligarchic Republic to a benevolent monarchy. The historian uses rhetoric in the sense of persuasive language to convince his readers that monarchical rule was the only form of constitution viable for a state as strong as Rome, and offers a portrait of Octavian-Augustus that idealizes Rome’s first monarch as well as his efforts to see through what Dio presents as a lifesaving transition of power. Dio’s approach is biased, just as his assessment of Octavian-Augustus’ motives is idealized. It is unnecessary to follow Dio on the assumption that his favorite was indeed truly selfless, or that he always had the interests of his fellow Romans at heart in prosecuting one conflict or another. Nor do we need to agree with Dio that the Romans ultimately won when they lost their freedom to Octavian at Philippi.

Rather, it is more illuminating to see Dio’s favorable portrait of Augustus as a contribution to an ongoing debate about how to organize the best form of government for Rome and its empire. Unlike Tacitus, who wrote his historical works about a century earlier, Dio had practically no faith in the ability of his fellow senators to exert any real influence upon decision-making or government. The need for unchecked monarchical power was not to be questioned, and neither were the efforts or intentions of the man who brought about the first viable form of monarchical rule, including the reign of Rome’s early kings.

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# Chapter 11: Cassius Dio and the Julio-Claudians: Fear and Loathing in the Early Principate [[699]](#footnote-699)

*Eleanor Cowan*

The Julio-Claudian emperors Tiberius (14–37 CE), Gaius Caligula (37–41), Claudius (41–54) and Nero (54–68) represented—although not straight-forwardly—Rome’s first experiment with dynastic autocracy since the time of the Kings. All belonged to the strategically constructed family of the divine Augustus and made use of connection with (different versions of) an Augustan past in order to give legitimacy and authority to their own Principates. Their places as the first successors to, and interpreters of, Augustus’ deeds and words made them the ideal subjects of historical reflections on the nature and rise of the Principate and the role of the Roman emperor. Tacitus’ *Annals* and Suetonius’ eponymous biographical studies remain the most comprehensive and best-known treatments of the Julio-Claudian emperors, but Dio’s longer project—which included seven books on these emperors—both shares a similar preoccupation with the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the origins of monarchic rule and, at the same time, seeks to situate these emperors within his own more chronologically ambitious project.

Dio’s reflections on the nature, purpose and experience of imperial power were informed, on the one hand, by his investment in the Principate as an institution and, on the other, by his active engagement with political theory and reflections on his own practice as an historian.[[700]](#footnote-700) He was, as Ando has noted, deeply interested in questions of legitimacy and he came to view legitimacy as dependent on the emperor’s “conduct in office” rather than the means by which he had secured succession.[[701]](#footnote-701) In addition to examining examples of good and bad emperors, Dio also undertook a critique of dynastic monarchy by exposing the tensions between the emperor’s deeds and his words (expressed as a gap between λόγος and ἔργον) and demonstrated the changing nature of the environment within which frank speech could take place.[[702]](#footnote-702)

Dio’s Julio-Claudian narrative (books 57–63) consists of lengthy surviving fragments of his text along with excerpts made in the tenth century and summaries and extracts provided by Xiphilinus and Zonaras in the following centuries. Books 57–60 include substantial fragments of the surviving text whilst books 61–63 (the reign of Nero) have been reconstructed from Xiphilinus and excerpts.[[703]](#footnote-703)Dio’s narrative has regularly been used to supplement the accounts of Tacitus and Suetonius, but has only rarely (and relatively recently) been examined in its own right.[[704]](#footnote-704)

To a large extent, the narrative of the Julio-Claudian emperors is framed as a response to Augustus, his achievements and legacy.[[705]](#footnote-705) Dio’s attitude towards Augustus the man has been the subject of ongoing scholarly disagreement, but in his role as exemplar and paradigm, Augustus stood unparalleled within the narrative.[[706]](#footnote-706) Two of Dio’s great set-piece speeches, the debate between Agrippa and Maecenas (52.1–41) and the advice of Livia to Augustus (55.14–21) provided vehicles for the examination of his political philosophy which was informed, in part, by his appreciation (and imitation) of Thucydides’ view of the constancy of particular traits in human nature and, in larger part, by his desire to speak to his own third-century context.[[707]](#footnote-707) Maecenas’ speech (in favor of monarchy) advocates strong leadership in politics, law, religion and external affairs exercised in conjunction with those best men who serve their community in the senate (52.14.3). But Dio also made considerable effort to make Maecenas’ advice speak to his picture of Augustan history and thus its own imagined historical context.[[708]](#footnote-708) Certainly, as Maecenas’ speech already demonstrates, it was possible to view the Principate as treading a fine line between benevolent monarchy and unacceptable tyranny—the balance one way or the other determined by the character and actions of the ruler. The cessation of civil war (a core claim for the legitimacy of the Principate) and the reorganization of the state which began with Augustus mark the foundation of the Principate in Dio’s text (56.44.2), demonstrating Augustus’ “transcendent role in Roman, and so universal, history” and within the narrative.[[709]](#footnote-709) The lifetime of Augustus before and after the pivotal battle at Actium thus marked a watershed in Dio’s narrative and hence made the need for a close examination of the Julio-Claudian emperors compelling. In this context, Augustus functioned as both a super-paradigm (a paradigm against which all subsequent emperors might be measured) *and* a fixed starting point from which the failures of subsequent Julio-Claudian emperors could cascade downwards, each emperor’s failure measured against that of his immediate predecessor: “Hence the deeds of Tiberius, though they were felt to have been very harsh, were nevertheless as far superior to those of Gaius as the deeds of Augustus were to those of his successor”.[[710]](#footnote-710)

Dio approached the task of writing about the Julio-Claudian emperors acutely conscious of the fact that the political system under which he lived and to which he owed his career and advancement had developed from Augustan beginnings, and had first had its fault-lines exposed in the immediate wake of Augustus’ death—that is, by his Julio-Claudian successors. The narrative of the Julio-Claudian emperors provided, therefore, an opportunity to test for the first time Dio’s thinking about good and bad emperors and, just as importantly, his ideas about what a contemporary reader of his *Roman History* might learn from his work and take with him into their own troubled times.[[711]](#footnote-711) Each of the Julio-Claudian emperors fails to emulate Augustus’ success as *civilis princeps*—a ruler capable of existing within his community without causing offence.[[712]](#footnote-712) Madsen sums up their failures in Dio’s narrative by noting a pattern in which each emperor starts well but descends into a tyranny marked by falling out with the senate and by the abuse of power.[[713]](#footnote-713)

Many of Dio’s key interests and themes are manifest in the Julio-Claudian books. Pelling used the term “trans-regnal” themes as a means of understanding Dio’s biographical practice.[[714]](#footnote-714) Chief among these themes is Dio’s interest in examining and exposing the hypocrisy of the Principate and individual *principes* and his interest in human nature.[[715]](#footnote-715) In addition, Ando has examined Dio’s interest in the pressures which the emergence of the Principate placed on senatorial behavior and Dio’s evaluation of emperors according to the conventions of the “good emperor”, conventions which, by Dio’s time, formed a recognizable “catalogue of gestures and actions” such as promises not to kill senators or the capacity of the emperor to create space in which the Senate might meaningfully be included in the conduct of affairs of state.[[716]](#footnote-716) Schulz has further identified the multiple methods of deconstruction which Dio uses to expose bad emperors.[[717]](#footnote-717) Emperors in Dio, she demonstrates, were represented in panegyric in terms of their military achievements, building programs, entertainment, speeches, divine aspirations and “the atmosphere of their reigns”.[[718]](#footnote-718) Bad emperors could be found wanting against these same measures. In addition to these core themes of Dio, the impact of the interests and concerns of the excerptors and epitomators add further layers of selection and interpretation to the Julio-Claudian narrative.

Lindholmer observes that recent research has “transformed [Dio] from a politically uninterested and incompetent historian into a complex political interpreter who is worth studying in his own right”.[[719]](#footnote-719) In this chapter, I argue that we can see further evidence for Dio’s engagement in crafting his project in both the content and the organization of the Julio-Claudian narrative. In order to do this I propose to examine references to fear and loathing. My argument has two parts. In the first part of the chapter I examine the evidence for fear and loathing in Dio’s post-Augustan Julio-Claudian narrative including the evidence for fear and loathing in the surviving epitomes of his text for the reign of Nero.[[720]](#footnote-720) In the final part of the chapter I examine four uses of fear in Dio’s writing and conclude that an interest in how human action could be compelled by fear informed both the composition and organization of the narrative as well as Dio’s evaluation of the Julio-Claudian emperors and the didactic importance of their reigns.

*1. Fear and Loathing in Dio’s Julio-Claudian narrative: Books 57–60*

“The most prominent emotion in Dio’s imperial narrative is fear”.[[721]](#footnote-721)

*1.1 The Fearful Emperor*

In two set-piece exchanges, Dio examines the ways in which Augustus should or could negotiate a relationship with his community post-conflict. In the first of these, the well-known speeches by Agrippa and Maecenas, the former advocating democracy and the latter monarchy, both speakers note the vulnerable position in which Augustus, as a ruler, would find himself. Agrippa begins his oration (52.2.2) by noting that he can speak disinterestedly since he will reap the benefits but incur none of the dangers of monarchy, all of which fall to the ruler. He continues (52.10.4) by observing that it is inevitable that a ruler should suffer anxiety and fear “for men who have much power have many troubles” (οἵ τε γὰρ πολὺ δυνάμενοι πολλὰ πράγματα ἔχουσι). Among these he singles out conspiracies and an inability to trust one’s friends as the chief banes of the ruler’s life (alongside the expense of maintaining his position): “the multitude of bodyguards is gathered merely because of the multitude of conspirators; and as for the flatterers, they would be more likely to destroy you than to save you” (τά τε πλήθη τῶν δορυφόρων διὰ τὰ πλήθη τῶν ἐπιβουλευόντων ἀθροίζεται, καὶ οἱ κολακεύοντες ἐπιτρίψειαν ἄν τινα μᾶλλον ἢ σώσειαν). Maecenas, on the other hand, argues that only a bad ruler—a tyrant—need be fearful of his own community. The good ruler has within his own character the means of ensuring his own safety from danger (52.39.4). He offers an aphorism of his own to illustrate this idea: “therefore, since you have in your own hands a mighty means of protection—that you never do wrong to another—be of good courage and believe me when I tell you that you will never become the object of hatred or of conspiracy” (ὥστ’ αὐτὸς παρὰ σαυτῷ μέγα φυλακτήριον ἐν τῷ μηδένα ποτὲ ἀδικῆσαι ἔχων θάρσει, καὶ πίστευέ μοι λέγοντι ὅτι οὔτε μισηθήσῃ ποτὲ οὔτε ἐπιβουλευθήσῃ). Getting his relationships with multiple stakeholders within his community right, therefore, necessarily ensures the emperor’s safety from conspiracy.

Dio’s second set-piece exchange, this time between Livia and her husband following the exposure of a conspiracy, returns to the same theme (55.14–21). Augustus, sleepless because he cannot decide whether or how to punish the conspirators, characterizes his position as monarch miserably thus: (55.15.1) “no high position is ever free from envy and treachery, and least of all a monarchy”. Livia responds in the first instance (55.15.3) by noting how well guarded Augustus is, but continues by demonstrating that the best insurance against fear is to act with such justice and moderation that all men come to love you (55.19.4). Dio claims that Augustus took Livia’s advice and successfully avoided all further confrontations: “As a result of this course he so conciliated both him and the other persons so treated that neither they nor any one of the rest thereafter either actually plotted against him or was suspected of doing so” (55.22.2: κἀκ τούτου καὶ ἐκεῖνον καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀνθρώπους οὕτως ᾠκειώσατο ὥστε μηδένα ἔτ’ αὐτῷ τῶν ἄλλων μήτ’ ὄντως ἐπιβουλεῦσαι μήτε δόξαι·).[[722]](#footnote-722) Together, both speeches reflect on “the difficulties and disadvantages of tyranny” and the advantages of benevolent monarchy.[[723]](#footnote-723) Conventions concerning the “good emperor” were quick to emerge in imperial panegyric and have received extended treatment elsewhere.[[724]](#footnote-724) The remainder of this chapter will examine Dio’s engagement with the idea that the emperor’s success or failure could be measured according to his ability to avoid or succumb to being a fearful tyrant.

In both set-pieces of advice, Augustus’ attitude towards and relationship with his community is held up as a measure of his success as *princeps*. Both speakers exhort him–in part—to act as the archetypal “good ruler” and hence avoid the dual dangers of having to live in fear and being the victim of conspiracy. In addition to these three famous speeches, each a vehicle for the examination of Dio’s political philosophy, Dio offers a practical example of Augustus’ attitude and behavior in action (56.43.2):

τεκμήριον δὲ πρὸς τοῖς εἰρημένοις ὅτι τοῦ Ἀθηνοδώρου ἐν δίφρῳ ποτὲ καταστέγῳ ἐς τὸ δωμάτιον αὐτοῦ ὡς καὶ γυναικός τινος ἐσκομισθέντος, καὶ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ξιφήρους ἐκπηδήσαντος, καὶ προσεπειπόντος “οὐ φοβῇ μή τίς σε οὕτως ἐσελθὼν ἀποκτείνῃ;” οὐχ ὅπως ὠργίσθη, ἀλλὰ καὶ χάριν αὐτῷ ἔγνω.

One instance, in addition to those already related, occurred in the case of Athenodorus. This man was once brought into his room in a covered litter, as if he were a woman, and leaping from it sword in hand cried: “Aren’t you afraid that someone may enter in this way and kill you?” Augustus, far from being angry, thanked him for his suggestion.

In this example, the Stoic Philosopher Athenodorus staged a pretended assassination attempt as a learning experience in order to test imperial security and Augustus’ preparedness to meet the threat of assassination.[[725]](#footnote-725) The responses expected from Augustus were fear and anger. However, Augustus, as the archetypal good ruler, did not respond with either fear or anger but rather thanked Athenodorus for his warning about the need to improve imperial security. In this instance, Dio implies that the ruler demonstrated a right response both in terms of his lack of anger and in terms of his willingness to take advice from a subordinate. Not only this, but, by acting as he did, Augustus continued to adhere to the policy of Maecenas and Livia which Dio had established as his guiding philosophy. The ways in which Augustus’ Julio-Claudian successors would form relationships with their communities, and particularly the ways in which they would respond to the twin problems of fear and danger are used as a trans-regnal benchmark for their success or failure as *principes*.

For Augustus’ successors in Dio’s narrative, fear was ever-present, beginning at the very moment of Augustus’ funeral (57.2.2):

τούς τε σωματοφύλακας ἀμφ’ αὑτὸν ἤδη ἔχων ἐδεῖτο δὴ τῆς γερουσίας συνάρασθαί οἱ ὥστε μηδὲν βίαιον ἐν τῇ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ ταφῇ παθεῖν· ἐδεδίει γὰρ δῆθεν μή τινες αὐτὸ ἁρπάσαντες ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ, ὥσπερ τὸ τοῦ Καίσαρος, καύσωσι.

At a time when he [Tiberius] was already surrounded by the bodyguards, he actually asked the senate to lend him assistance so that he might not meet with any violence at the burial of the emperor; for he pretended to be afraid that people might catch up the body and burn it in the Forum, as they had done with that of Caesar.

In this passage Tiberius’ fears are simultaneously exposed and critiqued in such a way that this short episode does much to contribute to the overall representation of Tiberius as *princeps* in Dio’s history.[[726]](#footnote-726) Tiberius is introduced as a ruler who already has a bodyguard—a sign of his fearfulness and also of his potential to be a tyrant (one who rules through fear but lives in fear).[[727]](#footnote-727) No immediate or specific justification for the bodyguard is offered.[[728]](#footnote-728) Instead, the reader is to understand that Tiberius already exists in a state of fear and requires (or believes he requires) protection. Dio, however, signals his skepticism about Tiberius’ fears throughout the passage. He marks his surprise that Tiberius, who had a bodyguard, should require more assistance by “actually” and ironically suggesting (δῆθεν) that Tiberius’ fear of a repeat of the violence at Caesar’s funeral was a pretense.[[729]](#footnote-729) In this way, the passage presents Tiberius as a fearful ruler and as a ruler who uses his own fear to manipulate others. Tiberius’ real fear appears to be the threat he felt from the provincial legions and especially Germanicus, and it is his true nature that causes him to hide the cause of the fear from the Senate (57.3.1).[[730]](#footnote-730)

Tiberius’ attitude towards his community is explained in a maxim recorded by the sixth century excerptor Petrus Patricius which speaks directly to the tradition of bad rulers and tyrants (57.19.1b [*Exc. Vat*.]):

ὅτι Τιβέριος τοὺς κατηγορουμένους ἐπί τινι πικρῶς ἐκόλαζεν οὕτως ἐπιλέγων “οὐδεὶς ἑκὼν ἄρχεται ἀλλ’ ἄκων εἰς τοῦτο συνελαύνεται· μὴ μόνον γὰρ [τοὺς] μὴ πειθαρχεῖν τοὺς ἀρχομένους ἡδέως, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπιβουλεύειν τοῖς ἄρχουσι.”

He used to remark: “Nobody willingly submits to being ruled, but a man is driven to it against his will; for not only do subjects delight in refusing obedience, but they also enjoy plotting against their rulers”.

The idea that people are ruled against their will and respond with disobedience is echoed in the advice of Agrippa (52.4.4) and Livia (55.14.4) as well as by Maecenas in relation to right enforcement of punishment (52.34.1–11). This disobedience breaks the correct relationship between *princeps* and people (characterized by *pietas* and by gratitude on the one hand and by *civilitas* on the other) and gives rise to assassination attempts.[[731]](#footnote-731) In Tiberius’ case, these plots, in turn, validate the *princeps*’ paranoia and hence justify his ongoing anger and cruelty so that even Sejanus, a selected and trusted advisorm becomes the object of fear (58.13.1).

The measure of the failure of the subsequent Julio-Claudian emperors is their willingness (in Dio’s narrative) to be influenced by the maxim of Tiberius rather than the example of Augustus. Influenced by fear of their communities and potential rivals, the Julio-Claudian emperors are unable to realize the potential of Augustus’ example or his paradigmatic system. This can be clearly seen in the case of Gaius Caligula who explicitly makes Tiberius’ advice his model (59.16.5–7):

τοιαῦτα ἄττα εἰπὼν αὐτὸν δὴ τὸν Τιβέριον τῷ λόγῳ παρήγαγε, λέγοντά οἱ ὅτι “καὶ καλῶς καὶ ἀληθῶς πάντα ταῦτα εἴρηκας, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μήτε φιλήσῃς τινὰ αὐτῶν μήτε φείσῃ τινός. Πάντες τε γὰρ μισοῦσί σε καὶ πάντες ἀποθανεῖν εὔχονται· καὶ φονεύσουσί γε, ἂν δυνηθῶσι [σε]. Μήτ’ οὖν ὅπως τι χαρίσῃ πράξας αὐτοῖς ἐννόει, μήτ’ ἄν τι θρυλῶσι φρόντιζε, ἀλλὰ τό τε ἡδὺ καὶ τὸ ἀσφαλὲς τὸ σεαυτοῦ μόνον ὡς καὶ δικαιότατον προσκόπει. Οὕτω μὲν γὰρ οὔτε τι πείσῃ κακὸν καὶ πάντων τῶν ἡδίστων ἀπολαύσεις, καὶ προσέτι καὶ τιμηθήσῃ ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ἄν τ’ ἐθέλωσιν ἄν τε καὶ μή· ἐκείνως δὲ ἔργῳ μὲν οὐδὲν ὀνήσει, λόγῳ δὲ δὴ δόξαν κενὴν λαβὼν οὔτε τι πλέον ἕξεις καὶ ἐπιβουλευθεὶς ἀκλεῶς τελευτήσεις. Οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀνθρώπων ἑκὼν ἄρχεται, ἀλλ’ ἐφ’ ὅσον μὲν φοβεῖται, θεραπεύει τὸν ἰσχυρότερον, ὅταν δὲ δὴ θαρσήσῃ, τιμωρεῖται τὸν ἀσθενέστερον.”

After some such remarks as these he represented in his speech Tiberius himself as saying to him: “In all this you have spoken well and truly. Therefore show no affection for any of them and spare none of them. For they all hate you and they all pray for your death; and they will murder you if they can. Do not stop to consider, then, what acts of yours will please them nor mind it if they talk, but look solely to your own pleasure and safety, since that has the most just claim. In this way you will suffer no harm and will at the same time enjoy all the greatest pleasures; you will also be honoured by them, whether they wish it or not. If, however, you pursue the opposite course, it will profit you naught in reality; for, though in name you may win an empty reputation, you will gain no advantage, but will become the victim of plots and will perish ingloriously. For no man living is ruled of his own free will; on the contrary, only so long as a person is afraid, does he pay court to the man who is stronger, but when he gains courage, he avenges himself on the man who is weaker”.

Here, Tiberius’ maxim is taken further—the people should be kept in fear in order to keep them subordinate. That the *princeps* should fear the people and the people should be kept in fear of the *princeps* then became the hallmark of Gaius’ relationship with his community and his decision to echo Tiberius’ attitude is immediately signalled by the repetition of the idea of pretense at 59.23.1: “He sent a report about these matters to the senate at the time, just as if had escaped some great plot; for he was always pretending to be in danger and to be leading a miserable existence” (προσεποιεῖτο ἐν δεινοῖς τε εἶναι καὶ ταλαιπώρως διάγειν). That such a relationship resembled that of a tyrant towards his people is made clear in another anecdote (59.20.6):

οὕτω δὲ δὴ τὸ σύμπαν καὶ βάσκανος καὶ ὕποπτος πρὸς πάντα ὁμοίως ἦν ὥστε καὶ Καρρίναν Σεκοῦνδον ῥήτορα φυγαδεῦσαί ποτε, ὅτι λόγον τινὰ ἐν γυμνασίᾳ κατὰ τυράννων εἶπεν.

In general his attitude was one of envy and suspicion toward everything alike. Thus he banished Carrinas Secundus, an orator, for delivering a speech against tyrants as a rhetorical exercise.

Here, Gaius’ attitude (βάσκανος and ὕποπτος) is represented as giving rise to the banishment of Carrinas Secundus. The implication is that the rhetorical exercise which involved a speech against tyrants (a stock declamatory figure) was interpreted by Gaius as an attempt to discredit or insult the *princeps* himself. Thus, Gaius’ paranoia colored his interpretation of his world and provided the primary motivation for his interaction with his community.

Dio examines Gaius’ attitude of suspicion [ὕποπτος] again at 59.27.4: “Gaius, of course, hated all who were stronger than himself, and he was suspicious [ὑπώπτευεν] of all who were successful, feeling sure that they would attack him” (τῷ τε γὰρ κρείττονι τῷ ἑαυτοῦ ὁ Γάιος ἤχθετο, καὶ τὸ εὖ φερόμενον ὡς καὶ ἐπιθησόμενόν οἱ ὑπώπτευεν). In this passage, Dio insists that Gaius believed not only that he would be insulted, but that he would be attacked. That such paranoia would naturally give rise to plots against Gaius follows logically in Dio’s exposition in accordance with the cycle of fear established above, as he later explains: “Living in this manner, he was bound to become the object of a plot” (59.25.5b [Xiph./*Exc. Vat*.]: τοῦτον δὲ τὸν τρόπον βιοὺς πάντως ἐπιβουλευθήσεσθαι ἔμελλε). Gaius’ assassination thus represents both the inevitable culmination of his broken relationship with his community and the confirmation of the Tiberian maxim he had taken to heart.

Claudius is also depicted as fearful, and his fear also leads him to pretend, a state that Dio traces back to the emperor’s childhood: “From a child he had been reared a constant prey to illness and great terror [ἐν φόβῳ πολλῷ], and for that reason had feigned a stupidity greater than was really the case (a fact that he himself admitted in the senate)… (60.2.4: ἅτε γὰρ ἐκ παίδων ἔν τε νοσηλείᾳ καὶ ἐν φόβῳ πολλῷ τραφείς, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐπὶ πλεῖον τῆς ἀληθείας εὐήθειαν προσποιησάμενος, ὅπερ που καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῇ βουλῇ ὡμολόγησε). His fear too distorts his relationship with his community. He feigns ignorance before the Senate and suspects all those who come near him: “Therefore he exercised great caution in everything; he caused all who came near him, men and women alike, to be searched, for fear they might have a dagger, and at banquets he was sure to have some soldiers present” (60.3.2–3: ἀλλὰ τά τε ἄλλα ἀκριβῶς ἐφυλάττετο, καὶ πάντας τοὺς προσιόντας οἱ καὶ ἄνδρας καὶ γυναῖκας ἐρευνᾶσθαι ἐποίει μή τι ξιφίδιον ἔχωσιν, ἔν τε τοῖς συμποσίοις πάντως τινὰς στρατιώτας συνόντας εἶχε). His paranoia then leads him to live in terror—even to the point of wanting to abdicate (60.15.4)—and a sense that his own fear of his community would take on metaphysical proportions: “Since there was to be an eclipse of the sun on his birthday, he feared (ἐφοβήθη) that there might be some disturbance in consequence, inasmuch as some other portents had already occurred…” (60.26.1: καὶ ἐπειδὴ ὁ ἥλιος ἐν τοῖς γενεθλίοις αὐτοῦ ἐκλείψειν ἔμελλεν, ἐφοβήθη τε μή τις ἐκ τούτου ταραχὴ γένηται, ἐπεὶ ἄλλα ἄττα τέρατα συνεβεβήκει).

Gowing has identified three core themes in the Neronian narrative of Dio’s excerptors: “1) Nero’s theatricality and exhibitionism, 2) the emperor’s effeminacy and 3) allusions to how poorly Nero compared with Augustus”.[[732]](#footnote-732) In addition, he argues that the narrative was structured to bring out these themes which, in turn, demonstrated Nero’s unsuitability as an emperor.[[733]](#footnote-733) Nero’s vices emerge quickly in the narrative which situates him in the cascading descent of failed Augustan successors who were worse than their predecessors (61[61].5.1 [Xiph.]). In what followed, Dio first established that Nero was a tyrant and then tracked the deterioration of his character and his relationship with his community.

The *Epitome* and excerpts from his work suggest that Dio’s interest in fear and loathing was pursued in the narrative of Nero’s Principate as well. Although references to the emperor’s own fear are rare, Dio appears to have presented Nero initially as a fearful emperor who fluctuated between fear and courage (62[61].11.1 [*Exc. Val.*]):

πάντα τε γὰρ ὅσα ἐξῆν αὐτῷ ποιεῖν, καὶ καλὰ ἡγεῖτο εἶναι, καὶ τοῖς φόβῳ τι ἢ κολακείᾳ αὐτοῦ λέγουσιν ὡς καὶ πάνυ ἀληθεύουσι προσεῖχεν. Τέως μὲν γὰρ φόβοις καὶ θορύβοις συνείχετο· ἐπεὶ δ’ οἱ πρέσβεις πολλὰ <καὶ> κεχαρισμένα αὐτῷ εἶπον, ἀνεθάρσησε.

He came to believe that anything that it was in his power to do was right, and gave heed to those whose words were inspired by fear or flattery, as if they were utterly sincere in what they said. So, although for a time he was subject to fears and disturbances, yet after the envoys had made to him a number of pleasing speeches he regained his courage.

Nero is also depicted as knowing that his actions will cause anger—and hence fearing attack (62[63].12.3 [Xiph.]: καὶ ἅμα φοβούμενος τοὺς δυνατωτάτους μὴ ἐπίθωνταί οἱ τοιαῦτα ποιοῦντι, πολλούς τε καὶ ἀγαθοὺς ἄνδρας ἔφθειρεν) and fearing the people, but here his fear is not a general sense that they will conspire against him, but rather flows from guilt that his plans to assassinate his mother will be exposed to public scrutiny (62[61].12.3 [Xiph.]). Faced with conspiracy, however, Nero responded as had his Julio-Claudian predecessors, with fear: “But when he heard about Galba having been proclaimed emperor by the soldiers and about the desertion of Rufus, he fell into great fear…” (63[63].27.1 [Xiph.]: ἐπεὶ δὲ περί τε τοῦ Γάλβα ἤκουσεν ὅτι αὐτοκράτωρ ὑπὸ τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἀνερρήθη, περί τε τοῦ Ῥούφου ὅτι αὐτοῦ ἀπέστη, ἐν δέει τε μεγάλῳ ἐγένετο…).

Augustus, with the support of his advisors, became in Dio’s narrative reconciled to the inevitability of hostility towards the monarchy and towards himself as monarch. He chose, moreover, to forge relationships with his community which sought to address the root causes of this hostility by taking Maecenas’ advice and treating others as he would himself wish to be treated: “if you of your own accord do all that you would wish another to do if he became your ruler, you will err in nothing and succeed in everything, and in consequence you will find your life most happy and utterly free from danger” (52.39.2: ἂν γὰρ ὅσα ἂν ἕτερόν τινα ἄρξαντά σου ποιεῖν ἐθελήσῃς, ταῦτα αὐτὸς αὐτεπάγγελτος πράσσῃς, οὔτε τι ἁμαρτήσῃ καὶ πάντα κατορθώσεις, κἀκ τούτου καὶ ἥδιστα καὶ ἀκινδυνότατα βιώσῃ). Consequently, he was able to avoid living in fear and, when a (pretended) assassination attempt was made, to respond as the good ruler should. His Julio-Claudian successors singularly failed to build correct relationships with their communities and hence lived in fear. Not only this, but Dio also demonstrates that, in electing to do so, they both re-cast the history of the emerging Principate and cast themselves as victim-tyrants.

*1.2 Frightening and Loathing the Emperor*

Not only do the emperor’s paranoia and anger give rise to a culture of fear, but Dio repeatedly shows that emperors were frightened by subjects who loathed and distrusted them. The emperor’s failure could therefore also be measured by the extent to which (unlike Augustus in his response to Athenodorus above) Julio-Claudian emperors could be intimidated by their subjects. In the case of Tiberius, Dio depicts the leader of the legions revolting in 15 CE preparing to use intimidation as a means of communicating with the *princeps* (57.4.3):

οὐ μὴν ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνοι μὲν τότε <τε> μόλις ποτὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Βλαίσου πεισθέντες πρέσβεις πρὸς τὸν Τιβέριον ὑπὲρ αὑτῶν ἔπεμψαν· ἐν γὰρ τῇ μεταβολῇ τῆς ἀρχῆς πάνθ’ ὅσα ἐπεθύμουν, ἢ αὐτὸν ἐκφοβήσαντες ἢ καὶ ἄλλῳ τινὶ τὸ κράτος δόντες, καταπράξειν ἤλπιζον.

However, they [rebelling troops] were at this time finally and with no little difficulty won over by Blaesus, and sent envoys to Tiberius at Rome in their behalf; for they hoped in connection with the change in the government to gain all their desires, either by frightening Tiberius or by giving the supreme power to another.

In the same way, Gaius’ infamous complaint that he wished to be able to strangle the Roman people becomes in Dio’s account an opportunity for the people also to intimidate the *princeps*: “The bystanders recalled the words once addressed by him to the populace, ‘Would that you had but one neck’, and they showed him that it was he who had but one neck, whereas they had many hands”.[[734]](#footnote-734) Dio also heightens the sense of how much Gaius was loathed by his people by adding to the description of his assassination the gory cannibalistic detail that even after he had been repeatedly stabbed and was dead some of the assassins tasted his flesh (59.29.7).[[735]](#footnote-735)

In the case of Claudius, the emperor is held up as a case-study in the extent to which fear and intimidation allowed others effectually to rule in Claudius’ stead. At 60.2.6–7, Dio comments that Claudius’ cowardice was abused by his courtiers to accomplish their own ends: “for by frightening (ἐκφοβοῦντες) him they could use him fully for their own ends, and could at the same time inspire the rest with great terror (δέος)”. Messalina and Claudius’ freedmen also terrify Claudius whenever they want to bring about someone’s death (60.40.1).

In the same way, Nero is depicted as surrounded by people who hate him and would seek to make him fearful. Sabina persuaded Nero that his mother was hostile to him and needed to be removed (62[61].12.1 [Xiph.]). After his mother’s murder, the Roman people turned against Nero and made their displeasure about his matricide publicly known (62[61].16.1 [Xiph.]). Indeed, after the fire of 64 CE, they came to curse Nero, although not directly by name (62[61].18.3 [Xiph.]; see also 63.23.2 [Xiph./Zon./*Exc. Vat*.]).

A similar emphasis on the ways In which the emperor’s fears might be justified (or self-perpetuating) also appears in these passages which show the people’s anger against Nero in the wake of Agrippina’s downfall. Indeed, the murder of Agrippina is a watershed in the movement of the narrative from Nero as a creator of fear to Nero as the subject of the people’s anger. It is noteworthy, however, that the narrative of the Neronian Principate as it survives in the epitomes and excerpts frames the emperor’s experience of fear in terms of the over-arching theme of the emperor’s role as actor and exhibitionist. At the beginning of his reign, Nero is himself a subject of fear who, after the fall of Seneca and Burrus, gives way to his desires: “Consequently Nero now openly and without fear of punishment [ἐπ’ ἀδείας] proceeded to gratify all his desires” (61[61].7.5 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]: καὶ ἐκ τούτου ὁ Νέρων λαμπρῶς ἤδη πάντων ὧν ἤθελεν ἐπ’ ἀδείας ἐνεπίμπλατο).

Chief among these desires is the emperor’s desire for theatricality and display. Nero’s tyranny is illustrated in Dio’s narrative by his behavior as an actor on many stages. In this, as Gowing has shown, his depiction speaks directly to another of Maecenas’ injunctions to Augustus (52.34.2): “For you will live as it were in a theatre in which the spectators are the whole world” (καθάπερ γὰρ ἐν ἑνί τινι τῆς ὅλης οἰκουμένης θεάτρῳ ζήσῃ). Represented in Maecenas’ speech as an incentive to live a life which was above reproach, that is to *be* as well as to *seem* to be the “good ruler”, this need to act came in Dio’s narrative to incorporate the central hypocrisy of the Principate—the emperor’s and his subjects’ need to pretend. It became, for Dio, the hallmark of a tyrannous emperor. Nero’s final flight and suicide are dwelt upon at length, including an extended scene of Nero cowering in the marshes (63[63].28.2–3 [Xiph.]):

καὶ πάντα μὲν τὸν παριόντα ὡς καὶ ἐφ’ ἑαυτὸν ἥκοντα ὑποπτεύων, πᾶσαν δὲ φωνὴν ὡς καὶ ἀναζητοῦσαν αὑτὸν ὑποτρέμων, εἴ τέ που κυνίδιον ὕλαξεν ἢ καὶ ὀρνίθιον ἐφθέγξατο ῥωπίον τε καὶ κλάδος ὑπ’ αὔρας ἐσείσθη, δεινῶς ἐταράττετο, καὶ οὔθ’ ἡσυχάζειν ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ἐδύνατο, οὔτ’ αὖ λαλεῖν τινι τῶν παρόντων, μὴ καὶ ἕτερός τις ἀκούσῃ, ἐτόλμα, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς καθ’ ἑαυτὸν τὴν τύχην καὶ ἐθρήνει καὶ ὠλοφύρετο. ἐλογίζετο γὰρ τά τε ἄλλα, καὶ προσέτι ὅτι πολυανθρωποτάτῃ ποτὲ θεραπείᾳ γαυρωθεὶς μετὰ τριῶν ἐξελευθέρων ἐκύπταζε.

Everyone who passed he suspected had come for him; he started at every voice, thinking it to be that of someone searching for him; if a dog barked anywhere or a bird chirped, or a bush or branch was shaken by the breeze, he was greatly excited. These sounds permitted him no rest, and he dared not speak a word to any one of those that were with him for fear someone else might hear; but to himself he lamented and bewailed his fate, considering among other things how he had once prided himself on so vast a retinue and was now skulking out of sight in company with three freedmen.

The scene represents more than a prelude to his own physical demise—it represents the “death” of his persona, a death in which fear stops up his voice and forces him to hide from his “audience”.

Paranoia about assassination attempts is a feature of the characterization of all four post-Augustan Julio-Claudian emperors in Dio’s narrative: the behavior of a “good/model” emperor like Augustus is contrasted with the behavior of his successors who are shown to fear those around them, both colleagues and family members and the community itself. This fear of assassination exists alongside other characteristics which mark a bad or unsuccessful emperor and, specifically, those characteristics like arbitrary or unwarranted anger which suggest the stock tyrant. In several places, the narrative confirms the emperor’s paranoia about assassination by demonstrating that there were those (including the people, the imperial household and the soldiers) who did indeed intend to frighten an emperor and who loathed him.

*2. Cassius Dio, Fear, and the Principate*

Cassius Dio was certainly interested in tracing those themes which Pelling has termed “trans-regnal” across his Julio-Claudian emperors. Fear and loathing provided good vehicles for the examination of the regimes of Augustus’ political successors. In this final section of the chapter, I argue that these trans-regnal themes also offer insights into Dio’s own working methods as an historian.

*2.1 Reigns of Terror – A Principle of Evaluation*

Dio makes two programmatic statements about Augustus’ achievements and the correct relationship between the *princeps* and his community in the Julio-Claudian narrative. At 56.43.4 he claims that Augustus managed to combine monarchy and democracy; to preserve freedom whilst creating security and thus to create a community in which citizens were subordinate, but not enslaved and political life was conducted without discord. His community was “living at once in a liberty of moderation and in a monarchy without terrors” (ἔν τε ἐλευθερίᾳ σώφρονι καὶ ἐν μοναρχίᾳ ἀδεεῖ ζῆν). At 56.44.3–4 Dio places Augustus’ achievements in the context of Rome’s constitutional history. He notes that people were pleased with the current state of affairs “since they saw that their present state was better and more free from terror than that of which they knew by tradition” (καὶ βελτίω καὶ ἀδεέστερα αὐτὰ ὧν ἤκουον ὁρῶντες ὄντα). Dio stated that Augustus had achieved monarchy without terror—an indication of the right use and representation of power and of the correct impact of autocracy on a subordinate community. In the Julio-Claudian narrative, these twin measures of moderate liberty and monarchy without terror are then shown to be unattainable under his successors. In this context, fear became a means of evaluating the failures of Augustus’ immediate successors.

In the case of Tiberius, Dio made the rise and fall of Sejanus mark the culmination of a mounting terror in Tiberian Rome. Dio explains that, as a consequence of Tiberius’ changing attitudes, Sejanus himself lived in an alternating state of elation and fear (58.6.4–5). His vacillation between feeling honored and feeling fearful effectively kept him from attempting to overthrow Tiberius. Tiberius’ treatments of Sejanus translated, after the fall of Sejanus, into widespread terror promulgated by the community as a whole (58.12.1–4). Dio describes the terror (φόβος) and chaos that erupted in the city after the fall of Sejanus in which the people sought and killed Sejanus’ supporters at the same time as the angry soldiers plundered the city (58.12.1–4). Among the Senators, Dio explained in the same passage, there was widespread fear shared by both Sejanus’ supporters and the *delatores* suspected of acting in his interests. He claims (58.12.3–4),

ὀλίγον τε πάνυ τὸ θαρσοῦν ἦν, ὅσον ἔξω τε τούτων καθειστήκει καὶ τὸν Τιβέριον ἠπιώτερον γενήσεσθαι προσεδόκα. τά τε γὰρ συμβεβηκότα σφίσιν ἐς τὸν ἀπολωλότα, ὥσπερ που φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαι, ἔτρεπον, καὶ ἐκεῖνον ἢ οὐδενὸς ἢ ὀλίγων ᾐτιῶντο· τὰ γὰρ πλείονα τὰ μὲν ἠγνοηκέναι, τὰ δὲ καὶ ἄκοντα κατηναγκάσθαι πρᾶξαι ἔλεγον.

Very small, indeed, was the courageous element that remained free from these terrors and expected that Tiberius would become milder. For, as usually happens, they laid the responsibility for their previous misfortunes upon the man who had perished, and charged the emperor with few or none of them; as for most of these things, they said he had either been ignorant of them or had been forced to do them against his will.

The passage is an insightful examination of the way in which terror gained momentum at Rome. Dio observes the way in which the soldiers’ anger operates as a driving factor in their actions. He also noted the division of the political classes: Sejanus’ former allies fear that vengeance will be exercised against them; there is terror among the *delatores* and those prosecutors who had sought to undertake Sejanus’ will. Public celebration of release from (Sejanus’) tyranny masks the imposition of a much greater tyranny—the tyranny of terror. This is the very antithesis of the order and security established by Augustus.

Gaius, Claudius and Nero are also all shown to be unable to balance monarchy and terror. Gaius’ unpredictability itself became a source of anxiety and fear for his community (59.16.8) whilst, under Claudius, Agrippina makes use of fear and favors in order to control both Claudius and his court (61[60].32.1 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). In the case of Nero, Dio appears to have engaged in an extended contrast between liberty, on the one hand, and rule by Nero on the other. At 62[62].26.4 [Xiph.] Thrasea dedicated his suicide to Jupiter the patron of Freedom, whilst at 63[63].22.6 [Xiph.] Vindex called on his followers to liberate the world (ἐλευθερώσατε <δὲ> πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην) from a Nero whom he characterizes as Thyestes, Oedipus, Alcmeon or Orestes. Finally (63[63].29.1 [Xiph./Zon.]), after Nero’s downfall the Roman people celebrated a freedom symbolized by the wearing of liberty caps (τινες καὶ πιλία ὡς ἠλευθερωμένοι ἔφερον). The starkness of this contrast between freedom and life under Nero pointedly denies the possibility of the Augustan construction of “a liberty of moderation …in a monarchy without terrors” (56.43.4).

Firmly convicted of the claim that Augustus could deliver monarchy without terrors, Dio used terror as a measure of the success or failure of Augustus’ successors and hence as a principal by which their regimes and achievements could be evaluated. Hence Augustus’ successors fail to quieten the fears of their communities and are caught up in a culture of fear which becomes self-perpetuating.

*2.2 Fear at the Beginning and the End – A Principle of Organization*

I have suggested that Dio was drawn to stories which demonstrated the culture of fear under the Julio-Claudian emperors. These stories operated not only as a means of evaluating their achievements and the extent to which they failed to maintain the Augustan “monarchy without terror” (I have termed this a “principle of evaluation”) but these stories about fear also became, for Dio, a “principle of organization”, that is a guiding theme which caused him to structure his Julio-Claudian narratives in broadly similar ways. The life and achievements of each *princeps* provided the central narrative features of the Julio-Claudian parts of the text. These semi-biographical sections of the narrative, which highlight the feelings as well as the experience of the *princeps*, begin and end in moments of fear.

The death of Tiberius is a good example of this since, in Dio’s narrative, fear holds center stage (58.28.2–3):

κἀκ τούτων πολλὴν μὲν ἡδονὴν τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ τῷ Γαΐῳ ὡς καὶ τελευτήσων, πολὺν δὲ καὶ φόβον ὡς καὶ ζήσων, ἐνεποίει. δείσας οὖν ἐκεῖνος μὴ καὶ ἀληθῶς ἀνασωθῇ, οὔτε ἐμφαγεῖν τι αἰτήσαντι αὐτῷ ὡς καὶ βλαβησομένῳ ἔδωκε, καὶ ἱμάτια πολλὰ καὶ παχέα ὡς καὶ θερμασίας τινὸς δεομένῳ προσεπέβαλε, καὶ οὕτως ἀπέπνιξεν αὐτόν, συναραμένου πῃ αὐτῷ καὶ τοῦ Μάκρωνος·

These changes would alternately cause Gaius and the rest great pleasure, when they thought he was going to die, and great fear, when they thought he would live. Gaius, therefore, fearing that his health might actually be restored, refused his requests for something to eat, on the ground that it would hurt him, and pretending that he needed warmth, wrapped him up in many thick clothes and so smothered him, being aided to a certain extent by Macro.

In this passage, Gaius’ fear that Tiberius might live leads him to ensure that Tiberius will die. This fear then marks both the end of Tiberius’ regime and the beginning of Gaius’. In the same way, Gaius’ death is marked by Claudius’ fear (60.1.2–3):

κἀν τούτῳ στρατιῶταί τινες ἐς τὸ παλάτιον, ὅπως τι συλήσωσιν, ἐσελθόντες εὗρον τὸν Κλαύδιον ἐν γωνίᾳ που σκοτεινῇ κατακεκρυμμένον (συνῆν τε γὰρ τῷ Γαΐῳ τοῦ θεάτρου ἐξερχομένῳ καὶ τότε τὴν ταραχὴν φοβηθεὶς ὑπέπτηξε).

Meanwhile some soldiers who had entered the palace for the purpose of plundering found Claudius hidden away in a dark corner somewhere. He had been with Gaius when he came out of the theatre, and now, fearing the tumult (τὴν ταραχὴν φοβηθεὶς), was crouching down out of the way.

And Claudius’ death is also marked by fear, this time fears held by Agrippina which lead her to murder Claudius. At 60.34.1–2 Dio proclaims that it was Agrippina’s anxiety that Britannicus would assume the *toga* *virilis* which prompted her poison her husband. Nero’s first brutal actions, recorded by Dio’s excerptors, also draw attention to the culture of fear and violence which will characterize his regime (61[61].1.1 [Xiph./Zon.]). His story also ends in fear—fear of Galba (62[62].27.1 [Xiph.]) and fear of assassination which leads to his own suicide.

The Julio-Claudian emperors begin their regimes and end their lives in an atmosphere of fear.[[736]](#footnote-736) Organizing the biographically focused material in this way served to establish the tenor of the narrative to follow. It allowed Dio to foreground the key failings of Augustus’ successors to behave as conventional good emperors in a way that would also have been familiar, or at least thought-provoking, for his contemporary readership. Emperors, their courts and their subjects were bound together in a series of relationships which could easily descend into a suffocating atmosphere of fear and mistrust and this danger was signaled again and again in the coming and passing of each of Augustus’ Julio-Claudian successors.

*2.3 Threatening Talk – A Principle of Selection and Composition*

Dio’s Julio-Claudian *principes* threaten their communities not only by their actions but also by their words. Verbal threats made by the *princeps* serve both as an insight into the relationship between *princeps* and people, and as a litmus test for the character of the man himself. The decision to collect or compose these threats is a further feature of Dio’s Julio-Claudian narrative. Tiberius’ *bon mot* (57.19.1b) about unwilling subjects who enjoy plotting the downfall of their rulers demonstrates both his paranoia and his failure to believe that the *princeps* and his community could ever form a bond. Gaius, by contrast, demonstrates his anger and propensity for violence at the same time as forcing the people to recognize how much he despised them, as with his threat, “Would that you had a single neck” (59.13.6: εἴθε ἕνα αὐχένα εἴχετε). Claudius’ threatening talk, on the other hand, draws attention to his status as a man forever overlooked who, when he came to power, came with a thirst to claim his entitlements. At 60.16.7 Dio reports that Claudius gave as a watchword words of vengeance and retribution: “to avenge yourself upon one who first has injured you” (ἄνδρα ἀπαμύνασθαι ὅτε τις πρότερος χαλεπήνῃ).

In each case, Dio’s depiction of the *princeps* as incapable of achieving monarchy without terror is underpinned and reinforced by the words of the emperor. Along with his actions and the escalating culture of fear, this threatening talk serves to underline the ways in which terror encompasses actions and words.

*2.4 The Language of Fear – Communication between People and Princeps*

Threats proffered by the *princeps* generate fear and, in Dio’s Julio-Claudian narrative, fear becomes the means by which the people and the *princeps* communicate. Thus Germanicus, the proto-*princeps*, in his encounter with the rebelling soldiers, enacts his own fear by drawing his sword and threatening suicide. His hope that this action might cause a change of heart or gain him the sympathy of the soldiers is rudely and abruptly quashed by a soldier’s reply: “Take this; this is sharper” (57.5.2). Threat and counter threat are couched in the same language. People and *princeps* both use fear to communicate.

In the case of Nero, Dio concentrates on the way in which the relationship between Nero and his mother and advisors deteriorated. Note the role played in the passage below by fear which here is used to suggest to Nero that his relationship with his advisors is perverted—in reality *he* has power over them; *they* should submit to *him*; but his fear of them rendered their relationship corrupt (61[61].4.5 [Xiph./*Exc. Val*.]):

καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο τὰ μὲν καταφρονήσας, οἷά που συνεχῶς παρὰ τῶν συνόντων ἀκούων “σὺ δὲ τούτων ἀνέχῃ; σὺ δὲ τούτους φοβῇ; οὐκ οἶσθα ὅτι Καῖσαρ εἶ καὶ σὺ ἐκείνων ἐξουσίαν, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐκεῖνοι σοῦ ἔχουσι;” τὰ δὲ καὶ φιλονεικῶν μήτε τῆς μητρὸς ὡς καὶ κρείττονος ἐλαττοῦσθαι μήτε τοῦ Σενέκου τοῦ τε Βούρρου ὡς καὶ φρονιμωτέρων ἡττᾶσθαι.

Next, he [Nero] came to despise the good advice [of Agrippina, Seneca and Burrus], since he was always hearing from his associates: “And do you submit to them?” “Do you fear them?” “Do you not know that you are Caesar, and that you have authority over them rather than they over you?” And he was resolved not to acknowledge that his mother was superior to him or to submit to Seneca and Burrus as wiser.

In Dio’s account, Nero’s advisors communicate with the emperor and seek to govern his behavior by using fear. Seneca is reported to have reminded Nero that “No matter how many you may slay, you cannot kill your successor” (62[61].18.3 [Xiph.]: ὅσους ἂν ἀποσφάξῃς, οὐ δύνασαι τὸν διάδοχόν σου ἀποκτεῖναι). Once established as a tyrant, his tyranny is marked in the narrative not only by his own words and deeds, but by what is said about him by others. Thrasea Paetus announces, “Nero can kill me, but he cannot harm me” (62[61].15.4 [Xiph.], “ἐμὲ Νέρων ἀποκτεῖναι μὲν δύναται, βλάψαι δὲ οὔ”), whilst Flavius’ outburst marks Nero as tyrant and object of hatred (62[62].24.2 [Xiph.]):

καὶ ὁ Φλάουιος “καὶ ἐφίλησά σε” εἶπε “παντὸς μᾶλλον καὶ ἐμίσησα. ἐφίλησα μὲν ἐλπίσας ἀγαθὸν αὐτοκράτορα ἔσεσθαι, ἐμίσησα δὲ ὅτι τὰ καὶ τὰ ποιεῖς· οὔτε γὰρ ἁρματηλάτῃ οὔτε κιθαρῳδῷ δουλεύειν δύναμαι”.

And the response of Flavius [bodyguard and would-be assassin] was: “I have both loved and hated you above all men. I loved you, hoping that you would prove a good emperor; I have hated you because you do so-and-so. I cannot be a slave to a charioteer or lyre-player”.

Fear and loathing not only pervert the relationships between *princeps* and people, but they also become, in Dio’s narrative, the means by which communication takes place.

*2.5 The Didactics of Fear—Learning to Fear the Emperor*

Ironically, the only people who show courage after the death of Sejanus—those who believed that (without Sejanus) Tiberius would grow milder—are shown to be the only ones who are mistaken. For this spreading terror, like the incursion of Athenodorus into the bedchamber of Augustus, is also represented in the text as a learning experience. But where Augustus was willing to learn from a member of his community, here the situation is reversed and the people learn to fear their *princeps*. Dio used the downfall of Sejanus to examine how even the most sanguine members of Tiberius’ community—those who believed that the misfortunes they had suffered were the work of Sejanus and that Tiberius (in his absence) would become more benevolent—learned to see that Tiberius bore as much responsibility for the damage done to his community as had been attributed to Sejanus (58.16.4):

ὅθεν καὶ πάνυ ἀκριβῶς ἔμαθον, αὐτοὶ δι’ ἑαυτῶν ἀπολλύμενοι, ὅτι καὶ τὰ πρότερον ἐκεῖνα οὐ τοῦ Σεϊανοῦ μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ Τιβερίου ἔργα ἦν.

Hence people learned only too clearly, now that they were perishing at one another’s hands, that their former woes were the work of Tiberius quite as much as the work of Sejanus.

In this way, even those who had initially been free from terror of the emperor learned to succumb to fear.

Subsequent *principes* also teach their communities to fear them: Gaius by the inconsistency detected between his words and his deeds (59.16.8); Claudius, as a consequence of his fear of Agrippina which left space within which she could intimidate others (61[60].32.1 [Xiph./Zon./*Exc. Val.*]); and Nero after the diminution in the power and influence of Seneca and Burrus (61[61].7.5 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). Millar has argued that “the essential feature of Dio’s account of Augustus…is the sense of continuity he felt between that time and his own”.[[737]](#footnote-737) Millar was here concerned to show that Dio’s study of a monarchy “whose constitutional forms were mere trappings” found echoes in his own experience. The experience of learning to fear the emperor which he examines in the Julio-Claudian narrative must also have resonated for a contemporary readership, as his account of the arrival of Septimius Severus demonstrates (75[74].2.1–2 [Xiph.]):[[738]](#footnote-738)

ἐσελθὼν δὲ οὕτως ἐνεανιεύσατο μὲν οἷα καὶ οἱ πρῴην ἀγαθοὶ αὐτοκράτορες πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὡς οὐδένα τῶν βουλευτῶν ἀποκτενεῖ· καὶ ὤμοσε περὶ τούτου, καὶ τό γε μεῖζον, ψηφίσματι κοινῷ αὐτὸ κυρω- θῆναι προσετετάχει, πολέμιον καὶ τὸν αὐτοκράτορα καὶ τὸν ὑπηρετήσοντα αὐτῷ ἔς τι τοιοῦτον, αὐτούς τε καὶ τοὺς παῖδας αὐτῶν, νομίζεσθαι δογματίσας. πρῶτος μέντοι αὐτὸς τὸν νόμον τουτονὶ παρέβη καὶ οὐκ ἐφύλαξε, πολλοὺς ἀνελών· καὶ γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Σόλων ὁ Ἰούλιος, ὁ καὶ τὸ δόγμα τοῦτο κατὰ πρόσταξιν αὐτοῦ συγγράψας, οὐ πολλῷ ὕστερον ἐσφάγη.

Having entered the city in this manner, he [Septimius Severus] made us some brave promises, such as the good emperors of old had given, to the effect that he would not put any senator to death; and he took oath concerning this matter, and, what was more, also ordered it to be confirmed by a joint decree, prescribing that both the emperor and anyone who should aid him in any such deed should be considered public enemies, both they and their children. Yet he himself was the first to violate this law instead of keeping it, and made away with many senators; indeed, Julius Solon himself, who framed this decree at his behest, was murdered not long afterwards.

Dio’s narrative of the Julio-Claudian period concentrates on the contrasts between the reign of Augustus and those of his successors. Augustus’ reign is characterized by “a liberty of moderation” and “a monarchy without terrors”. By contrast, the regimes of his successors are seen to embrace terror with the result that both emperor and people live in fear. The presence or absence of fear thus becomes one of the means by which Dio evaluated each successive Principate. Not only this, but an examination of the ways in which fear compelled the actions of individuals informs the structure and organization of the narrative itself: each regime begins and ends with actions prompted by the fear felt by the protagonists. In addition, an interest in the prevalence and impact of fear in the Julio-Claudian period has arguably led Dio to select (or compose) certain threatening sayings from the time which demonstrate the emperor’s paranoia and anger. Finally, “fear” informs the didactic import of Dio’s text. He shows that, in the early Principate, people learned to fear the emperor and this in turn fed and was fed by the mismatch between the emperors’ words and deeds and the culture of distrust and suspicion which, in Dio’s view (53.19.1–4), differentiated the empire from the Republic. Fear became the language by which *princeps* and community communicated in the Julio-Claudian period.

*Conclusion*

Dio’s Julio-Claudian narrative concentrates on an exploration of the role of fear and loathing within the Roman community of the early Principate. In this chapter I have suggested that fear (in the form of a paranoid anxiety about assassination) plays an important role in the characterization of all four post-Augustan emperors as “bad emperors” or tyrants. I have then sought to show that the emperor’s fear became, in many ways, self-perpetuating (even ironically justified) because of the loathing he inspired in his community. None of this was especially original or characteristic only of Dio’s views. Nevertheless, as I have also demonstrated, his interest in the impacts of fear and loathing under the early Principate can tell us something about his working methods and the way in which he understood his project. I have suggested, for instance, that the desire to examine the workings of the emperor’s paranoia prompted Dio to select or compose particular maxims, and that the desire to show the impact of fear on each regime led him to begin/end each with the protagonists in the narrative articulating specific fears. Finally, I have argued that the examination of the ways in which both emperor and community *learned* to fear each other during the regimes of the Julio-Claudians was instructive for readers of Dio’s own time.[[739]](#footnote-739)

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Chapter 12: Cassius Dio and the Emperors: From the Flavians to the Antonines

*Antonio Pistellato*

Seeking information on the empire from the Flavians to the Antonines, any scholar or even connoisseur reading Cassius Dio is probably aware of two things: first, Dio is an essential source for the years 69–192 CE; second, Dio’s text for the period considered (books 65[66]–73[72]) is almost entirely epitomized, with the exception of excerpts— *excerpta*, that is direct quotes— from the original text.

In this chapter, which focuses on Dio’s treatment of the ten emperors ruling from 69 to 192 CE, I intend to highlight some of the most distinctive strands of Dio’s narrative—as we can infer from the analysis of what is left of the *Roman History*. The analysis will proceed diachronically, according to a timeline divided into three segments: the Flavians, Nerva to Hadrian, and then the Antonines. By no means do I intend to offer an exhaustive analysis, but rather to present a consistent overview of Dio’s approach to the emperors from the Flavians to the Antonines. In this respect, due attention will be paid to Dio’s personal experience of the Antonine and post-Antonine periods. Dio’s senatorial standpoint will be paramount, and so ideologically strong that it imposes a particular political analysis on the historical record. Of course, this affects the whole interpretation of the *Roman History* on the years 69–192 CE.

Preliminary to the main body of analysis, though, will be a brief overview of scholarship on the contents of books 65[66]–73[72], and a deeper focus on Dio’s textual tradition concerning our books. This is necessary, as any proper appreciation of Dio’s views depends on a clear assessment of the complex textual status of the imperial narrative concerning the years from the Flavians to the Antonines.

*An Overview of Scholarship on Cassius Dio’s Books 65[66]–73[72]*

Scholarship on this section of the *Roman History* is not immensely rich, though sometimes Dio is the only source reporting on specific events.[[740]](#footnote-740) One reason may be that Dio’s original text has not survived, a condition that may have caused intermittent scholarly attention. Another reason may be that parallel sources are available for the Flavian period (Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius) and for the reign of Commodus (Herodian), in a far better condition than Dio’s text.[[741]](#footnote-741) Be that as it may, two pillars of Dio studies are Cary’s Loeb edition of the *Roman History* in nine volumes (1914–1927), and Millar’s classic monograph (1964). The French edition of Dio’s work for the Budé collection does not include books 65[66]–73[72] at the present moment. The most recent editions of our books were published in 2000 and 2009 for the Italian BUR “Classici greci e latini” series, with scholarly introductions, Italian translation, and footnotes.[[742]](#footnote-742)

In addition, scholarship has focused on specific aspects of Dio’s treatment of the time from the Flavians to the Antonines. One of the most significant contributions is probably Murison’s detailed commentary on books 64–67 of the *Roman History*, focusing on the period from Galba to Domitian and thus including Dio’s treatment of the civil war of 68/69 (1999). Another is Migliorati’s monograph on Dio’s early second century (2003).[[743]](#footnote-743) Migliorati’s approach draws parallels between the *Roman History* and a variety of documents recently found—inscriptions, coins, papyri, archaeological findings—which help define Dio’s view of the time. Other studies may be grouped under specific labels. They have generally, though slowly, increased over the years. The panorama does not need to be exhaustive. Nevertheless, the emperors being the obvious center of Dio’s narrative, a general polarization emerges between studies on positive and negative models of emperorship. Among the former, Marcus Aurelius is the most investigated, followed at a distance by Trajan and Nerva.[[744]](#footnote-744) As for the dark side, both Domitian and Commodus are the object of attentive interest.[[745]](#footnote-745) As for the in-between emperors—that is, as we shall see, not entirely positively nor that negatively treated by Dio—Hadrian eclipses Vespasian and Titus.[[746]](#footnote-746) Finally, and accordingly, if we take into account the dynasties involved in our books, the Antonines eclipse the Flavians.[[747]](#footnote-747)

*The Textual Tradition of Books 65[66]–73[72]*[[748]](#footnote-748)

Given that Dio’s account for books 65[66]–73[72] has been handed down to us especially through Byzantine epitomes, it is with Xiphilinus (far above all), Peter the Patrician, John of Antioch, Zonaras, and with a variety of excerpts and lexicographic quotes allegedly preserving Dio’s own words, that we have to deal.

Epitomizing Greek and Latin books was a well-established practice in late antiquity—and one that continued well after. The audience appreciated shorter versions of prose works, which were either difficult to reach or hard to read, especially when ponderous, as historiography tended to be. In late antiquity, the only case for the latter type is that of Ammianus, whose textual tradition is indeed damaged. Thus, beside authors of brief historical accounts, such as Aurelius Victor and Eutropius in Latin, Zosimus and Procopius in Greek, epitomes of monumental works as Dio’s *Roman History* had circulated at least since the sixth century CE in the Byzantine world. The earliest example is Peter the Patrician (c. 500–565), whose epitome went almost entirely lost—except for a series of fragments collected by compilers under Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (mid-tenth century) in the so-called *Excerpta historica Constantiniana*. However, the tradition continued well into the Middle Ages, with Zonaras (1074–1130). In between were the work of John of Antioch (seventh century), fragmentary as well, and the epitome of Xiphilinus (second half of the eleventh century).[[749]](#footnote-749)

Huge works were particularly subject to perishing, due to their papyrus roll format. This made Dio’s eighty-book *Roman History* a very concrete burden: eighty rolls (each comprising one book) held in eight *capsae* (special cases for holding rolls).[[750]](#footnote-750) Significantly, at the time of Xiphilinus, Dio’s account of Antoninus Pius and the first part of that of Marcus Aurelius—at least until the death of Lucius Verus (169 CE)—had already perished. In particular, the lost sections covered the relations of Marcus Aurelius with Lucius Verus, and the actions undertaken by the latter in the Parthian war (162–166 CE).[[751]](#footnote-751) Elements of Peter the Patrician’s much earlier epitome, however, may lead to the same conclusion, thus placing the loss in the sixth century, or even before, already in the course of the (late?) fifth century.[[752]](#footnote-752) If so, Dio’s work would have suffered from severe damage affecting the Antonine narrative at a relatively early stage, around the end of antiquity. Furthermore, toward the end of the fifth century, copies of the *Roman History* started circulating in parchment codex format in the East.[[753]](#footnote-753) Between the end of the fifth and the sixth century, the transition caused losses that spared only books 36–60 of Dio’s work.

Therefore, it is most important to be aware that the entire narrative covering the years this chapter deals with is almost entirely from indirect tradition. The implications are momentous. Each epitomator had his own characteristics. The ways they epitomized are various. Peter the Patrician not only excerpts, but interprets to such an extent as not to be a good (that is, reliable) witness of Dio’s text. On rare occasions, the personal opinion of Peter emerges as well, and puts forward his own experience and interest on such themes as tyranny, servitude, virtue, and historical criticism. John of Antioch is generally a reliable epitomator, with some significant exceptions due to his own historical thought. Being a fervent admirer of the Roman Republic, he tends to change Dio’s text in order to add his own view of the Principate—which is often negative.[[754]](#footnote-754) Xiphilinus, who is our main source for books 65[66]–73[72], tends to be a more trustworthy compiler, but there are still caveats.[[755]](#footnote-755) He sometimes heavily copies the original text, and sometimes, like Peter the Patrician, offers his personal opinion, especially against Dio.[[756]](#footnote-756) Furthermore, Xiphilinus alters the original narrative structure concerning the imperial period. He re-works Dio’s text, by narrating the lives of the emperors in a manner that sometimes makes the narration close to that of a biographer like Suetonius—which Dio was not—and segments the imperial narrative on a one-book-per-emperor basis.[[757]](#footnote-757) Finally, Zonaras paraphrases Dio to a wider extent and more frequently than Xiphilinus. He re-elaborates Dio’s text in a way which is similar to Peter the Patrician.[[758]](#footnote-758)

The variety of sources and styles involved may suggest caution, especially when one aims at reconstructing, if not Dio’s exact wording, at least Dio’s historical thought with regard to the Roman emperors. In such a scenario, the only exception is given by excerpts from Dio’s original text. In this respect, the abovementioned collection of the *Excerpta Historica Constantiniana* is essential. It originally comprised different sets of excerpts, among them the *Excerpta Valesiana* and the *Excerpta Ursiniana*. Thecollectionfunctioned as a sort of research engine of the past.[[759]](#footnote-759) Quotations from the *Roman History*, however, are generally short, and cannot be always placed securely in Dio’s narrative stream.

*Cassius Dio and the Flavian Emperors*

Together with the biographies of Suetonius, and partially Tacitus’ *Histories* and *Agricola*, Dio’s books 65[66], 66[66], and 67[67] provide essential information on the evolution of the Principate between 69 and 96 CE. Dio’s point of view is most interesting, as it leads straight to his own time and experience. Strong historical patterns seem to shape Dio’s attention in many respects. He witnessed the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, the autocracy of Commodus, the civil war of 193–197 CE, the rise of the Severans, and the troublesome time that followed: a complex sequence of order and crisis, which replicates the events of the first century CE to a significant extent.

Books 65[66] and 66[66] treat the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, while book 67[67] is devoted to Domitian. If we retain Boissevain’s division, the presence of both Vespasian and Titus in the sole book 66 could depend on a particular interpretation of the position of Titus as sharing the imperial power with Vespasian.[[760]](#footnote-760) In effect, Vespasian and Titus are very much seen by Dio as co-regents, which may be regarded as a remarkable feature of Dio’s narrative design.

When Vespasian took power in 69 CE, two moments of Dio’s own experience happen to overlap. On the one hand, there is Marcus Aurelius’ and Lucius Verus’ joint rule from 161 to 169 CE. Dio seems accordingly to narrate the reigns of Vespasian and Titus as if they were a *Doppelprinzipat*.[[761]](#footnote-761) He elaborates on sole power as opposed to shared power, and ostensibly opts for the former as the only form of government that allows making a ruler responsible.[[762]](#footnote-762) The reflection is conveniently placed between the death of Vespasian and the accession of Titus. The intrinsic unity of Vespasian and Titus emerges also from Dio’s considerations on the death of Titus (81 CE): “he passed away at the same watering-place that had been the scene of his father’s death”.[[763]](#footnote-763) The notion had been known since the time of Suetonius.[[764]](#footnote-764) But in Dio’s view, the common destiny of father and son was probably inspiring. The *Doppelprinzipat* he was acquainted with had a solid precedent. Furthermore, the unity of Vespasian and Titus is narratively well balanced and presents an intrinsic duality. As emperor, Vespasian was not a man of action. He was essentially an administrator, and a wise and good-natured man, to such an extent as to be credited as a miracle man in Alexandria. But he was not perfect, since he was a little too greedy.[[765]](#footnote-765) Under Vespasian, Titus is very much represented as a man of action instead. He was the protagonist of the Judean war, and the conqueror of Jerusalem (70 CE).[[766]](#footnote-766) His outrageous relationship with the Judean princess Berenice is emphasized as well (75 CE).[[767]](#footnote-767) He is apparently the only dynamic element of Vespasian’s Principate, and thus adds some twist to an overall plain narration. There is only one major exception, which attracts Dio’s attention and sensibility. Vespasian prosecuted the Stoics, notably Helvidius Priscus (c. 75 CE), who was a fierce opponent of his rule.[[768]](#footnote-768) Things change radically as Titus becomes sole *princeps*. He turns from being a man of action to following the steps of his father, as a distinctively mild administrator and a prodigal man.[[769]](#footnote-769) In particular, he has a respectful demeanor toward the Senate, with whom he cooperates harmoniously[[770]](#footnote-770)—behavior that anticipates the attitude of Nerva, Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. Differently from Vespasian, though, Titus is not at all greedy, and this is the major difference between father and son in the *Roman History*.[[771]](#footnote-771)

On the other hand, as neatly shown by Scott, the victory of Vespasian in the civil war of 68–69 CE offered the model of Septimius Severus’ rise to power in 197.[[772]](#footnote-772) Both Vespasian and Severus were army commanders, who defeated their opponents. Both had a legitimacy issue to face. Vespasian needed to establish the Flavian rule after the reign of the Julio-Claudians. Septimius Severus had to set the Severan rule after the Antonine dynasty. In addition, if we regarded the civil wars of 68–69 and 193–197 CE as extraordinary intermissions along a regular succession line, Vespasian and Severus would be the successors of the bad emperors Nero and Commodus. These attractive parallels probably operated as a source of inspiration in Dio’s mind, beside others as we shall see. In Dio’s historiographic *habitus*, the search for precedents of his own time played an essential role. They were the foundations of and provided explanation for the age he lived in. The Flavian past offered abundant models, either positive or negative. No doubt, Vespasian and Titus may be regarded as an exemplar couple.

Then came the third wheel. In 81 CE, Domitian took power. He is one of Dio’s favorite villains. The narrative design changes accordingly. Book 67[67] gives a number of anecdotes about Domitian. All of them serve to represent Domitian as a tyrant.[[773]](#footnote-773) One of his distinctive traits is theatricality, well known to his contemporaries—among whom the poet Martial deserves a special mention.[[774]](#footnote-774) Dio insists upon the pain that Domitian caused to the people, especially of senatorial rank, and to the Roman state.[[775]](#footnote-775) His vices and folly, his tendency toward theocracy, his inability as a military commander, and his passion for fake triumphs are elements of a powerful narrative strategy, as Schulz has neatly demonstrated.[[776]](#footnote-776) In this respect, significant attention is paid to the initiatives which Domitian promoted against the “philosophers”, a label under which political Stoicism was usually meant. In addition, a formidable synthesis of Dio’s attention to Domitian is the spectacular banquet given by Domitian, in the context of the initiatives celebrating the alleged victory over the Dacians of Decebalus (89 CE). Many senators were invited, but secluded in a black dinner room set as a cemetery, with silver stele engraved with their names as place markers. In Dio’s words, that was the way Domitian wanted to celebrate his control over them.[[777]](#footnote-777) For Dio—and not only him—Domitian was a new Nero, since both were tyrants and Nero, who preceded him, was his negative model.[[778]](#footnote-778) As we shall see, Domitian was also, so to speak, an old Commodus—Dio’s “personal” tyrant. Thus another strong pattern seems to operate in the Flavian narrative.

Overall, in Dio’s Flavian books there is some progression into autocracy—or even, to put it in Schnurbusch’s words, *Irrationalität*.[[779]](#footnote-779) Vespasian’s greed is a leitmotiv. Attacks on the Stoics are typical under Vespasian.[[780]](#footnote-780) One of his opponents was Tullius Hostilianus, who openly accused him of governing as a monarch.[[781]](#footnote-781) Most probably, Hostilianus was a Stoic, since monarchy as a degeneration of the imperial rule was a key theme of political Stoicism.[[782]](#footnote-782) Titus counterbalances Vespasian, and for Dio he was in the end a potential bad boy turned into an entertaining, benevolent man.[[783]](#footnote-783) On the contrary, Domitian plays the role of the perfect villain, a foolish power-seeker since the end of the civil war of 68–69 CE, and a paramount autocrat to whom all attention must be paid. This is not surprising. Tacitus and Suetonius had already had very clear ideas about him. But, as a distinguished member of the Roman Senate, Dio had in his turn a profound experience of autocracy from Commodus to Elagabalus. In late antiquity, the *Historia Augusta* mentions Domitian as a negative emperor *par excellence* along with Caligula, Nero, and Commodus (see also below).[[784]](#footnote-784) All of them humiliated the Senate. This is the sort of thing that Dio himself aims to denounce in his narrative. He does it to an extent which it is hard to find elsewhere in Roman historiography.

*Best in Town: Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian (and Antoninus)*

The period between the Flavians and the Antonines marked a refreshing intermission in the history of the Principate—one of strong ideological impact for the Senate. The principle that an emperor should adopt the best man available as successor was a direct consequence of Domitian’s autocracy. Nerva, whom the Senate chose as the successor of Domitian in 96 CE, was a very distinguished senator from a family already prominent in the Late Republic, with no connections with the Flavians.[[785]](#footnote-785) His reign was short, as he passed away two years later. Accordingly, only four chapters of book 68 are devoted to him.[[786]](#footnote-786) Nevertheless, on his accession things changed radically. Dio offers a peculiar view. He reports a polemical assessment by Catius Caesius Fronto, the consul of 96 CE, due to tensions in Rome after the death of Domitian: Fronto alluded to the risk that Rome would pass from autocracy to anarchy, and that undue tolerance would replace intolerance. Nerva’s response resolutely aimed to restore civic order in Rome.[[787]](#footnote-787) Dio does not fail to underline what Nerva did: first, he got rid of as many traces of Domitian as possible, and put cooperation between the Senate and the emperor duly at the center of his policy. Thus, he took an oath not to slay any senator—a topical assertion, which would characterize the good emperors following him. What emerges is a predictable scheme. Nerva did exactly the opposite of what his predecessor had done. Of course, it could not have been otherwise.[[788]](#footnote-788) Nevertheless, it is exactly for this reason that, in Dio’s view, Nerva ruled just so well.[[789]](#footnote-789) Dio has true admiration for the experienced senator become emperor. Nerva embodied an ideal, and an aspiration for the Senate. [[790]](#footnote-790) Pertinax replicated that ideal after the assassination of Commodus, and Dio owed part of his advancement to Pertinax as he received praetorship for 194 CE. The solution was just one: to be governed by an emperor from the Senate, who would work in conjunction with that glorious body. Unfortunately for the senators, that proved to be truly just an ideal. But general consensus was hard to find even for the best in town. In this respect, it is significant that an unsuccessful plot against Nerva was formed in 97 CE by Gaius Calpurnius Piso Crassus Frugi Licinianus, a former consul.[[791]](#footnote-791)

Dio highlights another key element of Nerva’s policy. It concerns the opposition between dynastic power and the Roman State. For Dio, Nerva did not esteem family relationship above the safety of the State, nor nationality above ability.[[792]](#footnote-792) Here, elements of Galba’s speech on the adoption of Piso Licinianus in Tacitus’ *Histories* and of Pliny’s *Panegyric* to Trajan are present.[[793]](#footnote-793) Thus Dio offers a manifesto of the principle inspiring the new era, and explains why Nerva adopted Trajan in 98 CE.

For the very first time, a Roman emperor was not Italian. Another turning point in the history of imperial Rome. But Trajan was by far the best man in town. It is likely that Dio, who was also not Italian, had a special admiration for him.[[794]](#footnote-794) Very much in line with Pliny’s *Panegyric*—though without being as obsessive—Trajan is portrayed as the *optimus princeps*.[[795]](#footnote-795) Trajan’s myth was vivid in Dio’s time. Providing the last conquests of the Romans and the maximum expansion of the Roman empire in the East, Trajan’s military campaigns were the object of enduring admiration. The impact of the Dacian conquest was engraved on Trajan’s Column, and it was worth a literary record as well. This may easily explain why Dio’s Trajanic narrative is almost entirely devoted to foreign policy. Besides the Dacian campaigns, the Eastern campaigns, notably but not exclusively against Parthia, are narrated.[[796]](#footnote-796)

If one leaves warfare aside, Dio pays predictable attention to Trajan’s respect for the Senate. It confirms Dio’s method of assessment: no harm against members of the Senate assures Dio’s appreciation for the emperor.[[797]](#footnote-797) The scheme is also operating with Hadrian, with some shadows, and with new source material. For the first time in Dio’s work, personal experience and the historiographical record come together. At the very beginning of book 69, Dio explicitly refers to his father Apronianus as a source of information for the succession of Hadrian to Trajan.[[798]](#footnote-798) His narrative thus gains stronger credibility on the grounds of his father’s connections at the time of Apronianus’ governorship of Cilicia (182 CE). Of course, this cannot lead the *Roman History* to anything referring to the modern ideal of historiographical exactness. In effect, in Dio’s mind supernatural connections play an essential role as well, and have equal validity. An anecdote provides good evidence: in 117 CE, before his accession, Hadrian had a dream foretelling his rise to power. It was practically the same dream that Trajan had in 98 CE, exactly in the same condition.[[799]](#footnote-799) In both circumstances, Dio connects the dream to a consequence: Trajan and Hadrian, once they had become emperors, proclaimed their devotion to the Senate in official letters.[[800]](#footnote-800)

Nevertheless, senators were executed by Hadrian, at the beginning and end of his reign. Dio tends to minimize this fact, but does not omit it.[[801]](#footnote-801) Hadrian is also affected by a constant flaw of his character: his envy, especially towards artists—he being notoriously fond of art. In this respect, his preference for the obscure poet Antimachus instead of Homer is certainly paradoxical, and highlights Hadrian’s odd personality.[[802]](#footnote-802) Apart from this anecdotal material, much attention is paid to Hadrian traveling throughout the empire, not so much to undertake military campaigns, as to satisfy his own cultural curiosity.[[803]](#footnote-803) This has created the cliché of Hadrian as the traveling emperor.[[804]](#footnote-804) The loss of Roman territory may lie behind the curtains. The province of Mesopotamia was lost immediately after Hadrian’ accession in 117 CE. The Roman dominion in the East shrank quite abruptly, which marked an historic watershed.[[805]](#footnote-805) Significantly, when Dio focuses on the caring relationship between Hadrian and the Roman army —which happens pretty often—he does it *pour cause*. Of course, the army escorted an emperor wherever he needed to go, either for war or for peace. This may provide an historical framework for Dio to highlight Hadrian’s movements from province to province. Apparently, such attention pivots on the fundamental principle of Hadrian’s aim to establish peace throughout the empire. The emperor’s civic engagement seems to reflect his own philosophical engagement, a balanced mix of Stoicism and Epicureanism—an aspect rather neglected by scholars.[[806]](#footnote-806) He purportedly styled himself in a special way, as he was the first bearded Roman emperor. His beard was meant to represent philhellenism, and thus Greek philosophy. Marcus Aurelius was still to come, and Hadrian was not perfect, but contributed to paving the way to Marcus’ elaboration on the need of an intrinsic relationship between Stoicism and the Principate.

From this point of view, one of the most interesting aspects of Dio’s Hadrianic narrative is the speech that Hadrian, severely ill, delivered on occasion of his adoption of Antoninus, due to become his successor (138 CE).[[807]](#footnote-807) It has justly attracted the attention of Davenport and Mallan, as it is set as a theoretical analysis of legal adoption as opposed to entrusting power to a dynasty:[[808]](#footnote-808) “A begotten son turns out to be whatever sort of person Heaven pleases, whereas one that is adopted a man takes to himself as the result of a deliberate selection.”[[809]](#footnote-809) Deliberate selection vs. the Imponderable, one might presume. The opposite outcome is very clear to Dio, as he well knows how Heaven has been pleased to present Commodus on the scene of history. Nevertheless, when Hadrian chose Antoninus Pius, the perspective was utterly different. It was totally positive, indeed. The Antonine era had arrived.

*Cassius Dio and the Antonine Emperors*

The narrative of the Antonine emperors is pivotal in Dio’s historiographic design. With one lacuna due to the loss of Dio’s book 70, which at the time of Xiphilinus had already occurred, the account of the twenty-four years of Antoninus Pius’s reign (138–161 CE) is lost, as well as Dio’s narration of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus’ joint emperorship (161–169 CE). As seen, Xiphilinus himself regrets the loss, which forced him to rely on different source material—and one can only share such regret.[[810]](#footnote-810) What survives is in accord with elements of Antoninus’ biography in the *Historia Augusta*, and it is apparent that Dio had an excellent opinion of the first Antonine emperor. As for Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus’ *Doppelprinzipat*, parallels with the Flavian diarchy of Vespasian and Titus earlier described are tangible despite the narrative loss. The emperors combined their efforts against the Parthians, the Iazyges, the Quadi, and the Marcomanni, who threatened the Roman Empire. Verus appears as a pure man of action, and indeed is sent to make war against the Parthians, while Marcus’ primacy is apparent, as it was he who sent Verus to the East.[[811]](#footnote-811) For Dio, Marcus proves to be at once a man of action (notably in the campaigns against the Quadi and the Marcomanni), and a keen administrator of justice (to which he devotes as much of his story as possible).[[812]](#footnote-812) Of course, wise administration was needed, and Marcus perfectly served this need, while Verus faded away without leaving too many regrets. Marcus was benevolent not only toward the senators but also toward the enemy.[[813]](#footnote-813) He celebrated the pre-eminence of the Senate, and declared himself a guest of a “house” (i.e. the Palatine) which belonged to the Senate and the Roman people.[[814]](#footnote-814) The final chapters of book 72[71] are almost hagiographic.[[815]](#footnote-815) To put it in Dio’s words: “for my part, I admire him all the more for this very reason, that amid unusual and extraordinary difficulties he both survived himself and preserved the empire”.[[816]](#footnote-816)

Given such premises, it is not surprising that in the second half of the fourth century CE Eutropius described Marcus as a descendant of the wise legislator Numa Pompilius, the legendary second king of Rome.[[817]](#footnote-817) Marcus had a great addition to make: he wrote his *Meditations*, which distil his philosophical interpretation of the imperial station.[[818]](#footnote-818) Dio himself duly celebrates Marcus’ philosophical education, especially as concerns Stoicism.[[819]](#footnote-819) In connection stands Marcus’ attention to the intellectual and cultural environment at Rome and in the provinces.[[820]](#footnote-820) Marcus was a Stoic emperor, whose inspiration emerged to the greatest extent as he ruled as sole emperor from 169 CE. Dio anchors the ideological foundations of his rule to the (obviously Stoic) ideal of the common good, a concept which is found in the *Meditations* in opposition to the risk of a Caesar transforming himself into a tyrant.[[821]](#footnote-821) The revolt of the governor of Syria, Avidius Cassius, who aimed at capturing imperial power with his army (175 CE), offers the opportunity for Dio to illustrate the spirit of Marcus’ statecraft. Twelve chapters of book 72[71] are devoted to the upheaval, which ends with the assassination of Avidius, contrary to Marcus’ wish to pardon him.[[822]](#footnote-822) In view of the final campaign against Avidius, a lengthy speech is ascribed to Marcus, delivered before the soldiers. The speech has a strong theoretical emphasis. Marcus not only pleads the cause of reconciliation with Avidius, but proves to be the ideal equilibrium between autocracy, which is intrinsic to the imperial station, and collegiality, which is embodied by the Senate.[[823]](#footnote-823) For Dio, he is indeed the emperor dreamed of by the Stoics as well as by the senators, a paradigm, through whom Dio can assess the actions of the preceding and following emperors.[[824]](#footnote-824) Thus it cannot be by chance that Marcus’ behavior coincides very well with the characteristics of the good emperor as expressed by Dio through Maecenas’ speech in book 52.[[825]](#footnote-825)

Then, from gold to iron. When Marcus died in 180 CE, Commodus succeeded. After Domitian, a new tyrant took power. Book 73[72] is entirely devoted to Commodus. Dio immediately introduces Commodus in terms of pure degeneration. The turning point is marked by a famous phrase, which is placed at the end of the previous book: “from a kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust”.[[826]](#footnote-826) It is likely to be a wordplay after Commodus’ own styling of his Principate as a “golden age”.[[827]](#footnote-827) In effect, be it by chance or by a deliberate design, in the *Roman History* we do not find Commodus declaring that he would respect the lives of senators; indeed, he killed a large number of people.[[828]](#footnote-828) He was a reckless emperor,[[829]](#footnote-829) and stimulated inglorious parallels. For instance, his indolence against the advice of the most distinguished senators is pointed out from the very beginning, and reaches a peak as he plans to get rid of Erucius Clarus and Sosius Falco, the designated consuls of 193 CE.[[830]](#footnote-830) The episode has a strong resemblance to Caligula, with whom Dio credits the deposition of the consuls of 39 CE by breaking their fasces into pieces, a scandal that caused the suicide of one of them, and deeply shocked the Senate, thus attracting Dio’s attention.[[831]](#footnote-831) Similarity with Caligula emerges also when Dio reports the expenditures of Commodus for games and other spectacles, which he was fond of and which made him popular, but put him in constant need of money. Significantly, Nero had exactly the same problem.[[832]](#footnote-832) In addition, Caligula collected divine titles, exactly like Commodus.[[833]](#footnote-833) As for Nero, Commodus was quite similar to the last Julio-Claudian *princeps*, in particular as regards theatricality. Like Nero, he exhibited a Greek and Eastern dress—a tendency which had previously characterized Caligula, as well. This display was so eccentric to the Roman standard, so similar to tyrannical extravaganza.[[834]](#footnote-834) But Commodus somewhat exceeded Nero, as he replaced the head of the Neronian Colossus in Rome with his own head, and even added Herculean symbols.[[835]](#footnote-835)

In addition, Dio does not fail to highlight the affinity between the time of Commodus and that of Domitian. Under both emperors, poisonings for pay occurred throughout the empire.[[836]](#footnote-836) Furthermore, Lucius Ulpius Marcellus, who under Commodus led a successful expedition to Britain (184 CE), is very much like Agricola under Domitian—though Agricola is not mentioned by Dio—: both were the object of the emperor’s envy.[[837]](#footnote-837) The relation between Commodus and Domitian is also apparent from a parallel source. Herodian, who was only a little younger than Dio, reports the accidental discovery of a wooden tablet with a list of names of distinguished people that the emperor wished to kill. He refers the anecdote to Commodus, whereas Dio entirely omits it. On the contrary, Dio refers the same situation to Domitian as if he had personally learnt it—but no trace of it is found in Suetonius’ biography of Domitian.[[838]](#footnote-838) This is striking, and raises some suspicion. An error may have occurred in the attribution of the specific episode to one emperor or another.[[839]](#footnote-839)

Overall, what we may infer from such a remarkable—and occasionally mysterious—overlap illustrated so far is that, in the ancient historian’s mind, tyrants operated similarly and replicated each other. Commodus is worse than his predecessors, as he is the sum of the triad. There was no need for Dio to make the connection with Caligula, Nero and Domitian explicit by mentioning their names alongside that of Commodus. The relation was self-apparent, on the grounds of Commodus’ behavior. The match was simply inescapable, as demonstrated by Herodian, who also draws parallels with Nero and Domitian.[[840]](#footnote-840) Later on, the reception of Commodus’ Roman models became canonical in the *Historia Augusta*.[[841]](#footnote-841) The picture may seem extreme, but Dio’s narrative has an advantage which he never fails to emphasize: his personal testimony.[[842]](#footnote-842) He debuted as a member of the Senate around 189 CE. His first political steps were thus carried out under Commodus.[[843]](#footnote-843) This allows Dio to highlight the degradation suffered by the senators from an authoritative point of view.[[844]](#footnote-844)

*Conclusion: Dio’s Historical Models, and Dio Modeling History*

From what has been discussed so far, one may easily infer that the condition of our books prevents us from addressing the question of Dio’s sources—at least as far as Dio’s family connections and personal experience enter the scene with the accession of Hadrian. Dio’s sources can hardly be identified, as he usually does not mention them—differently from Xiphilinus, who claims to rely on other sources than Dio when Dio’s text is missing. Yet, it is clear that Dio selected his sources on the basis of a defined work plan. Dio’s senatorial standpoint is the nucleus, and his agenda for the period considered in the present study may be summarized as follows:

1. Senatorial perspective on the history of the Principate. Dio’s account of the imperial period from the Flavians to the Antonines is not just focused on a series of emperors succeeding one another. Nor is it just focused on their deeds or on the events that occurred during their reigns, in Rome or in the provinces. It is specifically focused on the relationship that the emperors had with the Senate.
2. Special appreciation is reserved for the emperors who proved to be benevolent toward the Senate. In this respect, Marcus Aurelius is stands out by far as the model around whom Dio’s inspiration pivots throughout his narration. Marcus inspires Dio’s assessment of the good predecessors Nerva and Trajan, as well as of the others (Vespasian, Titus, Hadrian), whom he puts at a bit of a lower level. Furthermore, as a champion of the ideal connection between Stoicism and the Principate, Marcus provides Dio with a basis of comparison which exceeds the timeframe of the present investigation. Maecenas’ speech, in book 52, may be seen as a theoretical mirror of Marcus’ historical behavior as recorded in the *Roman History*.
3. Special narrative emphasis is on the tyrants. Domitian and Commodus were two sides of the same coin. If compared to Marcus Aurelius, they behave in just the opposite way, as well as their predecessors Caligula and Nero. In addition, each ruler’s behavior mirrors the other’s. There is a pattern for autocracy, centered on a pathological aversion to the common good. Dio experienced it firsthand, and needs to explore it in the course of the Principate. Recursiveness is a fundamental narrative trait of books 65[66]–73[72], as intratextual elements have shown.
4. Recursiveness, indeed. If autocrats behave the same, other things can look the same, and recurrent events produce recurrent consequences. The *omina* announcing those events tend to be accordingly recursive. Starting from his personal experience of the Principate from the Antonines to the Severans, Dio had a number of benchmarks to think about. The parallels I tried to show are quite telling. Sometimes Dio thinks very differently from us, but he finds matches, either explicit or implicit, which allow him to model the history of the Principate.

Dio undoubtedly has a strong political strategy for his historical record, though it is a peculiar one. Insofar as we can infer from what is left of them, books 65[66]­–73[72] have a cyclic nature, which is implied by recursiveness. This has nothing to do with annalistic historiography, which characterizes Dio’s Republican narrative.[[845]](#footnote-845) Neither can it entirely depend on biography, which plays an essential role in shaping Dio’s imperial books. The imperial narrative is a creature of the Principate itself. As Dio admits, under the Principate all information available at the public level declined in quality, and political decisions depended on public debates only to a limited extent.[[846]](#footnote-846) As quality decreased, a different strategy to gather information and make fruitful use of it was needed. Personal experience and memories, thus, helped. Dio’s political identity helped as well. But apart from that, the culture of Dio’s own time helped. Let us call it common sense. It is very likely that common sense provided the historian with structures of understanding that may well be extraneous to our historiographical habit, but which were familiar to Dio. Dio’s models were probably widespread in the *koine* he (a man from Asia Minor, a proud Roman senator, and most likely a fierce Stoic himself) was immersed in. He uses them fruitfully, and the way he models the history of the Principate from the Flavians to the Antonines proves it. The curious reader may just expand the investigation of the *Roman History*, and go further along this path.

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Chapter 13: Cassius Dio and the Age of Iron and Rust

*Andrew G. Scott*

*Introduction*

In books 73[72]–80[80] of his *Roman History*, Cassius Dio details a period that he experienced firsthand, as a Roman senator who enjoyed a successful political career up to his retirement from public life in 229 CE.[[847]](#footnote-847) These books narrate the reigns of a variety of emperors, including the naïve and foolish Commodus, the prudent Pertinax, the former praetorian prefect Macrinus, and the outrageous Elagabalus. Overall, the period was dominated by the reigns of Septimius Severus and the members of his subsequent dynasty. Severus occupies an important position in Dio’s work, not only as a long-reigning emperor and founder of a new dynasty but also as the inspiration for Dio to take up the pen in the first place. Just like Dio’s judgment of Severus, the contemporary books present a complicated picture of a tumultuous age.

Cassius Dio’s narrative of the period mirrors this tumult and is presented almost primarily through the eyes of the disenchanted senator.[[848]](#footnote-848) Because of Dio’s unconventional approach to his own age (and also, no doubt, on account of the state of the text as it survives today), approaches to Dio’s contemporary books have, until recently, been largely negative. Historians of a previous generation wanted more proper names, greater detail, and, above all, greater analytical insight.[[849]](#footnote-849) Yet these points of view are unrealistic, both because of Dio’s professed purpose and, more generally speaking, the narrative-based method of ancient Greco-Roman historiography. Rather than fault Dio for not providing the information that historians of ancient Rome might have wanted, this chapter seeks to contextualize the contemporary books within the larger themes of the history, especially Dio’s belief that monarchy was superior to democracy and his conceptualization of how the Roman monarchy should properly function. Then it will be possible to assess how he fits the contemporary books into his overall analysis of Roman governmental institutions.

Before embarking on this analysis, it is important to acknowledge some potential problems when dealing with the text of Dio’s final books. For books 73[72]–80[80], we rely primarily on the epitome of Dio’s history made by Xiphilinus in the eleventh century, as well as excerpts from the tenth-century *De virtutibus et vitiis* (referred to here, following Boissevain, as the *Excerpta Valesiana*, after their seventeenth-century editor, Henri de Valois). The text of 79[78].2.2–80[79].8.3 has been preserved in a single manuscript, *Codex Vaticanus Graecus* 1288, dating to the fifth or sixth century CE.[[850]](#footnote-850) Because they are not entirely extant, we cannot claim to have a full picture of the content of these books. My approach in this chapter is to observe general themes, which also resonate throughout the history as whole. Thus, even if the picture is not perfect, my hope is to bring out some of Dio’s major concerns with the series of events that he himself lived through.

*The Uniqueness of Cassius Dio’s Contemporary Books*

Cassius Dio is deliberate in marking the point at which he becomes an eyewitness reporter of the events that he narrates. The first notice comes early in his narration of Commodus’ reign (73[72].4.2 [Xiph.]) and is followed soon after by a similar claim with an important addition: the author believes that his eyewitness status will ensure the value of the story that he was telling, in spite of the less than worthy material that he will record (73[72].18.3–4 [Xiph.]):

καὶ μή μέ τις κηλιδοῦν τὸν τῆς ἱστορίας ὄγκον, ὅτι καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα συγγράφω, νομίσῃ. ἄλλως μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἂν εἶπον αὐτά· ἐπειδὴ δὲ πρός τε τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ἐγένετο καὶ παρὼν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ καὶ εἶδον ἕκαστα καὶ ἤκουσα καὶ ἐλάλησα, δίκαιον ἡγησάμην μηδὲν αὐτῶν ἀποκρύψασθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτά, ὥσπερ τι ἄλλο τῶν μεγίστων καὶ ἀναγκαιοτάτων, τῇ μνήμῃ τῶν ἐσέπειτα ἐσομένων παραδοῦναι. καὶ μέντοι καὶ τἆλλα πάντα τὰ ἐπ’ ἐμοῦ πραχθέντα καὶ λεπτουργήσω καὶ λεπτολογήσω μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ πρότερα, ὅτι τε συνεγενόμην αὐτοῖς, καὶ ὅτι μηδένα ἄλλον οἶδα τῶν τι δυναμένων ἐς συγγραφὴν ἀξίαν λόγου καταθέσθαι διηκριβωκότα αὐτὰ ὁμοίως ἐμοί.

And let no one feel that I am sullying the dignity of history by recording such occurrences. On most accounts, to be sure, I should not have mentioned this exhibition; but since it was given by the emperor himself, and since I was present myself and took part in everything seen, heard and spoken, I have thought proper to suppress none of the details, but to hand them down, trivial as they are, just like any events of the greatest weight and importance. And, indeed, all the other events that took place in my lifetime I shall describe with more exactness and detail than earlier occurrences, for the reason that I was present when they happened and know no one else, among those who have any ability at writing a worthy record of events, who has so accurate a knowledge of them as I.[[851]](#footnote-851)

Dio’s point of view here is highly unusual.[[852]](#footnote-852) Contemporary historiography was considered the finest type of history in ancient Greece and Rome, especially after it was defined as such by Thucydides (to whom Dio owed a significant debt).[[853]](#footnote-853) This belief hinged on two main points: that the period through which the author lived was particularly notable, and that the author himself was especially well positioned and qualified to write about it. To take the latter point first, we observe that Dio easily fulfilled this requirement. He was a Roman senator, which gave him access to official information gleaned in meetings of the Roman Senate, and as a contemporary was able to take the temperature, so to speak, of the emperor, his peers, and the *populus Romanus*. But regarding the first point, if Dio’s period was notable, it was notable for its decline, which, at least from Dio’s viewpoint, was characterized as a descent from gold to iron and rust (72[71].36.4 [Xiph.]). If anything, Dio’s stance is an inversion of generic expectation, where most authors trumpeted the importance of the period about which they wrote and implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) entered into competition with their historiographic peers.[[854]](#footnote-854)

While the change “from gold to iron and rust” refers to the transfer of power from Marcus Aurelius to Commodus, I take Dio’s notice to extend to his entire contemporary period, as the golden age was never to be seen again in his life. The story that Dio tells of his own day is defined by contrapositions: the golden age of Marcus Aurelius and the precipitous descent to one of iron and rust; the hopes of a return to that golden age under able emperors such as Pertinax and Septimius Severus and the disappointments of charlatans such as Commodus, Didius Julianus, Macrinus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus; and the success of Dio’s own political career and his wish, at perhaps its highest point, to depart the dangers of Roman politics of his own day. This final passage is worth quoting, as it provides an important example of the type of contraposition that we find in these last few books (80[80].5.1–3 [Xiph.]):

οὐ μέντοι προετίμησε τι αὐτῶν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὐναντίον ἄλλως τε ἐσέμνυνέ με καὶ δεύτερον ὑπατεύσοντα σὺν αὐτῷ ἀπέδειξε, τό τε ἀνάλωμα τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς [αὐτῷ] αὐτὸς ἀναλώσειν ὑπεδέξατο. ἀχθεσθέντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τούτοις ἐφοβήθη μὴ καὶ ἀποκτείνωσί με ἐν τῷ τῆς ἀρχῆς σχήματι ἰδόντες, καὶ ἐκέλευσεν ἔξω τῆς Ῥώμης ἐν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ που διατρῖψαι τὸν τῆς ὑπατείας χρόνον. καὶ οὕτω μετὰ ταῦτα ἔς τε τὴν Ῥώμην καὶ ἐς τὴν Καμπανίαν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἦλθον, καὶ συνδιατρίψας τινὰς ἡμέρας αὐτῷ, τοῖς τε στρατιώταις μετὰ πάσης ἀδείας ὀφθείς, ἀπῆρα οἴκαδε παρέμενος ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν ποδῶν ἀρρωστίᾳ, ὥστε πάντα τὸν λοιπὸν τοῦ βίου χρόνον ἐν τῇ πατρίδι ζῆσαι, ὥσπερ που καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐν τῇ Βιθυνίᾳ ἤδη μοι ὄντι σαφέστατα ἐδήλωσεν. ὄναρ γάρ ποτε ἔδοξα προστάσσεσθαι ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ προσγράψασθαι τῷ ἀκροτελευτίῳ τὰ ἔπη τάδε,  
 Ἕκτορα δ’ ἐκ βελέων ὕπαγε Ζεὺς ἔκ τε κονίης  
 ἔκ τ’ ἀνδροκτασίης ἔκ θ’ αἵματος ἔκ τε κυδοιμοῦ.

Alexander, however, paid no heed to them, but, on the contrary, honoured me in various ways, especially by appointing me to be consul for the second time, as his colleague, and taking upon himself personally the responsibility of meeting the expenditures of my office. But as the malcontents evinced displeasure at this, he became afraid that they might kill me if they saw me in the insignia of my office, and so he bade me spend the period of my consulship in Italy, somewhere outside of Rome. And thus later I came both to Rome and to Campania to visit him, and spent a few days in his company, during which the soldiers saw me without offering to do me any harm; then, having asked to be excused because of the ailment of my feet, I set out for home, with the intention of spending all the rest of my life in my native land, as, indeed, the Heavenly Power revealed to me most clearly when I was already in Bithynia.  For once in a dream I thought I was commanded by it to write at the close of my work these verses:

“Hector anon did Zeus lead forth out of range of the missiles,   
Out of the dust and the slaying of men and the blood and the uproar”.

Just as his age was marred by the promise of renewal that was undercut by the reality of its decline, so Dio’s career reached its pinnacle under circumstances that made it impossible to carry out his second consulship in Rome itself. These events bracket a difficult period in the history of the Roman Principate, at least as Dio tells it, one that physically threatened Dio and required flight to his ancestral home in Bithynia to secure his safety.[[855]](#footnote-855) These final words mark out the perilous situation Dio thought himself in, while also emphasizing the divine protection that allowed for the eventual production, or at least completion, of his Roman history.[[856]](#footnote-856)

*Approaches to Cassius Dio’s Contemporary History*

The usual entry point to Cassius Dio’s contemporary books has been the author’s comments on the genesis of the work at 73[72].23 [Xiph.]. There, Dio describes how he came to write history, in shorter works aimed at the newly minted emperor, Septimius Severus. The first piece detailed the divine signs that foretold Septimius Severus’ rise to power, while the second was a monograph on the civil wars that occurred after the death of Commodus. Both of these works, published during Severus’ reign and sent to the emperor himself, were likely encomiastic in nature.[[857]](#footnote-857) Dio also tells us that the emperor’s approval spurred him to write a history of Rome, and that he would incorporate the work on the civil wars into this larger history. Finally, he relates that he researched from the foundation of Rome down to the death of Severus, and however far he made it beyond that would be according to Fortune’s desire.

This passage gives the impression that Dio conceived of Severus’ reign in a positive way and that this opinion changed as Dio’s experience of that and subsequent reigns continued.[[858]](#footnote-858) As such, there has been a tendency to isolate the events that served as a turning point for Dio’s view of his own age, when it went from hopeful or even laudatory to condemnatory.[[859]](#footnote-859) This pursuit is understandable, insofar as we believe that Dio saw Septimius Severus, at least initially, in a positive light, or at least glimpsed an opportunity to use his literary work under Severus to advance his career.[[860]](#footnote-860) For many, Dio’s ultimate depiction of Severus, frequently described as being “mixed”, is a manifestation of Dio’s changing viewpoint of his own age.[[861]](#footnote-861)

The problem with this approach is that it functions as an extension, more or less, of an overall belief that Dio was a poor historian and that his contemporary history, in particular, was poorly organized and poorly researched. In his conclusion to a chapter devoted entirely to books 73[72]–80[80], Millar (1964, 171) writes:

Dio was no Polybius. In writing the history of his own times he had no conscious historical theory or framework, but was simply concerned to carry on his History as far as fate would allow. The result is inevitably disappointing….

Millar’s judgments intersect with the belief that Dio changed his opinion of Severus over the course of his writing in the sense that both views present a picture of the historian simply moving through his work, recording what bits of information he has, and not attempting to produce an analytical history.[[862]](#footnote-862)

It is more useful, in my opinion, to take the opposite approach and search for thematic connections in the contemporary books, which in turn allow for a better understanding of Dio’s goals for his history. Such a tactic has been up taken by Bering-Staschewski (1981) and Kemezis (2014, 90–149), who analyze the contemporary books through the lens of Marcus Aurelius as ideal *princeps* and as a departure from the peace and prosperity of the Antonine period, respectively. In this chapter, we will look for unifying themes that run through Dio’s discontent with his own age. His work should be understood as the product of his learning and experience—in fact, like that of an historian in the mold of someone like Polybius, contrary to Millar’s criticism.

*Cassius Dio, Septimius Severus, and the Themes of the Contemporary History*

As noted above, Septimius Severus’ reign, born from the wars and civil wars that followed the death of Commodus, was the most significant reason that Dio took to writing history. Severus was notable for his historical position in the civil wars beginning in 193 CE, subsequent reign, and establishment of a dynasty, as well as the encouragement to write history that he offered to Dio. Severus’ reign thus stands in an important position in the contemporary section, taking up three books and looking both back to the Antonine past and forward to the Severan future.[[863]](#footnote-863) Despite Dio’s seemingly close relationship to Severus, the overall depiction of the emperor has frequently been seen as “mixed”, as noted above.[[864]](#footnote-864)

Although several commentators have tried to explain away the complicated portrait that Dio paints of Severus, it is better, following the general theme of this essay, to take it at face value. There were several things that Severus might be admired for: bringing peace after civil war, attempting to govern in the manner of the Antonines (or even Augustus), and bringing a sense of renewal to Rome, such as in his celebration of the *ludi saeculares* in 204 CE.[[865]](#footnote-865) Yet Severus was not perfect, at least in Dio’s opinion. He favored military strength over collaboration with the Senate and put some senators to death.[[866]](#footnote-866) He fought unnecessary wars that brought danger and expense to the empire.[[867]](#footnote-867) Finally, he passed power to his sons, despite the fact that he knew they were unfit to rule.[[868]](#footnote-868)

The judgment of emperors was, of course, one of Dio’s main concerns, as the major theme of Dio’s history is the change in Rome’s governmental forms, especially the transition from Republic to Principate, or, in Dio’s terms, from democracy to monarchy.[[869]](#footnote-869) At least one quarter of the work is dedicated to the period of the dynasts that brought about the end of the Republic and the subsequent establishment of a stable monarchy under Augustus.[[870]](#footnote-870) Books 57–80 chart the highs and lows of the Roman monarchy, from the descent of the Julio-Claudians to the revived monarchy under Vespasian, and from the despotism of Domitian to the stability of the Antonines. This latter period culminates in the golden kingship of Marcus Aurelius, only to be followed by another period of decline, the age of iron and rust through which Dio himself lived.[[871]](#footnote-871)

Dio, of course, did not invent this scheme for understanding Roman history. By the time he was composing his *magnum opus*, the contours of the Principate were set. No one could (or would) rehabilitate a Caligula or Domitian. Nor was Dio’s preference for monarchy unique, as he had predecessors, such as Appian, who considered monarchy to be a good thing for Rome.[[872]](#footnote-872) One of Dio’s contributions was to chart the ways that he saw the monarchy unraveling, and the figure of Septimius Severus stands at a crucial point. For Dio, the civil war victor was one who generally reset the balance of power in Rome, as was the case of Augustus and Vespasian earlier.[[873]](#footnote-873) Severus’ reign also came after, but within the memory of, the stable and generally peaceful period from the accession of Trajan to the death of Marcus Aurelius. When Severus decided to pass power to his sons, in spite of the example of the passage of power from Marcus Aurelius to Commodus, his decision re-animated problems that had previously plagued the Roman monarchy and would end up defining Dio’s contemporary period: hereditary succession; the role of novel forms of imperial representation that undermined the legitimacy of the *princeps*; and the sidelining of the Senate as a partner in governance.[[874]](#footnote-874)

In what follows, I will trace the thematic connections among these problems through the figures of Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus. These are not separate strands, but rather form an intertwined method of analysis throughout these books. With this approach, we can move away from a negative view of Dio, that considered his work an incoherent sketch made by a discontented senator. Instead, we can trace these themes throughout the final books as means of assessing just where Dio thought the Roman monarchy stood in 229 CE.

*Hereditary Succession*

Dio is generally supportive of non-hereditary succession, and his views are in line with other writers, especially on the transition of power after the death of Domitian.[[875]](#footnote-875) Dio’s most explicit comments come at Nerva’s adoption of Trajan; there he writes (68[68].4.1–2 [Xiph.]):

οὕτω μὲν ὁ Τραϊανὸς Καῖσαρ καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο αὐτοκράτωρ ἐγένετο, καίτοι συγγενῶν τοῦ Νέρουα ὄντων τινῶν. ἀλλ’ οὐ γὰρ τῆς τῶν κοινῶν σωτηρίας ὁ ἀνὴρ τὴν συγγένειαν προετίμησεν, οὐδ’ αὖ ὅτι Ἴβηρ ὁ Τραϊανὸς ἀλλ’ οὐκ Ἰταλὸς οὐδ’ Ἰταλιώτης ἦν, ἧττόν τι παρὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸν ἐποιήσατο, ἐπειδὴ μηδεὶς πρόσθεν ἀλλοεθνὴς τὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων κράτος ἐσχήκει· τὴν γὰρ ἀρετὴν ἀλλ’ οὐ τὴν πατρίδα τινὸς ἐξετάζειν δεῖν ᾤετο.

Thus Trajan became Caesar and later emperor, although there were relatives of Nerva living. But Nerva did not esteem family relationship above the safety of the State, nor was he less inclined to adopt Trajan because the latter was a Spaniard instead of an Italian, inasmuch as no foreigner had previously held the Roman sovereignty; for he believed in looking at a man’s ability rather than at his nationality.

Dio also shows an interest in Hadrian’s plans for adoptive succession. Hadrian made a string of adoptions, meant not just to put his own successor in position, but also his successor’s successors. He was particularly fond of M. Annius Verus, though because he was only fifteen years old at the time, he adopted L. Aelius Caesar, who would serve as a sort of interim emperor. Thus, Aelius was adopted in 137 CE, but died soon afterwards. In his place, Hadrian adopted T. Aurelius Fulvus Boionius Arrius Antoninus (the future Antoninus Pius). In turn, Antoninus Pius adopted both M. Annius Verus (the future Marcus Aurelius) and L. Ceionius Commodus (the future Lucius Verus). In addition to the several oddities of this scenario, it is notable that Hadrian waited until late in his reign to make these plans. It seems that Hadrian, who took the throne in 118 CE, did not move forward in organizing his succession plans until he fell ill in 136 CE.

Against this backdrop we should consider the adoption speech of Hadrian that Cassius Dio puts into the emperor’s mouth. At the time of the speech, Hadrian was ill and his first choice of heir, Lucius Aelius Caesar (whom Dio refers to by his original name, Lucius Commodus), had already perished. Hadrian states the following (69[69].20.2–5 [Xiph.]):

“ἐμοί, ὦ ἄνδρες φίλοι, γόνον μὲν οὐκ ἔδωκεν ἡ φύσις ποιήσασθαι, νόμῳ δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐδώκατε. διαφέρει δὲ τοῦτο ἐκείνου, ὅτι τὸ μὲν γεννώμενον, ὁποῖον ἂν δόξῃ τῷ δαιμονίῳ, γίγνεται, τὸ δὲ δὴ ποιούμενον αὐθαίρετόν τις αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ προστίθεται, ὥστε παρὰ μὲν τῆς φύσεως ἀνάπηρον καὶ ἄφρονα πολλάκις δίδοσθαί τινι, παρὰ δὲ τῆς κρίσεως καὶ ἀρτιμελῆ καὶ ἀρτίνουν πάντως αἱρεῖσθαι. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πρότερον μὲν τὸν Λούκιον ἐξ ἁπάντων ἐξελεξάμην, οἷον οὐδ’ ἂν εὔξασθαι παῖδα ἠδυνήθην ἐμαυτῷ γενέσθαι· ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐκεῖνον τὸ δαιμόνιον ἡμῶν ἀφείλετο, εὗρον ἀντ’ ἐκείνου αὐτοκράτορα ὑμῖν, ὃν δίδωμι, εὐγενῆ πρᾷον εὔεικτον φρόνιμον, μήθ’ ὑπὸ νεότητος προπετὲς μήθ’ ὑπὸ γήρως ἀμελὲς ποιῆσαί τι δυνάμενον, ἠγμένον κατὰ τοὺς νόμους, ἡγεμονευκότα κατὰ τὰ πάτρια, ὥστε μήτε τι ἀγνοεῖν τῶν ἐς τὴν ἀρχὴν φερόντων καὶ πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς καλῶς δύνασθαι χρήσασθαι. λέγω δὲ Αὐρήλιον Ἀντωνῖνον τουτονί· ὃν εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα οἶδα ἀπραγμονέστατόν τε ἀνδρῶν ὄντα καὶ πόρρω τοιαύτης ἐπιθυμίας καθεστηκότα, ἀλλ’ οὔτι γε καὶ ἀφροντιστήσειν οἴομαι οὔτε ἐμοῦ οὔτε ὑμῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄκοντα τὴν ἀρχὴν ὑποδέξεσθαι”.

“I, my friends, have not been permitted by nature to have a son, but you have made it possible by legal enactment. Now there is this difference between the two methods — that a begotten son turns out to be whatever sort of person Heaven pleases, whereas one that is adopted a man takes to himself as the result of a deliberate selection. Thus by the process of nature a maimed and witless child is often given to a parent, but by process of selection one of sound body and sound mind is certain to be chosen. For this reason I formerly selected Lucius before all others — a person such as I could never have expected a child of my own to become. But since Heaven has bereft us of them, I have found as emperor for you in his place the man whom I now give you, one who is noble, mild, tractable, prudent, neither young enough to do anything reckless nor old enough to neglect aught, one who has been brought up according to the laws and one who has exercised authority in accordance with our traditions, so that he is not ignorant of any matters pertaining to the imperial office, but could handle them all effectively. I refer to our Antoninus here. Although I know him to be the least inclined of men to become involved in affairs and to be far from desiring any such power, still I do not think that he will deliberately disregard either me or you, but will accept the office even against his will”.

In this speech, we can observe the idealization of adoptive succession, which must have matched the “official” line on the matter.[[876]](#footnote-876) Ultimately, it seems that Hadrian’s planning was to good effect, as the reign of Antoninus Pius, and the subsequent reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, and then of Marcus Aurelius alone, have been received as one of general peace and stability, a view propounded by Dio as well as modern scholars.[[877]](#footnote-877)

Dio experienced two hereditary successions (Commodus and Caracalla) and one false claim of a hereditary succession (Elagabalus). To begin with Commodus’ succession, we turn to the final days of the reign of Marcus Aurelius. In a well-known passage, Dio uses the transition from father to son to mark the descent from a golden kingship to an age of iron and rust (72[71].36.4 [Xiph.]):

ἓν δ’ οὖν τοῦτο ἐς τὴν οὐκ εὐδαιμονίαν αὐτοῦ συνηνέχθη, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν καὶ θρέψας καὶ παιδεύσας ὡς οἷόν τε ἦν ἄριστα, πλεῖστον αὐτοῦ ὅσον διήμαρτε. περὶ οὗ ἤδη ῥητέον, ἀπὸ χρυσῆς τε βασιλείας ἐς σιδηρᾶν καὶ κατιωμένην τῶν τε πραγμάτων τοῖς τότε Ῥωμαίοις καὶ ἡμῖν νῦν καταπεσούσης τῆς ἱστορίας.

Just one thing prevented him from being completely happy, namely, that after rearing and educating his son in the best possible way he was vastly disappointed in him. This matter must be our next topic; for our history now descends from a kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust, as affairs did for the Romans of that day.

Dio’s comments, which in part shield Marcus from criticism for advancing his son, focus on Commodus’ failures. In Dio’s view, Marcus had done all that he could: Commodus had been well educated and well brought up, and Marcus had a plan for managing his young heir, namely to surround the young emperor with wise advisors, including the finest senators (73[72].1.2 [Xiph.]).

Commodus’ reign does not, of course, turn out as planned. The young emperor quickly returns to Rome, rids himself of his father’s advisors, and creates a new image of a *princeps*.[[878]](#footnote-878) The purge of senators highlights the change that Commodus is making, as it shows the erasure of the Antonine past from that body.[[879]](#footnote-879) In addition to this violence, Commodus put the Senate and people of Rome under threat, and fear was pervasive in his reign.[[880]](#footnote-880) The young emperor paired this with a new imperial persona, part Hercules and part gladiator.[[881]](#footnote-881) This departure from the norms of the reign of Marcus Aurelius could not have been clearer, and it is no surprise when Commodus meets his death in a palace coup (73[72].22.1–6 [Xiph.]).

The death of Commodus ushers in a period that is a blend of the events that followed the deaths of Nero and Domitian. Nero’s end came amid internal threats from the provincial armies, and civil war followed. Domitian died in a palace coup, and his successor, Nerva, was chosen by the Senate. In the case of Commodus, we find the emperor murdered in a similar scenario, and his successor, Pertinax, chosen by the Senate. But according to Dio, Pertinax tried to do too much too fast, and his reign lasted a mere three months (74[73].10.3 [Xiph.]). Although he was succeeded by Didius Julianus, civil war, fomented among the legions in the provinces, eventually brought Septimius Severus to power.

It was the plan of Severus to advertise his reign as a new age of peace and prosperity. This image, however, is undercut by Dio. In addition to his many failures as a ruler (as noted earlier), Severus also decided to pass power to his sons, despite the fact that he was already aware of their corruption. According to Dio, Severus tried to reform them on a British campaign, only to be nearly assassinated by Caracalla.[[882]](#footnote-882) However we judge the historicity of this event, Dio provides a damning judgment of Severus toward the end of the narrative of his reign. Dio relates that Severus frequently criticized Marcus Aurelius for passing power to his son. Yet Severus himself, Dio opines, allowed the love for his child to outweigh his love of Rome (77[76].14.5–7 [Xiph.]). Indeed, the reign of Caracalla would prove Severus’ folly. Among other missteps (to be discussed below), Caracalla murdered his brother and co-Augustus within the first year of his reign and carried out a major purge (78[77].2.1–6.1).[[883]](#footnote-883) This murder hangs over the reign of Caracalla. Dio notes that the dissension between the brothers brought Rome almost to ruin: not only was Geta murdered, but so were those who honored him, were involved with him in anyway, and even those who merely spoke his name (78[77].12.3–5 [Xiph.]). Dio goes on to report that murder continued to haunt Caracalla, who dreamed that he was being chased down by Geta and Severus, both armed with swords (78[77].15.3–4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]).

The formal connections between Commodus and Caracalla are important. As noted already, Dio connects the two accessions in Severus’ judgment of Marcus Aurelius for passing power to his son, and Dio’s belief that Severus favored his family over the empire. We can also see that both Commodus and Caracalla were well educated, and that their fathers surrounded them with advisors (whom they both disposed of).[[884]](#footnote-884) Both ignored the precedents of more stable rulers, opting instead for novel forms of representation (to be treated further below). Both also fell victim to conspiracies plotted by members of their inner circles.[[885]](#footnote-885) These connections are important since they add a further argument against Severus’ claim to have returned to a golden age; instead, we see history repeating itself, as the Roman past (and Dio’s work) descends further into the period of iron and rust.[[886]](#footnote-886)

The decline of the Principate, brought about by the return of hereditary succession, can further be seen in the civil war that elevated Elagabalus to power. Elagabalus was the cousin of Caracalla, but in order to overthrow Macrinus he claimed to be the son and rightful heir to his supposed father (79[78].32.2–3). According to Dio, these claims corrupted the soldiers and caused them to revolt against Macrinus. Later, after Macrinus was dead and Elagabalus had gained power, Dio reports that the Senate, which had previously cast aspersions on Caracalla, now praised him and hoped that his son, Elagabalus, would be just like him (80[79].2.6).

Dio makes it clear that Elagabalus was not the true son of Caracalla, and that is the point.[[887]](#footnote-887) Marcus Aurelius re-established hereditary succession as a norm; the practice was reinforced by Severus’ actions, and later Elagabalus used it (falsely) for his own ends. The problem, for Dio, is that hereditary succession continued to produce inept and even dangerous emperors. This led to shifting images of the emperor and the marginalization of the Senate, two themes to which we now turn our attention.

*The Image of the Emperor*

The issue of hereditary succession moves naturally into a discussion of imperial representation, as hereditary succession led to the accession of young emperors, who in turn were prone to developing new imperial *personae*. Cassius Dio’s critique of these novel images allows him to both evaluate the emperors of his own age and participate in a more expansive tradition of identifying tyrants in this manner.[[888]](#footnote-888)

Before returning to a discussion of Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus, we should note that Dio’s age was not devoid of emperors who attempted to bear an appearance that corresponded to traditional modes of what a good emperor should look like. Naturally, these were older men of experience, Pertinax and Septimius Severus. For example, Dio notes that Pertinax “was not only most noble in spirit but also strong in body” (74[73].1.5 [Xiph.]: τήν τε γὰρ ψυχὴν ἄριστος ἦν καὶ τῷ σώματι ἔρρωτο), a comment that suggests that Dio saw a connection between the outward appearance and inner virtue of the man. Dio spends considerable time on Severus’ initial entrance into Rome as emperor, noting his change in clothing at the city walls and the fanfare with which he was received (75[74].1.3–5 [Xiph.]). As for his appearance, Dio notes that Severus was small but strong, weakened only later in life by gout (77[76].16.1 [Xiph.]). For these types of emperors, Dio generally does not comment extensively on their image (at least in the surviving epitome and excerpts), most likely because their imperial representation was normative. In the cases of Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus, who adopted new modes of imperial representation, the situation is quite difference, and we find Dio spending a lot of time pointing out their deviations from the norm. In what follows, I will briefly trace the innovations, as observed by Dio.

Dio begins his description of Commodus’ shifting public image with the comment that the emperor was “more harmful to the Romans than all disease and all evil” (73[72].15.1 [Xiph.]: ἦν δὲ ἁπάντων νοσημάτων καὶ ἁπάντων κακουργημάτων χαλεπώτερος Ῥωμαίοις). Dio goes on to describe Commodus’ change in image, becoming not only Hercules but also Amazonius and Exsuperatorius, the latter of which Dio explains was meant to show that the emperor was superior to all people in every respect (73[72].15.2–4 [Xiph.]). In addition, Commodus had a large number of statues of himself as Hercules set up and had it voted that his age be called a golden one (73[72].15.6 [Xiph.]).[[889]](#footnote-889) In the following sections Dio goes into detail about Commodus’ new, related persona, that of gladiator. Dio attests that he himself watched the emperor perform these feats in the arena, in a pointed passage in which he apologizes for including such degrading material in his history (73[72].18.3–4 [Xiph.]).

As he comes to the end of his description of the games, Dio describes a scene in which Commodus’ helmet was brought through the gate of the arena that is used for removing the dead bodies. Dio sees this as a sign portending Commodus’ demise, and the notice seems to serve as a transition to Dio’s narrative of the end of Commodus (73[72].21.3–22.1 [Xiph.]). Indeed, Dio specifically attributes the cause of Commodus’ murder to the emperor’s change in appearance (73[72].22.4 [Xiph.]). But throughout these sections, Dio also stresses the harm done by the emperor, particularly the fear that he instilled not just in the Senate but in the people of Rome as well (73[72].21.1 [Xiph.]). Commodus’ change, then, was not just one of appearance, but was symptomatic of poor rule.

As noted already, there are formal links in Dio’s history between the figures of Commodus and Caracalla, and one of those links was the perversion of the image of the princeps. Like Commodus, Caracalla was also unwilling to listen to advisors, which Dio chalks up to his reliance on his own opinions (78[77].11.5 [*Exc. Val.*]):[[890]](#footnote-890)

ὅτι ὁ αὐτὸς αὐτογνωμονῶν πολλὰ ἐσφάλη· πάντα τε γὰρ οὐχ ὅτι εἰδέναι ἀλλὰ καὶ μόνος εἰδέναι ἤθελε, καὶ πάντα οὐχ ὅτι δύνασθαι ἀλλὰ καὶ μόνος δύνασθαι ἠβούλετο, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὔτε τινὶ συμβούλῳ ἐχρῆτο καὶ τοῖς χρηστόν τι εἰδόσιν ἐφθόνει. ἐφίλησε μὲν γὰρ οὐδένα πώποτε, ἐμίσησε δὲ πάντας τοὺς προφέροντας ἔν τινι, μάλιστα δὲ οὓς μάλιστα ἀγαπᾶν προσεποιεῖτο· καὶ αὐτῶν συχνοὺς καὶ διέφθειρεν τρόπον τινά.

But this same emperor made many mistakes because of the obstinacy with which he clung to his own opinions; for he wished not only to know everything but to be the only one to know anything, and he desired not only to have all power but to be the only one to have power. Hence he asked no one’s advice and was jealous of those who had any useful knowledge. He never loved anyone, but he hated all who excelled in anything, most of all those whom he pretended to love most; and he destroyed many of them in one way or another.

These comments seem to come toward the end of a summary Dio has included on the emperor’s way of life and just prior to his depiction of the emperor in war.[[891]](#footnote-891) In this subsequent section, Dio details a number of alarming actions by the emperor. He took pleasure in the fighting that occurred between the brothers of the ruling house of Parthia (78[77].12.3 [Xiph.]). Among the Germans he massacred a group of young men after he was laughed at for trying to change the names of cities and towns to honor himself (78[77].13.4–5 [*Exc. Val.*]). Similarly, in Alexandria he carried out a massacre because of jokes at his expense, especially those that ridiculed his murdering his brother (78[77].22–23 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). He bribed the Cenni and others to secure a victory or alliance (78[77].14.1–2 [Xiph.]). Dio also depicts the emperor as mentally unstable (78[77].15.2–4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]), as he even tried to call up the ghost of Commodus for help (in addition to that of Septimius Severus). Finally, he attacked Parthia under the false pretext of wishing to marry the daughter of Artabanus (79[78].1.1 [Xiph.]).

Dio’s depiction of Caracalla’s Parthian campaign functions as the final section on the reign, as it ultimately led to Caracalla’s assassination. It is in this section that Dio details the strange and novel forms of comportment that Caracalla employed in the provinces. Dio here includes a section on the emperor’s appearance, emphasizing that it was all a sham, meant to make Caracalla appear as something he was not. Thus, to seem like a soldier, Caracalla wore a mock breastplate, since he had become too weak to wear the real thing. He also describes the emperor’s chlamys, either purple or a mixture of purple and white, as well as his use Germanic dress. Dio also notes the emperor’s famous innovation, the *caracallus*. The Parthians, however, saw through the emperor’s appearance and realized how weak both he and the army were (79[78].3.4).

Dio postpones this description of the emperor’s appearance in order to show how it led to his demise, and it thus functions, as in the case of Commodus, as a precursor of the downfall to come. The reader, however, can easily connect these appearances to the earlier narrative, in which Caracalla campaigned in Germany, played the role of the *commilito*, and wintered in Syria. While the emperor likely saw these as calculated measures meant to win the army and local populations to his side, Dio interprets them negatively, as a departure from Roman custom and a sign of Caracalla’s weakness.

Caracalla unceremoniously met his end while urinating on the side of the road, taken down by a plot devised by his praetorian prefect Macrinus. Although the prefect ascended to the throne, his reign was a brief fourteen months, a mere interlude in the Severan dynasty.[[892]](#footnote-892) He was overthrown by a new Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, otherwise known as Elagabalus, and the false image of Caracalla’s “heir” is revealed by Dio at the moment he comes on the scene. In the midst of an uprising among the soldiers, the teenaged Elagabalus made his attempt for the throne against Macrinus (79[78].31.2). In a mutilated passage (79[78].31.3), Dio relates that the plan was to parade the young Elagabalus as the son of Caracalla, even dressing him in the same clothes that Caracalla had worn at that age. Bringing him into the camp at Rhaphaneae, his handlers advertised the boy, who Dio says looked a bit like Caracalla, as the rightful heir to the throne (79[78].32.2–3). Dio highlights the false impression by styling the boy “Pseudantoninus” (79[78].32.3).

Once he begins narrating Elagabalus’ reign proper, Dio employs a number of other nicknames, including “the Assyrian” and “Sardanapalus”. This last moniker is particularly applicable, as Dio will present the reign as one similar to the luxurious and debaucherous eastern potentate of the same name.[[893]](#footnote-893) Part of this depiction is the emperor’s appearance. Dio notes that Elagabalus “was frequently seen even in public clad in the barbaric dress which the Syrian priests use” (80[79].11.2 [Xiph.]: καὶ μέντοι καὶ ὅτι τὴν ἐσθῆτα τὴν βαρβαρικήν, ᾗ οἱ τῶν Σύρων ἱερεῖς χρῶνται, καὶ δη μοσίᾳ πολλάκις ἑωρᾶτο ἐνδεδυμένος). Dio explains that this was the reason he received the nickname “the Assyrian”, a description that informs all of the irregularities of this reign, and he divides his depiction of the reign between the emperor’s murders and his actions contrary to custom (80[79].8.1). The narrative of the reign highlights all sorts of irregularities and Dio has been charged trafficking in rumor, hearsay, stereotypical images, and ethnic bias. One might fault Dio for this approach, but the penultimate book effectively shows how far the monarchy had degraded.[[894]](#footnote-894)

These novel forms of imperial representation demonstrate a move away from Roman tradition and are symbolic of a rejection of accepted forms governance under the Principate. While these new images may have been meant to appeal to particular constituent groups, it is clear from Dio that the Senate was not one of those groups. This rejection of the Senate contravenes one of Dio’s main prescriptions for proper rule, and it will be useful to look at this issue more closely.

*A Marginalized Senate*

Cassius Dio believed that the Principate functioned optimally when the monarch worked closely with the Senate.[[895]](#footnote-895) Indeed, a sort of co-rule with the best men was the ideal form of governance, as seen in Maecenas’ prescriptions for Augustus and in Dio’s depiction of Augustus’ reign.[[896]](#footnote-896) The failure of young emperors such as Commodus and Caracalla derived specifically from the marginalization this group, which they did in favor of individuals of lower social station.[[897]](#footnote-897) This is a repeated theme in Dio’s narrative of his own time, during which emperors such as Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus surrounded themselves with individuals who, in Dio’s view, were an embarrassment.[[898]](#footnote-898)

As observed above, Marcus Aurelius had initially surrounded Commodus with wise advisors, though these men Commodus quickly disposed of. In their place stood figures such as Cleander, for whom Dio includes a short biography (intertwined as well with the figure of Saoterus, 73[72].12 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). Therein, he notes that Cleander was a freedman who rose to the position of *cubicularius* to the emperor, displacing Saoterus, who also had possessed significant power. Cleander was able to award positions in the Senate, military commands, and other offices, going so far as to appoint twenty-five consuls for a single year. He was fabulously wealthy and spent a great deal on public works, prior to his fall from fortune. For Dio, Cleander is the product of a period during which all political and social norms had been turned upside down. He was an imperial freedman who wielded power nearly as great as that of the emperor— yet did so in order to enrich himself. Indeed, Cleander even took over the emperor’s traditional role of benefactor, doing favors for citizens and cities alike.

Similar characters can be found under Caracalla, and Dio singles out two figures for scorn. The first is Sempronius Rufus, whom Dio characterizes as a eunuch who ruled over the group of senators attending Caracalla at Nicomedia, which included Dio himself (78[77].17.2 Xiph.]). Rather than conduct business with his senatorial advisors, Caracalla preferred to ride his chariot, hunt, or drink (or attend to the associated hangover), all in the company of soldiers (78[77].18.4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). Dio also includes notes on a certain Theocritus, known to the emperor because of his dancing, who gained so much power that he outranked the prefects in influence and even had the procurator of Alexandria put to death (78[77].21.2–4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). The elevation of these men goes hand in hand with the debasement of the Senate, as we can see further in a subsequent anecdote about Caracalla’s communication with the Senate while he was living in Antioch. Dio charges the emperor with luxurious living and records his displeasure with Senate, quoting the emperor as saying in a letter to the Senate, “I know that my behaviour does not please you; but that is the very reason that I have arms and soldiers, so that I may disregard what is said about me” (78[77].20.21 [Xiph.]: οἶδα μὲν ὅτι οὐκ ἀρέσκει τὰ ἐμὰ ὑμῖν· διὰ τοῦτο μέντοι καὶ ὅπλα καὶ στρατιώτας ἔχω, ἵνα μηδὲν τῶν λογοποιουμένων ἐπιστρέφωμαι).

While not a central aspect of this chapter, the reign of Macrinus also exemplifies this trend. Macrinus was the first equestrian to become emperor, a fact not lost on Dio. While Dio hardly loathes Macrinus, he is offended by the breach in social and political norms.[[899]](#footnote-899) In his obituary for Macrinus, Dio twice notes that it would have been better for Macrinus, an equestrian, to hand over power to a senator (79[78].41.2, 4), emphasizing his view of the Roman social and political order, with the Senate on top.[[900]](#footnote-900)

This trend reaches almost comical proportions under Elagabalus, as Dio provides details about several similar individuals. To begin with, Elagabalus gained power through the machinations of a certain Eutychianus, a public performer, and Comazon, who derived his name “from mimes and mockery” (ἔκ τε μίμων καὶ γελωτοποιίας) and served as Elagabalus’ praetorian prefect, before becoming consul and city prefect (80[79].4.1).[[901]](#footnote-901) Dio writes that Elagabalus was greatly influenced by Hierocles, a slave from Caria, whom Dio also characterizes as the husband of Elagabalus (80[79].15.1–2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). Dio goes on to say that other men (unnamed) were honored by Elagabalus, either because they aided his coup or because they had sex with him (80[79].15.3 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). The kicker is perhaps Aurelius Zoticus, son of a cook and thus nicknamed, who, known for the size of his penis, aroused the jealousy of Hierocles and was subsequently banished after not being able to achieve an erection because of a potion administered by his rival for the emperor’s attention (80[79].16.1–6 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]).

*Conclusion*

Cassius Dio’s judgment of his own age as one of iron and rust fits into the larger theme of his history, which was to provide an analysis of the Roman governmental system. Dio was a monarchist, a view reflected both in his own sentiments and to the length and type of treatment that he gives to the Principate in this work. As the first writer in a long time to undertake a history that dealt with his contemporary period, Dio appears to have taken up the pen in order to document the changes to the Roman governmental system that caused the debasement of the monarchy, which had reached one of its high points in the generation before Dio’s, under the Antonines and especially Marcus Aurelius. In the figure of Septimius Severus, Dio likely saw an emperor whose messaging was undercut by both the reality of his own reign and the dynasty that he set up. There would be no return to a golden age, but rather a descent to one of the low points of the monarchy.

In the survey above, it has been possible to trace certain themes throughout the contemporary books that get to the heart of Dio’s analysis of his own day. We can observe a sustained focus on the elements of monarchical rule that Dio considered important, and which were not appropriately managed by the emperors under whom Dio lived. The details that Dio includes are not simply the random accounting of his own experience, but rather an organized and specific explanation for why he thought the monarchy was failing. In fact, the focus on his own experience is crucial to the story that he tells of his age. It is true that Dio does not always deliver the information that modern historians, especially of the last century, have desired, such as prosopographical or legislative details. But to make these demands of Dio (or any other ancient Greek or Roman historian) is to misunderstand that the genre was driven by narrative, and that it is from this story-telling that we must make our own analyses. By placing our analysis within the bounds of Dio’s overall project, we can observe more clearly the incisive and explicit historical analysis that he provides.

Finally, we must recognize and appreciate the uniqueness of Dio’s contemporary books. Dio brought back a long dormant form of historical writing, namely contemporary historiography. He wrote in a highly personal way, both by including his presence at certain events and also by writing a highly reactive account of his period. In his history we receive a unique, firsthand account from a Roman senator who was highly displeased with the direction of the Roman monarchy.

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Chapter 14: The Republican Speeches

*Marianne Coudry*

The question of speeches in Cassius Dio’s *Roman History* has been neglected in historiographical studies over the past century, mostly because of lasting indifference toward their particular use and role in Dio’s project. Traditionally, more scholarly attention has been devoted to the reliability of Dio’s information than to his literary fashioning, of which elaborate discourses are the most visible testimonies. Consequently, the speeches inserted by Dio in his narrative were usually criticized for their profusion of general ideas and their inappropriateness to the factual context.[[902]](#footnote-902) But new perspectives in recent research have deeply modified this climate of disregard.

First, on a general level, the relationship between history and rhetoric has been explored afresh, mainly in French and Anglophone scholarship. Due attention has been given to the origins of the use of speeches in the narrative process employed by historians, at least from Thucydides on, and to its persistence and refinement in the Greco-Roman literary culture of the second and third centuries, the so-called Second Sophistic, to which Cassius Dio belonged.[[903]](#footnote-903)

Second, Dio’s work itself has recently attracted growing interest,[[904]](#footnote-904) and his supposedly exaggerated use of speeches has been reconsidered, especially those which extend over large parts of his preserved books, once deemed repetitive and full of commonplaces. These pieces of oratory have been analyzed on other grounds, and have even become a clue to appraising Dio’s literary skills.[[905]](#footnote-905) Moreover, innovative insights have been proposed about how he used speeches to elucidate a specific political context. Adam Kemezis, in his stimulating monograph,[[906]](#footnote-906) first asserted that Dio shaped the discourses of the political actors in close accordance with his idea of the status and role of oratory in each regime, and through this device contrasted not only Republic with empire, but even early and middle Republic on one side with Late Republic on the other. Subsequent studies have discussed and refined this view.[[907]](#footnote-907)

Accordingly, it seems to be the right moment for reconsidering Dio’s speeches, or more exactly Dio’s use of speeches in his *Roman History.* They deserve attention from several points of view which have been recently brought to light: as highlighting the cultural context in which he wrote his *History*, as testifying to his own ability in managing the long literary tradition he inherited, and finally as revealing how original and elaborate his use of speeches could be.

This last point will be the main subject of the present paper. It will be treated through two avenues: first, a commentary on a selection of speeches chosen according to their variety, and then broader reflections concerning the overall place and function of speeches in the structure of Dio’s *Roman History*. But in the first instance, some general remarks are necessary.

*1. General Remarks*

Introducing speeches in historical works had been a usual practice since the beginnings of Greek historiography. They were considered a necessary part of the writing of history, on the same level as describing the causes of events, because they explain actions, a point clearly evidenced by Polybius, for instance (12.25b.1). But their shaping and their use had always been controversial, and remained so in Dio’s own time—a point which needs to be briefly investigated, as being the background of Dio’s practice.[[908]](#footnote-908) The prescription established by Thucydides (1.22.1) is well-known: knowing how difficult it is to report exactly what the actors actually said in such or such circumstances, the historian will try to imagine the words that best suit the situation while approximating the truth as closely as possible—that is, (re)constructing the truth by means of verisimilitude. Such reconstructions of real speeches were of course open to criticism, on two fronts. First, a comparison between the historical context and the arguments attributed to the orator could reveal them to be incongruent—a point raised by Dionysius of Halicarnassus about Thucydides’ Melian dialogue, for instance (D.H. *Th.* 37–41); and secondly, a supposedly excessive fondness of rhetorical feats might reveal an undue desire for admiration. As the importance of rhetoric in the education and cultural habits of the Greco-Roman elite grew, such an accusation had more and more chances to be justified: Polybius (12.25i.4) had already spoken of Timaeus in these critical terms, harshly blaming him for using speeches to display his rhetorical talents. Half a century before Dio, Lucian, in his well-known treatise *How to Write History*, restates the right priority: “If a person has to be introduced to make a speech, above all let his language suit his person and his subject, and next let these also be as clear as possible. It is then, however, that you can play the orator and show your eloquence.”[[909]](#footnote-909) It is on these grounds that Dio’s discourses have been judged for a long time: as spoiled by excessive rhetorical refinement. And the point made by Zonaras in the preface to his epitome about historians of this kind, who encumber their narrative with useless speeches to exhibit their skills (*Praef.* 1.2), may have heavily influenced modern judgements on Dio.

Fortunately, a wide set of recent studies have proposed a much more positive—and relevant—analysis. Some have taken into account the cultural and social context of Dio’s work: at a time when history and rhetoric were still taught together in the school system,[[910]](#footnote-910) acquiring and exhibiting skills in rhetoric was an inescapable requirement for whoever endeavored to write history.[[911]](#footnote-911) Others, by reconsidering the overall purpose and economy of the *Roman History* and by focusing on the construction of its narrative, offer analysis of specific topics and speeches:it appears that the “rhetorical” skills of Dio, far from resulting in useless niceties that distract the reader’s attention from the general lesson of the whole work, rather allowed him to produce a very elaborate narrative that fulfilled this objective.[[912]](#footnote-912)

A first stage in reviewing all these questions will consist in recording the kind of speeches in direct discourse that Dio inserted into his narrative of the Republican period, considering first the preserved books (36 to 46), which correspond to the years 69 BCE to 43 BCE. The originality of these books—the profusion of discourses—must be highlighted. As has long been observed,[[913]](#footnote-913) direct-discourse speeches become scarce and shorter in the Augustan books, and very infrequent in the imperial ones. Dio himself may offer a clue for understanding this change, when, to explain that access to information has been radically transformed, he underlines the new political conditions: important decisions were no longer taken in public, but secretly (53.19.1–4), which implies that public debate on collective issues had all but disappeared. And the narrative of the reigns, focused on the ruler, generally provides only short speeches or brief utterances in direct discourse, mostly expressing the emperor’s often tense relationship with senators.[[914]](#footnote-914) For the fragmentary books that cover the regal and early Republican periods, any inquiry is naturally difficult, and they will be evoked only in the last part of this paper, by building on John Rich’s (2019) recent comprehensive and careful study.

All of the speeches of books 36 to 46 are rather extensive pieces of oratory (see the table *infra*), but on variable scales, ranging from 2 or 4 chapters (*Caesar to the senators after his final victory over the Pompeian armies in 46*) to 30 chapters, which means more than half of a book (*Cicero, and then Calenus, to the Senate in January 43, about Antony*)—a fact which in itself calls for comment, and suggests that Dio’s insertion of speeches is far from mechanical and reveals specific choices.[[915]](#footnote-915) Moreover, they occur in a variety of contexts and concern different audiences, most often the Senate, or the citizens, either in political assemblies (*vote of the lex Gabinia on attribution of extraordinary powers to Pompey to fight piracy in 67*) or at war as soldiers (*Caesar to his soldiers in Placentia during the civil war in 49*). Some are isolated, others are paired or arranged as answering each other, and clearly conceived as vivid political debates allowing a confrontation of arguments. Some, too, are private dialogues (*Cicero in exile and Philiscus in 58*), which seem less directly related to the factual context. This variety deserves further exploration, which will focus on the relationship between the speeches and the context into which they are inserted. As we have already seen, this was a major issue in ancient polemics about the use of speeches in history-writing. It will reveal a valuable clue for scrutinizing the function Dio allocates to discourses in the frame of his narrative.[[916]](#footnote-916)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| date | reference | ch. | speakers | audience | Subject |
| 67 | 36.25–26  36.27–29  36.31–36 | 2  3  6  total 11 | Pompey  Gabinius  Catulus | popular assembly | *lex Gabinia*  (extraordinary command for Pompey) |
| 58 | 38.18–29 | 12 | Cicero-Philiscus | private dialogue | exile |
| 58 | 38.36–46 | 11 | Caesar | officers in Vesontio | war against Ariovistus |
| 49 | 41.27–35 | 9 | Caesar | soldiers in Placentia | mutiny |
| 46 | 43.15–18 | 4 | Caesar | Senate | promise of moderation |
| 44 | 44.23–33 | 11 | Cicero | Senate | amnesty after Caesar’s assassination |
| 44 | 44.36–49 | 14 | Antony | popular assembly | eulogy of Caesar |
| 43 | 45.18–47  46.1–28 | 30  28  total 58 | Cicero  Calenus | Senate | war against Antony |

*2. Some Speeches from Books 36 to 46 in Context*

*Debate on the* Lex Gabinia *(36.25–36)*

Our first case-study consists of a collection of three speeches which Dio presents as delivered on the same day, in front of the Roman citizens summoned to decide whether a special command should be created for Pompey to fight Mediterranean piracy.[[917]](#footnote-917) The context is the growing anxiety of the senators at the bold actions of pirates, closer and closer to Italy and Rome itself, their inability to face the problem with appropriate decisions, and, by contrast, the action of a tribune, A. Gabinius, who proposes an unusual solution: to have extraordinary military powers conferred upon Pompey by a vote of the people. In short, a harsh confrontation between the Senate and the *populus* on the question of the extra-constitutional position of Pompey.

Dio makes Pompey, whom he presents as eager to obtain this command, speak first, and reject the proposal, pretending he wishes to retire from public life; but then Gabinius, introduced as devoted to Pompey, vigorously commends him as the most suited for that campaign. These first two speeches, equally adorned with conventional rhetorical devices, patently answer each other, and are clearly intended to evidence the ambition and disingenuousness of Pompey. The third speech is of a different kind: deprived of literary ornaments, over six chapters it widely develops an elaborate description and defense of the Republican political system, chiefly its magistracies, their rules of allocation, and their execution, and it argues that the whole is dangerously imperiled by Gabinius’ proposal. This analysis is put in the mouth of a senator, Q. Lutatius Catulus, whom Dio presents as utterly devoted to the public interest and for this reason unanimously esteemed.

The subsequent narrative is remarkably concise (one chapter): Catulus fails to convince the people, Pompey is given huge military and financial resources, and he wins the war. Through this literary device, which is unique to Dio (neither Plutarch nor Appian, who report the same events, make the same choice), contrasting a long and articulated speech with a concise narrative, and thus emphasizing the issue instead of the events, Dio clearly aims at expressing not only his own conception of the Republican *politeia*, but also his interpretation of its downfall. Derogation from the traditional institutions allowed ambitious individuals like Pompey to become exceedingly powerful, and paved the way for the transition to a monarchical system.

However, these topics are not purely retrospective speculation: in other sources, including contemporary speeches,[[918]](#footnote-918) the issue of extraordinary powers and of the danger of domination by a successful *imperator* are explicitly attested as subjects of debate. Dio’s writing of these three speeches thoroughly meets the traditional requirements of historiography, as stated by Thucydides.[[919]](#footnote-919)

This set of speeches, in short, fills a number of functions, at different scales. It directly introduces the reader to the public stage and thus allows a vivid insight into the political life of the Late Republic and its dramatic conflicts; it fosters the characterization of its most important actors; and it gives a clue to understanding the main lines of the constitutional evolution of Rome in a particular manner—a confrontation of opinions—that stimulates the reflection of the reader.

*Caesar’s “Vesontio speech” (38.36–46)*

The second example[[920]](#footnote-920) takes place in a very different context: the beginning of Caesar’s war in Gaul in 58 BCE. It shows him dealing not with his soldiers, but with his officers, on the eve of a battle against Ariovistus, king of the Germans. The speech inserted here provides a unique opportunity for judging Dio’s re-elaboration of his main (and more probably, only) source of information: the writings of Caesar himself, in which such a discourse also appears (*BGall.* 1.40). Both are ample pieces of rhetoric, but Dio’s is far more extended (eleven chapters) and includes a wide and original addition about the development of Roman conquest from its origins down to the time in question. The context is not only the fear of the enemy, but also the growing feelings of distrust on the part of Caesar’s soldiers, who complain that this war, far from being planned by the Senate and the people, actually results from Caesar’s ambition alone. Accordingly, Caesar’s arguments to provide moral and legal bases for his attack of the Germans inevitably sound fallacious and operate to reveal Caesar’s ambition and dissimulation.

So, one of the functions of this speech of Caesar—the first occurring in the narrative of his growing power—is to build an image of Caesar as one of those dynasts who undermine the Republican regime. Another function is to induce the reader to think about the perverted use of oratory in the Late Republic: although mendacious, Caesar’s discourse is convincing enough to neutralize his officers’ reluctance.[[921]](#footnote-921)

A third aim of Dio, and the most original, is to call to mind the process and the consequences of Rome’s imperialism.[[922]](#footnote-922) About one third of the speech is devoted to a defense of Rome’s conquest, and an advocacy of offensive wars to prevent the loss of what has been acquired over the centuries. In these passages Dio repeatedly alludes to the Athenian past, a means for exhibiting his literary skills through familiarity with Thucydides and Demosthenes, but also for raising his reflection to a general level and embracing a long-lasting evolution.[[923]](#footnote-923) This part of Caesar’s speech allows him to express indirect criticism about Rome’s expansion as the outcome of individual ambition—Caesar’s, here, and that of others such as Crassus and his dramatic campaign against the Parthians, elsewhere (40.12–30). Such ambition and the conquests that result from it are one of the reasons for the fall of the Republic, which grew increasingly unable to face the management of such a wide empire, as Dio explicitly states in his well-known analysis of the consequences of Caesar’s assassination (44.2.4, repeated in 47.39.4–5).

*The Cicero-Philiscus Dialogue (38.18–29)*

The third example is very different: it is not a public speech but a private dialogue, generally neglected or dismissed as full of commonplaces and literary references and disconnected from its context; in other words, invaded by the rhetorical protocols so usual in Dio’s times.[[924]](#footnote-924)

This is the twelve-chapter dialogue, supposed to have taken place in Macedonia where Cicero, constrained to leave Rome after the vote of Clodius’ law in 58 BCE, met the (real or fictitious) philosopher Philiscus. It takes the form of a reflection about exile, and belongs to a very conventional genre, called consolation, of which a wide range of examples in Greek and Roman literature exist, mostly from the imperial period. Dio, while accurately following its rules, introduces many elements that render the tenor of Philiscus speech original: not only examples of other Roman exiles, but precise allusions to Cicero’s career and to the legal effects of his exile, judgements about his political actions, and even ideas borrowed from the orator’s own writings. All this serves to connect the dialogue with the genuine context of Cicero’s public career and actions. Moreover, it fulfils a notable function within Cicero’s characterization: to counterbalance the consistently negative image given through the narration of the events in which he was involved—his support of Pompey, his excessive self-confidence. At last, by predicting Cicero’s death should he refuse to retire from public life, this dialogue delivers a general message concerning the Late Republic: the Republican regime is doomed to disappear, overpowered by dynasts, and there is no place left for citizens devoted to the public good.

*Cicero and Calenus in the Senate (45.18–46.28)*

The last example is more famous and has often elicited comment: it is the two very long speeches uttered by Cicero and Q. Fufius Calenus in a Senate-meeting of January 43 BCE intended to decide what action should be undertaken against Antony.[[925]](#footnote-925) Both speeches occupy more than half of the books in which they are inserted (30 chapters of book 45, 28 of book 46), a distinctive situation in the preserved Republican books. For this reason, it has generally been described as a typical example of the overwhelming place of rhetoric in Dio’s *Roman History*. Actually, his re-working of the material provided by Cicero’s *Philippics* to make up Cicero’s speech, on one side, and the use of the anti-Ciceronian tradition to make up Calenus’ fictitious speech on the other side, are obvious: it has been suggested that both pieces of oratory were heavily indebted to declamatory exercises in use in rhetorical schools.[[926]](#footnote-926) As for the numerous references to Athenian orators like Aeschines and Demosthenes, and to Aristophanes’ comedies,[[927]](#footnote-927) these bear witness to Dio’s familiarity with classical authors, and to his desire to exhibit his literary skills and culture, in a kind of game which educated readers will have anticipated. However, the arguments developed by both orators to convince their fellow senators are perfectly consistent with the historical context: the point at stake is whether Antony imperils the Republican regime or not, and Dio has carefully organized the narrative that encapsulates this senatorial debate to make his reader reflect on the transition from Republic to Principate. Book 45 opens with a few chapters presenting Octavian, the future Augustus, in the same way as future emperors are portrayed later in the imperial books, suggesting that Principate is not far ahead. Book 46 ends with the agreement concluded in Bononia to lay the basis of the Triumvirate, suggesting that the Republic has definitely sunk. The Senate-meeting described in-between is thus a turning-point in the constitutional evolution of Rome. One of the main topics recurring through the two discourses, with the purpose of pointing out this irreversible alteration, is the idea of freedom of speech, *parrhēsia*, a key concept used to characterize democratic regimes at least from the fifth century in classical Athens, and very important in Dio’s own political reflection.

The originality of this pair of discourses is the device used by Dio: he chose, by confronting Cicero with Calenus, to portray *parrhēsia* in action.[[928]](#footnote-928) Cicero presents himself as an inflexible defender of freedom of speech, necessary to democracy, but Calenus undermines his position by denouncing his pretended freedom of speech simply as slander. At the same time, he indulges in invective, instead of opposing arguments appropriate to a deliberation of the Senate (it is only days afterward, when the other senators make proposals, that decisions are taken). Dio’s lesson is clear: freedom of speech has no place left in Rome, deliberative oratory has become impossible, and the Senate has lost its constitutional function. So, through these long and violent speeches answering each other, Dio vividly depicts the failure of *parrhēsia* at that crucial moment, and offers his reader another approach to his general ideas about the end of the Republic.

By considering these four very different examples of speeches in the preserved Republican books, we have highlighted the variety of uses Dio can make of pieces of oratory. All of them fulfil three functions (although with specific variations), well acknowledged and traditional in historiography. Generally speaking, they allow Dio to provide pauses in the historical narrative, to please his readers by his refined use of rhetorical codes, and to display his literary skills according to the cultural habits of his time—an aesthetic function, in other words. More precisely, they contribute to the narrative by other means than narration in its strict sense: they result in actions (positive or not), and they supply lively portraits of the actors. They also—and here lies Dio’s true originality—contribute to formulating his own understanding of the ample historical process he describes, the collapse of the Republic and its replacement by the Augustan monarchy.[[929]](#footnote-929) This particular point now deserves to be further investigated.

*3. Speeches in the Structure of the* Roman History

As has long been recognized, Dio gives a much more detailed account of the last period of the Republic, an era of personal powers, which he terms *dynasteiai*,[[930]](#footnote-930) and of the establishment of the Augustan monarchy, than of the previous and subsequent periods of Rome’s history. The main features of *dynasteiai* are vigorously drawn throughout the narration: collective action and search for concord are wiped out by personal ambition (*philotimia*) and envious resentment (*phthonos*), and political opposition transforms into ineffective obstruction. What part did Dio ascribe to speeches in this description? One observation, which has been pointed out in recent works,[[931]](#footnote-931) is that speeches convey a vivid depiction of these relevant new elements, consonant with Dio’s personal commentsinserted here and therein the narrative. This point has been explored for instance with reference to the speeches uttered for or against the *lex Gabinia*.[[932]](#footnote-932)

Thus Catulus’ predictions of the dramatic effect of exceptional powers on those who receive them (36.35.1) are echoed in Dio’s assessment of the significance of the battle of Pharsalus, as a culmination of the lasting and destructive rivalry between Pompey and Caesar (41.53.2–54.3; 56.2–3). Or Pompey’s and Gabinius’ words about the effects of envy toward those who assume a position superior to their fellow citizens (36.26.1–2; 29.2) are confirmed by passages later describing the harsh opposition Pompey had to face when he came back from the East and asked the Senate to give validity to his settlement (37.49–50), or, further, by Dio’s general comment on the assassination of Caesar as resulting from jealousy and hatred of his position (44.1.1).

Connections of this kind also appear surrounding other orations, such as Cicero’s speech in the Senate after Caesar’s assassination, his so called “amnesty speech” (44.23–33). Widely developed and rich with Thucydidean references, this discourse, focusing on the necessity of producing concord between the opposite factions to prevent civil war, convinces the senators at once and first succeeds in having both the murderers and Caesar’s friends take mutually agreeable decisions (44.34.1), but it rapidly fails to prevent popular resentment, and thereby misses its aim. The lesson of events is not explicitly formulated; it emerges rather from the unfolding of the narrative. But a comment was not necessary, since precisely at the opening of book 44 (44.1–2), entirely devoted to Caesar’s murder, Dio had introduced a personal reflection on the consequences of this event for Rome, and disclosed its meaning: the return of *stasis* and civil war, which revealed the impossibility of preserving concord in a democratic regime. Through this device, the substance of Cicero’s amnesty speech, and its failure as well, are anticipated: the reader is compelled, when he reads the discourse and the narrative of its impact, to remember the interpretation previously delivered. Although the relationship between speech and authorial comment is not dispatched in the same way as in the preceding example, the literary technique remains identical.

Unsurprisingly the same links between discourse and reflections of a general kind appear also in the fragmentary books which concern the early and middle Republic. One instance is Fabricius’ speech in response to king Pyrrhus’ offer of becoming his counsellor, when the Roman was sent by the Senate to negotiate with the king about prisoners of war—a famous confrontation widely known through ancient authors. Dio provides a lengthy demonstration of the superiority of sobriety over *pleonexia* (the desire for having more)(fr. 40.35–36), a topic which he obviously chose to stress, as it was not the focus of his predecessors’ versions. This topic had appeared earlier in the narrative, precisely in connection with Pyrrhus’ motives to fight war in Italy (fr. 40.5).[[933]](#footnote-933) These links between discourses and reflections scattered in the narrative exemplify how integral speeches were to it.

What should be stressed, moreover, is the point at which Dio inserted these speeches in the frame of the narrative: it clearly appears that their location is carefully chosen. These deliberate choices are most often original, and enable him to underline some moments he considers as turning-points in the history of Late Republican Rome. We have already noted this fact about the Cicero-Calenus debate, which assumes a pivotal function within books 45 and 46, describing the collapse of free government and foreshadowing the Augustan monarchy; but it also appears in the vote of the *lex Gabinia* in 67 BCE*.* Extraordinary commands or magistracies were conferred upon Pompey on several occasions after 67 BCE through plebiscites, and often in spite of vigorous debate and opposition, as we know from other sources; the same happened with those conferred upon Caesar, Crassus, and later upon Octavian and the triumvirs down to 43 BCE. But only once, in the narrative of the conflict about the *lex Gabinia*, did Dio decide to allow a wide space for speeches. Those of Pompey and Gabinius are intended to make visible the position of power that *imperatores* will henceforth hold over the public stage; Catulus’ discourse, on the other hand, explains how dangerous extraordinary commands are for the Republican regime. These two topics do not explicitly surface again in the subsequent narrative—they need not. In other words, Dio obviously chose to concentrate on this event—the vote on the law in 67 BCE—his main ideas about the institutional reasons for the collapse of the Republic, and to formulate them in elaborate speeches.[[934]](#footnote-934) In doing so, he offers to his reader, in advance, a clue to understanding the next steps in the decay of the regime.

The fragmentary books which concern the early Republic offer another example of this device, applied to a different topic: not the change in Roman institutions, but the stages of Rome’s expansion overseas. As is suggested by Zonaras’ narrative and by the fragments preserved in the various *excerpta*,[[935]](#footnote-935) Dio widely developed the narrative of the beginnings of the Second Punic War, and inserted three speeches, two in Carthage and one in the Roman Senate, offering “one of the most ambitious deployments of extended speech in the early books”.[[936]](#footnote-936) Moreover, it seems that he transferred to the context of the second war debates which other authors placed in the context of the first one. This choice appears consistent with his own view of the Roman conquest, for he underlines that until the beginning of the Second Punic War the Romans lived in complete harmony (fr. 52.1), thus suggesting that it disappeared precisely at this time. Linking the expansion of Rome’s hegemony with its internal transformation in this way, by ascribing the weakening of Rome’s internal harmony to the progress of her external domination, is specific to Dio’s historical reflection.[[937]](#footnote-937) These examples reveal how he conceived of the function of widely expanded speeches in the writing of history: as landmarks underlining a few decisive turning-points in broad historical evolutions, which help the reader to grasp their significance.

Such a remark naturally leads us to highlight a second originality in Dio’s use of speeches:echoes between one speech and another. Several speeches, placed at different points of the narrative, work in relation to each other: they address similar topics, or evidence similar behaviors. Some of these pairs have long been identified: the so-called Agrippa-Maecenas debate of book 52, which marks the passage from Republic to Empire, echoes the debate of book 3, which marks the birth of the Republic after Tarquinius’ expulsion from the city.[[938]](#footnote-938) Both focus on which regime was most suitable for the Roman people.

Some other pairs of speeches have been more recently noticed, as Pompey’s (in 67 BCE) and Octavian’s (in January 27 BCE), each displaying their alleged refusal of power (*renuntiatio imperii*) at two crucial moments in the transition from Republic to Principate.[[939]](#footnote-939) The first one belongs to the set of three speeches inserted by Dio in his narrative of the vote on the *lex Gabinia*, and helps to exemplify the disingenuousness of those ambitious politicians whose military successes are greatly needed in the moment, but may allow them a position of domination in the state. The second one shows how Octavian, who succeeded in acquiring, through his military victory at Actium, such a position of domination, hopes to get the consent of his fellow citizens to consolidate his monarchical power. Through its recurrence in 27 BCE at the final point in the process of Republican decline, the function allocated to this latter speech may be to repeat those disingenuous strategies which proved so successful forty years earlier, and so to underline the main steps in the destruction of the Republican political system, which Dio conceived of as irreversible.

Another pair of speeches can be considered from a similar perspective: Caesar’s discourse to the senators in 46 BCE and Cicero’s amnesty speech of 44 BCE. In the first one (43.15–18),[[940]](#footnote-940) uttered after the elimination of the Pompeian leaders in Africa, Caesar promises that he will not use his victory to behave like a tyrant, as his clemency towards his enemies testifies, but rather as a father and a benevolent guide. This sort of programmatic speech prefaces the description, in the subsequent chapters of the same book, of Caesar’s government and of his definite victory over the remaining Pompeian forces in Spain. In the following book, focused on the Ides of March, Cicero’s amnesty discourse in the Senate (44.23–33), calling for the preservation of concord after Caesar’s assassination, appears to emphasize the failure of Caesar’s famous clemency,[[941]](#footnote-941) which undermined the form of government he established. The correspondence between these two speeches helps to demarcate Caesar’s political regime in the complex period of transition from Republic to Empire, but also provides, through the topic of consensus and dissension, a frame to think about its viability.

As we have seen above, one remarkable feature of the location of speeches is the choice of significant moments to offer the reader pauses in the flow of the narrative, as signals to make him aware of the issues at stake in that moment. In some cases of speeches linked together by common topics, for instance the debates of 509 (in book 3) and of 27 BCE (in book 52) about the best political regime, it happens that each speech is separated from its twin by several books. It seems that Dio conceived of these echoes as a means of helping his reader to embrace the story-arc of Rome’s history over centuries, and to identify the decisive turning-points in its domestic and external history in a wide perspective.[[942]](#footnote-942) This device, which is a clear proof of the coherence of his whole work, suggests that his readers were able to recognize such signals, something rather unfamiliar to our modern culture; this may be related to the educational practice of his time, which relied heavily on training memory and recall.

These remarks invite us to consider speeches from a different and broader perspective: as constituting by themselves an element of historical interpretation on a grand scale. That speeches are unevenly distributed among the different parts of Dio’s *History*, according to the period described, has been long observed, and one can reasonably surmise that such differences are not deprived of significance. They invite us to question Dio’s interpretation of the changing status of oratory and its correspondence to historical transformations, more precisely to political changes and developments. What do they reveal about his conception of oratory as a mode of expression for the actors on the public stage?

This question arises from two observations formulated by Dio himself. First, in a well-known passage of his Augustan narrative, he writes about the new conditions resulting from the establishment of a monarchy: information is no longer brought before the popular assemblies or the Senate, and important decisions are now taken not in public, but secretly (53.19.1–4). This explains why direct-discourse speeches, widely deployed in the preserved Republican books, become scarce and shorter in the Augustan ones, and very rare in the imperial ones. Second, he expresses a retrospective view about the significance of the battle of Actium: this was, to Dio, the return of monarchy after Republican government (*dēmokratia*) and a period he terms *dynasteiai* (52.1.1). The isolation of this last moment inside what we are used to considering as a whole, the Republic, suggests that he believes that the conditions of public decision-making had then radically changed, and consequently the practice of oratory had been deeply altered.

On this basis, Kemezis has recently proposed an attractive understanding of the relation between Dio’s periodization and his presentation of speeches:[[943]](#footnote-943) *dēmokratia* as a period of free and efficient oratory (“genuine deliberative oratory”), and *dynasteiai* as a period of denaturation in which dynasts use oratory as a means of gaining popular or senatorial support to pursue their own aims, while all other orators prove ineffective. Such a view of the dysfunction of oratory in the Late Republic as an important and specific topic of Dio’s *Roman History* seems convincing, and has been further explored in other recent works.[[944]](#footnote-944) Most of the examples of speeches presented in this paper allow the same observation, with the mendacious (and successful) discourses of Pompey and Caesar on one side, and the ineffective ones of Catulus and Cicero on the other side.

However, the supposed contrast between the two sorts of oratory according to the opposition between the early and middle Republic on one side, and the Late Republic on the other, may seem excessively clear-cut. Some recent works have underlined that Dio, instead of idealizing the early and middle Republic as Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus did, thought of the Republic as a continuum, and of the political dysfunctions of the Late Republic—the destructive effects of selfish competition—as already present earlier. In his eyes, they were deeply rooted in the political system: such vices do not simply come into being, but rather intensify when already present.[[945]](#footnote-945) Others have reconsidered the speeches of the fragmentary part of Dio’s *Roman History* and proposed a more nuanced assessment.[[946]](#footnote-946) As far as they can be identified, that is mostly for the period prior to 146 BCE, and although long speeches in direct style are not easy to recognize and to separate from others nor to replace in their narrative context, they seem to reveal a use of speeches and a conception of the function of oratory rather similar to their counterpart in the preserved books.[[947]](#footnote-947) Extended discourses do not prove less numerous, and, just as happens in the Late Republican narrative, the majority take place at Rome and in public, having the Senate or the people as audience, and it happens that some of the speakers defend their own private interests instead of the common good.

Nonetheless, the image of oratory as a tool in the hands of dynasts in the last decades of the Republic, as it emerges in the preserved books, is still valid. But as it remains impossible to recover the number, extent, and context of speeches in direct discourse in the part of Dio’s *History* corresponding to the early and middle Republic, any specific characterization of the function of oratory in political life of this period is left uncertain.

A means of overcoming this difficulty may be found in a passage from the fragmentary books, sometimes presented as evidence for Dio’s positive view of the function of oratory in the middle Republic—and, implicitly, for his negative view of what it became in the time of *dynasteiai*. It conveys Dio’s own assessment on the effect of Appius Claudius Caecus’ famous oration urging the hesitating senators to refuse any negotiation with king Pyrrhus, and resulting in their dismissal of his ambassador Cineas: “Such is the nature of oratory and so great its power, that it completely changed them.” (fr. 40.40: τοιαύτη μὲν ἡ τοῦ λόγου φύσις ἐστὶ καὶ τοσαύτην ἰσχὺν ἔχει ὥστε καὶ ἐκείνους ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τότε μεταβαλεῖν).[[948]](#footnote-948) Actually, this remark could apply to the Late Republic as well, and can be taken as expressing Dio’s general idea of the power of oratory in any political system relying on public decision-making, whatever the aims and motivations of the political actors. Considered from this perspective, Dio’s reflection on Appius Claudius Caecus’ speech further emphasizes the important place awarded to speeches in his narrative of the entire Republic.

*4. Conclusion*

This review of recent scholarship on Dio’s use of direct speeches in his Republican books allows a set of conclusions which may seem to offer a combination of observations often considered as conflicting, but these in fact represent instead a more comprehensive view of Dio’s writing.

First, concerning the literary side of the subject, commentators have noticed the refinement in composition and style in the extended speeches (Cicero and Calenus in 43 BCE), in accordance with rhetorical codes traditionally used in historiography, as well as the careful pairing of their substance with their situations and characters, a basic requirement as we have seen.[[949]](#footnote-949)

But one remarkable feature of Dio’s composition of discourses is his effort to provide them an original setting in the narrative (e.g., Catulus’ speech against the *lex Gabinia*), often different from what we can read in the rest of the tradition; much of the content too is, accordingly, original (Caesar’s Vesontio speech). Such a habit implies that he made deliberate choices about whether or not to expand the speeches he found in his sources, or to create one when the tradition provided only allusions, or conversely to avoid inserting another one altogether. Moreover, this paper has limited its survey to extended speeches in direct discourse, but Rich has highlighted the variety of means Dio used to present them, from artfully composed discourses to brief exchanges, or single sentences in direct discourse sometimes inserted in summarized speeches, or from reported speeches in indirect discourse to mere statements.[[950]](#footnote-950)

Such observations evince one striking originality of Dio’s writing, which has been evidenced in this paper: the criterion for inserting a piece of oratory at one specific point of the narrative appears to be its significance for Dio’s overall interpretative framework. One of the functions allocated to elaborate speeches is to underline major steps in Rome’s internal and external evolution. Rhetoric is used as an auxiliary of historical reflection. This does not mean that orators are conceived of as Dio’s spokesmen: even when he warns his reader that the orator will speak on behalf of the public interest, and thus presumably honestly and trustfully, the affirmations he puts in the speaker’s mouth may be misguided.[[951]](#footnote-951)

What benefit may be expected from this use of speeches on the historian’s part? It offers the reader not only, as is usually said, a sophisticated piece of literature in accordance with Dio’s own culture and taste, but something more: an opportunity to involve him in the historical reflection. Such seems to be, particularly, the aim of debates and dialogues—in accordance with the intellectual bent of the elites of Dio’s time. Therefore, speeches are not to be considered as a merely aesthetic device, arbitrarily interrupting the narrative, but rather as an additional means of conveying Dio’s interpretation of Rome’s history.[[952]](#footnote-952)

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Chapter 15: The Agrippa-Maecenas Debate

*Christopher Burden-Strevens*

# *1. The Turning-Point of Actium*

On September 2nd, 31 BCE, the naval forces of Octavian clashed against the fleet of Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra at Actium, an ancient town guarding the narrow strait into the Ambracian Gulf. It is fashionable nowadays to write of the Battle of Actium as a tawdry, shabby affair, nowhere nearly as decisive and important as it is magnified to be.[[953]](#footnote-953) Yet Cassius Dio, like all ancient historians who described the event, rightly recognized its importance in the long and bloody transition from free Republic to monarchical empire. He devotes the entirety of book 50 of his *Roman History* to it, and states at the very opening of the book that although Antonius and Octavian controlled the “Republic”, neither of them had yet turned it into a monarchy as such.[[954]](#footnote-954) Ancient readers, just as the attentive reader today, would have recognised this deep breath before the plunge: a foreshadowing of the monarchy soon to come, of Octavian’s transformation into Augustus (“The Revered One”), and a clear signal of the decisive role played in that process by the struggle off the shores of an insignificant little town in Acarnania.

Yet to Dio, victory at Actium alone was not enough. Sulla had defeated fellow Romans in a spectacular victory at the Colline Gate, literally beneath the walls of Rome itself; but his new Republican constitution was wholly unpicked by populists within a decade. His reputation was soon in tatters.[[955]](#footnote-955) Julius Caesar had vanquished Pompeius Magnus at Pharsalus; but the Republican aristocracy could never accept a king.[[956]](#footnote-956) They took their revenge on the Ides of March—symbolically, it is said, beneath the statue of Pompeius Magnus himself. By the time of Actium and book 50, Octavian’s path seems no different. Cassius Dio presents him as a scheming dynast, a vulture, capable of unspeakable acts of cruelty such as the alleged massacre of Roman equestrians and senators at the siege of Perusia.[[957]](#footnote-957) What made Octavian successful where Sulla, Caesar, and all the rest were not, dying peacefully in his bed as the emperor Augustus almost half a century after the Battle at Actium?

For the answer to that question, we need to look to the enormous bipartite debate (or *controversia*) between Agrippa and Maecenas in book 52. Suetonius records that, after defeating Antonius, Octavian took pause and initially considered restoring genuine Republican government at Rome.[[958]](#footnote-958) In book 52 of his *Roman History*, Dio took that idea and expanded it into the most important extended reflection on the nature of imperial rule ever written during the period now known as the Principate. Octavian’s closest friends, his general Agrippa and the wealthy patron and advisor Maecenas, are summoned in private to advise him on the decision he must make: to restore Republican government (Agrippa) or to formalize a monarchy as such (Maecenas).

The exchange is unique in imperial historiography. Dio certainly had no “source” for the arguments it contains, and it entirely reflects his own causal interpretation of the historical process and his political philosophy.[[959]](#footnote-959) As the longest surviving analysis in Greek of the constitution of the Roman Empire, the Agrippa-Maecenas debate is Dio’s response to Polybius’ excursus in book 6 of his *History* on the constitution of the Roman Republic, and was possibly inspired by it as well as older debates of a similar nature earlier in the Greek tradition.[[960]](#footnote-960) Marking the end of his massive account of the Republic, it is the cornerstone of his historiographical project and is rightly famous among Roman historians today.[[961]](#footnote-961)

The purpose of what follows is to give both an introduction to, and new reappraisal of, the Agrippa-Maecenas debate according to its main functions. In the past, scholars have sought to explain what central purpose the *controversia* sought to fulfil in Dio’s *Roman History*: what one thing it “does”.[[962]](#footnote-962) This is a mistake, for its scope is as vast as the historian’s intentions in drafting it were varied. First, the speeches evidently serve as a response to the political instability, and occasional tyrannies, of the Severan Period (193–235 CE). To read the set-piece in this manner is the most traditional approach, but carries with it some critical baggage to be discussed below. Secondly, the debate articulates the historian’s own analysis of the fundamental weakness of Republican government, both on practical grounds and in relation to his political theory and philosophy. To place it at this point in the text, just after the Battle of Actium, makes historiographical sense: it concludes Dio’s history of the Republic with a summary of his interpretation for its collapse. This important aspect of the composition had been largely ignored until relatively recently.[[963]](#footnote-963) Thirdly, Agrippa and (especially) Maecenas set out the historian’s own explanation of the reasons for Augustus’ success and the stability of his regime: in other words, what course of action he must take in order to escape the bloody fate of Caesar and all the other would-be autocrats of the Late Republic. In short, the debate of book 52 condenses Cassius Dio’s entire theoretical framework for the collapse of the Republic, the emergence of monarchical rule, and the means by which that rule may be made durable. Its scope is prodigious—and rightly so, for the largest and most ambitious history of Rome since Livy.[[964]](#footnote-964)

# *2. Cassius Dio’s Contemporary World*

It has long been recognized that much of the content of Maecenas’ speech addresses the Severan period—reflecting on its challenges (fiscal, political, and military), positing solutions to those challenges, and appealing for continuity with the imperial regime established in part by Augustus. This is a trend which began even in the nineteenth century with Paul Meyer’s 1891 dissertation. Meyer viewed the composition as a political pamphlet written in order to indirectly criticize the last Severan emperor, Alexander (222–235 CE), as a weak ruler who relied too much on the Senate: Dio thus emerges as an ‘anti-senatorial’ writer in favor of a largely symbolic role for that body. This interpretation is no longer fashionable and for the past half century has rarely been cited but to reject it.[[965]](#footnote-965) However, Meyer’s achievement lies in establishing the basic questions about the role of the text—as a political pamphlet addressed to a particular emperor, and an expression of the historian’s suggestions for sound government—which have continued to inform modern readings, even in the twenty-first century.[[966]](#footnote-966) We may still ask:

Is this sort of discussion historical? What is its compositional role in the general structure of the *Roman History*? Which emperor of the Severan dynasty could be its addressee? Within those speeches, what is the relation between generalities, rhetorical and ideological clichés and Dio’s own political views? How real or utopian are the suggestions formulated by him?[[967]](#footnote-967)

Broadly, we can divide Maecenas’ oration into five parts. First, the *proemium* or introduction (52.14–18) explains the difference between enlightened kingship on the one hand and tyranny on the other, and summarizes the reasons for Rome’s civil wars and the imperative for Octavian to save the state. Secondly, Maecenas turns to the rights and responsibilities of the aristocracy, including senators, equestrians, and provincial governors (52.19–26): here he suggests how to ensure the loyalty of the provinces and their governors. Thirdly, financial matters are discussed, including the administration and payment of the army, reforms to systems of taxation and the imperial estate, and the proper privileges of the cities within the empire (52.27–30). Section four (52.31–34) gives guidance on how to show mercy (*clementia*) toward the aristocracy and how to maintain the illusion of respect proper from one citizen to another (*civilitas*). The fifth and final section deals with more moral concerns, including the emperor’s conduct toward his subordinates and guidance on how to cloak the real fact of his monarchy behind a civilian guise by declining ostentatious honors, statues, deification and so forth (52.35–40).

Clearly such a comprehensive programme of reform was never intended as a purely “literary” or “rhetorical” schoolroom exercise, although such readings of the text have been attempted.[[968]](#footnote-968) Rather, the most common approach to the speech, described as such by Fergus Millar in his classic 1964 *Study of Cassius Dio* and followed widely since, is to treat it as “a serious, coherent, and fairly comprehensive plan for coping with what Dio conceived to be the evils of his time”.[[969]](#footnote-969) This is especially the case from chapter 19 onwards. Some of the content from this point onward is hortatory: it promotes to the contemporary reader—perhaps even to the current emperor himself—a vision of what the empire *should* be (and, therefore, *was not yet* in the first half of the third century CE). Dio’s suggestions, placed into the mouth of Maecenas, are at their most original when they concern financial and administrative matters. This perhaps should not surprise in view of the historian’s career: if we accept the later and more generally followed dating for the composition of book 52 (under Severus Alexander, c. 223 CE),[[970]](#footnote-970) then Dio had by this time quite wide personal experience of provincial government, including a spell as *curator* (governor fiscal) of Pergamum and Smyrna under Elagabalus.[[971]](#footnote-971)

He proposes, for example, that the emperor sell the property of the state, including *ager publicus* (public land), and use the capital raised to give investment loans. “In this way”, he writes, “the land will be put to productive use under the new owners who cultivate it; they will acquire property and become more prosperous; and the treasury will obtain a permanent source of sufficient revenue” (52.28.3–4: οὕτω γὰρ ἥ τε γῆ ἐνεργὸς ἔσται, δεσπόταις αὐτουργοῖς δοθεῖσα, καὶ ἐκεῖνοι ἀφορμὴν λαβόντες εὐπορώτεροι γενήσονται, τό τε δημόσιον διαρκῆ καὶ ἀθάνατον πρόσοδον ἕξει). Here Dio departs radically from contemporary practice; if anything the imperial estate grew rather than shrank in the years following Augustus’ accession to the throne, as Hammond (1932, 96) notes in his classic article on Maecenas’ speech. His vision for taxation is similarly innovative, even progressive: all property should be valued and taxed at an equal proportional rate across the empire, without exemptions. Payment should be made more manageable through smaller instalments rather than a lump sum (52.28.6–8). Dio was far ahead of his time in suggesting so equitable a reform of the taxation system: Augustus was greeted with howls when he suggested something similar (56.28.4), and the exemption of land in Italy from taxation was not lifted until Diocletian’s time in the late third century.[[972]](#footnote-972) Provincial matters also lead Maecenas to argue for the abolition of all systems of local weights, measurements, and coinage—still common in the Greek East—and to restrict the zealous competition between these cities for prestige by curtailing their games and magnificent building works (52.30.3–9). As the speeches of Dio of Prusa attest, such competition for status among the cities of the Greek East in particular could be genuinely divisive. Maecenas additionally recommends clearly separating the public treasury (*aerarium*) from the emperor’s personal funds (*fiscus*) by appointing salaried officials for each, drawn from the equestrian order—a clear step back from contemporary practice.[[973]](#footnote-973) Other important reforms, such as the division of the empire and Italy itself, by race even (κατά τε γένη καὶ ἔθνη), into smaller territorial units with a more uniform system of administration, reflect developments not yet fully realized in Dio’s time.[[974]](#footnote-974) Evidently, the historian used his speech of Maecenas in book 52 to set out concrete proposals for change in the administration of Severan Rome.

However, the greater part of Maecenas’ programme cites reforms that Augustus or subsequent emperors did in fact implement in some form prior to the historian’s lifetime. It is therefore very difficult to see it simply as a propaganda pamphlet polemicizing against Severan policies. If that were Dio’s intention, then necessarily his Maecenas would argue mainly for progress not already begun. He recommends, for example, that Augustus revise the membership of the Senate, inviting the “best men” from the provinces (52.19.1–3). As a Greek-speaking intellectual from a distinguished family in Nicaea (İznik, north-western Turkey) who, like his father, rose to the ranks of the Senate and the consulship,[[975]](#footnote-975) Dio here not only *commends* the actual practices of his own day, but perhaps also alludes to the revisions of the Senate membership (*lectiones*) conducted by Augustus himself.[[976]](#footnote-976) In a similar vein his speaker argues that citizenship should be given to all free inhabitants of the empire (52.19.6). This is universally recognized as referring to the Edict of Antoninus (*constitutio Antoniniana*)issued by Caracalla in 212 CE. Dio in fact criticizes Caracalla’s motives for issuing this edict at a later point in his work—he attributed it to the emperor’s desire for increased tax revenues to squander[[977]](#footnote-977)—but this is not a criticism of the measure *per se*, merely Caracalla.

So much for the provincials. As for those deputed to govern them, Maecenas’ (read: Dio’s) programme again clearly reflects many existing practices of the imperial period. He proposes a minimum age-requirement of twenty-five for any man to become a senator and thirty for the praetorship; this mirrors Augustan practice and is remarkably similar to what was probably Dio’s own career trajectory.[[978]](#footnote-978) The candidates for these posts, Maecenas continues, should be selected by the emperor himself and the scope of free elections should be restricted (52.20.3); Dio’s contemporary readers would have recognised this also. To guard against corruption, Maecenas suggests that public officials be awarded a salary, and serve in provincial government at least three years to gain experience. These changes had again become regular by the Severan period.[[979]](#footnote-979) Though not fully a province in the sense of other territories of the Roman empire, Italy too in Maecenas’ programme should have two praetorian prefects drawn from the equestrian class to share responsibility over the troops stationed there, both the Praetorian Guard and other forces; by the time this speech was written, this had been a regular practice for almost two hundred years.[[980]](#footnote-980)

Numerous other aspects of Maecenas’ oration on the government of the ideal monarchy depict the Principate as it had long been already. This is especially the case with his recommendations for the relationship between the emperor and the aristocracy. The emperor should extend his patronage to the aristocratic youth, the *iuventus*, funding public education in academic as well as martial pursuits.[[981]](#footnote-981) Legislation should be enacted not through the popular assemblies, but through Senate decrees at the emperor’s instruction.[[982]](#footnote-982) Appeals should go to the provincial governor, and embassies to the Senate.[[983]](#footnote-983) When a member of that body is accused of misconduct or a crime, he should enjoy the right to be tried by his peers.[[984]](#footnote-984) Finally—and perhaps most importantly of all, as we shall later see—Maecenas recommends that the emperor take scrupulous care over the outward manifestation of his power, especially before the aristocracy. He should decline all exceptional and magnificent honors, and refuse statues wrought in precious metals and temples erected in his name; these give only the illusion of power, and make the *princeps* appear more like a despot, envied and hated, than a mild and respectful citizen.[[985]](#footnote-985) And a citizen indeed: in closing, Maecenas notes that if the emperor needs an official title, he may be styled *imperator* or *Caesar*—that is, civilian titles—and never “king” (52.40).

All of the above recommendations are recognizable aspects of the Principate. Some are detailed and technical, minute even, and provide a summary of reforms adopted by Augustus or his successors which were still in use in Dio’s time.[[986]](#footnote-986) Others encapsulate by-then established aristocratic attitudes toward imperial rule, emphasizing the importance of *civilitas*: the belief that the emperor ought to behave humbly toward the Senate, affording them the respect they were due.[[987]](#footnote-987) The speech of Maecenas therefore cannot be simply a propaganda piece, calling for change in the Severan period. A better way of looking at it, perhaps, is as an overview of the *development* of imperial rule.[[988]](#footnote-988) Situated at this transitional point between Republic and Empire in his *Roman History*, Dio took this opportunity to survey for the benefit of his reader those wide-reaching changes that would arise in the two hundred years between Augustus’ accession to the throne and his own entry into public life as a senator in the early 180s CE. Many were instituted by Augustus himself and were observed to varying degrees throughout the Principate; other reforms would be left to his successors.

Dio does, however, use his Maecenas to labor one especially important point, already mentioned here: the personal conduct of the emperor, including his moral character and his respectful treatment of the senatorial aristocracy. We have already seen the importance of *civilitas* above: it was embedded in the ideology of the Principate. On this particular issue our historian certainly was reacting, urgently and sometimes polemically, against the developments of his day. When reading the so-called “contemporary history” or *Zeitgeschichte*—books 73[72]–80[80]—it is impossible to escape the conclusion that the historian was deeply concerned about the character of imperial rule under the Severans.[[989]](#footnote-989) In a famous and often-cited passage, he notes that with the death of Marcus Aurelius, Rome degenerated from an age of gold to an empire of iron and rust (72[71].36.4 [Xiph.]). Maecenas’ part in the debate of book 52 thus gave Dio an opportunity to reflect, right at the beginning of his imperial narrative, on the qualities he considered desirable in the ideal emperor. There can be no doubt that he believed that the emperors of his lifetime—Commodus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, the short-lived pretenders of 193 and 217 CE, Elagabalus, and Severus Alexander—failed to live up to these standards. This is certainly the strongest argument for supporting the speculation offered by Millar (1964, 104)—and speculation it is—that Dio may have personally declaimed the speech he wrote for Maecenas at the imperial court, perhaps before the emperor himself.

Setting out his paradigm for the ideal ruler in this way enabled Dio to engage with, and contribute to, the rich tradition of “kingship literature”.[[990]](#footnote-990) The roots of this tradition were ancient: in the Greek world we think of Greek texts such as Xenophon’s *The Education of Cyrus*, or the advice offered to King Croesus of Lydia by the Athenian sage, Solon, in book 1 of Herodotus’ *Histories*. With the return of monarchical rule to Rome after a hiatus of half a millennium—and when that process of cultural absorption and adaptation of Greek ideas known as Hellenization had reached its zenith—this genre acquired renewed vigour in the Roman tradition not only as a literary exercise, but also as a means of guiding the emperor and exhorting him toward the just or generous course of action. Flattery, too, was a welcome corollary of such an exercise.

Dio’s oration of Maecenas in book 52 is evidently his attempt to show his awareness of this tradition and it has long been known that many of its arguments draw from commonplaces in contemporary political thought. One function of Maecenas is thus a *speculum principis*, holding a “mirror” to the emperor’s conduct. Whether it is Commodus, Caracalla, or Severus Alexander being addressed here is not the point. The speech surveys commonly-recognized criteria for the “good emperor” and invites the reader (or listener, if the speech was indeed declaimed) to evaluate his emperor in relation to those criteria. Some are mentioned not only here, but even recur quite explicitly later in the *Roman History*.

First, Maecenas recommends that Augustus should never permit statues of himself in gold and silver to be erected; these are wasteful and ephemeral (52.35.3–5). The basic idea can be found in Pliny’s *Panegyric* for Trajan orPlutarch’s *Moral Essays*, but in Dio’s work the idea frequently returns, and he invites us in each case to reflect on the ideal emperor.[[991]](#footnote-991) He lists the prodigious honors awarded to Commodus, including a gold statue weighing a thousand pounds (73[72].15 [Xiph.]). Fittingly, he was strangled in the bath by an athlete. Dio notes with ironic glee that, being unable to tear Commodus’ corpse limb from limb, people at least did so with his statues (74[73].2.1 [Xiph.]). Those that remained were melted down and the materials sold by his short-lived successor Pertinax (74[73].5.4–5 [Xiph.]). When Pertinax—of whom Dio generally approved—was assassinated only a few months later, Didius Julianus bought the loyalty of the Praetorian Guard for a short time and rose to the throne in his place. Dio thought him a tyrant and a usurper who commanded little respect in the Senate, and he records almost poetically the fate of his statues, too (74[73].14.2a [*Exc. Vat*.]):

ψηφισαμένης δὲ τῆς βουλῆς χρυσοῦν ἀνδριάντα αὐτοῦ οὐ προσεδέξατο, εἰπὼν ὅτι ‘χαλκοῦν μοι δότε, ἵνα καὶ μείνῃ· καὶ γὰρ τῶν πρὸ ἐμοῦ αὐτοκρατόρων τοὺς μὲν χρυσοῦς καὶ ἀργυροῦς ὁρῶ καθαιρεθέντας, τοὺς δὲ χαλκοῦς μένοντας,’ οὐκ ὀρθῶς τοῦτο εἰπών· ἀρετὴ γὰρ ἡ διαφυλάττουσα τὴν μνήμην τῶν κρατούντων· ὁ γὰρ δοθεὶς αὐτῷ χαλκοῦς ἀναιρεθέντος αὐτοῦ καθῃρέθη.

When the Senate voted to him a statue wrought in gold, he did not accept it, saying instead: “give me a bronze statue so that it may last; for it seems to me that all the gold and silver statues of previous emperors have been torn down, whereas the bronze ones remain”. In saying this he was wrong, for it is *virtue* that preserves the memory of rulers. Besides, the bronze statue we granted to him was toppled along with him.

This is Dio at his most catty, and the reader has seen this idea before. In book 52, Maecenas advises Augustus that immortality is obtained not by a vote, but by virtue alone: if he rules just and honorably then that will be enough, “and the whole earth will be your sacred precinct, all cities your temples, *and all men your statues*, since you will forever be enshrined and glorified within their thoughts”.[[992]](#footnote-992) He labors the point because he wishes us to remember Maecenas’ advice, and to apply it to the emperors of his own time. Statues and other vainglorious honors make the emperor no more competent or deserving; those distinctions are achieved by humility and virtue alone.

Statues of precious metal remain a shorthand or *topos* for incompetent and tyrannical figures, always ending in their destruction. Septimius Severus’ cousin and prefect of the Praetorian Guard, Plautianus, is said to have had more and larger statues than the royal family (76[75].14.6–7 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]); when Severus gave the order that many of the more excessive ones in the city be destroyed, many assumed that Plautianus had fallen from favor and began tearing them down elsewhere (76[75].16.2 [Xiph.]). Severus had him executed in 205 CE, and Dio notes again, with poetic irony, that the remainder of his statues were destroyed (76[75].16.4 [Xiph.]). As for the emperor’s son and heir Caracalla, he nurtured such a hatred for his brother Geta that after having him killed, he vented his anger by pelting stones even at the empty bases where his statues once stood (78[77].12.6 [*Exc. Val.*]); when Caracalla himself was assassinated in 217 CE, Dio records that the people melted down his gold and silver statues with fervent rejoicing (79[78].18.1). Maecenas’ guidance to Augustus on the impermanence of grand monuments is a central aspect of Dio’s political philosophy and key to his conception of the ideal emperor.

Secondly, the same principle applies to prodigious and extraordinary honors in general, which Maecenas advises Augustus to decline. The good emperor should allow no exceptional distinction to be given to him; for since he is already supremely powerful, nothing can be awarded him greater than what he possesses already, and in fact his position is *weakened* by such flatteries (52.35.1–2). The idea again tallies with similar arguments in Plutarch and Pliny, but it is a mistake to treat Maecenas’ words simply as “copying”.[[993]](#footnote-993) The need for the monarch to demonstrate his *civilitas* was in Dio’s view of profound importance for the stability of imperial rule. By book 52, the reader has already seen the catastrophic results that may issue from a monarch who forgets these prescriptions and gets carried away by flattery. It is Dio’s basic explanation for the murder of Julius Caesar: the Senate voted him ever-more ostentatious honors, including a golden throne set with jewels and the right to wear purple, because they wished to make him envied and hated as a tyrant and so justify his murder (44.3–8). On the Ides of March they got their wish.

Later emperors who fail to follow Maecenas’ (that is, Dio’s) advice usually obtain a similar fate. Commodus assumed extraordinary titles: “conqueror of the earth”, “Roman Hercules”, and so forth (73[72].15.2–6 [Xiph.]). When fighting in the arena, he would command the senators looking on at the spectacle—Dio included—to call out praise, lauding him as master of the earth, most blessed and triumphant of all men (73[72].20 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). Later, Caracalla demanded golden crowns from the cities of the empire, and vainglorious building projects: fine houses and lodgings for him to rest even on short journeys, paid for entirely at the expense of the aristocracy (78[77].9.4 [*Exc. Val.*]). As for Macrinus, he assumed all the official powers and honorific titles of a Roman emperor “without waiting for any vote on our part, as would have been fitting” (79[78].16.2: οὐκ ἀναμένων τι, ὡς εἰκὸς ἦν, παρ᾽ ἡμῶν ψήφισμα). In this context, it is easy to see Maecenas’ appeal for the new emperor Augustus to be humble, rejecting ostentation and vain honors, as the historian’s genuine polemic against the trends of his day, and an appeal to pay the senatorial aristocracy the respect he deemed them due.

Third and finally, the theme of mercy is of obvious importance. As a Roman senator who lived in an age of civil wars and repeated usurpers and pretenders, Dio had a vested interest in the emperor’s treatment of those unfortunate enough to find themselves on the wrong side. As Carsten Lange has recently written, we must not underestimate the horror of civil war and its centrality to Dio’s history.[[994]](#footnote-994) Dio tells us himself that he had reason to be concerned for his safety when Didius Julianus briefly usurped the throne (74[73].12.2–5 [Xiph.]). His *Roman History* expands widely on the theme of imperial clemency, often through speeches: the longest is the dialogue between Augustus and his wife Livia in book 55, where she advises him to show mercy to a conspirator against his life.[[995]](#footnote-995) At a later point in the contemporary history Dio also inserts a short speech given by the aptly-named Cassius Clemens, encouraging the new emperor Septimius Severus to give his clemency (*clementia*) to members of the elite who had no choice but to side with his enemies (75[74].9 [Xiph.]). The former is almost certainly the historian’s invention, but he may have been present to hear the latter.[[996]](#footnote-996)

Understandably therefore, Dio reserves a substantial portion of his speech of Maecenas to the importance of mercy, calm, forgiveness, and kindness in an emperor (52.31.5–34.11). His advice on this point is wide-ranging. If one is accused of plotting against the regime, the emperor should refrain from prejudging the charge or giving judgment himself. The accused should make his defense in the Senate, and if found guilty the emperor should moderate the sentence as far as possible and safe.[[997]](#footnote-997) When advising the monarch, senators should feel no reason to fear speaking their minds openly (52.33.6–7). The good emperor acts on genuine cases reported to him in the public interest, but ignores speculation or scurrilous rumors about the private lives of his subjects. In any case, there is no need to punish every wrong-doing: the emperor should apply the law judiciously, for it cannot conquer human nature (52.34.4–7). In short, “you can best induce men to shun their wicked ways by being kind, and to desire better ways by being generous” (52.34.9: οὕτω γὰρ ἂν μάλιστα ποιήσειας αὐτοὺς τῶν τε χειρόνων ἀπέχεσθαι, τῇ φιλανθρωπίᾳ, καὶ τῶν βελτιόνων ἐφίεσθαι, τῇ μεγαλοδωρίᾳ).

Dio was not naïve: the rationale Maecenas gives for the system outlined above is pragmatic rather than utopian. Yet in any case, it would be an understatement to say that the reigns of the Severan emperors described by him do not approach even this standard in books 73[72]–80[80] of the *Roman History*. Septimius Severus decreed that no senator would be put to death under his reign, only to execute the very senator who assisted him in drawing up that decree, and many others besides (75[74].2.1–2 [Xiph.]). The list of those executed by Commodus in the text, including ex-consuls and women, would be tedious to number over 73[72].4–5 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]: they included the two Quintilii brothers, distinguished members of the Senate whose fine villa still stands outside Rome today and was confiscated by the emperor. The version of Caracalla’s reign presented in the *Roman History* is similarly brutal; the list of those executed was apparently so long that the Byzantine scholar who copied Dio’s text for us apologizes for leaving it out (78[77].6.1 [*Exc. Val.*]). Short-lived usurpers such as Didius Julianus similarly hunted down those who had opposed their rise to power or supported the previous regime (74[73].16.5 [Xiph.]), and our historian records that Septimius Severus did the same (75[74].1.1 [Xiph.]). Only the first of Commodus’ temporary successors, Pertinax, stands out as a merciful figure. Dio writes that the Praetorian Guard were on the verge of deposing him and electing the consul Quintus Pompeius Sosius Falco in his place, but Pertinax refused to have Falco executed. He even went so far as to proclaim “heaven forbid that any senator should be put to death while I am ruler, even for just cause” (74[73].8.5 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]: “μὴ γένοιτο… μηδένα βουλευτὴν ἐμοῦ ἄρχοντος μηδὲ δικαίως θανατωθῆναι”). Just as Dio’s Maecenas predicts, Falco retired to the country, mollified by mercy, and caused no further trouble.

Maecenas’ speech in book 52 thus presented the historian with an ideal opportunity to set out his vision of the ideal emperor, and it establishes the benchmark against which he will judge all monarchs from Augustus onward. To Dio, the successful emperor must shun ostentation and avoid conspicuous and near-divine honors. Comporting himself as if he were a member of the aristocracy, he must treat the Senate with all due respect. He must also realize both the moral and strategic value of mercy: this was the best way to heal the wounds of civil war and so protect the emperor, too. In short, he must be the *civilis princeps*, the citizen-king. In these respects, the historian evidently did intend to use his Maecenas as a means of responding to the ills of his time: it is almost a manifesto for the ideal emperor he felt Rome needed, a Marcus Aurelius or a Pertinax. It is less a programmeof *reform* as such, since most of Maecenas’ detailed recommendations for the administration of the empire were in fact implemented by Augustus or his successors; yet in view of the crises and instability of the Severan period, it certainly appeals for continuity with that regime. Scholars are therefore right to emphasize the importance of the Severan age as a “target” for the Agrippa-Maecenas dialogue; Dio certainly had a polemic against his own time in mind. However, that was not its *sole* function; and to understand this we must consider two further points.

The first is the role played by Agrippa in the debate; to this point we have discussed only Maecenas. Agrippa has little to say to Dio’s contemporary reader: unlike his counterpart, he is necessarily silent on how the empire (and therefore Dio’s contemporary world) should be managed, and he restricts his comments to the virtues of Republicanism as compared with the vices of tyranny. But this by no means suggests that Agrippa’s speech served no purpose, and this raises our second question: Dio’s rationale for including the debate at this specific point in his *Roman History.* It has been a common scholarly habit to read the Agrippa-Maecenas debate as a standalone composition, that is as a political pamphlet for the Severan age. Yet if this were truly the historian’s intention, there would be no need to include Agrippa at all, nor to incorporate this material into his historical *narrative* of the decline of the Republic. Let us now fit these pieces together, and read the Agrippa-Maecenas debate as part of Dio’s story-arc.

# *3. Between Republic and Principate*

Agrippa’s speech is noticeably shorter than that of Maecenas. As with Maecenas’, it is possible to divide his oration into some relatively straightforward sections. He compares “democracy” with “tyranny” through a set of political criteria: the role of civic virtue in such systems (52.2–5); the use and procurement of state finances (52.6); how justice is administered (52.7); how competition operates among their respective aristocracies (52.8–9); the effects of real power upon the individual in both systems (52.10); the distribution of favors and honors (52.11–12); and finally, a list of examples from Republican Roman history of great statesmen who conceived a desire for monarchical rule and fell from grace as a result (52.13). Agrippa’s *peroratio* (conclusion) has not survived as there is a missing folio in our manuscript. But by chapter 13, he is clearly winding up, and his arguments will not have proceeded much further.

At first glance its purpose is very simple: it seeks to persuade the young Octavian, recently victorious at the Battle of Actium, to lay down the wide-ranging powers he has hitherto enjoyed as a *triumvir*. Unlike Maecenas’ response to follow, however, Agrippa’s main argument is achieved not through detailed and specific suggestions, but rather through a generalizing comparison of the virtues of “democracy” or δημοκρατία—the word used by Dio and other Greek historians to describe the Roman Republic—with the vices of “tyranny” (τυραννίς), that is, monarchy in its degenerate or corrupted form.[[998]](#footnote-998)

This immediately should give us pause: Agrippa is not comparing like with like. In ancient Greek political thought, there existed three basic forms of government: rule by the people, rule by the elite, and rule by a single monarch. As famously explored by Polybius in book 6 of his *Histories* (as well as by Aristotle previously), for each form of government there was a positive and negative nuance.[[999]](#footnote-999) Rule by the elite, for example, may in its best form be described as an “aristocracy”, or rule by the “best men” (ἄριστοι); but excessive corruption or abuse of power may degrade the system into an oligarchy. Similarly, democracy has a positive connotation, but its negative opposite—ochlocracy or “rule by the mob”—denotes a crazed mass whose worst instincts are pandered to by demagogues. Rule by a single individual, on the other hand, may be described as monarchy or even better “kingship” (βασιλεία) where the monarch exercises his power fairly; but rule by a cruel usurper is not kingship but rather tyranny (τυραννίς).[[1000]](#footnote-1000) Dio’s educated readers would have noticed immediately the logical fallacy of Agrippa’s argument: he compares rule by the people in its positive form, democracy, with monarchy in its worst form, tyranny.

The reason for this fallacy is simple, and it is deliberate on Dio’s part. As a Republican statesman,[[1001]](#footnote-1001) Agrippa cannot conceive of monarchy in anything *but* a negative form. Dio’s other staunch Republican politicians, such as Catulus in his speech of book 36 and Cicero in book 44, could never describe monarchy in positive terms: it is always a tyranny. In describing monarchy in a similarly categorical way, Agrippa displays Dio’s awareness of the political attitudes of the Republican aristocracy. In Latin, “monarchy” (*regnum*) and “king” (*rex)* were rarely positive terms, and usually had a pejorative application.[[1002]](#footnote-1002) Monarchy was anathema to the proud Republican statesman. Dio has his Agrippa speak in an entirely appropriate manner for the speaker and the context. Unlike Maecenas, he cannot imagine or describe sole rule in anything but tyrannical terms. Maecenas, too, is aware of this tension—hence his recommendation that Octavian rule not as “king” or “dictator”, but as “Caesar” and “imperator” (52.40).

Yet this also sets up an implicit hurdle for Octavian to surmount in the aftermath of Actium, and this hurdle is of genuine historical importance. A monarch at Rome, Agrippa shows us, could never be considered anything but a tyrant. Agrippa states this problem at the beginning of his speech: should Octavian choose monarchy, then people will think that he has been aiming at it all the while. The result, he predicts, will be a repetition of past events: disgrace (Sulla) or even death (Marius, Pompeius, Caesar).[[1003]](#footnote-1003) Were the point not sufficiently clear, these *exempla* return at the end of his speech. “You remember”, Agrippa whispers paraliptically, “how people proceeded against your father just because they became suspicious that he wished to make himself sole ruler” (52.13.4: μέμνησαι δὲ ὅπως τῷ πατρί σου προσηνέχθησαν, ὅτι τινὰ ὑποψίαν ἐς αὐτὸν μοναρχίας ἔσχον). Agrippa thus raises a fundamental historical question for Dio’s narrative. How could Octavian make himself a monarch without suffering the same fate as those before him? Was it possible to rule Rome justly and without a tyrannical reputation?

As well as explaining the risk to Octavian’s reputation, Dio additionally uses his Agrippa to summarize more practical and immediate dangers that may arise should he choose to make himself monarch. Most important is the threat posed to Octavian’s regime by ambitious provincial commanders eager to supplant him. Agrippa summarizes the likely difficulties Octavian’s monarchy will face as follows (52.8.4):

νῦν δὲ πᾶσά σε ἀνάγκη συναγωνιστὰς πολλούς, ἅτε τοσαύτης οἰκουμένης ἄρχοντα, ἔχειν, καὶ προσήκει που πάντας αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀνδρείους καὶ φρονίμους εἶναι. οὐκοῦν ἂν μὲν τοιούτοις τισὶ τά τε στρατεύματα καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς ἐγχειρίζῃς, κίνδυνος ἔσται καὶ σοὶ καὶ τῇ πολιτείᾳ καταλυθῆναι.

It will be absolutely necessary for you to have many assistants in governing so vast an inhabited world, and I suspect that all of them will need to be of a brave and noble disposition. But if you entrust both legions and provinces to men such as these, you and your government will be in danger of being overthrown.

The reader of Dio’s narrative to this point cannot doubt the reality of this risk. By book 52, we have seen countless examples of generals and governors out on the periphery, challenging the central authority with military force: Octavian himself of course, whose power began more or less with a private army raised at his own expense; Marius, who catapulted himself to extraordinary power after his wars against the Cimbri; Sulla, who marched on Rome itself at the head of an army of loyal veterans; and naturally Caesar, who followed Sulla’s example.

Thus, at this critical point of transition in Dio’s narrative of the decline of the Republic and the emergence of the Principate, Agrippa serves to articulate some key historical problems that Octavian would—did—have to address in solidifying his nascent rule, including the risk to his reputation as a tyrant and the danger of other usurpers seeking to follow his example. It is important to note that this is the first point in the *Roman History* at which the historian raises these important questions, and it is a fictitious speech, not the narrative, which takes on the explanatory burden. In the recent words of Valérie Fromentin, speeches are often the key to Dio’s interpretation of historical events,[[1004]](#footnote-1004) and recent years have witnessed a growth in scholarly attention to Dio’s use of speeches as a means of explaining his major interpretative premises and themes.[[1005]](#footnote-1005)

However, the attentive reader will have noticed already another obvious logical flaw in Agrippa’s argument, and this again is deliberate on the historian’s part. His arguments against monarchy focus on the potential risk of ambitious provincial commanders challenging the central government, and on Octavian’s reputation as a usurper or tyrant. These were real challenges to his position indeed; but they were not new. Agrippa describes these dangers as particular to monarchy, but the reader has seen these faults many times already in Dio’s history of the Republic. There had, indeed, been many tyrants and usurpers already under the so-called Republic of the first century BCE.[[1006]](#footnote-1006) Agrippa’s peculiar praise of “democracy” thus draws the reader into a personal reflection on the nature of Republican government as we have seen it in the preceding narrative. We refute the case he makes in favor of the *res publica*, point-by-point in real time, and we construct that refutation ourselves on the basis of what we have read already. The purpose of this exercise—which demonstrates the great extent of Dio’s compositional art—is to guide the reader to the conclusion that the Republican constitution could not be rescued. It was untenable, and only a monarchy established according to the principles outlined by Maecenas could save Rome from itself.

This is in fact a common tactic in Dio’s speech of Agrippa: his praise of the Republic is refuted *in advance* through the unfolding of Dio’s Republican narrative. He claims, for example, that under a δημοκρατία all men are satisfied with the honors conferred upon them, and readily accept the punishments for their crimes. As so often in the *Roman History*, Dio’s speaker bases this argument upon human nature: all men in a δημοκρατία consent to be ruled by others because they seek to rule themselves, and because they dislike being surpassed by the successes of others, so they do not seek to outdo their peers with their achievements (52.4.5). Here Agrippa describes democracy in risibly utopian terms (52.4.6–8):

κἂν οὕτω πολιτεύωνται, κοινὰ μὲν τὰ ἀγαθὰ κοινὰ δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐναντία νομίζοντες εἶναι, οὔτε τι κακὸν οὐδενὶ τῶν πολιτῶν γίγνεσθαι βούλονται, καὶ πάντα τὰ κρείττω πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς συνεύχονται. καὶ ἄν τε τις αὐτὸς ἀρετήν τινα ἔχῃ, καὶ προφαίνει αὐτὴν προχείρως καὶ ἀσκεῖ προθύμως καὶ ἐπιδείκνυσιν ἀσμενέστατα, ἄν τε καὶ ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἴδῃ, καὶ προάγει ἑτοίμως καὶ συναύξει σπουδαίως καὶ τιμᾷ λαμπρότατα. καὶ μέντοι κἂν κακύνηταί τις, πᾶς αὐτὸν μισεῖ, κἂν δυστυχῇ, πᾶς ἐλεεῖ, κοινὴν τῆς πόλεως καὶ τὴν ζημίαν καὶ τὴν αἰσχύνην τὴν ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν εἶναι νομίζων.

If they live under this kind of government and consider good fortunes and their opposite as belonging to all alike, then they do not wish any harm to come to any of the citizens, but rather pray that everything good may come to all people. And if one of the citizens shows particular virtue, then he readily shows it, practices it enthusiastically, and exhibits it most joyfully; and if he sees that virtue in someone else, then he readily advertises it, eagerly tries to increase it, and confers brilliant honours upon it. On the other hand, if one of the citizens shows himself to be wicked, then everyone hates him, and if unfortunate, then everyone pities him. Each citizen considers the punishment and disgrace that issue from these faults as shared by the whole state.

Agrippa rounds off the thought by comparing this with tyrannies. Under tyrannies, he claims, the situation is precisely the opposite. The aristocracy vie jealously for status and prestige, and in their fierce competition they seek to overreach one another with the minimum personal risk. They are so selfish that they regard the successes of others as their own loss, and their failures as their own gain (52.5.1–2).

Any student familiar with Dio’s narrative will know that the democratic nirvana described by Agrippa has nothing to do with the Late Republic. Conversely, his description of the selfish wickedness of the aristocracy under a “tyranny” matches Dio’s presentation of Late Republican politics very closely. He claims that under a δημοκρατία, aristocrats do not seek to surpass their peers; what then do we make of Pompeius and Caesar, “the former wishing to be second to no man, and the latter to be first of all”?[[1007]](#footnote-1007) A recurring feature of Dio’s Republican books is the inability of almost all politicians to be satisfied with their lot, and the historian explains their fall in consequence of their selfish desire ever to acquire more.[[1008]](#footnote-1008) Thus it can hardly be said that all citizens in a δημοκρατία are modest and satisfied with the honors already conferred upon them! Furthermore, Agrippa presents democracy as a virtuous form of government in which the good are proudly promoted and the wicked have little influence. The historian’s actual presentation of the Late Republic is precisely the opposite. Consider, for example, the futility of Catulus’ and Cato’s efforts to defend the *res publica* from the ambitions of Gabinius, Clodius, Caesar, Pompeius, and all the rest.[[1009]](#footnote-1009) The “tyranny” described by Agrippa is in fact the Late Republic.

There are many more examples of this technique. Throughout Agrippa’s praise of δημοκρατία, Dio consciously and deliberately made his speaker present the Republic in terms his reader would know to be untrue, and ironically describe as faults of monarchy those vices which are in fact pervasive in the Late Republican portions of the *Roman History*. He states that for Octavian to make himself a monarch would be an act of subjection, reducing the Roman people and their allies and subject nations to slavery (52.5.4). But enslavement is in fact the metaphor Dio uses to describe Roman imperialism in the Late Republic, and occasionally the powers of the great Republican dynasts (such as Octavian himself).[[1010]](#footnote-1010) Similarly, Agrippa describes aristocratic competition in a δημοκρατία in terms that will, by now, appear absurd to Dio’s reader. In a democracy—so he claims—the more wealthy, powerful, and brave men there are, the more eagerly they vie with one another to be foremost in serving the state (52.9.1). Nothing could be further from the reality of Dio’s Republican narrative, where aristocratic competition repeatedly escalates into bribery and violence. Indeed, a recent analysis has even suggested that in Cassius Dio’s interpretation, excessive aristocratic competition was perhaps the most important driver of instability in the Late Republic and the main cause of its collapse.[[1011]](#footnote-1011) We might also consider Agrippa’s comparison of finance and taxation in “democracies” and “tyrannies” in the same way. He notes—again unrealistically—that in a δημοκρατία many make generous contributions to the treasury of their own free will, all eagerly vying with one another to be the most patriotic; in monarchies, on the other hand, individuals are selfish and jealously guard their existing wealth (52.6). No reader of the *Roman History* to this point could believe such fantasy; Dio’s history of the Late Republic is littered with examples of acquisitiveness and corruption, but of conspicuous generosity toward the state there are none.[[1012]](#footnote-1012)

Agrippa thus serves two important purposes for the historian at this point in his narrative of the transition from Republic to Empire. First, he recapitulates the main lines of Dio’s moral and ethical interpretation for the collapse of the Republic. By vaunting the many alleged virtues of δημοκρατία, Agrippa merely reminds the reader of all the vices of the Republic. Secondly, Agrippa’s speech adds a tension which arises from a genuine and inescapable historical problem at this point in the unfurling of events. How, he asks, could Octavian’s rule ever seem anything but a tyranny? Would-be autocrats had arisen before—Marius, Sulla, Pompeius, Caesar—and all were now dead. By what means could Octavian possibly survive where they did not?

The speech of Maecenas to follow provides the answer. By proposing a suite of reforms to combat these historical problems, Maecenas sets out Dio’s interpretation of which remedial measures implemented by Augustus would be the most important and effective, and in short paves the way for Augustus’ success. Agrippa’s oration in defense of the Republic is not therefore a simple “prelude” or preliminary to Maecenas, as was once suggested by scholars,[[1013]](#footnote-1013) but rather stands in dialectic with him, as Adler (2012) has suggested. It also, I would argue, establishes a dialectic with Dio’s *reader*. As we have already seen, some of Maecenas’ suggestions concern relatively detailed and minute administrative or financial reform, and some also survey developments in the government of the empire which would emerge after Augustus’ time. These suggestions obviously relate to the imperial period as a whole, not to the specific historical situation in 31–27 BCE and Octavian’s transformation into Augustus. However, it is entirely mistaken to view all of Maecenas’ programme in this light. His most important recommendations for reform clearly reflect Dio’s own analysis of the main reasons for the stability of Augustus’ fledgling regime in the early 20s BCE.

A brief glance at only a few of these will demonstrate their obvious relevance to the specific political situation after the Battle of Actium. After his introduction Maecenas begins by surveying the pitfalls of Republican government. He exhorts Octavian to found not a tyranny but rather an enlightened monarchy, taking guidance from magistrates and advisors appointed on merit by Octavian himself. Maecenas argues that curtailing this fundamental aspect of the Republican system—elections—will hold in check the worst vices of aristocratic competition: craze for office (σπουδαρχία), envy (φθόνος), ambition (φιλοτιμία), and the civil strife (στάσις) that issues from these.[[1014]](#footnote-1014) He goes on (52.15.5–6):

ταῦτα γὰρ πᾶσα μὲν δημοκρατία ἔχει· οἱ γὰρ δυνατώτεροι, τῶν τε πρωτείων ὀρεγόμενοι καὶ τοὺς ἀσθενεστέρους μισθούμενοι, πάντα ἄνω καὶ κάτω φύρουσι· πλεῖστα δὲ δὴ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν γέγονε, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως ἄλλως παύσεται. τεκμήριον δέ, πάμπολυς ἐξ οὗ χρόνος καὶ πολεμοῦμεν καὶ στασιάζομεν. αἴτιον δὲ τό τε πλῆθος τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τὸ μέγεθος τῶν πραγμάτων· ἐκεῖνοί τε γὰρ παντοδαποὶ καὶ τὰ γένη καὶ τὰς φύσεις ὄντες καὶ ποικίλας καὶ τὰς ὀργὰς καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἔχουσι, καὶ ταῦτα ἐς τοσοῦτον προῆκται ὥστε καὶ πάνυ δυσχερῶς ἂν διοικηθῆναι.

Democracy has all of these vices just named…they have been most frequent in our time, and there is now no other way to stop them. The proof of this? We have been at war, and engaged in civil war, for a long time now. The cause of this? The multitude of our population and the enormity of our affairs. For our people are diverse, and being drawn from many races and cultures they possess a range of temperaments and desires. These considerations have brought us to such a point that we can now administer our empire only with the greatest difficulty.

This is certainly the historian’s own analysis of the historical situation: in his famous digression on the nature of democracies at the opening of book 44, Dio writes that Rome’s outdated Republican system could no longer accommodate itself to the vast size of its empire (44.2.4). The basic point returns later in Maecenas’ speech, and surprisingly is used as justification by Dio’s Caesar in the harangue of his mutinying troops at Vesontio in book 38 (38.41.1–7). Evidently the historian viewed the traditional system for allocating magistracies and provincial commands—through election—as the midwife of competition and civil war, and Rome’s empire too large to be governed securely under a Republic.

Chapters 19 to 23 of Maecenas’ oration set out, in detail, the historian’s interpretation of how Augustus should neutralize those risks. He should revise the Senate roll, excluding members who were unfit and adding new worthy members. “In this way”, Maecenas continues, “you will have many assistants and will keep an eye on the leading men from all the provinces; and the provinces will not rebel, because they will no longer have leaders of distinction”.[[1015]](#footnote-1015) The *princeps* should make all appointments himself, except for the offices of praetor and consul; these may remain filled by election in order to give the appearance of Republican government. This is because entrusting elections to the people will lead to discord and rioting, and entrusting them to the senators will aggrandize their ambitions (52.20.3). Even the offices of consul and praetor should be shorn of the full extent of their traditional power in order to limit their capacity to rebel—in other words, “to stop the same things happening all over again” (52.20.3: ἵνα μὴ τὰ αὐτὰ αὖθις γένηται). Magistrates ought not to command legions during their term of office nor immediately afterward, but only after a sufficient hiatus. “In this way”, Maecenas observes astutely, “they will never be put in command of soldiers while still enjoying the prestige of their titles and thus be led to incite rebellions; and they will be less ambitious after they have spent a time as private citizens”.[[1016]](#footnote-1016) The *cursus honorum* should again be regularized: would-be provincial governors should themselves serve as *legati* for other governors before assuming the praetorship, and should only hold the consulship after that (52.21.8). They should serve in office for no longer than five years, “because longer terms of many years in power tend very often to make officials conceited and encourage them to rebel”.[[1017]](#footnote-1017) Finally, it should also be forbidden for provincial governors and commanders to hold several important posts in succession: they will be milder if they spend time in the city as private citizens before moving on to their next appointment.[[1018]](#footnote-1018)

We have already seen that Augustus or his successors would indeed go on to implement many of these reforms to the provincial administration in the ensuing decades, but that is not quite the point here. What matters most is the historian’s decision to place this list of suggestions at this juncture in the narrative. These points constitute a plan—*Dio’s* plan—for ending the cycle of extraordinary commands, prodigious honors, rebellious governors, and ambitious generals that in his view caused the final crisis and collapse of the Roman Republic. With the Battle of Actium confirming Octavian’s unchallenged position as the leading power in Rome, Dio took this opportunity to pause, to explain how affairs arrived at this point in the first place, and how Octavian in the early 20s BCE could refashion the empire to prevent a repeat performance. Maecenas’ suggestions underline the imperative for the new *princeps* to keep the traditional aristocracy—Senate, magistrates, provincial commanders and governors—weak, and unable to challenge his power. If the new regime is to survive, it must be a military dictatorship, and no one individual should acquire too much power.

Maecenas also poses a solution to the second stumbling-block interposed by Agrippa for Augustus’ nascent rule: the risk to his reputation. How could the young Octavian install himself as monarch without seeming the very image of a tyrant? It must indeed be a military dictatorship, but cloaked beneath a civilian guise. At the very opening of his speech he responds directly to Agrippa’s objection: Octavian should by no means set up a “tyranny” (τυραννίς, 52.15.1). Rather, he should be moderate. The ideal *civilis princeps* must be easy of access, and welcoming of frank and unrestrained advice.[[1019]](#footnote-1019) He should seek the loyalty of his subjects through kindness and generosity rather than compelling them to obey through fear (52.34.6–11). As we have already seen, he must also scrupulously decline excessive and prodigious honors—that arrogance which was one of the main causes of Caesar’s assassination (52.35–36). Maecenas proposes the means by which Octavian may avoid such a course. He must act, dress, and speak in the manner of an ordinary citizen. Even his title must be a civilian one.

These are precisely the steps that Octavian will go on to take in the following book.[[1020]](#footnote-1020) After the Agrippa-Maecenas debate, the historian devotes most of book 53 to narrating the process by which Octavian’s powers were confirmed by the Senate and the most important of the reforms he immediately implemented. Coming before the Senate, Octavian delivers a weighty address, promising to relinquish his powers and demanding that the order permit him to retire to a quiet life as a private citizen. It is all spin, of course: Dio writes that he proclaimed this refusal of power or *recusatio imperii* not because he genuinely wished to restore the Republic, but rather to appear “forced” to accept monarchical powers by a Senate which could not countenance his resignation.[[1021]](#footnote-1021) But the mere act of refusal is in itself an example of Octavian following Maecenas’ (that is, again, Dio’s) advice for solidifying his rule, putting on a show of refusing power and honors and behaving in the manner of an ordinary citizen. Many more examples of this tactic will also follow later, with Augustus self-consciously emphasizing his *civilitas*, his modesty, and his respect for the aristocracy.[[1022]](#footnote-1022) The Senate, of course, were not fooled as to his intentions: but having no power to stop him or little inclination to, they begged him to assume the leadership of the state.[[1023]](#footnote-1023)

At this point the *Roman History* summarizes Augustus’ reforms to the provincial administration. Wishing to appear “Republican” or perhaps “civilian” (δημοτικός), he declared that he would not govern all of the provinces himself. Rather, he made some “senatorial”, their governors chosen at random and by lot from among the qualifying membership of the order, and others “imperial”, that is, under his personal jurisdiction or that of his own hand-picked governors.[[1024]](#footnote-1024) At a stroke he removed the potential for any one individual to use a particularly juicy or well-situated province, such as Gaul, as a springboard for their personal ambitions. But there is more, and here Dio’s analysis is astute and incisive. Augustus justified this reform on the pretext that it would enable the Senate to enjoy the best of the empire without fear—the peaceful provinces—while he himself would take on all the hardship and strain of more heavily militarized provinces. Such generosity! But in fact the actual and intended result of this, Dio writes, was to entrust the Senate only with the weaker provinces (53.12.2–3). True to Maecenas’ advice, Augustus’ reforms to the provincial administration took care to enfeeble the traditional establishment while keeping the emperor personally strong. This is the most important example of Augustus directly following Maecenas’ recommendations, but there are many others that we need not detail here: accepting frank and honest advice and freedom of speech;[[1025]](#footnote-1025) treating conspirators and wrongdoers mercifully;[[1026]](#footnote-1026) declining grand or ostentatious honors, especially statues;[[1027]](#footnote-1027) and ensuring harmonious relationships with his assistants and the aristocracy, curtailing their ambitions wherever possible.[[1028]](#footnote-1028) In the ensuing narrative Dio’s Augustus follows scrupulously all those suggestions of Maecenas we have outlined in the previous section.

The Agrippa-Maecenas debate thus fulfils an important purpose not only in advocating Dio’s political programme for the Severan period and the proper government of the empire in general, but also—crucially—in his interpretation of the decline of the Republic and the success of Augustus’ regime. It can hardly be read straightforwardly as a Severan political pamphlet, less still a generic philosophical treatise on kingship with Agrippa as a mere prelude to justify Maecenas’ intervention. Cassius Dio made a meaningful and deliberate decision to insert the *controversia* at this point in the historical narrative. Agrippa praises a Republic that no longer exists, and perhaps never existed. In so doing, he merely serves to remind us of the cesspit the *res publica* has become, and how far it has fallen from the philosophical ideal of a functioning δημοκρατία. Ironically, his speech in defense of the Republic merely summarizes the justification for abandoning it. Yet Agrippa looks forward as well as back, positing key challenges the new regime will have to face. In Maecenas, Dio sets out the solution to those challenges, offering his own interpretation—as an historian—of the measures Augustus would have to follow in order to survive where Caesar did not. The Agrippa-Maecenas debate is a remarkably sophisticated historical analysis of Octavian’s position in the aftermath of the Battle of Actium. The narrative of books 50 to 53 of the *Roman History*, charting the final stage in the bloody transition from Republic to Empire, would be wholly incomplete without it.

# *4. Conclusion*

Almost half a century after the Battle of Actium, its victor Octavian—now Augustus—lay dying. By 14 CE, Rome had enjoyed decades of relative internal cohesion and stability. Dio was not fooled by the idealistic claims of the new regime, immortalized in the emperor’s own autobiographical writings and the output of the Augustan poets.[[1029]](#footnote-1029) There were pretenders and challenges to the emperor’s power: Dio records the ambitions of provincial governors such as Marcus Primus and Cornelius Gallus,[[1030]](#footnote-1030) or populists at home like the aedile Egnatius Rufus.[[1031]](#footnote-1031) There was competition and discord: when Augustus attempted to fill the consular posts of 22 and 19 BCE by free election, the people fell to rioting and violence (54.6, 54.10). And there were inevitably plots against his rule: the most elaborate example in the *Roman History* is an alleged conspiracy of L. Cornelius Cinna Magnus, lavishly dramatized in the private dialogue between Livia and Augustus on the need to be merciful to wrong-doers in book 55.[[1032]](#footnote-1032) But none of these threats weakened the imperial center to perdition. Ambitious governors were tried and replaced; the elections ceased and were replaced by personal appointments; plots failed in their objects, partly thanks to the oft-forgotten repressiveness of Augustus’ military dictatorship. Octavian had succeeded.

In any case, it was in Dio’ view too dangerous for Augustus to turn back after Actium. “Who”, Maecenas asks, “will spare you if you give your powers back to the people or entrust them to another, when you have injured so many people and practically all of these will aim for supreme power for themselves?”.[[1033]](#footnote-1033) The wise advisor is unequivocal and gives as examples the major dynasts of the last century. Pompeius gave up his extraordinary powers after returning from the East with his loyal army in 62 BCE; and we know what happened to him. Marius and Sulla would certainly have suffered the same fate, had they not died first. As for Caesar, when he had defeated his enemies there was no option but to press on. He could not march back over the Rubicon; it was done (52.17.3–4). Maecenas voices Dio’s firm historical view that Octavian, too, could not make a second crossing. It was essential for him to seize this opportunity to solidify his position after Actium; he could not back down now.

In Dio’s view Octavian ultimately succeeded because he, unlike his successors, was moderate, respectful, and listened to sensible advice. In the process of showing us that advice in action, the Agrippa-Maecenas dialogue sets out the historian’s main causation for the decline of the Republic and Augustus’ success. Agrippa’s valiant but doomed final defense of the Republic maintains a delicate balance: by praising an idealized δημοκρατία which no longer exists, Agrippa’s speech must summarize Dio’s view of how dramatically the *res publica* has degenerated from a positive form while at the same time appearing to give a genuine defense of the *status quo*. The result is unconvincing, but that of course was precisely the historian’s intention. Maecenas, on the other hand, explains that a different Rome was possible. It was neither necessary nor inevitable that Augustus’ monarchy be a tyranny. At this dramatic point of transition in the history of Rome, Octavian could either turn back and follow the fate of his predecessors, or press on and forge the most stable possible monarchy: a strong central government sustained by military force, legitimized by popular and aristocratic approval, tempered by clemency and virtue, and cloaked in a humble and civilian guise.

This perhaps also explains the reason for which Agrippa and Maecenas serve as a shorthand for Augustus’ excellence whenever they are mentioned in the narrative after the *recusatio imperii* of book 53. Their interactions with the emperor give Dio an opportunity to show the *civilis princeps* following their advice, and succeeding in his objects by that means. Whenever they enter the scene, Augustus is presented as following carefully Maecenas’ programme for the “good emperor”. In a list of Agrippa’s many building works and public benefactions, Dio notes that he not only enjoyed a life free from envy despite his great position, but was even praised and honored by the emperor: “the reason for this was that he consulted and cooperated with Augustus in the most humane, celebrated, and beneficial endeavours, and yet did not arrogate to himself any glory for them”.[[1034]](#footnote-1034) When Agrippa died, the historian opines that he had shown himself the most noble of men, and was honored unstintingly by the emperor for his excellence. As for the inheritance he left to the emperor, the latter generously distributed it to the people in Agrippa’s name (54.29.4). It is ironic and deliberate that Agrippa, whose speech argues that it is impossible to find a patriotic statesman under a monarchy, becomes the ideal citizen under Augustus’ rule.

On the other hand, Maecenas continues to fill the function he served in book 52: that of the wise and honest counsellor, unafraid to speak to truth to a temperate and forgiving monarch. When the emperor was on the verge of sentencing men to death, Dio records that Maecenas publicly interposed himself and convinced him otherwise. Augustus, far from being displeased, was glad: “because whenever he was given over to unfitting passion as a result of his own nature or the stress of his affairs, he was set right by the honesty of his friends”.[[1035]](#footnote-1035) Satisfyingly, the interactions between Augustus, Agrippa, and Maecenas demonstrate *in action* those virtues which Maecenas’ speech charged the new emperor to possess and which Agrippa predicted he could not as a monarch: clemency, tolerance, humility, trust, and magnanimity.

The elaborate *controversia* of book 52 is therefore a very special piece of eloquence, unique in the Greek historiography of the Roman Empire. We have seen here that one important function of the debate is to reflect on the ills of the Severan period. Living in an age of instability, dynastic struggles, and occasional tyrannies, Dio took this opportunity to reflect upon the character of the ideal emperor for Rome in two set-piece speeches, drawing several arguments from the Greek tradition of kingship literature. To that reflection he appended concrete and often sophisticated suggestions for reform in the early third century CE. Dio’s administrative and financial proposals—some of which would not be fully realized until long after his time—demonstrate his statecraft and his clear wish to make a contemporary political point with the debate. However, most aspects of the programme for imperial government set out by Maecenas in fact list changes once put in place by Augustus or his successors. It cannot, therefore, be a straightforward a ‘call to arms’ for a Severan audience. Rather, it surveys the development of imperial rule over the *longue durée*, and invites the contemporary reader to reflect upon what had until relatively recently been the building-blocks of Rome’s imperial stability.

Yet none of this suggests that the Agrippa-Maecenas debate was a mere political pamphlet, dropped into the text the moment the appropriate dramatic situation occurred. The speeches of book 52 belong inextricably to Dio’s historical explanation of the transition from Republic to Principate. Indeed, they are so essential to his method that the overarching interpretation of books 50–56—encompassing Octavian’s rise, his war against Antonius, the means by which he confirmed his monarchy, and made it successful thereafter—would make little sense without them. They offer an important analysis of Octavian’s historical position in the wake of the Battle of Actium, each summarizing the risks to his position should he assume a monarchy (Agrippa) or reject it (Maecenas). The risks were great indeed. Agrippa and Maecenas offer a tantalizing counterfactual possibility: a history in which Octavian came to be seen as a tyrant and suffered the same fate as his adoptive father, was dethroned by a provincial governor at the head of a loyal army, fell at the hands of plotters against his rule, or perhaps laid down his powers after all and was assassinated. None of these eventualities came to pass. Maecenas articulates, point by point, the historian’s own interpretation of the measures necessary for Augustus to anticipate and neutralize these hazards, all of which the *princeps* will indeed go on to implement in the narrative to follow. Dio’s speaker gives a detailed overview of the virtuous means by which Augustus was to secure acceptance and even celebration of his rule; to make himself a god not in the manner of a Hellenistic tyrant, but in the hearts and minds of his people. It is a gross mistake to be too sentimental about Augustus, and Cassius Dio certainly was not. He simply knew a capable monarch when he saw one—and Agrippa and Maecenas pave the forward road for Octavian to become one. In any case, after the reigns of Commodus and Caracalla, one could hardly censure Dio for a little nostalgia.

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Chapter 16: “To Bury Caesar”: The Poetics and Polemics of Funerary Oratory in Cassius Dio

*Roger Rees*

After Thucydides, Cassius Dio is the next (and only) classical historiographer to include complete versions of funerary oratory. Dio’s admiration for Thucydides and his imitative engagement with his *Peloponnesian War* are well known;[[1036]](#footnote-1036) but it is notable that while Pericles’ funeral speech for the Athenians who had died in the first year of the war against Sparta (Thuc. 2.35–46) has become the subject of a minor industry in modern research on Thucydides, funerary oratory in Dio has largely been bypassed by scholars. Pericles’ speech in Thucydides has become a touchstone for modern consideration of oratory and ideology in Athenian democracy, most notably in Nicole Loraux’s 1981 monograph and in a recent project to review the influence of that landmark study four decades on;[[1037]](#footnote-1037) by contrast, critical response to funerary oratory in Dio has barely reached beyond dismissing it for being unreliable (there is no reason to think that the funerary orations recorded by Dio are either accurate transcripts of what was said, or Greek translations of such).[[1038]](#footnote-1038) Given that that is a charge on which Thucydides is never held to account—rather, his famous disclosure that his speeches are not accurate transcripts of what was actually said (Thuc. 1.22) is generally hailed a virtue, not a vice—it seems that Dio has been hard done by.[[1039]](#footnote-1039) Dio’s reintroduction to historiography of complete transcripts of this particular type of epideictic oratory is a distinctive moment in the history of the genre. Consideration of the frequency, nature and effect of funerary speeches within the *Roman History* and how their inclusion situates Dio’s work in the traditions of writing about the Roman past has the potential to illuminate wider questions of literary and cultural politics: this chapter will address not so much what funerary orations in Dio reveal of the dead they honor but rather, the poetics and polemics of their author.[[1040]](#footnote-1040)

A compelling case could be made that the most important sequences of death and succession in Roman high politics of the Late Republican and imperial periods were those of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE and Augustus in 14 CE. Caesar’s assassination effectively brought a violent end to the Roman Republic and precipitated new civil wars, from which Octavian, his grandnephew and heir, emerged victorious. As Augustus, Octavian became the first emperor, and on his death was succeeded by Tiberius, his adopted son. These two sequences can be seen as foundational, securing both monarchy as the standard political system and heredity (be it adoptive or natural) as its means of succession; with only occasional disruptions in the form of civil war, these principles endured for hundreds of years, incorporating Dio’s lifetime.

Recognition of the importance of these two sequences of death and succession can be found in their various retellings in ancient sources before Dio, including Plutarch (*Caes.* 66–69), Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.1–10), Suetonius (*Iul.* 82–85; *Aug.* 97–101) and Appian (*B Civ.* 2.111–154). These accounts vary in the attention they devote to the funerary orations given for Caesar and Augustus by Mark Antony and Tiberius respectively. For example, Suetonius records that Antony said a few words at Caesar’s funeral, but gives no specific details (*Iul.* 84.2–3):

laudationis loco consul Antonius per praeconem pronuntiauit senatus consultum, quo omnia simul ei diuina atque humana decreuerat, item ius iurandum, quo se cuncti pro salute unius astrinxerant; quibus perpauca a se uerba addidit

Instead of a eulogy the consul Antonius caused a herald to recite the decree of the Senate in which it had voted Caesar all divine and human honours at once, and likewise the oath with which they had all pledged themselves to watch over his personal safety; to which he added a very few words of his own.

The biographer gives no richer detail in the case of Augustus: “But though a limit was set to the honours paid him, his eulogy was twice delivered: before the temple of the Deified Julius by Tiberius, and from the old rostra by Drusus, son of Tiberius” (*Aug.* 100.3–4: *uerum adhibito honoribus modo bifariam laudatus est: pro aede Diui Iuli a Tiberio et pro rostris ueteribus a Druso Tiberi filio*).[[1041]](#footnote-1041) Much fuller than Suetonius is Appian who gives an extended account of Antony’s funerary oration for Caesar (*B Civ.* 2.144–146). At its outset Antony claims in direct speech to be speaking on behalf of the country; he then recites various decrees that the Senate and people had voted in Caesar’s favor during his lifetime, before moving to his military achievements. The telling is notably dramatic, with theatrical similes used both of Antony’s location in front of the bier “like in a play” (ὡς ἐπὶ σκηνῆς, *B Civ* 2.146) and of the people’s response to his speech, “like a chorus” (ὁ δῆμος οἷα χορὸς, *B Civ* 2.146). In terms of Appian’s mode of reporting the speech itself, direct quotation is interspersed with paraphrase. After Antony introduces himself as the country’s spokesperson, the next quotations of him consist of three short summary observations he made prompted by the decrees, and a fourth in which he seeks to calm the crowd (*B Civ* 2.144–145). These quotations never exceed three sentences. Two further sentences of direct quotation punctuate an otherwise severely compressed account of the main part of the speech (*B Civ* 2.146):

ἐπιλέγων ὁμοῦ σὺν δρόμῳ φωνῆς πολέμους αὐτοῦ καὶ μάχας καὶ νίκας καὶ ἔθνη, ὅσα προσποιήσειε τῇ πατρίδι, καὶ λάφυρα, ὅσα πέμψειεν, ἐν θαύματι αὐτῶν ἕκαστα ποιούμενος καὶ συνεχῶς ἐπιβοῶν· “μόνος ὅδε ἀήττητος ἐκ πάντων τῶν ἐς χεῖρας αὐτῷ συνελθόντων. σὺ δ᾿,” ἔφη, “καὶ μόνος ἐκ τριακοσίων ἐτῶν ὑβρισμένῃ τῇ πατρίδι ἐπήμυνας, ἄγρια ἔθνη τὰ μόνα ἐς Ῥώμην ἐμβαλόντα καὶ μόνα ἐμπρήσαντα αὐτὴν ἐς γόνυ βαλών.” πολλά τε ἄλλα ἐπιθειάσας τὴν φωνὴν ἐς τὸ θρηνῶδες ἐκ τοῦ λαμπροτέρου μετεποίει καὶ ὡς φίλον ἄδικα παθόντα ὠδύρετο καὶ ἔκλαιε καὶ ἠρᾶτο τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ψυχὴν ἐθέλειν ἀντιδοῦναι τῆς Καίσαρος.

At the same time with rapid speech he recited [Caesar’s] wars, his battles, his victories, the nations he had brought under his country’s sway, and the spoils he had sent home, extolling each exploit as miraculous, and all the time exclaiming, “You alone have come forth unvanquished from all the battles you have fought. You alone have avenged your country of the outrage put upon it 300 years ago, bringing to their knees those savage tribes, the only ones that ever broke into and burned the city of Rome.” Many other things Antony said in a kind of divine frenzy, and then lowered his voice from its high pitch to a sorrowful tone, and mourned and wept as for a friend who had suffered unjustly, and solemnly vowed that he was willing to give his own life in exchange for Caesar’s.

After Antony’s impassioned apostrophe to Caesar, the next speaker Appian quotes is Caesar himself, somehow able to speak at his own funeral, bemoaning the trust he had put in the men who were to murder him (2.146). Soon afterwards, the people rose in bloody violence against those they believed were responsible (2.147). All told, complemented with theatrical similes and Caesar’s otherworldly intervention, Appian compresses through paraphrase and expands through quotation to animate the discourse to dynamic effect; his historiography attends to the funerary oration, but essentially exploits its occasion rather than records its transcript.

In sum, the Greek and Latin record before Dio is consistent in the significance it accords the funerary rites of Caesar and Augustus, but the level of detail varies, and notably only Appian quotes from the orations that all agree were given. Therefore, when Dio includes contexts for and complete transcripts of both speeches (44.36–49 and 56.35–41), he marks a distinctive juncture of historiography and epideictic (*genus demonstratiuum*) rhetoric in the Greco-Roman world.

*Poetics*

In addition to being the first complete transcripts we have of funerary oratory in historiography since Thucydides, these eulogies (*laudatio funebris* in Latin, ἐπιτάφιος in Greek) are significant for being the only twoin the *Roman History*. Andriy Fomin has recently noted that across the variety of speeches in the work, single types of set oration (such as a speech by a woman, or consolation to an exile) often feature twice.[[1042]](#footnote-1042) The “pairing” of speeches as a dynamic technique had an established pedigree in classical historiography, such as, for example, those attributed to Caesar and Cato in the Senate debate in Sallust’s *Bellum Catilinae*, where two characters engage in debate on a single issue. Dio sometimes includes speeches to create a similarly pointed effect, but the principle of “pairing” speech-types extends beyond set deliberative debates.[[1043]](#footnote-1043) Fomin also made the point that Dio made significant sacrifices in the “speech occasions” he inherited—his regime promoted duplication but not endless multiplication of speech types. To use the same example, Dio did not rehearse the senatorial debate between Caesar and Cato staged by Sallust, perhaps, Fomin suggests, because of the “eminence of the Sallustian version”.[[1044]](#footnote-1044) What can be sensed here is Dio’s authorial discretion, shaped by his desire to write a full-scale narrative history that could be understood as an intelligent contribution to—but not a plain reprise of—a sizeable body of inherited literature, in Greek and Latin. Questions of what “speech occasions” to include, what to forego, and how to arrange the material, must have confronted him endlessly as he researched and wrote, and one of the challenges thrown down by a text that knowingly covers ground that had been covered before—but this time differently—is an evaluation of this distinctive authorial design.[[1045]](#footnote-1045) Various other funerary occasions are narrated in Dio’s text—for example, Augustus is said to have given the eulogy for Agrippa in 12 BCE, “he gave the speech about him” (54.28.3: τόν τε λόγον τὸν ἐπ᾿ αὐτοῦ εἶπε) and two years after that for his own sister Octavia “and he gave the funerary speech there” (54.35.4: αὐτός τε ἐκεῖ τὸν ἐπιτάφιον εἶπε);[[1046]](#footnote-1046) the funeral of Drusus in 9 BCE is said to have featured two eulogies, one by Tiberius and the other by Augustus (55.2.2–3); Tiberius is also said to have given a funerary oration for a friend (57.11.7) and for his own son Drusus in 23 CE (57.22.4); the funerary oration for Tiberius is said to have been given by Gaius (Caligula) (58.28.5, 59.3.7); much closer to Dio’s own time, Severus is said to have read a eulogy at the funeral of Pertinax (75[74].5.1 [Xiph.])—in none of these cases is anything quoted and only exceptionally are any details given.[[1047]](#footnote-1047) And from what can be reconstructed from the books that are now defective, it appears that Dio included no other funerary eulogies elsewhere in the *Roman History*.[[1048]](#footnote-1048) If that is correct, the inclusion and extraordinarily full disclosure of the *laudationes funebres* for Caesar and Augustus can hardly be thought casual or automatic, but the result of a considered process of literary creativity, one effect of which is to signal the two funerary occasions as exceptional.[[1049]](#footnote-1049) That Dio is assumed, Thucydides-like, to have made these speeches up, when it would have been easier to move on quickly and quietly, serves to confirm their importance.[[1050]](#footnote-1050)

It is also instructive that neither Antony nor Tiberius is a prolific orator in the *Roman History.* Among their contemporaries, for example, Caesar, Cicero and Octavian-Augustus each give three or more extensive speeches.[[1051]](#footnote-1051)Before his ἐπιτάφιος, Antony is briefly quoted by Dio when he named Caesar king and crowned him with a diadem, “through me the people grant you this” (44.11.3: τοῦτό σοι ὁ δῆμος δι᾿ ἐμοῦ δίδωσιν), an honor which Caesar refused. Later, Antony is accorded a second *in extenso* speech in his battle exhortation to his troops before clashing with Octavian at Actium (50.16–22). Outside of his ἐπιτάφιος, Tiberius is directly quoted only once by Dio, in a famously pithy exchange with the Illyrian leader Bato: Tiberius asks, “why did you decide to revolt and wage war against us for so long?” (56.16.3: τί ὑμῖν ἔδοξε καὶ ἀποστῆναι καὶ ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἡμῖν χρόνον ἀντιπολεμῆσαι;) and Bato replies that Romans are wolves rather than shepherds or sheepdogs. In scope and effect, the conversational exchanges between Antony and Caesar or Tiberius and Bato are very different to the full-scale epideictic of their funeraryoratory, but as well as adding variety, Dio’s limited use of both types of discourse makes their appearances more notable. For both Antony and Tiberius, the ἐπιτάφιος is his oratorical debut. In sum, while he broke new ground by including complete funerary orations in Roman historiography, in limiting them to the two speeches given by Antony and Tiberius, Dio freighted them heavily with significance.[[1052]](#footnote-1052)

The two sequences of death and succession bookend the mature political life of Octavian-Augustus and so signal the transition from Republic to Empire; as critical start and end-points, the generation and inclusion of oratory in these sequences constitute a rhetorical-structural device which reveals aspects of Dio’s cultural and political preoccupations. His speeches draw attention and waymark, and in experiencing two eulogies that have been specially crafted and arranged, the reader of Dio is granted a privileged vantage point. Although it seems that others were in attendance as well, both speeches are addressed to the Roman senators (ὦ Κυιρῖται,“Quirites”, 44.36.1; 56.41.1), but with the various wars and proscriptions in the full fifty-eight years separating the two funerals, it is unlikely that any individual attended both and was able to set their experience of the latter against their memories of the former.[[1053]](#footnote-1053) And so, Dio’s scripted record mobilizes a dynamic which enables and invites the reader to consider the two funerary occasions and the oratory which is their soundtrack.[[1054]](#footnote-1054)

A quick résumé of the two passages in Dio: after Caesar’s assassination, his will was read out, then Antony brought his bloodied corpse into the Forum where he delivered a eulogy. Antony started by saying that Caesar’s political position had been such that a two-fold eulogy was required, and that he would speak as both an heir and a consul, leaving out nothing the people would themselves celebrate with one voice (44.36.1–2); finding suitable words would be difficult, because everybody knew Caesar and his virtues (44.36.3–6); he discusses Caesar’s lineage (44.37); his upbringing and education (44.38); his friendliness (44.39); his conspicuous virtue which underpinned his achievements (44.40); his political offices (44.41); his successes in Gaul (44.42–3); the war against Pompey (44.44–45); his defeat of Pharnaces (44.46); that power had not changed him (44.47); the many roles and titles he had been granted (44.48); that despite all those achievement, he died the victim of murder (44.49). The emotive tone of this final section is exemplified by the final word, addressed in apostrophe to Caesar, “you are slaughtered” (σφαγῇς).

According to Dio, at his funeral nearly six decades later, Augustus’ body was hidden from view, in a coffin within the funerary couch; a wax image of him was visible on the couch, and a golden image of him was also part of the procession (56.34.1–2). Drusus is said to have read out something; then Tiberius delivered the eulogy. He started by commenting on the difficulty of finding fitting words for his speech, especially before a knowing audience (56.35). His starting point is then not Augustus’ birth or upbringing but the vengeance he took for Caesar’s assassination (56.36); he demonstrated great wisdom in his political affairs and won glory, and recounting his achievements will please the old and instruct the young (56.37); uniquely, he forgave his enemies but did not allow his allies to be wanton in victory (56.38); he healed the state, then tried to return its governance to the wider body politic, but was not allowed to do so (56.39); he secured the frontiers with troops and attended to legal and electoral reform, and to infrastructure (56.40); his achievements were so many and great that a speech could only be a summary (56.41.1–8); and he had received various titles and offices of state, and had been declared immortal (56.41.9).

Although in the circumstances it seems reasonable to assume that Antony extemporized where later Tiberius read from a prepared script (56.42.1), there is much common ground here.[[1055]](#footnote-1055) Both Antony (44.36.3) and Tiberius (56.35.2) said how difficult their subject matter was to match in words;[[1056]](#footnote-1056) both of them presented themselves as the spokesperson for everyone (44.36.3 and 56.35.4); both identified the crowd’s familiarity with the subject matter as a challenge for them (44.36.4 and 56.35.3)—in particular, both imagined how much easier it would be if they were addressing “strangers” instead (ἀλλότριοι at 44.36.4 and 56.35.3); both address the suspect nature of praise-discourse in the assertion of their own reliability (44.38.3–4 and 56.41.2); both deployed the rhetorical figure of *praeteritio* (44.42–46.1 and 56.37.4); Antony spoke of Caesar’s ancestry and education (44.37–38.3), and Tiberius hurried past Augustus’ education to elaborate on his first interventions in political life (56.36.1–5); both speakers then essentially followed a political-biographical sequence, each exemplifying the qualities of virtue and clemency in their subjects. These correspondences might be considered a function of formulaic composition and so an index of their reliability—does Dio appear concerned to impress upon his reader the plausibility (if not reliability[[1057]](#footnote-1057)) of the speeches? To this end, it is worth considering whether or not the speeches have demonstrably anachronistic aspects which would themselves be revealing of Dio’s method.[[1058]](#footnote-1058) Although no authentic Roman *laudationes funebres* have survived from the Republic and early Empire, other witnesses from the period can be invoked as useful comparanda for assessing Dio’s achievement in composing funerary oratory from over two hundred years earlier.

The earliest witness to Roman funerary oratory is Polybius, like Dio a Greek speaker, who wrote many decades before the deaths of Caesar and Augustus. He provides a lengthy and detailed account of Roman aristocratic funerary culture in the middle Republic (Polyb. 6.53–54) which Kierdorf used to exemplify the first of his three key stages in the history of the Roman *laudatio funebris*. The passage is rich in anthropological detail about ritual and its inspirational effects, although beyond mention of the ‘virtues and deeds’ of the deceased as a regular subject of the *laudatio*, Polybius dedicates little attention to the oratory itself.[[1059]](#footnote-1059) According to Kierdorf, the second stage emerged in the mid-second century BCE, the product of the spread of high Greek culture in Roman society, in particular through the adoption of Hellenized models of rhetorical education. The anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, from the later 80s BCE, does not explicitly single out funerary oratory, but gives a general account of what to say in formal praise (or blame) of an individual.[[1060]](#footnote-1060) The structure should be: his descent, education, physique and virtues (*genus, educatio, corporis commoda* and *uirtutes* 3.7.13–14), and how the latter have marked his conduct in public and private. In the *De Oratore*, Cicero mentions funerary oration (*funebris contio*, 2.341), but his advice seems to refer to praise-giving in general: he urges that at the heart of praise should be virtue (*uirtus*), and how it responds to the external factors of “descent, looks, strength, resources, wealth, the other things that fortune grants” (2.342: *genus, forma, uires, opes, diuitiae, cetera quae fortuna dat*). Quintilian is also aware of funerary oratory in his advice about rhetorical praise-giving (*Inst. Orat.* 3.7.2); he then organizes the praise of the individual into three divisions, that is, before the subject’s birth, during his lifetime and after his death (3.7.10); this structure follows a broadly chronological trajectory, covering home country, parentage, mind, body, wealth, power in influence and (in the case of the dead) divine honors, decrees and statues (10–18). According to Kierdorf, this second stage dominated Roman funerary oratory until Christian ideology introduced a wholly new dimension to the form several centuries later.[[1061]](#footnote-1061)

So wide is the chronological range of this second stage (from c. 150 BCE to c. 350 CE) that it incorporates Dio’s own lifetime, and so it becomes plausible that rather than from those giants of Late Republican and early imperial rhetorical theory, Dio was able to rehearse the recommendations he would himself have encountered in his own education. It has long been recognized that in its wide range of speakers and speech-types, Dio’s *Roman History* showcases the riches of the progymnasmatic schooling he may have received in Nicaea.[[1062]](#footnote-1062) To that extent, the *Roman History* is a product of its time and place.[[1063]](#footnote-1063) For an approximate source for this, we can turn to Menander Rhetor, dated to the late third century CE, whose surviving work consists of treatises (in Greek) subdivided into recommendations about suitable material and structure for a multiplicity of ‘speech occasions’. His advice about how to compose an ἐπιτάφιος (*Treatise* 2.418–422, at 420.8–9) is strikingly similar to his template for a speech in praise of the (living) emperor, his so-called *Basilikos Logos* (*Treatise* 2.368–377)—πατρίς, γένος, γένεσις, ἀνατροφή, παιδεία, ἐπιτηδεύματα, πράξεις(country, family, birth, upbringing, education, activities, deeds)*.*[[1064]](#footnote-1064)The chronological and ethical coverage of this model does not contradict the earlier Latin recommendations—in fact, what is striking here is the common ground the earlier Latin and later Greek treatises share, and against which Dio’s two funerary orations do not seem to have an anachronistic quality when they are read in the dramatic contexts of 44 BCE and 14 CE. Perhaps they present a funerary rhetorical culture that was more established and more recognized than had actually been the case in their day, but if so, that is more likely to have been the result of refinement and polish over time rather than of any radical rethinking or willful misrepresentation. In fact, the likelihood of his original readers’ familiarity with the conventions of funerary oratory added a further dimension to the pair of speeches in that they could more readily be understood as mirrors to Dio’s own time—the rhetorical modeling of rulership in the words of Antony and Tiberius could well be understood as commentary on later emperors. But even without that interpretive complication, it seems that although Dio’s two *laudationes funebres* are works of historical imagination and there was a considerable lapse in time between their dramatic date/s and composition, they seem to have been composed with at least some concern for plausibility.

But if the two speeches have much in common, they are not identical twins, and the comparison between them that Dio’s authorial design encourages is illuminating. In particular, how character is revealed around the stable point of funeral oratory at the beginning and end of Octavian-Augustus’ mature political life is worth consideration, as revealing of Dio’s compositional practices and the resulting ethical texture of his work.[[1065]](#footnote-1065) Dio rarely passes direct comment on the speakers’ rhetorical ability or choices, but a striking exception occurs before Antony speaks (44.35.4):

καὶ αὐτοὺς ὁ Ἀντώνιος ἐπιπαρώξυνε, τόν τε νεκρὸν ἐς τὴν ἀγορὰν ἀνοητότατα κομίσας, καὶ προθέμενος ᾑματωμένον τε, ὥσπερ εἶχε, καὶ τραύματα ἐκφαίνοντα, καί τινα καὶ λόγον ἐπ᾿ αὐτῷ, ἄλλως μὲν περικαλλῆ καὶ λαμπρόν, οὐ μέντοι καὶ συμφέροντα τοῖς τότε παροῦσιν, εἰπών.

And Antony incited them still further, most senselessly bringing the body into the Forum, exposing it all covered with blood as it was and with the wounds on show, and then delivering over it a speech, which was very ornate and brilliant, certainly, but out of place on that occasion.

It is notable that in Appian’s account (*B Civ.* 2.143), Caesar’s body is brought into the Forum by Piso. Dio focuses unflinchingly on Antony, and encourages the reader to draw moral conclusions about Antony’s words even before they have been delivered; this strong ethical coloring from the outset necessarily endures throughout the speech and beyond. The speech is recounted, uninterrupted: it is addressed to the senators (44.36.1) and includes many second person references to them, although as details in the framing narrative make clear, there was a non-senatorial presence there too in the form of ‘the people’. Antony variously mentions his audience’s knowledge of his subject-matter (44.36.3–4, 38.3, 40.4); he tells them that they have demanded praise of Caesar (44.36.5–6); he reminds them that they had voted a triumph and consulship for him (44.41.3), and later, eight years of command (44.43.1–2); he tells them that they had loved Caesar as a father and cherished him as their benefactor (44.48.1–2). With such references to his audience and their experience of and commitment to Caesar, Antony establishes a sense of unity in a shared memory and grief. From this carefully constructed community of opinion, Antony begins his decisive final paragraph with a series of rhetorical elaborations, including dramatic exclamation and characterization of Caesar and the cruel ironies of his assassination (44.49.1–2); his closing flourish is to raise the pitch higher still with an apostrophe to Caesar, beginning ποῦ δῆτά σοι, Καῖσαρ, ἡ φιλανθρωπία, ποῦ δὲ ἡ ἀσυλία, ποῦ δὲ οἱ νόμοι; (44.49.3: “Caesar, of what use to you was your compassion, of what use your inviolability, of what use the laws?”) and reference to his bloodied corpse (44.49.3–4). Dio casts no judgement on the speech after its close—no explanation, for example, of what was “ornate” or “brilliant” or “out of place” in it (44.35.4); the reader decides—but the effect on the crowd is detailed, τοιαῦτα τοῦ Ἀντωνίου λέγοντος ὁ δῆμος τὰ μὲν πρῶτα ἠρεθίζετο, ἔπειτα δὲ ὠργίζετο, καὶ τέλος … ἐφλέγμηνεν (44.50.1: “As Antony said such things, at first the people were roused, then angered and finally … inflamed”.). They turned to retributive violence, including lynching the unfortunate Helvius Cinna, who Dio says had had nothing to do with Caesar’s assassination (44.50.4). The brilliance of this apparently extemporized rhetoric and its misapplication precipitate this renewed violence and characterize Antony as a demagogue; and far from being closural or cosmetic, his funerary oratory has agency, a necessary link in the chain of the bloody narrative.

Tiberius’ ἐπιτάφιος for Augustus is used rather differently. As was the case for Antony, Tiberius’ speech is his first in Dio’s narrative; the speech is also part of his first public appearance as emperor, so expectations are high. It is notable that the speech is introduced without any value-judgements equivalent to those by which Dio prefigured Antony’s (56.34.4). Rather than outstanding, the speech itself is workmanlike; its focus is generally on Augustus’ political achievements, although some attention is paid to his private lifestyle; in line with textbook recommendations, the figures of *praeteritio*, *synkrisis* and rhetorical questions are deployed, the latter especially towards the end. Unlike with Antony’s speech for Caesar, there is no apostrophe to the deceased and no dramatic gestures are detailed. Tiberius’ speech is competent but, especially in comparison with Antony’s, it comes across as uninspired and uninspiring. [[1066]](#footnote-1066) This sense is confirmed at its closewhere no consequences of or even reactions to the speech are detailed—no approval, nothing, the narrative simply moves on to other matters (56.42.1). The effect is perhaps disquieting, especially when bearing in mind the fatal consequences of Antony’s oration for Caesar, but it encourages reflection.

Christopher Burden-Strevens has recently argued that Tiberius’ funerary oration represents Augustus in ways which closely align with Dio’s own view of the first *princeps*: “The funeral oration for Augustus which Dio placed into the mouth of Tiberius reflects his own distinctive interpretative themes and major historical premises so remarkably closely that its main arguments cannot have derived from an external source.” [[1067]](#footnote-1067) According to this interpretation, the speech can serve to confirm the author’s analytical account; Tiberius’ commendation of Augustus’ mature political life canonizes a standard of imperial conduct against which all other emperors can then be judged.[[1068]](#footnote-1068) Of course, the first to face this test is Tiberius himself, and when he is found out to be “not like” Augustus (56.45.1), he is perhaps all the more culpable for knowing good governance but failing to deliver it. From his relatively sober speech, a generous reader might think Tiberius reserved or ‘stoical’ rather than uncaring; but from his opening justification of his role as eulogist, Tiberius opens himself up to charges of insensitivity and self-regard.He delivered his speech in his capacity as Augustus’ son and heir. He had been granted this position ten years previously when Augustus, who had daughters but no natural sons, had adopted him, and at the same time, forced Tiberius himself to adopt Germanicus, son to his deceased brother Drusus (55.13.3). This had been just the latest in a series of moves Augustus made to secure an orderly succession after his own death, all of which had been foiled by the early deaths of his nominated heirs.[[1069]](#footnote-1069) With Tiberius and Drusus as “successors and allies” (διαδόχους καὶ βοηθοὺς), Augustus was able to press ahead with certain reforms. In Dio’s telling, five years later, in a long speech to the *equites*, a perceived demographic crisis in Rome saw Augustus commend thosewho were fathers (56.2–3) and rebuke those who had yet to become parents (56.4–8). To the fathers he feted the joy that parents felt in the recognition of themselves in their offspring, both in body and spirit (56.3.4: τοῦ σώματος … καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς) in their offspring; and likewise the pleasure in the knowledge that on their own death, they would leave as “successor and heir” (56.3.5: διάδοχον καὶ κληρονόμον) someone born from their stock and substance. These advantages accrued, he said, to those who marry and have children (56.3.6). When Augustus died five years later, it could have been seen to be in keeping with the established convention Polybius (6.53.1) had recorded of the oldest son delivering the funerary oration (53.1) when that honor was granted by decree to Tiberius. However, it may be considered an awkward impropriety when as Augustus’ *adopted* son (and by no means the man first to have enjoyed that privilege) Tiberius said in only his second sentence “to whom more justly than to me, his son and successor, could the duty of praising him be entrusted?” (56.35.2: τίς γὰρ ἂν δικαιότερον ἐμοῦ τοῦ καὶ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ διαδόχου τὸν ἐπ᾿ αὐτῷ ἔπαινον ἐνεχειρίσθη;).[[1070]](#footnote-1070) The question is a prelude to a standard *topos* of rhetorical inadequacy (56.35.2–4), but given the troubled history of succession, this assertion of his right to deliver the address undermines Tiberius’ pose of modesty; meanwhile, nowhere does he confess a sense of filial debt or gratitude to Augustus. Instead, without humility, he appears crassly oblivious or arrogantly dismissive of the anxiety concerning the succession to Augustus that had affected many people over the previous decades, as also to Augustus’ own diffidence about succession through adoption. Rather than seeking to reassure his audience of his own suitability for imperial office at this critical moment of transition, Tiberius takes their acquiescence for granted.

By making them distinctive within the overall design of his work, Dio effectively primes comparison between the funerary speeches of Antony and Tiberius; and by the specifics of what each man says, significant ethical capital is made out of the comparison. Perhaps neither Antony nor Tiberius comes out of it particularly well—according to the readings above, Antony is inflammatory, and Tiberius presumptuous.[[1071]](#footnote-1071) It is also worth noting that in between their orations, Dio narrates the mature political life of Augustus—that structure itself generates potential for further comparative analysis, where Antony’s representation of Caesar’s leadership and Tiberius’ representation of Augustus’ can be set against the model of Emperorship in Dio’s narrative of Augustus. In Dio’s literary method, funerary oratory has an important role to play in the modeling of power and the representation of the individuals who wielded it; but if these poetics serve to enrich the ethical texture of the work, this literary development might be seen to have a controversial, or even polemical edge in the history of historiography.

*Literary Polemics*

It was noted above that in quoting complete transcripts of funerary oratory, Dio looks back to Thucydides; this turn to a Thucydidean model perhaps also renders as something of an intermediary Appian, who, as was also discussed above, had quoted excerpts of Antony’s ἐπιτάφιοςfor Caesar, several decades before Dio wrote. In reviving the practice of the classical Athenian general, Appian and Dio (the latter in particular, for committing to full versions) signal a difference between Greek and Latin historians of Rome, for how this stacks up against Latin practice is distinctive. Despite its reverence for Thucydides, Latin historiography did not include *laudationes funebres* among its oration-types. In his *Brutus* (62), Cicero expressed concern about the effect of *laudatio funebris*:

et non nullae mortuorum laudationes forte delectant. et hercules eae quidem exstant; ipsae enim familiae sua quasi ornamenta ac monumenta seruabant et ad usum, si quis eiusdem generis occidisset, et ad memoriam laudum domesticarum et ad illustrandam nobilitatem suam. quamquam his laudationibus historia rerum nostrarum est facta mendosior. multa enim scripta sunt in eis quae facta non sunt, falsi triumphi, plures consulatus, genera etiam falsa et ad plebem transitiones, cum homines humiliores in alienum eiusdem nominis infunderentur genus

Perhaps some funeral orations bring delight, and certainly, some of them survive; their families have kept them safe as ornaments and mementos, and for use on the death of a member of the same family, both to recall the memory of personal praise, or to illustrate their own noble origins. However, our history has been made more dishonest by these laudatory speeches; for much is set down in them which never occurred, false triumphs, too many consulships, false family connections and transitions to plebeian status, whereby men of humbler birth are blended with a family of the same name, though in fact quite unrelated to them.

There is much of relevance here for the history of the relationship between historiography and funerary oratory: texts of *laudationes* were preserved and passed down within the family as points of reference for future generations, and so, they were available as source material for historians. However, Cicero deplores the discourse for its unreliability.[[1072]](#footnote-1072) This caution about the use of *laudationes* as sources in history-writing finds interesting corroboration in Livy’s *Ab urbe condita* in a short discussion of Coelius Antipater, whose history does not survive but who appears to have practised a certain degree of source criticism. The passage from Livy concerns the death of Marcellus in 208 BCE (27.27.13–14):

ut omittam alios, Coelius triplicem gestae rei commemorationem ordine edit: unam traditam fama, alteram scriptam in laudatione fili, qui rei gestae interfuerit, tertiam quam ipse pro inquisita ac sibi conperta adfert.

Not to mention others, Coelius furnishes successively a threefold relation of what happened: one the traditional account, a second set down in the eulogy pronounced by the son, who was present, Coelius says, when it happened, [and] a third which he himself contributes as investigated and established by him.

Coelius noted but rejected an account he found recorded in a *laudatio funebris* from about a century before. Skepticism about the reliability of a funerary oration can also be found when Tacitus seems to have had a very good command of what Nero said in his *laudatio funebris* for Claudius, which had been written by Seneca (*Ann.* 13.3.1):

die funeris laudationem eius princeps exorsus est, dum antiquitatem generis, consulatus ac triumphos maiorem enumerabat, intentus ipse et ceteri; liberalium quoque artium commemoratio et nihil regente eo triste rei publicae ab externis accidisse pronis animis audita: postquam ad prouidentiam sapientiamque flexit, nemo risui temperare, quamquam oratio a Seneca composita multum cultus praeferret, ut fuit illi uiro ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus accommodatum

On the day of the funeral, the emperor opened his *laudatio* of Claudius, and so long as he enumerated the antiquity of his family, the consulates and the triumphs of his ancestors, he was taken seriously by himself and by others. Allusions, also, to his literary attainments and to the freedom of his reign from reverses abroad had a favourable hearing. But when he turned to his foresight and sagacity, no one held back a smile, although the speech, composed by Seneca, exhibited the degree of polish to be expected from that famous man, whose pleasing talent was so well suited to the ears of the time.

The account is laced with the author’s characteristically incisive and unforgiving tone, and his exploitation of the wider awareness of the exaggerated nature of the claims Nero made suggests that Tacitus could have quoted the speech but chose not to.[[1073]](#footnote-1073) It was seen above that if Suetonius had access to a transcript of Antony’s speech for Caesar (if such existed), or of Tiberius’ speech for Augustus, he chose not to quote from them. From these examples from Livy, Tacitus and Suetonius, it seems possible, therefore, that the concern raised by Cicero that the *laudatio funebris* culture could distort the historical record resonated with some other Latin writers too;[[1074]](#footnote-1074) against this, the choices made by Appian and Dio are conspicuous.

As we saw above in discussions of Cicero, the *Ad Herennium*, Quintilian and Menander, the funerary speech is a particular type of epideictic oratory. The wider intellectual context in which attitudes to funerary oratory are situated concerns the appropriate relationship between the discourses of historiographic narrative and epideictic; panegyrical historiography was decried by both Greek and Latin authors, but the linguistic divide was also occasionally held up as a marker of cultural identity.[[1075]](#footnote-1075) From the Late Republic through to late antiquity, a succession of Latin writers characterized epideictic as a rhetorical form practised by Greeks, and for which Roman society had relatively few outlets, one being funerary addresses. Cicero explains (*De or.* 2.341):[[1076]](#footnote-1076)

quod nos laudationibus non ita multum uti soleremus, totum hunc segregabam locum. ipsi enim Graeci magis legendi et delectationis aut hominis alicuius ornandi quam utilitatis huius forensis causa laudationes scriptitauerunt … nostrae laudationes, quibus in foro utimur, aut testimoni breuitatem habent nudam atque inornatam aut scribuntur ad funebrem contionem, quae ad orationis laudem minime accommodata est.

Because we do not generally use laudatory speeches that much, I excluded them from my whole subject. For the Greeks themselves kept writing speeches of praise, more for reading and pleasure or for glorifying some individual than for this utility in the forum. … Our laudatory speeches, which we deliver in the forum, either have the bare and unadorned brevity of character evidence or are written for funeral gatherings, which are not at all suitable for parading distinction in oratory.

We saw above that in his *Brutus*, Cicero notes how Latin funerary oratory could be ornamental, written to please; here, when contrasting Roman with Greek practice, he rather downplays the Latin form’s aesthetic character.[[1077]](#footnote-1077) In the case of Quintilian’s similar differentiation between Greek and Latin practice (3.7.17), Laurent Pernot has observed that his protestations do not neatly align with wider evidence for contemporary norms in Roman society, which in the imperial period developed a widespread application for epideictic oratory.[[1078]](#footnote-1078) The cultural posturing of these leading figures in Roman rhetoric is significant and in this climate of strident (and occasionally racist) denomination, Dio’s late intervention strikes a note of literary polemics.

*Conclusion*

When Dio wrote and incorporated funerary speeches in his *Roman History*, he enmeshed cultural and literary issues. Cicero’s criticism of the distorting effects of the testimony of *laudatio* *funebris* on historiography signals its problematic status, a point which may find confirmation in the conspicuous absence of the text of any such speeches in Latin historiography. Dio’s inclusion of complete transcripts of funerary oratory in his work stands out against this Latin tradition, and can be seen as the culmination of a movement in which Appian too played a part.[[1079]](#footnote-1079) By reinstating the ἐπιτάφιος as an ingredient in recording the past, Dio arcs back to Thucydides and dignifies epideictic as suitable for inclusion in historiography. In this moment, cultural politics are being played out, with Greek historiography of Rome using an oratorical type that Latin historiography of Rome had avoided, even as the elite of Rome committed themselves more generally to Greek rhetorical practices.

In the pages of Dio, Ciceronian anxiety about falsifying the historical record by including funerary oratory (*Brut.* 62: *historia est facta mendosior*, “history has been made more dishonest”) is nowhere; the acceptability of this hinges on a distinction between falsification and fictionalization in historiography. Dio’s success in this regard is best measured by the literary effect of his inclusion of funerary oratory. There is care in his structure and design, with only two charged moments granted the dramatic elaboration of funerary eulogy. The inclusion of these two funerary speeches, each dating to the period of constitutional transition from Republic to the Empire, foregrounds memorialization of the individual at precisely the period of Roman history when the right of the individual to rule was being asserted and confirmed. This is of great political significance, and as they signal that importance, the two speeches invite comparison. Antony and Tiberius—very different men—give funerary speeches of identifiable type, but in very different contexts and to different effect on their audiences and the reader. The two speeches are not presented as transcripts of documentary reliability any more than is the case with other speech types in the work; rather, they function as revealing in-character speech-acts, and the ethical enrichment that accrues simultaneously animates the narrative. When Antony speaks over the bloodied corpse and, at the end of his speech, apostrophizes Caesar, or when in his speech for Augustus Tiberius likens himself to the leader of a chorus (ἐμοῦ τε ὥσπερ ἐν χορῷ τινὶ τὰ κεφάλαια ἀποσημαίνοντος, ‘signalling the head words, like in some chorus’, 56.35.4), they present as *dramatis personae*, actors in history, characterized in their speech.[[1080]](#footnote-1080)

In the history of historiography, Dio’s deployment of complete transcripts of funerary oratory in his narrative transforms a suspect rhetorical type into a vehicle for political philosophy and ethical revelation. Against traditional scholarship’s dismissal of Dio’s *laudationes* as fictional, anachronistic, and unremarkable rehearsals of *progymnasmata* formulae, the speeches redound as knowing and manipulative interventions in the history of the literary recording of Roman history and in the history of Roman imperial praise-giving; Dio’s work does not so much illuminate appreciation of the history of the Roman *laudatio funebris* as the representation of the Roman *laudatio funebris* and its literary potential*.* This involves competition between genres and sideswipes across the literary-linguistic divisions of Greek and Roman cultures; ultimately, his *laudationes funebres* help us to see how Dio used his late arrival at the funeral to his own advantage.[[1081]](#footnote-1081)

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Chapter 17: Women, Politics, and Morality in Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*

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After recounting the death of Septimius Severus in 211 CE, Cassius Dio offers a summary of his appearance, accomplishments, and habits, in the manner of ancient biography (77[76].16.1–17.4). Among other actions modeled on those of Augustus, Severus chastised the unchaste and revived laws against adultery. Although many were indicted, few were punished. As an illustration of Severus’ failure to uphold his own laws, Dio records an encounter between a Caledonian woman and Julia Domna, Severus’ wife (77[76].16.5 [Xiph.]):[[1082]](#footnote-1082)

ὅθεν καὶ μάλα ἀστείως Ἀργεντοκόξου τινὸς γυνὴ Καληδονίου πρὸς τὴν Ἰουλίαν τὴν Αὔγουσταν, ἀποσκώπτουσάν τι πρὸς αὐτὴν μετὰ τὰς σπονδὰς ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνέδην σφῶν πρὸς τοὺς ἄρρενας συνουσίᾳ, εἰπεῖν λέγεται ὅτι “πολλῷ ἄμεινον ἡμεῖς τὰ τῆς φύσεως ἀναγκαῖα ἀποπληροῦμεν ὑμῶν τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν· ἡμεῖς γὰρ φανερῶς τοῖς ἀρίστοις ὁμιλοῦμεν, ὑμεῖς δὲ λάθρᾳ ὑπὸ τῶν κακίστων μοιχεύεσθε”.

For which reason the wife of Argentocoxus the Caledonian said something very witty to Julia Augusta, who was chatting with her after the treaty about the intercourse of her sex with men, and she said, “We fulfill the necessities of nature far better than you Romans, for we mix openly with the best men, while you are debauched in secret by the worst”.

Dio employs anecdotes such as this throughout his history in order to make a point about the morality of Roman society. The Caledonian woman disrupts the summary of Severus’ accomplishments to voice contemporary concerns from Dio’s lifetime.[[1083]](#footnote-1083) The digression is part of a narrative transition to the reign of Caracalla, and also marks a transition in Julia Domna’s presence in Dio’s history from a background character to an active political figure.[[1084]](#footnote-1084) Dio does not blame the empress for the lack of sexual morality, but uses her to explore other aspects of his narrative and overarching moralizing agenda. From the death of Septimius Severus through the end of the Severan period, women of the imperial household adopt overt political roles, and Dio’s narrative shifts as he records the politics of his own lifetime.

Throughout his history, Dio’s accounts of women show the influence of his contemporary experience and the political roles adopted by the Severans.[[1085]](#footnote-1085) This is evident in his focus on female morality and the impact of women on historical events. Self-control in one’s sexual desires (*sophrosyne*), the foundational virtue of womanhood, lies at the heart of Dio’s narratives of women, and its presence or absence provides the basis for his praise or condemnation of the women of the imperial household especially. The following discussion analyzes women in Dio as historical agents and/or moral *exempla* by setting them in a broadly chronological framework and according to the following schema: (1) women of early Rome, (2) the Vestal Virgins, (3) foreign women, (4) women and domesticity, (5) women and politics, (6) and women of Dio’s lifetime, ending with (7) conclusions on the narrative utility of women in Dio’s history. While many of the individuals mentioned are familiar from other historians, this chapter focuses on aspects of their stories that are unique to Dio and earn his especial admiration or contempt.

*1. Women of Early Rome: Establishing Paradigms*

In his narrative of early Rome, Dio establishes clear paradigms of womanhood that become more complex as his history progresses. Such women provide moral models to follow or to avoid; they also provide precursors for later historical figures. The emotional speeches and dramatic actions of these women introduce overarching narrative themes that are not necessarily gender-specific, including what it takes to be a good leader.[[1086]](#footnote-1086)

Although Roman women and their domestic lives remain largely separate from the public world of men, women transgress into the political and military spheres in times of civil conflict and thus into Dio’s extant narrative.[[1087]](#footnote-1087) Hersilia and the Sabine women illustrate the ability of women to act in groups and achieve political ends without compromising their domestic virtue (fr. 5.5–9). When Hersilia and the other women rush from the Palatine into the space between the Roman and Sabine armies, they call for peace; failing that, they demand that the Romans and Sabines kill them and their children before engaging in battle, so that the battle will no longer be fought between family members. Ripping open their garments, they display breasts and bellies, advertising their motherhood and the family connection between the warring peoples. The men are moved to weeping and come together to make an accord (fr. 5.5–7).[[1088]](#footnote-1088) These women establish that civil conflict is the worst type of conflict Rome will face, and they would prefer to die.

Dio’s Lucretia has a different political message (fr. 11.13–20). Lucretia is an *exemplum* of female *sophrosyne*, who, as Mallan demonstrates, has been transformed from her Livian model “to suit the ethical and political components of his [Dio’s] own narrative programme”.[[1089]](#footnote-1089) While Livy’s Lucretia claims to be an example for women, Dio’s Lucretia is the first person to die by suicide in order to have freedom, providing a model that is not gender-specific.[[1090]](#footnote-1090) The significance of Dio’s Lucretia emerges during the speech she delivers prior to her suicide (fr. 2.11):

“καὶ ἐγὼ μέν (γυνὴ γάρ εἰμι) τὰ πρέποντα ἐμαυτῇ ποιήσω· ὑμεῖς δ’ εἴπερ ἄνδρες ἐστὲ καὶ τῶν γαμετῶν τῶν τε παίδων ὑμῶν προορᾶσθε, τιμωρήσατε μὲν ἐμοί, ἐλευθερώθητε δὲ αὐτοί, καὶ δείξατε τοῖς τυράννοις οἵων ἄρα ὑμῶν ὄντων οἵαν γυναῖκα ὕβρισαν”.

“And I (for I am a woman) will do what is fitting for myself; but you, if you are men and care for your wives and children, avenge me and free yourselves, and show the tyrants what sort of men you are and what sort of woman they outraged”.

In this simple, powerful exhortation, Lucretia distinguishes between female *sophrosyne*, her adherence to which motivates her suicide, and male *sophrosyne*, a political virtue suggesting the moderation of a good leader.[[1091]](#footnote-1091) She demands that the Roman men prioritize freedom from tyranny as an absolute necessity. Dio’s version of Lucretia stands out for her exhortation to Brutus and his men to free themselves and prove that they are men through political action.[[1092]](#footnote-1092) *Exempla* like Lucretia are rare in the early books of Dio.[[1093]](#footnote-1093) Nevertheless, her lessons on freedom and *sophrosyne* are relevant for Dio’s readership, and she becomes a powerful reminder that *exempla* have both moral and political functions: to make their audience better people as well as better citizens.[[1094]](#footnote-1094) Lucretia suggests that even female *exempla* can serve both moral and political purposes (fr. 11.13–20).

One further example solidifies the emotional impact of women who act on behalf of Rome and place city before family. When Coriolanus’ mother Veturia and wife Volumnia are joined by his children and the matrons of Rome to convince him not to attack his native city, Veturia suggests that rage should not be his central motivating factor: excessive emotions are womanly, including rage and jealousy (fr.18.8–9). Dio increases the pathos of the scene by adding a visual element to her emotional appeal: like the Sabines, Veturia tears her clothing and displays breasts and belly (fr. 18.10). The spectacle of female lamentation overwhelms Coriolanus and he withdraws. Thus through public lamentation and impassioned calls to action, Dio’s women of early Rome establish the concepts of *sophrosyne*, civil strife, and the management of emotions by good leaders as foundational aspects of his political history.

Anti-models also emerge in Rome’s early history and provide precursors for the wives of emperors who influence or outright manage the imperial succession. Tanaquil, wife of Lucius Tarquinius Priscus, supports the accession of Servius Tullius in exchange for the promise that her sons will succeed him. Although Tarquinius is already dead, she assures the Roman people that he is alive and recovering, but that the management of Rome should be entrusted to Servius in the meantime (Zon. 7.9.1–6).[[1095]](#footnote-1095) In the following generation, Tullia, daughter of Servius Tullius and wife of Tarquinius Superbus, is a morally corrupt, power-hungry woman who complements the depraved character of her husband. She desires power as much as her husband and assists in the plot against her father. Her absolute degeneracy is proven when she drives a chariot over his dead body (Zon. 7.9.13–17). Tanaquil and Tullia foreshadow imperial women of the Severan household, especially Julia Domna and her sister Julia Maesa, discussed below.[[1096]](#footnote-1096)

*2. The Vestal Virgins and the Morality of an Age*

The Vestal Virgins provide symbols of the morality and sanctity of Rome from the time of Silvia, mother of Romulus and Remus (fr. 5.1). Their public prominence sets them apart from other women, and Dio records several moments when their deaths provide a litmus test for the morality of the age. In the fragmentary book 26, three Vestals are punished at the same time for being unchaste, but their actions are attributed to the wrath of some god (26.87.1–5). The Bona Dea scandal of 62 BCE provides an opportunity to mention rites carried out by the Vestals and forbidden to men. When held in the home of Julius Caesar, Dio asserts that the cross-dressed Publius Clodius debauchedCaesar’s wife. Caesar, although he doesn’t believe the tale, divorces Pompeia because of the suspicion of adultery, explaining, “A chaste wife not only cannot err, but must not come into shameful suspicion” (τὴν γὰρ σώφρονα χρῆναι μὴ μόνον μηδὲν ἁμαρτάνειν, ἀλλὰ μηδ’ ἐς ὑποψίαν αἰσχρὰν ἀφικνεῖσθαι, 37.45.2).

Various imperial women received honors and privileges similar to those of the Vestal Virgins, including the freedom from *tutela* (guardianship) and *sacrosanctitas*. Such freedoms are first granted to Livia and Octavia in 35 BCE (49.38.1).[[1097]](#footnote-1097) Under Claudius, Livia also received divine honors and the Vestals attended her cult (60.5.2). Caligula granted the honors of the Vestals to his grandmother Antonia and three sisters (59.3.4); however, within the same section, Dio reports that Caligula forced his grandmother to die by suicide, debauched his sisters, and sent two into exile, Drusilla having already died (59.3.6). Domitian put a Vestal to death on the charge of unchastity (67.3.32).[[1098]](#footnote-1098) During Dio’s lifetime, Caracalla put four Vestals to death, including one that he himself assaulted: Clodia Laeta, Aurelia Severa, and Pomponia Ruvina were buried alive, while Cannutia Crescentia hurled herself from a rooftop (78[77].16.1–3 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*).[[1099]](#footnote-1099) Their deaths prove the tyranny of the emperor: perhaps nothing is more indicative of an immoral leader than his inability to respect the sanctified bodies of the Vestals.

*3. Foreign Women*

Foreign women, especially warrior queens, challenge Roman concepts of gender and power. Dio uses such women as Cleopatra and Boudica to comment upon both concepts and their instability in moments of civil discord and at times when Rome labored under a tyrant. Women that operate outside of this paradigm earn accolades and are objects of wonder and unexpected admiration.

With Queen Teuta, wife of Agron, Dio establishes a characterization of foreign women as unable to lead (fr. 49.2–7; Zon. 8.19; cf. Polyb. 2.4.7–2.12.8). When Agron dies and leaves his young son as his successor, his wife governs the kingdom of the Ardiaeans in his stead. She immediately imprisons and kills Roman ambassadors, and panics when the Romans declare war against her. After a truce is formed, her womanly disposition—vain and fickle—emboldens her to send an army against the Romans. Her capriciousness loses her the loyalty of her emissary, Demetrius, among others, and ends in her abdication of power.[[1100]](#footnote-1100)

Beautiful foreign women are dangerous objects of desire. Scipio is noteworthy for his ability to withstand such allurements: rather than fall in love with a captive maiden, as was expected, he gains the allegiance of the Celtiberians for returning her to her fiancée, Allucius, along with the ransom her kinspeople had paid. They had assumed that Scipio would fall in love with a maiden distinguished for her beauty. His noble action gains him the loyalty of her kin and the rest of the Celtiberians (16.8.43). This anecdote is contrasted with the narrative of Sophonisba (called Sophonis by Dio), the Carthaginian noblewoman who captured the eye of the Numidian king Masinissa during the Second Punic War (17.57.51):[[1101]](#footnote-1101)

ὅτι τῆς Σοφωνίδος ἰσχυρῶς ἤρα Μασινίσσας, ἣ τό <τε> κάλλος ἐπιφανὲς εἶχε (καὶ γὰρ τῇ συμμετρίᾳ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τῷ ἄνθει τῆς ὥρας ἤκμαζεν) καὶ παιδείᾳ πολλῇ καὶ γραμμάτων καὶ μουσικῆς ἤσκητο· ἀστεία τε καὶ αἱμύλος ἦν, καὶ τὸ σύμπαν οὕτως ἐπαφρόδιτος ὥστε καὶ ὀφθεῖσα ἢ καὶ ἀκουσθεῖσα μόνον πάντα τινά, καὶ τὸν πάνυ δυσέρωτα, κατεργάσασθαι.

Masinissa fell exceedingly in love with Sophonis, who had outstanding beauty (both the symmetry of body and the bloom of youth) and was trained in literature and music; she was also clever, flattering, and altogether lovely such that seeing or even just hearing her overpowered everyone, even the most insensible to love.

Masinissa marries her without Scipio’s permission, and the marriage brings about the ruin of both. Sophonisba proves her fortitude and strength of character in her final words, as she declares her devotion to Masinissa, and in her choice to die freely by drinking a cup of poison given to her by her husband.[[1102]](#footnote-1102) Scipio marvels at the bravery of her action (ἐθαύμασεν, Zon. 13.6). The language of Scipio’s reaction is echoed in the death of Cleopatra, tying together the two women as well as their admirers.[[1103]](#footnote-1103)

Cleopatra is a recurring character from her introduction in book 42 to her suicide in book 51. Within these books, her actions and demeanor are used to comment upon the characters of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and Octavian, who is uniquely able to resist her charms. Dio introduces Cleopatra when Pompey flees to Egypt: she is at war with her brother, and after Pompey’s death, Caesar journeys to Egypt to take up her cause (42.3.1; 42.9.1). Cleopatra gains influence over Caesar for her charm, beauty, and cunning. Like Sophonisba, she “was the most beautiful woman and at that time in the prime of her life very striking” (42.34.4: ἄλλως τε γὰρ περικαλλεστάτη γυναικῶν ἐγένετο, καὶ τότε τῇ τῆς ὥρας ἀκμῇ πολὺ διέπρεπε). Upon seeing her and hearing her voice, Caesar becomes enslaved (ἐδουλώθη, 42.35.1), so much so that he fights her battles, overcoming Egypt and handing it over to her (42.44.1). The Romans censure Caesar for his love of Cleopatra, particularly when she comes to Rome and resides at his villa on the Tiber(43.20.2, 43.27.3).

Caesar’s relationship with Cleopatra is comparable to that of Mark Antony: Dio again uses conventional language of erotic enslavement to describe his relationship with the foreign queen (48.24.2). When rumor spreads that Antony will give Rome to Cleopatra and transfer the center of Rome’s power to Egypt, the Romans declare war against her (50.4.1).[[1104]](#footnote-1104) Despite her cunning intellect, she is fearful and anxious in the war with Octavian. These qualities likely reflect pro-Octavian propaganda and are attributed to her “womanly and Egyptian character” (50.33.2: ἀπό τε τοῦ γυναικείου καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ Αἰγυπτίου).[[1105]](#footnote-1105) After her defeat at Actium, she gains an audience and attempts to seduce Octavian by reading letters from Julius Caesar. Octavian resists her charms and thereby earns Dio’s admiration. The encounter does more to glorify Octavian than demean Cleopatra (51.12.1–13.2).[[1106]](#footnote-1106) When he presents varying accounts of Cleopatra’s death, Dio focuses on Octavian, who is astonished by her suicide, “admires and pities” her (51.14.15: καὶ ἐθαύμασε καὶ ἠλέησεν), and feels sorry for himself for being deprived of the glory of his victory.[[1107]](#footnote-1107) After her death, Dio gives a brief epitaph of both Antony and Cleopatra, and concludes with a warning against overweening ambition and the dangers of placing a woman of excessive passions in control. Cleopatra’s death resulted from her inability to charm Octavian, which increases Dio’s admiration for the soon-to-be emperor (51.15.4). Her image on a funeral couch completed the splendor of Octavian’s triumph (51.21.8). Although defeated, she remained glorified through a gold statue placed by Julius Caesar in the temple of Venus Genetrix and in dedications made in other temples in Rome (51.22.3).[[1108]](#footnote-1108)

Several resistance narratives elaborate upon the effects of women in war. The inhabitants of Salonae successfully repulse Octavian with the help of Gabinius, and the women join the men in performing a “great deed” (42.11.2: μέγα ἔργον). These women let down their hair, dress in black, take up torches, and join their men to assault Octavian’s camp at midnight. The Romans panic at their terrifying appearance and are defeated. Octavian escapes and conquers them in battle, but the women earn Dio’s recognition for assisting their men against the invaders (42.11.1–4). Foreign women also merit Dio’s respect for preferring honorable death to capture. During the Third Punic War, when Hasdrubal recognizes his defeat at Carthage and approaches Scipio with a suppliant branch, his wife berates him, throws her children into the burning temple of Aesculapius, and then casts herself in (Zon. 9.30). Similarly, during Germanicus’ siege of Arduba, the women act in contrast to the men of the town in their peace and prioritization of liberty over servitude: τῆς τε γὰρ ἐλευθερίας καὶ παρὰ τὴν τῶν ἀνδρῶν γνώμην ἐφίεντο, καὶ πᾶν ὁτιοῦν πρὸ τοῦ δουλεῦσαι παθεῖν ᾑροῦντο (56.15.2: “for the women, against the decision of the men, desired freedom and were prepared to suffer anything whatever instead of servitude”). They prove their convictions by taking their children and either throwing themselves into the flames or into the river below (56.15.3).

By contrast, individual women who act on the offensive are portrayed as poor leaders, uncivilized and unrestrained. Boudica, who led a revolt in Britain in 60/61 CE, stands out amongst Dio’s warrior queens for the extent of her narrative (although this is in part due to Xiphilinus’ epitome), her Amazon-like physical description, her savage treatment of her Roman captives, and her lengthy speech that critiques female rulers, culminating with the effeminacy of Nero and its impact on the masculinity of the Romans (62[62].1–12). Dio generalizes elsewhere that women lack judgment and rationality (12.49.4), but this leader “was Boudica, a woman of the royal family who had greater than average intelligence for a woman” (62[62].2.2 [Xiph.]: Βουδουῖκα ἦν, γυνὴ Βρεττανὶς γένους τοῦ βασιλείου, μεῖζον ἢ κατὰ γυναῖκα φρόνημα ἔχουσα). She is successful in uniting the Britons and burning Camulodunum (Colchester) and Londinium (London). Her warriors treat their prisoners, especially the noblewomen, with excessive cruelty, torturing them in the name of Andate (also called Andraste), their goddess of Victory (62[62].7.2–3 [Xiph.]).

Before a battle against the general Suetonius Paulinus and his Roman army, Boudica delivers a lengthy address to her troops (62[62].3–5 [Xiph.]).[[1109]](#footnote-1109) Her appearance is a list of superlatives, emphasizing her foreignness and masculinity (62[62].2.3–4 [Xiph.]):

ἦν δὲ καὶ τὸ σῶμα μεγίστη καὶ τὸ εἶδος βλοσυρωτάτη τό τε βλέμμα δριμυτάτη, καὶ τὸ φθέγμα τραχὺ εἶχε, τήν τε κόμην πλείστην τε καὶ ξανθοτάτην οὖσαν μέχρι τῶν γλουτῶν καθεῖτο, καὶ στρεπτὸν μέγαν χρυσοῦν ἐφόρει, χιτῶνά τε παμποίκιλον ἐνεκεκόλπωτο, καὶ χλαμύδα ἐπ’ αὐτῷ παχεῖαν ἐνεπεπόρπητο.

Her form was very tall and her appearance most grim, her eye most piercing and her voice harsh; a thick tawny mass of hair fell to her buttocks, and she wore a great golden torc. She was dressed in a multicolored tunic and a thick mantle fastened on top.

Boudica’s foreign appearance contrasts with her rational speaking style. She opens with economic concerns (the Romans are impoverishing the Britons with taxes), and eventually turns to the poor leadership of Rome, criticizing female leaders including Messalina and Agrippina the Younger, culminating with Nero. She observes that a feminized “Domitia-Nero” (ἡ Νερωνὶς ἡ Δομιτία, 62[62].6.5[Xiph.]) is having an adverse effect on the morality, masculinity, and strength of the men of Rome: the Romans are “enslaved to a lyre-player, and a bad one at that” (62[62].6.4 [Xiph.]: κιθαρῳδῷ, καὶ τούτῳ κακῷ, δουλεύοντας). Although Suetonius Paulinus soundly defeats Boudica and her Britons in the ensuing battle, her narrative reflects the criticism found throughout Dio’s portrait of Nero.[[1110]](#footnote-1110) Boudica’s story makes a broader political point about the nature of leadership and the necessity to have a strong man at the helm.

*4. Women and Domesticity*

Dio spares little space for domestic life, unless politics forces it into the public sphere. Women serve as an excuse for war from the time of Lavinia, whose broken engagement with Turnus provides the impetus for his war against Aeneas (fr. 1.1). As power became concentrated in the hands of a few men, marriage was used increasingly to create alliances, although without complete success.[[1111]](#footnote-1111) Women’s domestic lives become intertwined with politics and the law from the time of Augustus and his establishment of the Julian Laws in 18 BCE. Among other strictures, this moral legislation intended to encourage marriage and the production of children among the elites, while making adultery a crime against the state.[[1112]](#footnote-1112) After the *equites* protest the laws during a celebration of games in 9 CE, Dio’s Augustus speaks in the Forum on the importance of marriage and children (56.1–9).[[1113]](#footnote-1113) He delivers two speeches, one addressed to married men and the other to unmarried men, in which he praises the former and berates the latter. To the former, he asks (56.3.3):

“πῶς μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἄριστον γυνὴ σώφρων οἰκουρὸς οἰκονόμος παιδοτρόφος ὑγιαίνοντά τε εὐφρᾶναι καὶ ἀσθενοῦντα θεραπεῦσαι, εὐτυχοῦντί τε συγγενέσθαι καὶ δυστυχοῦντα παραμυθήσασθαι, τοῦ τε νέου τὴν ἐμμανῆ φύσιν καθεῖρξαι καὶ τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου τὴν ἔξωρον αὐστηρότητα κεράσαι;”

“For surely nothing is better than a wife who is a chaste mistress, housekeeper, rearer of children, who gives gladness in health and care in sickness, who is a partner in good times and a consoler in misfortunes, who confines the mad nature of youth and regulates the unseasonable extreme harshness of old age?”

Augustus identifies the ideal qualities of womanhood and domestic life, universalizing his message to the husbands. In his address to the unmarried, he suggests that the men go against the gods, Romulus, and the ancestors, recalling Hersilia, who established the rites of marriage (56.5.5). Augustus’ speeches contain a level of irony, as the emperor was himself a known philanderer.[[1114]](#footnote-1114) His wife Livia asserts that she obtained influence over him in part because she turned a blind eye towards such actions (58.2.5). Despite his own faults, he offers rewards to those with multiple children and penalizes the unmarried. A portion of his laws were revised as the *lex Papia Poppaea*, named for the two childless, unmarried consuls of 9 CE (56.10.1–4).

Women that remain in the home earn admiration for unexpected moments of strength. Porcia, wife of Brutus, proves that she is able to withstand physical pain, exhorting him to confide in her and cutting her own leg in order to demonstrate that she is trustworthy (44.13.2–4; cf. Plut. *Brut*. 13.3–5; Val. Max. 3.2.15). Brutus marvels at her action and it grants him renewed strength (ἐθαύμασε, 44.14.1). Arria, wife of Caecina Paetus, illustrates that physical pain and even death is meaningless when compared to marital devotion, killing herself in advance of her husband and proclaiming, “See, Paetus, I feel no pain” (60.16.6: “ἰδού, Παῖτε, οὐκ ἀλγῶ”).[[1115]](#footnote-1115) Arria commits suicide with her husband and earns honor in death, demonstrating that positive modelscan exist even in times of failing morality and political crisis.[[1116]](#footnote-1116)

Women counter the expectations of domesticity by leaving their homes and protesting in public. Their actions are transgressive by nature, but achieve results: the Sabine women forced a treaty, and the women who support the repeal of the *lex Oppia* in 195 BCE achieve their goal (18.60.17). In the latter episode, the women gather near the Forum as Cato and Lucius Valerius debate the law, eager to learn how the affair turns out. After Valerius comically suggests that women join the military and take part in assemblies, the women react (Zon. 9.17.4):

καὶ ὁ μὲν Οὐαλλέριος ταῦτα ἐπισκώπτων εἶπεν, ἀκούσασαι δὲ αἱ γυναῖκες (ἐγγὺς γὰρ τῆς ἀγορᾶς πολλαὶ διέτριβον πολυπραγμονοῦσαι τὸ γενησόμενον), εἰσεπήδησαν εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καταβοῶσαι τοῦ νόμου, καὶ οὕτω σπουδῇ λυθέντος αὐτοῦ ἀνεδήσαντο εὐθὺς ἐκεῖ ἐν τῇ ἐκκλψσίᾳ κόσμον τινὰ καὶ ἐξῆλθον χορεύουσαι.

Although Valerius said this as a joke, the women, hearing (for many were passing the time near the forum to meddle in the outcome), rushed into the assembly denouncing the law, and when it was thus swiftly repealed they immediately put on some ornaments in the assembly and left dancing.

Zonaras’ account of the women’s dancing minimizes their serious participation, mocks their intelligence through their willful misunderstanding of Valerius’ comment, and critiques their frivolous celebration.[[1117]](#footnote-1117) The women counter the advice of Cato, who ended his speech by concluding (Zon. 9.17.2):

“κοσμείσθωσαν οὖν αἱ γυναῖκες μὴ χρυσῷ μηδὲ λίθοις ἤ τισιν ἀνθηροῖς καὶ ἀμοργίνοις ἐσθήμασιν, ἀλλὰ σωφροσύνῃ, φιλανδρίᾳ, φιλοτεκνίᾳ, πειθοῖ, μετριότητι, τοῖς νόμοις τοῖς κειμένοις, τοῖς ὅπλοις τοῖς ἡμετέροις, ταῖς νίκαις, τοῖς τροπαίοις.”

“Therefore, let the women be adorned with neither gold nor gems or other shining and transparent garment, but with modesty, love of husband, love of children, persuasion, moderation, established laws, our arms, our victories, our trophies.”

Dio’s Cato echoes themes present in Livy’s version of his speech (Livy 34.2–4), and foreshadows Augustus’ speech to the husbands. The continuity from Cato to Augustus suggests a preference in Dio for strict morality over luxury and public display.

*5. Women and Politics*

Although women did not hold public positions, they were able to impact civic life from within the home. Dio discusses influential women from the Late Republic through his own time, recognizing the public role of imperial women while criticizing any attempt to transform unofficial influence into political power. In recording this period of history, Dio’s account becomes more biographical, focusing on the emperors.[[1118]](#footnote-1118) Women serve to illustrate aspects of the emperor’s character or explicate themes of his reign and across reigns.[[1119]](#footnote-1119) These women help frame Dio’s history of men, providing comparative models and reflections or foils to the men with whom they are associated, while offering some insight into the experience of historical women.

At the end of the Republic, Fulvia and Octavia, both wives of Mark Antony, provide oppositional models. While Dio’s portraits may reflect political propaganda more than historical accuracy, he is not alone in his condemnation of Fulvia as an overtly masculine, power-hungry woman who influenced the career of her husband and whose actions harmed the reputations of the men with whom she was associated as well as their causes.[[1120]](#footnote-1120) Fulvia is malicious and spiteful, a woman who mistreats the body of Cicero (47.8.4) and causes the deaths of many in the post-Philippi proscription period, “both to satisfy her hatred and gain their wealth” (47.8.2: καὶ αὐτὴ καὶ κατ’ ἔχθραν καὶ διὰ χρήματα). Her ambition is boundless, and Dio claims that she replaced Publius Servilius as Antony’s co-consul in everything but name, managed political and military affairs with him, and organized a triumph for him (48.4.1–6).

While Fulvia mirrors Antony’s faults, Octavia, Antony’s next wife and Octavian’s sister, confronts them. Although she is a political pawn in much of Dio’s account, one action stands out. During the period after Philippi, Octavia helped save a proscribed man and his wife (47.7.4–5):

τεκμήριον δέ, Τανουσία γυνὴ ἐπιφανὴς τὸν ἄνδρα Τίτον Οὐίνιον ἐπικηρυχθέντα τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἐς κιβωτὸν παρὰ ἀπελευθέρῳ τινὶ Φιλοποίμενι κατέκρυψεν, ὥστε καὶ πίστιν τοῦ τεθνηκέναι αὐτὸν παρασχεῖν· μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο δημοτελῆ ἑορτήν, ἣν συγγενής τις αὐτὴς ποιήσειν ἔμελλε, τηρήσασα, τόν τε Καίσαρα διὰ τῆς Ὀκταουίας τῆς ἀδελφῆς ἐς τὸ θέατρον μόνον τῶν τριῶν ἐσελθεῖν διεπράξατο, κἀνταῦθα ἐσπηδήσασα τό τε πραχθὲν ἀγνοοῦντί οἱ ἐμήνυσε, καὶ τὴν κιβωτὸν αὐτὴν ἐσκομίσασα ἐκεῖθεν τὸν ἄνδρα ἐξήγαγεν, ὥστε τὸν Καίσαρα θαυμάσαντα πάντας μὲν αὐτοὺς ἀφεῖναι (καὶ γὰρ τοῖς συγκρύψασί τινα θάνατος προείρητο), τὸν δὲ Φιλοποίμενα καὶ ἐς τὴν ἱππάδα κατατάξαι.

As proof, Tanusia, a remarkable woman, hid her proscribed husband Titus Vinius first in a chest at the home of the freedman Philopoemen, so as to offer proof that he had been killed. After this she awaited a festival which her relative was going to produce, and having taken care, she brought it about through Caesar’s sister Octavia that Caesar entered alone of the triumvirs. Then she rushed up and confessed her action to him, still ignorant, brought in the chest and brought out her husband, such that Caesar, astonished, released them all (for death was also brought upon someone who hid someone) and enrolled Philopoemen among the Equites.

Dio introduces this anecdote as evidence that the proscriptions were primarily enacted by Lepidus and Antony, and its conclusion proves Octavian’s clemency. Tanusia provides evidence that women could have an impact on politics by becoming informants against husbands and sons, or by supporting husbands and sons targeted by proscriptions.[[1121]](#footnote-1121) Their actions illustrate the blurring of public and private, domestic and political spaces in times of civil discord. Octavia’s supportive role stems from within the home and from alliances between women, suggesting a network of informed elite women who, despite having no public positions, were able to effect change. Octavia also organizes political marriages in an attempt to reconcile Octavian and Antony, but fails in her attempt (48.54.3–5).

Octavia is a potential rival of Livia, who impacts politics at the highest level. Dio introduces Livia as an exile with her husband Tiberius and young son (48.15.3–4). She captures the heart of Octavian, who divorces Scribonia on the day of their daughter’s birth to marry Livia, pregnant with Drusus (48.34.3, 48.43.6). While she receives similar honors to Octavia, including public statues (49.38.1), her actions are far more public and overtly political than those of her sister-in-law. She is honored after the death of her son Drusus with the exceptional privileges granted to mothers of three children, the *ius trium liberorum*, and Dio is unique in noting her receipt of this honor (55.2.4–5).

Dio demonstrates Livia’s influence over Augustus after the conspiracy of Cinna Magnus is discovered in 4 CE and Livia gives a speech on the power of clemency in a ruler. Her dialogue with her husband is the centerpiece of book 55 (55.16.2–21.4). While Seneca also gives an account of the conspiracy (Sen. *Clem*. 1.9.1–12), Dio fashions the conversation held within the intimacy of the imperial bedchamber to suit his own narrative goals.[[1122]](#footnote-1122) Livia counsels her husband to grant the conspirators pardon, and her words valorize clemency in a ruler and contain sound advice relevant for Dio’s own day.[[1123]](#footnote-1123) Allen reads Livia as “an adept political analyst” comparable to Agrippa and Maecenas.[[1124]](#footnote-1124) Adler argues that the passage simultaneously valorizes Livia as “steadfastly pragmatic” and undermines her as “self-serving and manipulative”.[[1125]](#footnote-1125) She convinces Augustus and the value of her advice is proven by Dio’s assurance that no further attempts were made on his life, except perhaps by Livia herself (55.22.2).

Dio’s characterization of Livia augments contrasts between Augustus and Tiberius as emperors. Augustus provided a paradigmatic ruler for Dio, with Livia, a woman of sexual morality, as his wife.[[1126]](#footnote-1126) Tiberius is a duplicitous, impious ruler, under whose regime Livia is more of a political rival than a supporter, power-hungry and increasingly involved in public affairs.[[1127]](#footnote-1127) In his will, Augustus granted Livia one-third of his estate, adopted her into the Julian *gens*, and honored her with the title of Augusta,marking a significant moment of change for women in the imperial household. She also became the priestess of the cult of the Divine Augustus (56.46.1–2). Livia uses her title to gain public prominence, although she faces censure from Tiberius. Dio is overtin his attribution of power to Livia, suggesting that she took part in the senate proceedings after the death of Augustus and that the senate expected her to exert influence (56.47.1). He insinuates that she manipulated the imperial succession, but incurred the hatred of Tiberius for claiming that she had secured the throne for him (57.3.3). Dio claims that Tiberius eventually left Rome for Capri primarily on Livia’s account: even after he barred her from public affairs, she continued to control the state from her home (57.12.1–6). In her death notice and the decree of posthumous honors (58.2.1–6), Dio records anecdotes that single out Livia’s *sophrosyne* as praiseworthy (58.2.5) and is unique in noting that Livia was voted an honorific arch by the Senate (58.2.3):

καὶ προσέτι καὶ ἁψῖδα αὐτῇ, ὃ μηδεμιᾷ ἄλλῃ γυναικί, ἐψηφίσαντο, ὅτι τε οὐκ ὀλίγους σφῶν ἐσεσώκει, καὶ ὅτι παῖδας πολλῶν ἐτετρόφει κόρας τε πολλοῖς συνεξεδεδώκει, ἀφ’ οὗ γε καὶ μητέρα αὐτὴν τῆς πατρίδος τινὲς ἐπωνόμαζον.

They also voted her an arch, which was voted for no other woman, because she had saved not a few of them, and because she had raised the children of many and paid for the dowries of many, on account of which some were also calling her “Mother of the Country”.

Tiberius promises to fund the project, thereby ensuring that it was never built (58.2.6).

Among Livia’s successors as imperial wives and mothers, Messalina and Agrippina the Younger split the Claudian Principate between them. Examples from Dio are now restricted to what Xiphilinus decided to add to his excerpts: in the extant text, these women overwhelm Dio’s narrative. Dio attributed the failure of Claudius’ Principate to his dependence on his wives and freedmen, and both Messalina and Agrippina take advantage of his ignorance and weak will. Messalina uses her authority to banish and kill other members of the Julio-Claudian family, including the two Julias (60.8.4–5, 60.18.1), and falsely accuses Asiaticus in order to acquire his property (60.29.6). She and Claudius’ freedmen order the deaths of many men and women, preserving some who offer bribes or other favors (60.14.2, 60.16.1–2, 60.29.6a), and allow others to purchase citizenship or magistracies (60.17.5). Her sexual promiscuity knows no bounds, and she forces other noblewomen to join her (60.31.1). The text is corrupt at the end of Messalina’s life and the beginning of Claudius’ marriage to his niece Agrippina, but preserves the idea that Agrippina gained complete control of Claudius and became a “second Messalina”; she was also given the title of Augusta, a title Claudius refused to grant Messalina (60.32.1, 60.33.21, 60.12.5). Agrippina has more public prominence than Messalina, and Dio records her accompaniment of Claudius and business transactions (60.33.1, 60.33.7). She even assists Claudius in fighting a fire (60.33.12). Claudius grows angry and fearful about her promotion of her son Nero over his son Britannicus, and she arranges his murder before he can curtail her power (60.33.1–3).[[1128]](#footnote-1128)

Agrippina continues her rule into the reign of Nero until Nero falls under the spell of Poppaea Sabina. After killing both his mother Agrippina and wife Octavia, Nero marries Poppaea. Poppaea’s death provides an occasion for Dio to recount her excessive luxuries, including bathing in asses’ milk and other attentions to her beauty (62[62].28.1 [Xiph.]). Dio provides evidence for Poppaea’s deification and cult worship as Sabina Venus, and records that the matrons of Rome dedicated a temple to her (63[63].26.3 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]).[[1129]](#footnote-1129) Nero then descends into a life of theatrical license. Nero and Poppaea are well-matched, as is illustrated by their luxuries and excesses. By comparison, Vitellius failed to find Nero’s Golden House luxurious enough for his tastes, and his wife Galeria ridiculed its mean décor (64[65].4.1–2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]).

Given the moral failures of imperial noblewomen, Dio finds unexpected models in non-elite women. The freedwoman Epicharis remains steadfast under torture when questioned about the Pisonian conspiracy (62[62].27.3 [Xiph.]), and Vespasian’s concubine Caenis earns a remarkable death notice for her fidelity and excellent memory.[[1130]](#footnote-1130) Dio recounts (65[66].14.3 [Xiph.]):

τοῦτό τε οὖν αὐτῆς ἐθαύμασα, καὶ προσέτι ὅτι καὶ ὁ Οὐεσπασιανὸς αὐτῇ ὑπερέχαιρε, πλεῖστόν τε διὰ τοῦτο ἴσχυσε, καὶ πλοῦτον ἀμύθητον ἤθροισεν, ὥστε καὶ νομισθῆναι ὅτι δι’ αὐτῆς ἐκείνης ἐχρηματίζετο· πάμπολλα γὰρ παρὰ πολλῶν ἐλάμβανε, τοῖς μὲν ἀρχὰς τοῖς δὲ ἐπιτροπείας στρατείας ἱερωσύνας, ἤδη δέ τισι καὶ ἀποφάσεις αὐτοῦ πιπράσκουσα.

I wonder at [Caenis] for this reason, and also because Vespasian was so delighted in her, gave her the greatest influence because of this, and she gained unspeakable wealth, so that it was even reckoned that he made money through her. She took great amounts from many, sometimes selling magistracies, sometimes procuratorships, generalships, priesthoods, and indeed even decisions.

While Sophonisba’s and Cleopatra’s deaths caused Scipio and Octavian to wonder, and Porcia’s acceptance of pain elicited wonder from Brutus, Dio’s own wonder at Caenis is remarkable: the historian, a recorder of memorable people and deeds, wonders at a woman’s ability to remember. He uses Caenis to elaborate upon the character of Vespasian. Caenis is similar to Messalina and Agrippina the Younger in her selling of magistracies, and her death notice introduces anecdotes concerning Vespasian’s avarice (65[66].14.4–5 [Xiph.]).

Vespasian’s sons are noteworthy for their choice of companions as well. When Queen Berenice comes to Rome with her brother Agrippa and lives with Titus in the imperial palace, expecting marriage, Titus takes a lesson from Caesar’s mistake with Cleopatra and sends Berenice away when he perceives that the Romans are displeased with the situation (although he may have acted on the advice of Vespasian) (65[66].15.3–4 [Xiph.]).[[1131]](#footnote-1131) Domitian engages in all forms of debauchery, and his immorality is partially complemented by that of his wife Domitia. He separates from Domitia on charges of adultery, perhaps even divorcing her, but reconciles on the demand of the people (67[67].3.1 [Xiph./Zon.]).[[1132]](#footnote-1132) Domitian’s excesses impact numerous anonymous women, who are forced to fight each other in night games (67[67].8.4 [Xiph.]),[[1133]](#footnote-1133) or punished for adultery, sometimes with Domitian himself (67[67].12.1 [Xiph.]). Domitia has knowledge of the murder plot against Domitian and may have been directly involved (67[67].15.3–4 [Xiph.]). Rather than Domitia, Domitian’s nurse Phyllis removes the body and buries it (67[67].18.2 [Xiph.]).[[1134]](#footnote-1134)

Among the women of the Antonine period, Dio highlights Plotina, wife of Trajan, and Faustina the Younger, wife of Marcus Aurelius, for their concordant marriages as well as their political impact. Plotina is the model good wife of the model good emperor who, upon entering the imperial palace, turned to the populace and said, “τοιαύτη μέντοι ἐνταῦθα ἐσέρχομαι οἵα καὶ ἐξελθεῖν βούλομαι” (“I enter here such a woman as I also wish to be upon leaving,” 68[68].5.5 [Xiph.]). Plotina subsequently incurred no censure and ensured the succession of Hadrian (69[69].1.1–4 [Xiph.]). During the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Faustina the Younger is concerned with her future in the imperial household. When Marcus falls ill and she thinks he might die, she fears a return to a private station and makes an agreement with Cassius to marry her and obtain power (72[71].22.3 [Xiph.]). Marcus survives, and Faustina dies from gout or something else, “in order to avoid being convicted of her compact with Cassius” (72[71].29.1 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]: ἵνα μὴ ἐλεγχθῇ ἐφ’ οἷς πρὸς τὸν Κάσσιον συνετέθειτο). Faustina’s death provides an opportunity for Marcus Aurelius to prove his excellent character (72[71].30.1 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]), and the Senate honors the couple with silver statues in the temple of Venus and Rome, an altar where married couples would sacrifice, and a golden statue of Faustina that would be carried into the theater whenever the emperor was attending (72[71].31.1–2 [Xiph.]). Such an afterlife honored the empress for her marriage, overlooking her vices.

*6. Women of Dio’s Lifetime*

The women of the regal period as well as the Julio-Claudian, Flavian, and Antonine periods provided precedents for the Severan women who had authority in the imperial household and influenced its reputation.[[1135]](#footnote-1135) Dio brings his life experience into his account during the reign of Commodus, who required men (Dio included), wives (including his), and children to give two gold pieces to the emperor every year on his birthday (73[72].16.2–3 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). Dio uses the first person, interjecting autobiography into his history in order to demarcate a narrative shift from the recorded past to his lifetime.[[1136]](#footnote-1136) This shift impacts his presentation of women as agents of historical change. Julia Domna, her sister Julia Maesa, and Maesa’s daughters Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea, the mothers of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, respectively, increasingly control both the imperial succession and the successor. Dio uses these women to track a downward moral spiral from the death of Septimius Severus to the end of his work.

Dio provides the fullest surviving account of Julia Domna from antiquity. Mallan argues that she serves a moralizing function within the Severan narrative, providing a moral foil to Gaius Fulvius Plautianus and Caracalla, and an opportunity for Dio to explore political and ethical themes important to his account of the Severan period.[[1137]](#footnote-1137) Her biography is not comprehensive, but serves as part of Dio’s broader narrative and moralizing agenda.[[1138]](#footnote-1138) Julia Domna is at a disadvantage during the reign of her husband, Septimius Severus, who is overly influenced by Plautianus. Plautianus’ mastery over Severus is demonstrated in his treatment of Julia (Cass. Dio 76[75].15.6–7 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]):

καὶ οὕτω καὶ ἐς τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ὁ Πλαυτιανὸς αὐτοῦ κατεκράτει ὥστε καὶ τὴν Ἰουλίαν τὴν Αὔγουσταν πολλὰ καὶ δεινὰ ἐργάσασθαι· πάνυ γὰρ αὐτῇ ἤχθετο, καὶ σφόδρα αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸν Σεουῆρον ἀεὶ διέβαλλεν, ἐξετάσεις τε κατ’ αὐτῆς καὶ βασάνους κατ’ εὐγενῶν γυναικῶν ποιούμενος. καὶ ἡ μὲν αὐτή τε φιλοσοφεῖν διὰ ταῦτ’ ἤρξατο καὶ σοφισταῖς συνημέρευεν·

To such an extent did Plautianus rule [Severus] in every way that he often treated even Julia Augusta terribly; for he especially hated her and was slandering her severely to Severus, investigating her actions and producing evidence through noblewomen. And because of this she began to pursue philosophy and to spend time among sophists.

The account provides an unexpected explanation for Julia’s interest in philosophy, and initiates a catalogue of Plautianus’ depraved actions.

Female excesses are visible in the public sphere in the form of female athletic competitors, who are eventually forbidden from single combat because their actions were used to deride noblewomen (76[75].16.1 [Xiph.]). The marriage of Severus’ son Antoninus (Caracalla) to Plautilla is celebrated with a party that is “both traditional and barbaric” (τὰ μὲν βασιλικῶς τὰ δὲ βαρβαρικῶς, 77[76].1.2 [Xiph.]). Plautilla’s shamelessness disgusts Caracalla: she is banished together with her brother after Plautianus’ death (77[76].6.3 [Xiph.]), and killed after the death of Severus (78[77].1.1 [Xiph.]).

Julia Domna emerges in the reign of Caracalla as a tragic mother who is not even allowed to mourn the death of her son Geta (78[77].2.3–5 [Xiph.]). She gives sound advice to Caracalla, although it is not followed, and this inability to accept good advice becomes a mark of a poor emperor (78[77].10.4 [Xiph.]). Thus Julia and her son are differentiated from Livia’s successful advising of Augustus after the conspiracy of Cinna Magnus.[[1139]](#footnote-1139) While in Antioch, Julia receives petitions and correspondences by Caracalla and has her name included in letters to the Senate (78[77].18.2 [Xiph.]). She is instructed to sort through letters addressed to Caracalla and send important missives to her son on campaign in Parthia, suggesting that she had the ability to manipulate empire-wide communications and control her son’s knowledge about the concerns of the empire (79[78].4.2–4). Scott (2017) argues that Dio portrays Julia Domna as foreign and power-hungry, and that this portrait is informed by his similar analysis of the later Severan women. Levick (2007) argues that Dio’s hostile account suggests that Julia was to blame for the downward descent of the Severans. Julia was Syrian, and while some scholars have seen her cunning (*panourgos*) as a pejorative aspect of her Syrian character, others note that this is an ethnic stereotype of Syrians, but not necessarily an indictment of Julia by Dio.[[1140]](#footnote-1140) When Caracalla is overthrown, his mother mourns not for her son, but for her own loss of power. She fears her reduction to a private station and the loss of the title of Augusta, and prefers death by starvation (79[78].23.1–4); this attitude recalls that of Faustina. In her obituary, Dio uses the term *archē* to indicate a level of power close to that of a regent (79[78].24.2).[[1141]](#footnote-1141)

A comparison between Julia Domna and Livia, the original model of female ascendency in politics, illustrates similarities and differences in Dio’s presentation of both women and the reigns of their husbands and sons. While Livia received numerous public honors and the title of Augusta, her influence is felt more when she successfully advises Augustus and hosts public receptions in her home, a practice copied by Julia Domna (57.12.1; 78[77].18.3 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). Tiberius attempted to curb her power, evidenced by his limitation of honors and separation of banquets, in which Tiberius would host the men and Livia the women (e.g., 55.2.4, 55.8.2, 57.12.5). Livia may have provided inspiration for Julia Domna’s characterization, and the failures of the latter Augusta are illuminated by the comparison. At the end of Domna’s life, Dio reproaches her aspiration to become sole ruler of the empire in the manner of Nitocris or Semiramis (78[77].23.1–4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]; cf. 62[62].6.2 [Xiph.]). And while Livia’s eulogy is overwhelmingly positive, Dio’s account of Julia’s life concludes with the following lesson (79[78].24.2):

τῆς ἀρχῆς ζῶσα ἐξέπεσεν καὶ ἑαυτὴν προσκατειργάσατο, ὥστε τινὰ ἐς αὐτὴν ἀποβλέψαντα μὴ πάνυ πάντας τοὺς ἐν ταῖς μεγάλαις ἐξουσίαις γενομένους μακαρίζειν, ἂν μὴ καὶ ἡδονή τις αὐτοῖς τοῦ βίου καὶ ἀληθὴς καὶ ἀκήρατος καὶ εὐτυχία καὶ ἀκραιφνὴς καὶ διαρκὴς ὑπάρχῃ.

(This woman) fell from power while living and destroyed herself, such that no one, after gazing upon her, could consider each and every one who attains great power to be blessed, unless some true and unmixed pleasure in life and a pure lasting prosperity falls to them.

The death of Julia Domna provides a transition into the latter part of the Severan era and its decline, attributed in part to the actions of Julia Maesa, Julia Soaemias, and Julia Mamaea, and their authoritative roles in the rise and fall of Elagabalus and in the accession of Severus Alexander (79[78].30.2).

The authority of the later Severan women is confirmed when war is declared against the Severan men, as well as their mothers and grandmothers (79[78].38.1).[[1142]](#footnote-1142) Julia Maesa and Julia Soaemias both join Elagabalus on the battlefield during his rebellion, leaping down from their chariots and attempting to halt the army’s retreat through a pathetic display of lamentation (79[78].38.4). While Dio does not offer an overt moral judgment, these actions speak for themselves. As the women grow more masculine in their expressions of authority, the emperor Elagabalus becomes more effeminate, dressing as a woman and proclaiming to be an imperial lady (e.g., 80[79].16.1–5, 80[79].11.1 [Xiph.]). Elagabalus’ effeminacy culminates in his marriage to his former slave and chariot-driver Hierocles, when Elagabalus is given over to his bridegroom and named his wife, mistress, and queen (80[79].14.4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]).[[1143]](#footnote-1143) The feminization of Elagabalus is countered by the masculinization of the women surrounding him. These women sit beside Elagabalus when he adopts his cousin Alexander as his heir (80[79].17.2 [Xiph.]), and Alexander is protected from Elagabalus by his mother and grandmother, together with the Praetorian Guard (80[79].19.2[Xiph.]). Both Soaemias and Mamaea attempt to enflame the soldiers to fight for their respective sons, and Soaemias is murdered together with Elagabalus, their naked bodies decapitated and dragged around the city (80[79].20.1–2 [Xiph.]). A fragment from Zonaras attests that Mamaea was proclaimed Augusta by her son, and she took over the direction of political affairs, choosing the best men in the senate for advisors and surrounding Alexander with wise men, “such that his habits might be correctly formed by them” (ἵνα δι’ ἐκείνων αὐτῷ τὰ ἤθη ῥυθμίζοιτο, Zon. 12, 15 p. 571, 3–10B).

The Severan women that dominate the closing books of Dio’s history conclude the moral progression that characterizes women of the imperial household from Livia onwards and follow the ambitious rather than the admirable female paradigms of the regal period. Rather than die by suicide and inspire the men of Rome to seek freedom, as Lucretia did, Julia Domna ends her life to avoid returning to obscurity. When Julia Maesa and Julia Soaemias attempt to halt the army’s retreat through visible lamentation, they lack the sincerity of the Sabines and their call for familial harmony, and fail to become moral *exempla*. Elagabalus and his mother do not choose a voluntary death; rather, their murders are the final instantiation of the family’s failure to govern with justice and morality and without civil and familial discord.

*7. Conclusion*

Over the course of Dio’s history, women provide models and anti-models of femininity, while contributing to the historian’s explorations of human nature, the character of rulers, and the struggle for freedom over servitude. From the time of the Sabines, women impact the development of the Roman state and illustrate the ways in which the past is informative for the present. Dio’s women establish moral models, illustrate moral failures in times of civil conflict, and facilitate a comparison between past and present modes of leadership. His account includes historical truths about the lives of women and their public presence under various emperors, truths built into his narrative ofthe growth and vicissitudes of power in the empire. Women are worthy of record when they inspire wonder and admiration in the men around them, or when their transgressive behaviors set them apart from other members of their sex. Their speeches provide opportunities for Dio to showcase his rhetorical education, but are more than just rhetorical set pieces. Female speakers effect change and mark turning points in Roman history, including Hersilia, Lucretia, and Veturia; prove their trustworthy characters, such as Porcia; fail to corrupt strong leaders, as Cleopatra with Octavian; and comment upon Roman morality and philosophies of leadership, as Livia and Boudica do. Such women return us to the Caledonian woman, and make us wonder whom Dio considered more at fault: non-Romans who embraced what was considered barbaric without pretense, or Roman women who tried to hide their immoral desires and wield power despite their sex.

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Chapter 18: Cassius Dio on Civil War: Between History and Theory

*Carsten H. Lange*

Recent years have seen a renewed interest in Cassius Dio and a growing interest in his particular take on *stasis* and civil war.[[1144]](#footnote-1144) There are numerous ways of approaching civil war, both ancient and modern. Dio approached Roman history as an historical theorist, giving particular attention to the political upheaval of the Late Republic and the transition from Republic to Principate. In doing so, he clearly resembled Thucydides and his analysis of *stasis* (civil strife) and human nature.[[1145]](#footnote-1145) Quite exceptionally and originally for a Roman historian, Dio’s framework of historical analysis focused less on the destabilizing effects of Rome’s expansion—he was himself a critic of imperialism (see below)—and rather more on its ineffective and flawed democracy, especially during the Late Republic. Having said that, even with its shortcomings, the (Late) Republic was not only a force for evil in his view. It was, in Dio’s reading, a necessary albeit long transitional period. The end goal remained the same: monarchy. The rule of Augustus brought stability and peace, but alas, not durably so. Dio was undoubtedly a theorist of the main historical development that led to this constitutional change—that is, civil war—but above all he was a monarchist; these two aspects of his theoretical approach are complementary, but monarchy to Dio represented the *sine qua non*. Further periods of civil war—especially following the death of Nero and later under Septimius Severus and beyond—needed to be properly explained by the historian, not as anomalies, but as setbacks due to ineffective emperors and likewise members of the elite. Dio was a historian in his own right both because of his historical analysis and his specific take on the past. I will suggest that the description of the Late Republic in its entirety is best approached as an excursus—a very long digression—on civil war.[[1146]](#footnote-1146) Even though the Late Republic was a vital part of his *Roman History*—and, perversely, the most successful part of it, because it created the conditions for the return of monarchy to Rome—it was evidently a terrible period of civil war in Dio’s view; his own personal experiences from the Severan period were vital for his interpretations of the past and our interpretation of his work.

The main turning point in Roman history according to Dio is thus the period from the defeat of Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium down to 27 BCE. In book 52 Dio emphasizes that in 29 BCE the Romans reverted to monarchical government: “Such were the achievements of the Romans and such their suffering under the kingship (*basileia*), under the *demokratia* [Republic], and under the dominion of a few (*dynasteiai*), during a period of seven hundred and twenty-five years” (52.1.1: Ταῦτα μὲν ἔν τε τῇ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ δημοκρατίᾳ ταῖς τε δυναστείαις, πέντε τε καὶ εἴκοσι καὶ ἑπτακοσίοις ἔτεσι).[[1147]](#footnote-1147) Civil war is a catalyst; and in this case it ended up bringing about monarchy. The term *dynasteia*—Dio’s shorthand for the extreme monopolization of powers, often dangerous extra-legal powers and fundamentally the tyranny of political factions—is almost unused in the history of the Principate.[[1148]](#footnote-1148) The most famous examples of its pervasion in Roman politics during the Late Republic are the so-called First and Second Triumvirates, in theory the joining of dynasts, including their supporters (cf. App. *B Civ*. 2.17; 2.19 on Caesar, Pompeius, and Crassus). But even though a regime change was to him a welcome and necessary development, Dio at the same time reveals himself as a typical Roman: fr. 12.3a, possibly the words of Brutus on the very foundation of the Republic in book 3, emphasizes in a typically Dioneian fashion that all changes are dangerous, and especially changes of government.

Dio combined both the Greek and Roman historiographical traditions in an interesting way. As already mentioned, Dio drew from Thucydides’ theories not only on the importance of human nature in historical developments, but also (and perhaps more importantly for our case), on the related idea of the cyclical recurrence of *stasis* and civil war (see below). At the same time, he also bears close resemblance to a too often neglected historiographical tradition whose main (surviving) figure is Sallust. Rosenblitt (2019, 1) pointedly emphasizes that “[a] Sallust-centered approach is one way to push back against Cicero-centric readings of the late republic”. Cicero’s Republic was one of consensus and “safer, more ordered, and less fire-brand than Sallust’s Rome”. In principle it hardly matters if Dio emulated Sallust—another admirer and interpreter of Thucydides—or whether he followed a tradition similar to Sallust. Whatever the answer, his basic take on the period was similar to that of Sallust and different to that of Cicero. In Dio’s *Roman History* democracy (that is, free competition and therefore flawed; see Freyburger-Galland 1997, 116–123) led to violence, *stasis*, and ultimately civil war. In the speech of Maecenas at 52.15.5–6, Dio writes as follows (cf. 39.26.1; 44.2.3; 52.9.1–2):

ταῦτα γὰρ πᾶσα μὲν δημοκρατία ἔχει‧ οἱ γὰρ δυνατώτεροι, τῶν τε πρωτείων ὀρεγόμενοι καὶ τοὺς ἀσθενεστέρους μισθούμενοι, πάντα ἄνω καὶ κάτω φύρουσι· πλεῖστα δὲ δὴ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν γέγονε, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως ἄλλως παύσεται. τεκμήριον δέ, πάμπολυς ἐξ οὗ χρόνος καὶ πολεμοῦμεν καὶ στασιάζομεν. αἴτιον δὲ τό τε πλῆθος τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τὸ μέγεθος τῶν πραγμάτων· ἐκεῖνοί τε γὰρ παντοδαποὶ καὶ τὰ γένη καὶ τὰς φύσεις ὄντες καὶ ποικίλας καὶ τὰς ὀργὰς καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἔχουσι, καὶ ταῦτα ἐς τοσοῦτον προῆκται ὥστε καὶ πάνυ δυσχερῶς ἂν διοικηθῆναι.

For these are the evils found in every democracy, — the more powerful men, namely, in reaching out after the primacy and hiring the weaker, turn everything upside down, — but they have been most frequent in our country, and there is no other way to put a stop to them than the way I propose. And the evidence is, that we have now for a long time been engaged in wars and civil strife. The cause is the multitude of our population and the magnitude of the business of our government; for the population embraces men of every kind, in respect both to race and to endowment, and both their tempers and their desires are manifold; and the business of the state has become so vast that it can be administered only with the greatest difficulty.

Adding to this, at 44.2 Dio states that democracy would never be possible in a large empire, or at least moderation and harmony cannot be retained: under such a system it is the dynasts who come to play a large role, and it is democracy which creates the space for them to do so. This is Dio’s personal and original take on the fundamental causes of civil war: it is, in other words, a case of systemic failure.[[1149]](#footnote-1149) Yet while this is transparently a negative story of systemic failure and violence, its results in the *Roman History* are (paradoxically) positive insofar as they create the necessary conditions for monarchy.

In *The Field of Blood: Violence in Congress and the Road to Civil War*, Freeman focuses on physical violence in the U.S. Congress from 1830 to the outbreak of the Civil War, shedding new light on systemic breakdown (xvii). More than seventy recorded violent incidents in the House and Senate or in nearby streets and dueling grounds are recorded.[[1150]](#footnote-1150) The question arises of whether a reasonably functioning political system on the one hand, and systemic breakdown and violence on the other hand, can exist at the same time. The build-up to the American Civil War suggests that this is possible. We may ask whether the Romans of the Late Republic, like the Americans of the 1830s onward, had a “cause” to fight for as such, but let us put this to one side for the time being: we need not speculate on how dysfunctional a system has to be for it to become inoperable. What is clear is that violence should be at the center of our attention in looking at the Late Republic and Dio’s view of it especially. Politics is about who gets what, when, and how, but the political process itself was always part of that equation. To add civil strife (*stasis*) and violence to that process obviously changes its dynamics. Civil war is defined as warfare, but we must not forget (political) violence and *stasis* as integral parts of it and especially its onset.

The civil war of the Late Republic marks a development from an incipient phase from 133 BCE; or alternatively perhaps from 146 BCE, at which point our sources place an emphasis on the impact of continuous external warfare upon internal power-struggles. Appian and Dio, both Romans writing in Greek—writing in both a Greek and Roman tradition—are great examples of how best to approach such periods of decline. Whether we call it human nature or something similar, it is safe to say that nobody is sympathetic in civil war. In Dio the focus is on ambition, which is again related to human nature. Democracy and human nature are to blame. With the coming of the Principate this changes, but human nature remains an issue. In the battle between Vitellius and Vespasian in 69 CE we hear that it was difficult for combatants to kill comrades because they knew each other (64.13). Nevertheless, the soldiers did so anyway.[[1151]](#footnote-1151) In Dio’s narrative it also becomes evident that Commodus and all other late emperors save Pertinax used terror and humiliation to suppress the Senate. At 73[72].21 [Xiph.], Dio talks of the fear of the senators during the reign of Commodus. The emperor kills an ostrich and cuts off its head, holding the head in his left hand and in his right hand the bloody sword. Dio uses this incident to further Commodus’ characterization as a ‘bad’ emperor, and this may be multiplied by other representations of his predilection for violence: his order to brutalize the body of his former favorite and Praetorian Guard commander, Cleander, and parade his head through the city on a pole springs to mind (73[72].13.6 [Xiph.]). If (political) violence, *stasis* and civil war are related phenomena, we should stop isolating them. These stories thus relate to the same basic issues of ‘bad’ versus ‘good’ emperors: in other words, violence to Dio was both a symptom and a cause of the decline of any political system, Republics and monarchies alike.

*Terminology*

We as scholars would be naïve to think that the Romans (and for that matter the Greeks) agreed on the definition of such concepts as war or civil war. Or indeed that our sources had a specific approach to, and definition of, civil war. However, not all is lost. There are two basic traditions and concepts, one Greek and one Roman: *stasis* and *bellum civile*. These are the main strands of ancient thought toward and definition of internecine violence, but are not exclusive of other concepts. Cassius Dio, combining both and making civil war, violence, and *stasis* the central themes of his *Roman History* (cf. Madsen 2019a), produced in fact a third category: a combined tradition of Greek and Roman approaches to internal conflict.

Let us linger a moment on the Greek and Roman concepts and their development. Polybius gives a digression on the Mercenary Revolt in Carthage after the First Punic War, which is most important for our purposes. In reflecting on this internal conflict he echoes Thucydides and the model of *stasis* Thucydides proposed in his famous digression on Corcyra(Thuc. 3.81.4–5; cf. 3.70–85).[[1152]](#footnote-1152) Polybius describes the revolt (1.65–88) as *stasis* at 1.66.10, 1.67.2, and 1.67.5. This is an internal war as well as an internal problem (in fact, it is not what the Romans would call a civil war, as the principal opponents are not citizens, *cives*, of the same entity). Yet *stasis* is not the only word used in Polybius’ Greek to describe inner conflicts. At 1.65.1–2 he uses the concept of *emphylios polemos* to describe the “internal (or civil) war” between Rome and the Falisci:

μετὰ δὲ τὰς διαλύσεις ταύτας ἴδιόν τι καὶ παραπλήσιον ἀμφοτέροις συνέβη παθεῖν. ἐξεδέξατο γὰρ πόλεμος ἐμφύλιος Ῥωμαίους μὲν ὁ πρὸς τοὺς Φαλίσκους καλουμένους, ὃν ταχέως καὶ συμφερόντως ἐπετέλεσαν, ἐν ὀλίγαις ἡμέραις ἐγκρατεῖς γενόμενοι τῆς πόλεως αὐτῶν.

Shortly after this treaty it so happened that both states found themselves placed in circumstances peculiarly similar. For at Rome there followed civil war (πόλεμος ἐμφύλιος) against the Falisci, but this they brought to a speedy and favourable conclusion, taking Falerii in a few days.

This becomes more complicated. Even though Polybius may be reflecting both a Roman and a Greek tradition, he cannot have used *emphylios polemos* as a translation of *bellum civile*, a concept only invented with Sulla (or so we may assume). Plutarch’s *Moralia* is the key (786D–E = *FRHist*. 2.22 [F26]), as it quotes from Sulla’s twenty-two-book memoirs (*FRHist*. 2.22), published soon after his death in 78 BCE. There is a distinct possibility that Sulla himself coined the concept in Latin, characteristic of his unapologetic political methods and conduct. In translating the concept into Greek, Plutarch logically turned to *emphylios polemos*.[[1153]](#footnote-1153) The nature and scale of the internal fighting in the years 88–82 BCE (see below) and Sulla’s attested record of innovation, such as the proscriptions and the dictatorship, all lends weight to the idea that Sulla described his war in innovative terms as a *bellum civile* (cf. App. *B Civ*. 1.77, quoting a letter to the Senate by Sulla, announcing his intention to take vengeance on all those guilty.[[1154]](#footnote-1154) Plutarch evidently used Sulla’s autobiography, and Dio perhaps did too. Certainly fr. 109 of his work reflects perfectly the narrative Sulla may have attempted to push in 88 BCE: Dio accepts (see below) that his war was indeed a civil war and different in scale. The focus in the fragment is revealing: on the end of (civil) war (fr. 109.3); on heads on display at Praeneste, as symbols of victory;[[1155]](#footnote-1155) on the massacre of prisoners in Rome (fr. 109.6); and on the proscriptions (fr. 109.12–21), including the display of heads on the Rostra (fr. 109.21). This may of course not all derive from Sulla, but the cruelty and the vengeance seem to fit the bill; this is of course very different to the narratives propagated by Caesar and Octavian-Augustus later.[[1156]](#footnote-1156)

With Roman historians writing in Greek such as Appian and Dio, the internecine conflicts of the Late Republic thus initiated a third phase. They use *emphylios polemos* and *stasis* as a shorthand to describe Roman civil war—thus translating *bellum civile*—but at the same time they are also clearly reflecting on the older Greek tradition. Therefore, *stasis* and *emphylios polemos* refer both to a Greek tradition and a Roman one. Thucydides is the great teacher (3.82.1–2), but importantly, he is so for both traditions. Adding to this, whatever differences and nuances there may have been between *stasis* and *bellum civile*, Dio—to give only one example—remarks that “there is no doubt that in civil wars (*staseis*) the state is injured by both parties” (41.14.2: ὄντως γάρ που ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἐν ταῖς στάσεσι τὸ κοινὸν βλάπτεται). He here uses *stasis* to describe the beginning of the civil war after Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon (similar uses of *stasis*: 39.58.2; 41.46.2). The concepts can be used as synonyms, but can at the same time refer to related concepts with a difference in scale.

One often misunderstood point needs to be added: *stasis* could include war, but did not have to.[[1157]](#footnote-1157) As for civil war, both Appian and Dio point to a difference in scale in 88 BCE. This does not change the fact that, at their core, the two concepts were manifestations of the same phenomenon. Appian distinguishes three phases of *stasis* at Rome: first there was bloodshed in internal disorders from the Gracchi onwards (*B Civ.* 1.1–2). Then at *B Civ*. 1.55, he marks the beginning of a new phase at 88 BCE: civil war proper, with the turning-point of the sacking of Rome which permanently changed the rules of the game. Third and finally, from that point onward the *stasiarchs* fought one another with great armies in the fashion of war, and with the fatherland as their prize. The fragmentary state of the early books of Cassius Dio makes any comparable interpretation of his account much more difficult, but it seems that he took the same view as Appian. Neither the term *polemos emphylios* nor the term *oikeios polemos* appears in his extant work until 38.17.4. At 52.16.2, he says that the discord arising after Rome’s world conquest was at first merely *stasis* “at home and within the walls”, but was then carried “out into the legions”, implying, like Appian, that 88 BCE was a turning point.[[1158]](#footnote-1158)

We may ask if Dio wrote a reflective authorial excursus on the nature of violence, *stasis* and civil war, similar to Thucydides and Polybius. There may have been a lost preface, perhaps similar to 52.1.1.[[1159]](#footnote-1159) I would however prefer, as mentioned above, to emphasize that the whole narrative of the Late Republic is best seen as a description of civil war. In fr. 83.4, Dio writes:

ἐκ τούτου οὐδὲν μέτριον ἐπράττετο, ἀλλ᾽ ἀντιφιλονεικοῦντες περιγενέσθαι μᾶλλον ἀλλήλων ἢ τὸ κοινὸν ὠφελῆσαι, πολλὰ μὲν καὶ βίαια, ὥσπερ ἐν δυναστείᾳ τινὶ ἀλλ᾽ οὐ δημοκρατίᾳ, ἔπραξαν, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ ἄτοπα, ὥσπερ ἐν πολέμῳ τινὶ ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ εἰρήνῃ, ἔπαθον.

Thereafter there was no semblance of moderation; but zealously vying, as they did, each to prevail over the other rather than to benefit the state, they committed many acts of violence more appropriate in a despotism than in a democracy, and suffered many unusual calamities appropriate to war rather than to peace.

Dio uses war (πόλεμος) to describe the conflict of the Gracchi, even though he does not quite mean conventional warfare as such.[[1160]](#footnote-1160) Why not use *stasis* in this case? Is this similar to Thucydides’ use of *polemos* in 3.82.2, where he emphasizes that war is a brutal teacher? And is this not a description of the period from 133 BCE onwards, a description of the Late Republic as a whole, the main and defining civil-war period in Roman history, best described as the “*Age* of Dynasts”? It is not by any stretch of the imagination difficult to understand why Dio, as a monarchist, took this view of the Late Republic: it fits the period as such, but also of course the dynastic conflicts of his own time. This was one war, one civil war, even if there were periods of (only) political violence and *stasis* (similar to Appian in the *Emphylia*). It is nevertheless important to remember that this is not only a question of language, but certainly also one of narrative, to which we must now turn.

*Violence and Civil War in Dio*

A brief overview of violence, *stasis*, and civil war in Dio may help to get a feel of his overall approach to these related phenomena. According to Dio, early Rome and the Republic—with a few exceptions—contained also long periods of political violence, *stasis*, and civil war. But during the Late Republic these trials become defining features and still recurred later during the Principate, despite Augustus’ mollifying influence. The exception is part of the period of expansion, symbolized by Carthage. The description of foreign war in Dio is essential for us to understand his approach to civil strife and civil war (cf. Zon. 7.19, on foreign wars). He emphasizes the unity of the Romans during the Second Punic War, describing their ὁμονοία (that is, *concordia*) as follows (fr. 52.1):

ὅτι οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι τὰ τοῦ πολέμου ἤκμαζον καὶ τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὁμονοίᾳ ἀκριβῶς ἐχρῶντο, ὥσθ᾽ ἅπερ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐκ μὲν ἀκράτου εὐπραγίας ἐς θάρσος, ἐκ δὲ ἰσχυροῦ δέους ἐς ἐπιείκειαν φέρει, ταῦτα αὐτοῖς τότε διαλλαγῆναι‧ ὅσῳ γὰρ ἐπὶ πλεῖον εὐτύχησαν, ἐπὶ μᾶλλον ἐσωφρόνησαν, τὸ μὲν θράσος, οὗ τὸ ἀνδρεῖον μετέχει, πρὸς τοὺς ἀντιπάλους ἐνδεικνύμενοι, τὸ δὲ ἐπιεικές, οὗ κοινωνεῖ ἡ εὐταξία, κατ᾽ ἀλλήλους παρεχόμενοι.

The Romans were at the height of their military power and enjoyed absolute harmony among themselves. Thus, unlike most people, who are led by unalloyed good fortune to audacity, but by strong fear to forbearance, they at this time had a very different experience in these matters. For the greater their successes, the more were they sobered; against their enemies they displayed that daring which is a part of bravery, but toward one another they showed the forbearance which goes hand in hand with good order.

Even though an opponent of continuous Roman expansion (52.15.4–16.2), two points need to be made. In theory, according to Dio monarchy has the potential to positively suppress human nature; the *Roman History* is partly the story of how Rome ended up with monarchy, the most stable form of government (cf. Rich 1989, 92). Clearly influenced by the Latin tradition of *metus hostilis*, Dio treats the final defeat and destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE as an essential part of the story of Rome’s fracturing *concordia*. With this victory came *stasis* and finally civil war (e.g., Sall. *Cat*. 10–12; *Jug*. 41; Vell. Pat. 2.1–2). Consequently, in Dio 146 BCE is one of many turning-points in Roman history.[[1161]](#footnote-1161) After the wars with Carthage this turned into the story of the decline of the Republic. The paradox of the story is that a negative development is turned into something positive in Dio’s narrative. This was a necessary road to monarchy. Fr. 17.3, discussing the earlier days of the so-called Conflict of the Orders and the Romans’ earliest decline into “civil strife” or *stasis* (fr. 17.1: πρὸς στάσεις ἐτράποντο), in many ways sums up the problematic interaction between foreign wars and internal struggles:

ὥστ᾽ αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀνθρώπων, πλὴν ἐν τοῖς πάνυ κινδύνοις, οὓς ἐκ τῶν ἀεὶ πολέμων δι᾽ αὐτὰ ταῦτα μάλιστα ἔσχον, διχοστατῆσαι‧ ὅθενπερ συχνοὶ τῶν πρώτων καὶ ἐξεπίτηδές σφας πολλάκις παρεσκεύασαν. καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἀρξάμενοι πολὺ πλείω κακὰ πρὸς ἀλλήλων ἢ τῶν ἀλλοφύλων ἔπαθον. καί μοι καὶ καταμαντεύσασθαι ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐπέρχεται ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως ἄλλως εἴτ᾽ οὖν τῆς δυνάμεως εἴτ᾽ οὖν τῆς ἀρχῆς στερηθεῖεν, εἰ μὴ δι᾽ ἀλλήλων σφαλεῖεν.

Hence more than all the rest of mankind they were at variance save in the midst of the gravest of dangers incurred in the course of the successive wars that were due chiefly to their own dissensions; hence, for the sake of the respite, many of the foremost men on numerous occasions brought on these conflicts purposely. From this beginning, then, they suffered far more harm from each other than from outside nations. And in view of these circumstances I am led to prophesy that they cannot possibly be deprived of either their power or their sway, unless they shall be brought low by their own contentions.

The causes for the “Conflict of the Orders” were manifold: one order was insatiate for freedom; the other desired public honors; moderation was disdained; the lower class rejected the overweening authority of the higher, and so forth. Dio gives these traditional explanations their due importance, but importantly attributes the contention between patricians and plebeians first and foremost to “the inherent disposition of men to quarrel with their equals and to desire to rule others” (fr. 7.3: τῆς ἐμφύτου τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πρός τε τὸ ὅμοιον φιλονεικίας καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἄρχειν ἑτέρων ἐπιθυμίας). The main weakness was human nature. Libourel rightly emphasizes that the early books contain more violence than our parallel evidence.[[1162]](#footnote-1162) Dio was not simply projecting contemporary patterns onto the past, but describing the origins of the specific phenomena of *stasis* and civil war. In doing so, he emulated Thucydides and his model of *stasis* (Thuc. 3.81.4–5), and especially Thucydides’ views on human nature and the idea of cyclical recurrence. Civil strife inflicted many a terrible blow, as it always does, and always will, while human nature remains the same (3.82.1–2; see Armitage 2017 regarding recurrence). Adding to this discussion, we may ask where foreign and civil war begin to converge and exert a reciprocal impact. Again, the answer is human nature (Cass. Dio 36.1.2):

καὶ τοὺς Ῥωμαίους διέβαλλον λέγοντες ὅτι, ἂν μονωθέντων σφῶν κρατήσωσι, καὶ ἐπ’ ἐκεῖνον εὐθὺς ἐπιστρατεύσουσι· φύσει τε γὰρ πᾶν τὸ νικῶν ἄπληστον τῆς εὐπραγίας εἶναι καὶ μηδένα ὅρον τῆς πλεονεξίας ποιεῖσθαι, καὶ τούτους, ἅτε καὶ ἐν κράτει πολλῶν δὴ γεγονότας, οὐκ ἐθελήσειν αὐτοῦ ἀποσχέσθαι.

[Mithridates and Tigranes] also went maligning the Romans, declaring that the latter, in case they conquered their present antagonists while these were left to fight single-handed, would immediately make a campaign against him [Oroses]. For every victorious force was inherently insatiate of success and set no bound to its greed; and the Romans, who had won the mastery over many, would not choose to leave him [Oroses] alone.

Dio seems to be echoing Sallust who had composed a letter for Mithridates (*Hist*. 4.60). The passage also echoes Thucydides’ Mytilenean Debate (Thuc. 3.39.4, 45.4). The hunt for success (*eupragia*) and unlimited greed for more (*pleonexia*) are an essential part of Dio’s narrative.[[1163]](#footnote-1163) The main difference between Early and Middle Republic—perhaps excluding partly the fight against Carthage—and the Late Republic is in consequence mainly one of scale. In the Late Republican books of Dio, *stasis* and *dynasteia* appear as alternating phenomena: as individual *dynasteiai* do not create a stable government, they inevitably create the conditions for *stasis* and ultimately civil war. The roots of these tendencies toward internal strife clearly go back to the founding of the city; this long process is an integral part of Rome’s legacy. This is the essence of Dio’s political interpretation of Rome’s development, as a political and historical theorist in his own right with a marked interest in civil war. By connecting foreign and internal conflict in this way, Dio thus adds to his novel take on Rome’s history: the collapse of the Republican regime is down to expansion.[[1164]](#footnote-1164)

Unsurprisingly, the turning-point comes mainly with Octavian-Augustus. Many such turning-points in Dio’s history of the transition from Republic to Principate involve Octavian-Augustus implicitly or explicitly: Caesar’s assassination (44.2), the Battle of Actium (50.1.2; 51.1.1–2; 56.30.5), and finally the ‘settlement’ of 27 BCE (53.17, 19.1). Yet Dio gives the fullest explicit summary of his success on his death (56.43.4):

διά τε οὖν ταῦτα, καὶ ὅτι τὴν μοναρχίαν τῇ δημοκρατίᾳ μίξας τό τε ἐλεύθερόν σφισιν ἐτήρησε καὶ τὸ κόσμιον τό τε ἀσφαλὲς προσπαρεσκεύασεν, ὥστ᾽ ἔξω μὲν τοῦ δημοκρατικοῦ θράσους ἔξω δὲ καὶ τῶν τυραννικῶν ὕβρεων ὄντας ἔν τε ἐλευθερίᾳ σώφρονι καὶ ἐν μοναρχίᾳ ἀδεεῖ ζῆν, βασιλευομένους τε ἄνευ δουλείας καὶ δημοκρατουμένους.

Not alone for these reasons did the Romans greatly miss him, but also because by combining monarchy with democracy he preserved their freedom for them and at the same time established order and security, so that they were free alike from the license of a democracy and from the insolence of a tyranny, living at once in a liberty of moderation and in a monarchy without terrors; they were subjects of royalty, yet not slaves, and citizens of a democracy, yet without discord.

In Dio’s speech of Tiberius we accept that harsh measures are a necessity during civil war (see likewise below on the speech of Septimius Severus). The speech of Tiberius has no fewer than three mentions of civil war (56.37.2, 37.4, 38.1). This is in fact very close to the way the story was told by Augustus himself in his autobiography and in the *Res Gestae*: the civil wars were started by others but ended by Augustus, the bringer of peace.[[1165]](#footnote-1165) Dio modeled his justification of the regime very closely on the ideology of Augustus, and understood it well (*RG* 3.1; 34.1: *bellum civile*).

There is, however, great difficulty in understanding Augustus without looking at the triumviral period. One example of the dealings of Octavian will suffice.[[1166]](#footnote-1166) According to Dio (48.14.3–6), after the siege of Peusia in early 40 BCE, he put to death three hundred Senators and equestrians.[[1167]](#footnote-1167) In the end, Dio did not wholeheartedly commit to the story of the three hundred murdered, but he still mentions it. Clearly, this concerns not only Dio’s wish to understand human nature and the leading civil war protagonists; it concerns also the impact of *civil* war, as well as the historian’s approach to it through narrative. Dio’s main point is this: Augustus did what was needed. This is not a criticism of Octavian as such (cf. Rich 1990, 13–18, esp. 14), but rather Dio trying to understand civil war at the same time as accepting that sometimes certain things are necessary, in this case in order to gain victory and secure a transition to monarchy. Dio may consequently be described as a “realist”.[[1168]](#footnote-1168)

In the end, Augustus and monarchy did not end *stasis* and civil war. Many examples would follow. Vindex rebelled against Nero in order to better the system—or so his justification runs in the *Roman History*—and in order to turn back to the ‘golden days’ of Augustus. He undertook to cause a revolt and a civil war, not at all dissimilar to Augustus himself (Gowing 1997, 2585: Dio’s speech for Vindex reflects the historian’s own perspective). This is a narrative of necessity. In the end, Dio’s Vindex cannot liberate Rome and consequently kills himself (63[63].24.4a [Zon.]). References to freedom and liberation (φιλελεύθερον and so forth; see Scott 2020) refer clearly back to Augustus at 56.43.4 (see above; 63[63].22.1² [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]). With Galba, a man of moderation, there is a sense of liberation from tyranny (63[63].29.1 [Xiph.]; Murison 1999, 32–33). A shift becomes visible. The conflict no longer concerns “democracy” versus monarchy, but rather “bad” emperors versus “good” emperors. Thus to Dio monarchy alone was evidently no panacea: monarchy *tout court* was never enough. The story of course does not end here and next comes a conspiracy by Otho (63[64].5.3 [Xiph./Zon.]). Galba is murdered (63[64].6.3–4 [Xiph./Zon.]). Vitellius then takes up arms and Otho dies in battle (63[64].11 [Xiph./Zon.]; see below). Vespasian in the end arrives at Rome, causing a tumult (64[65].19–20). Vitellius is killed by the people (64[65].20–21). Having not taken part in the civil war— not necessarily either a good or a bad thing—Vespasian is chosen as emperor by the Senate (65[66].1.1 [Xiph.]). Vespasian, a “good” emperor, is presented by Dio as attempting to restore continuity with the system created by Augustus, even if a new round of civil war had happened.

The next civil war comes in 193–197 CE, which Septimius Severus fought against Pescennius Niger (193–194) and Clodius Albinus (197). Later there is a second civil war in 218 CE between Macrinus and Elagabalus. They are connected through quite similar introductory remarks (73[72].24.2 [Xiph.]):

ἀφ’ οὗ δὴ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα δῆλον ἐγένετο ὅτι οὐκ ἐν τῇ πόλει τὸ δεινὸν στήσεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην αὐτῆς ἀφίξεται).

This, in particular, made it clear that the evil would not be confined to the City, but would extend over the entire civilized world under its sway.

This is followed just a few books later by a strikingly similar reflection (79[78].26.1):

καὶ ἔσχεν οὕτως· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐν τῇ πόλει μόνῃ τὸ δεινὸν ἔμεινεν, ἀλλὰ πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην αὐτῆς, ὑφ’ ἧς τὸ θέατρον ἀεί ποτε ἐπληροῦτο, ἐπέσχεν.

And so it proved; for the evil was not confined to the city alone, but laid hold upon the whole world that was under its dominion, with whose inhabitants the theatre was regularly filled.

The important point to be made here is Dio’s emphasis on the recurrence of these conflicts, a perspective inherited, as we have seen, from Thucydides: *stasis* and civil war remain a part human nature and cannot be quelled even by emperors. Especially under bad emperors, civil war remains an unpleasant fact of life. Monarchy is thus clearly different from the Late Republic; but at the same time, while the change from Nero to Vespasian represented in his view a positive development, the same cannot be said for his perspective on his own contemporary world. Monarchy brings peace, but clearly not always so, because of ineffective, ill-educated, and immoderate emperors. We may ask if Dio was disillusioned or just a realist (so obvious in the Late Republican narrative). Osgood’s (2016, 188) point is well-put: the *Roman History* was meant to end at this point, showing the negative possible results of dynastic rule. Elagabalus is portrayed as a tyrant in the aftermath of civil war (80[79].1.1).[[1169]](#footnote-1169) The realist Dio was, or so it seems, disillusioned. Adding to this, Scott (2017) rightly emphasizes that the final portion of Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*—books 73[72]–80[80]—provides an eyewitness account of contemporary Roman politics in a manner akin to memoirs (2017, 231: “The memoir-like nature of the text suggests that Dio carved out for himself a dual identity, as both senator and then annalist, participant and then critic.”). In this specific portion of his work at least, Dio thus seems to fall in the middle of these related categories (cf. Scott 2017, 232). If Osgood’s approach to the close of the *Roman History* is right, as seems so, then this was a fitting way to end: a fitting end, indeed, to the narrative of an historical theorist (and disillusioned realist) of civil war.

*Civil War: Example 1*

The second section of this article will briefly look at specific examples of civil war and their implications in Dio, taking the Late Republic as a starting point. At Pharsalus we encounter the *sound* of civil war (41.58):[[1170]](#footnote-1170)

τοιούτῳ μὲν ἀγῶνι συνηνέχθησαν‧ οὐ μέντοι καὶ εὐθὺς συνέμιξαν, ἀλλ᾽ οἷα ἔκ τε τῆς αὐτῆς πατρίδος καὶ ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστίας ὁρμώμενοι, καὶ τά τε ὅπλα παραπλήσια καὶ τὰς τάξεις ὁμοίας ἔχοντες, ὤκνουν μὲν ἄρξαι τῆς μάχης, ὤκνουν δὲ καὶ φονεῦσαί τινας ἑκάτεροι. σιγή τε οὖν ἀμφοτέρων καὶ κατήφεια πολλὴ ἦν, καὶ οὔτε τις αὐτῶν ἐς τὰ πρόσω προῄει οὔθ᾽ ὅλως ἐκινεῖτο, ἀλλ᾽ ἐγκύψαντες ἠτρέμιζον ὥσπερ ἄψυχοι. φοβηθέντες οὖν ὅ τε Καῖσαρ καὶ ὁ Πομπήιος μὴ καὶ ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἡσυχάσαντες ἀμβλύτεροί πως γένωνται ἢ καὶ συναλλαγῶσι, προσέταξαν σπουδῇ τοῖς τε σαλπικταῖς σημῆναι καὶ ἐκείνοις συμβοῆσαι τὸ πολεμικόν. καὶ ἐπράχθη μὲν ἑκάτερον, τοσούτου δὲ ἐδέησαν ἐπιρρωσθῆναι ὥστε καὶ ἐπὶ μᾶλλον ἔκ τε τῆς τῶν σαλπικτῶν ἠχῆς ὁμοφωνούσης καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἑαυτῶν βοῆς ὁμογλωσσούσης τό τε ὁμόφυλόν σφων ἐξέφηναν καὶ τὸ ὁμογενὲς ἐξήλεγξαν, κἀκ τούτου καὶ ἐς δάκρυα καὶ θρῆνον ἔπεσον. ὀψὲ δ᾽ οὖν ποτε τῶν συμμαχικῶν προκαταρξάντων καὶ ἐκεῖνοι συνέμιξαν, ἔκφρονες ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς γενόμενοι.

Such was the struggle in which they joined; yet they did not immediately come to close quarters. Sprung from the same country and from the same hearth, with almost identical weapons and similar formation, each side shrank from beginning the battle, and shrank from slaying any one. So there was great silence and dejection on both sides; no one went forward or moved at all, but with heads bowed they stood motionless, as if devoid of life. Caesar and Pompeius, therefore, fearing that if they remained quiet any longer their animosity might be lessened or they might even become reconciled, hurriedly commanded the trumpeters to give the signal and the men to raise the war cry in unison. Both orders were obeyed, but the combatants were so far from being instilled with courage, that at the sound of the trumpeters’ call, uttering the same notes, and at their own shout, raised in the same language, they showed their sense of relationship and betrayed their kinship more than ever, and so fell to weeping and lamenting. But after a long time, when the allied troops began the battle, the rest also joined in, fairly beside themselves at what they were doing.

This remains easily one of the most powerful descriptions of civil war from the ancient world.[[1171]](#footnote-1171) Think only of Thucydides’ description of the Spartans marching into battle accompanied by flute players (5.70). Think of Polybius’ descriptions of battle cries and the clashing together of shields of swords (1.34.2). Think of Livy’s description of the great noise and confusion in battle during the Second Punic War (22.5.3–4). Think of Ammianus’ description of battle (Amm. Marc. 25.3.11). As for civil war, perhaps the best parallel text is Appian and his description of the battle of Mutina (3.68). In Dio things are different: “So there was great silence and dejection on both sides; no one went forward or moved at all, but with heads bowed they stood motionless, as if devoid of life”. In Appian, the soldiers do what needs to be done, with discipline and silence, no less: “Being veterans they raised no battle-cry, since they could not expect to terrify each other, nor in the engagement did they utter a sound, either as victors or vanquished” (*B Civ*. 3.68: ὑπὸ δὲ ἐμπειρίας οὔτε ἠλάλαξαν ὡς οὐκ ἐκπλήξοντες ἀλλήλους, οὔτε ἐν τῷ πόνῳ τις αὐτῶν ἀφῆκε φωνὴν οὔτε νικῶν οὔτε ἡσσώμενος.).[[1172]](#footnote-1172) What a contrast to Dio’s account of their despair!

More is however at stake. Can we know that this or something similar did or did not happen? And even if it did not, why does Dio decide to tell the story? Descriptions of warfare and battles in texts were *never only* a literary device—and it is poor to claim otherwise—but a reflection of reality; of battles, wars and death with all their real and traumatic characteristics.[[1173]](#footnote-1173) Let us briefly compare this to a famous example of the deep breath before the plunge. The old story of the “Spirit of 1914” (the allegedly unanimous euphoria of the German people on the outbreak of the First World War) has been dismantled, giving away to one of frightening peace and quiet in anticipation of war, and the great fear of what might come.[[1174]](#footnote-1174) The tone of a Frankfurt journalist, in what Sheffield calls a typical reaction, may indeed convey the contemporary spirit of the age, but does it show *what happened*?[[1175]](#footnote-1175) This is about conveying a feeling. That may in the end not be that dissimilar to seconds and minutes before a civil war battle. Consequently, either Dio describes what actually happened, or, alternatively, he surmises a general feeling. Again, this is close to reality. The silence may have happened as it reflects on the terrible situation of fighting and consequently killing fellow citizens. For us this may be history only, text only, but for Dio and presumably many of his readers equally familiar with warfare, this was a serious matter. This was a reflection on the most frightening matter which continued to exert a negative effect on his contemporary world: civil war. Historiography is also for historians (for the famous debate on the purpose of historiography between Lendon and Woodman, see Woodman 1988 and Lendon 2009). Even if events did not happen precisely as Dio described, does it consequently turn history into literature? Or, more problematically, a description that has nothing to do with what actually happened? As the context is satisfactory, Dio’s literary art makes him no less reliable; but it *does* help him to reflect and to demonstrate his main analytical point, even if perhaps in an excessively dramatic way: civil war, albeit often a necessity, was terrible.

*Civil War: Example II*

As already mentioned, nobody was sympathetic in times of civil war. Civil war—including political violence and *stasis*—was, according to Dio, an integral part of Roman history. A main difference seems to be, as mentioned, that where civil war in Republican times was a necessity in as much as it brought about a regime change (to monarchy), when that process had been achieved the focus of civil war devolved to the question of “good” and “bad” emperors. Usurpers become a new central aspect. Even if there were only relatively few phases of civil war during the Principate for Dio to write about, we should not forget political violence, *stasis* and usurpation. Moreover, owing to its inherent place in Dio’s conception of human nature, lust for power and greed ever to acquire more was still found. During the Year of the Four Emperors we witness another typical issue during periods of civil war. Similar to the Late Republic there were changes of side: that is, to stop supporting one person or group and start supporting another. This is also visible during the civil war of 69 CE between Otho and Vitellius. Why does it reappear we may ask? Thanks to his Thucydidean or ‘realist’ take on civil war, this reappearance emerges from human nature. Dio explains (64[65].1.1 [Xiph.]):

οἱ δ᾽ ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ ὡς ἤκουσαν τὸ τοῦ Ὄθωνος πάθος, παραχρῆμα, ὥσπερ εἰκὸς ἦν, μετεβάλοντο‧ τόν τε γὰρ Ὄθωνα, ὃν πρότερον ἐπῄνουν καὶ νικᾶν ηὔχοντο, ἐλοιδόρουν ὡς πολέμιον, καὶ τὸν Οὐιτέλλιον, ᾧ κατηρῶντο, καὶ ἐπῄνουν καὶ αὐτοκράτορα ἀνηγόρευον‧ οὕτω που οὐδὲν πάγιόν ἐστι τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων, ἀλλ᾽ ὁμοίως οἵ τε ἐς τὰ μάλιστα ἀνθοῦντες καὶ οἱ ἐν τῷ ταπεινοτάτῳ ὄντες ἀστάθμητά τε αἱροῦνται, καὶ πρὸς τὰς τύχας σφῶν καὶ τοὺς ἐπαίνους καὶ τοὺς ψόγους τάς τε τιμὰς καὶ τὰς ἀτιμίας λαμβάνουσι.

When the people in Rome heard of the fate of Otho, they naturally transferred their allegiance forthwith. And so Otho, whom they had previously been lauding and for whose victory they had been praying, was now abused as an enemy, whereas Vitellius, upon whom they had been invoking curses, was lauded and proclaimed emperor. So true is it that there is nothing constant in human affairs; but alike those who are most prosperous and those who are in the humblest station make an unstable choice and receive praise or blame, honour or dishonour, according as their fortunes shift.

The language of civil war is fickle (cf. Spielberg 2017). This is similar to Dio’s description of the triumvirs’ war against Sextus Pompeius, vividly describing human nature in times of civil war (48.29.3; cf. 48.1.2):

τοσοῦτος μὲν δὴ καὶ τῶν στάσεων καὶ τῶν πολέμων παράλογός ἐστι, δίκῃ μὲν οὐδὲν τῶν τὰ πράγματα ἐχόντων νομιζόντων, πρὸς δὲ δὴ τάς τε ἀεὶ χρείας καὶ τὰ συμφέροντά σφων τό τε φίλιον καὶ τὸ πολέμιον ἐξεταζόντων, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τοὺς αὐτοὺςτοτὲ μὲν ἐχθροὺς τοτὲ δὲ ἐπιτηδείους σφίσι πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν ἡγουμένων.

So great, indeed, is the perversity that reigns in factional strife and war; for men in power take no account of justice, but determine on friend and foe according as their own interests and advantage at the time dictate, and accordingly they regard the same men, now as their enemies, now as their friends, according to the occasion.

Self-interest is vital in civil war. All individuals and warring groups naturally aimed to emerge on the winning side (Christia 2012, 3). Changing sides at the opportune moment could mean survival, especially if there was no credible guarantee that the victor would not strip them of power following victory. Once again, the main thing to take away is that of recurrence, both of human nature and, consequently, civil war.

*Civil War: Example III*

A speech by Septimius Severus after his victory over Clodius Albinus in 197 CE, as reported by Dio (76[75].8.1–4 [Xiph.]; cf. *HA*, *Sev*. 12.7–9), praised the cruelty of Sulla, Marius, and Augustus against their enemies in the civil wars.[[1176]](#footnote-1176) We must assume that Dio was present at the meeting;[[1177]](#footnote-1177) there is little reason to believe this speech was not delivered and indeed we may assume that the emperor did say something along the following lines (76[75].8.1–2 [Xiph.]):

πρός τε τὴν βουλὴν λόγον ἀναγινώσκων, καὶ τὴν μὲν Σύλλου καὶ Μαρίου καὶ Αὐγούστου αὐστηρίαν τε καὶ ὠμότητα ὡς ἀσφαλεστέραν ἐπαινῶν, τὴν δὲ Πομπηίου καὶ Καίσαρος ἐπιείκειαν ὡς ὀλεθρίαν αὐτοῖς ἐκείνοις γεγενημένην κακίζων, ἀπολογίαν τινὰ ὑπὲρ τοῦ Κομμόδου ἐπήγαγε, καθαπτόμενος τῆς βουλῆς ὡς οὐ δικαίως ἐκεῖνον ἀτιμαζούσης, εἴγε καὶ αὐτῆς οἱ πλείους αἴσχιον βιοτεύουσιν.

While reading to the senate a speech, in which he praised the severity and cruelty of Sulla, Marius and Augustus as the safer course and deprecated the mildness of Pompey and Caesar as having proved the ruin of those very men, he introduced a sort of defence of Commodus and inveighed against the senate for dishonouring that emperor unjustly, in view of the fact that the majority of its members lived worse lives.

The alleged ‘cruelty’ of Augustus is of especial interest here. According to Urso (2016, 14) the cruelty of Octavian was *largely* silenced in the historiographical tradition. This needs qualification, however. The fact that Suetonius (*Aug*. 15) and Dio (48.14.3–5; 49.12.4–5; 51.2.4–6), both mention this cruelty, as Urso acknowledges, certainly makes this more complicated. In order to understand what Dio is getting at, another speech by Livia is of the greatest importance (see now Allen 2020), as it has a take on Augustus and civil-war behavior. Octavian was forced to use violence (55.21.4; see also 56.38.5 on Sulla in the speech of Tiberius):

οὕτω μὲν γὰρ καὶ τἆλλα τὰ δυσχερῆ πάντα ἀνάγκῃ πεποιηκέναι δόξεις· οὐ γὰρ ἔστι πόλιν τηλικαύτην ἐκ δημοκρατίας πρὸς μοναρχίαν ἄγοντα ἀναιμωτὶ μεταστῆσαι·

If you do [enact an amnesty], all your other acts that have caused displeasure will be thought to have been dictated by necessity. Indeed it is impossible for a man to guide a great city from democracy to monarchy and make the change without bloodshed.

Taken together with Perusia and similar events this is most fascinating. According to Dio, Octavian-Augustus was forced to use violence because there was a civil war. Human nature becomes a question not of good or bad, but about doing what was necessary to win.

Shifting the focus back to Septimius Severus, was he no less cruel than Octavian? The aftermath of civil war is important and the victors can be judged. Augustus did well; but in Dio’s view Septimius Severus did not, displaying behavior similar to Sulla. When Albinus is later killed his head is sent back to Rome, exposed on a pole (76[75].7–8.1 [Xiph.]; cf. 77[76].9.1–2 [Xiph.]). Dio continues: “As this action showed clearly that he [Severus] possessed none of the qualities of a good ruler, he alarmed both us and the populace more than ever by the commands that he sent” (76[75].7.4 [Xiph.]: ἐφ᾽ οἷς δῆλος γενόμενος ὡς οὐδὲν εἴη οἱ αὐτοκράτορος ἀγαθοῦ, ἔτι μᾶλλον ἡμᾶς τε καὶ τὸν δῆμον, οἷς ἐπέστειλεν, ἐξεφόβησεν). To complete this picture, Dio mentions the torture of senators (76[74].9.5–6 [*Exc. Val.*]; and more will follow (77[76].14.5–7 [Xiph.]). It is hard to escape the conclusion that the historian believed that even a ‘good’ emperor could, and often had to be, cruel in times of civil war, but definitive final judgement on his character derives from his behavior *after* victory. With bad emperors, bad things continue in peace (cf. Scott 2020). Augustus was not cruel according to Dio, as he did what was necessary. Dio tells this story well, at the same time taking once again his cue from Thucydides, who talks of the change and degeneration of language during civil war (Spielberg 2017; see above).[[1178]](#footnote-1178) But then again, these are perhaps also at least semantics. The fact still remains, nobody was, or is, sympathetic in civil war.

*Conclusion*

Returning to the question of Dio’s disillusionment *versus* his realism, only in Marcus Aurelius’ speech on the rebellion of Avidius Cassius in book 72[71] does the historian speculate that there can be another, better way, in keeping with Marcus’ philosophical character (72[71].26.4 [Xiph.]; cf. 72[71].28.1, 2–4 [*Exc. Val.*], see below):

ὡς ἔγωγε τοῦτ᾽ ἂν μόνον ἐκ τῶν παρόντων κακῶν κερδάναιμι, εἰ δυνηθείην καλῶς θέσθαι τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ δεῖξαι πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὅτι καὶ ἐμφυλίοις πολέμοις ἔστιν ὀρθῶς χρήσασθαι.

For that would be the one profit I could derive from our present ills, if I could settle this affair well and show to all mankind that there is a right way to deal even with civil wars.

In general, such grisly scenes constitute what might fittingly be described as a violent break with the past. But at the same time victory is presented as a possibility of peace, perhaps even the ending of the recurrence of *stasis* and civil war. This possibility is tantalizingly reinforced by Marcus Aurelius’ later decision to bury the head of Avidius Cassius, which stands in sharp contrast to Septimius Severus’ mistreatment of his rival Albinus’ head (72[71].28.1 [*Exc. Val.*]):

ὁ Μᾶρκος Ἀντωνῖνος τοσοῦτον ἤχθετο τῷ τοῦ Κασσίου ὀλέθρῳ ὥστε ἀποκεφαλισθέντος οὐδὲ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ ἰδεῖν ὑπέμεινεν, ἀλλὰ πρὶν πλησιάσαι τοὺς αὐτόχειρας ταφῆναί που ἐκέλευσεν.

Marcus Antoninus was so greatly grieved at the death of Cassius that he could not bring himself even of the look at the severed head of his enemy, but before the murderers drew near gave orders that it should be buried.

Why not have Augustus present this idea? Was Marcus Aurelius really the only nice guy, the odd one out? Perhaps in the end Dio’s take on Augustus was really that of a realist. He was not and hardly could be a nice person during the triumviral period. But he had to win the civil war(s), establishing order and monarchy, and potentially paving the way to better times. He was in many ways Dio’s model emperor. Had it not been for human nature and the recurrence of civil war all would have ended with Augustus: truly the end of History and the last man! In general, Dio’s view on society’s descent from one of gold to one of iron and rust (72[71].36.4 [Xiph.]) speaks volumes. Certainly there are differences between the civil wars of the Late Republic and later: dynasts on the one hand, and emperors and succession on the other. And of course civil war to Dio was always bad, even if it was necessary and could ultimately bring positive change: he uses Augustus and Vespasian as good *exempla* even where the situation implied by the *exemplum* is a negative one (Roller 2018 on *exempla*). Sadly, for the pessimistic Dio his contemporary world was not so lucky. Thucydides claimed that *stasis* had a dynamic on its own, with wickedness and personal animosities reflecting human nature (3.82.1–3). Dio has revealed himself as a historian of civil war, a historian trying to understand Roman history and especially the reappearing factor of civil war. Accordingly, there is much value in thinking about Dio as a theorist of factions, *stasis*, and civil war.

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1. Rich 2012 points out that his name was most likely Lucius Cassius Dio; on his name, see also further below. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For further details on Dio’s career, see Millar 1964, 5–27; Molin 2016. Swan 2004, 1–3 also provides a brief overview. See also chapter 1 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For translations and transliteration from Latin into Greek, see, e.g., 45.12.3 and 48.38.2; on Dio’s Attic style, see 55.12.4–5. Chapter 4 in this volume deals with Dio’s senatorial posturing, while chapter 15, on the Agrippa-Maecenas debate of book 52, examines Dio’s most sustained discussion of governmental forms. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Radicke (1999) calls it “a complete mess”. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Gowing 1990, 49–50 for the history of the misattribution, which stretches back to the ninth century. For further discussion on Dio’s name see chapter 1 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For the details, see Radicke 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For Dio’s description of Severus entrance into Rome in 193 CE, see 75[74].2.1–6 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]. Dio follows this scene with a recounting of the signs that foretold Severus’ rise, suggesting a close connection between the event and his first composition. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Schmidt 1997, 2613. Millar (1964, 29) insists on 193 CE, since Severus was in Rome and would not be again until 196–197. This reading, however, is based on the false belief that Severus answered Dio’s missive the same day; for this objection, see also Bowersock 1965, 470–471. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Schmidt (1997, 2613) and Slavich (2004, 152) contend that the Parthian campaigns would not have been included, but this is hard to square with the fact that Severus’ first Parthian campaign, which took place in 195 CE, occurred between the wars against Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus (cf. Millar 1964, 29). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Rubin 1980, 41–84 for Dio as a promoter of Severus’ propaganda. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For this segmentation, see Kemezis 2014, 94–104. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Thucydides’ influence has been noted since at least the Byzantine period; cf. Photius, *Bibliotheca* 71. For Dio’s view of human nature, see Reinhold 1988, 215–217; Rees 2011; and, recently, Lange 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See, recently, the contributions in Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer 2019, as well as chapter 9 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See chapter 18 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 44.2.1–4. These views align with other Greek thinkers of the imperial age, such as Appian (*B Civ.* 1.6). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. On these paired speeches, see chapter 15 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. For more on the reign of Augustus, see chapter 10 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. “Bio-structuring” in Pelling’s (1997) terminology. See also chapter 11 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. On the cyclical nature of Dio’s history, see Bertrand 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. These themes are the topic of chapter 13 of this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See, e.g., Madsen 2016; Rantala 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For different versions of this view, see Schwartz 1899, 1686–1687; Eisman 1977, 667–673; Murison 1999, 11; Swan 2004, 378–381; Kemezis 2014, 282–293. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See, e.g., Rubin 1980, 42–53, Bering-Staschewski 1981, 51–59; Barnes 1984, 246–247. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. For a listing of manuscripts and their contents, see Boissevain 1.lix–lx. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. On the reliability of Zonaras for the reconstruction of Dio’s early books, see chapter 8 in this volume, with further references. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See, e.g., Xiph. 87.2, with Mallan 2013, 611–612. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. On Xiphilinus’ epitome and its reproduction of Dio’s text, see Mallan 2013 and Berbessou-Broustet 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Németh 2018, 1–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. These do not constitute an exhaustive list of texts used to reconstruct Dio’s history. Others are discussed in relevant chapters, and one can also consult Boissevain 1.i–lix for a more detailed analysis, as well as the introduction to Cary’s Loeb edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. For subsequent works concerned with Dio’s use of sources, see, e.g., Manuwald 1979; Swan 1997; Westall 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Millar 1964, viii–ix; also noted by Sidebottom 2007, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See especially his comments on p. 28, as well as a longer discussion of Dio’s sources at 34–38; 83–92 on sources on Augustus (a multiplicity). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Of these topics, Millar’s treatment of Dio’s time of composition is particularly problematic, immediately noted by some reviewers; see, e.g., Bowersock’s (1965) critique. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. See also Millar’s additional comment on the same page: “Even if it is admitted that the task of making a satisfactory literary work out of an 80-book history of Rome was beyond Dio, as it might be beyond any man, neither the magnitude of the achievement nor Dio’s personal contribution to the work should be underestimated”. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. An exception to this is Manuwald’s 1979 monograph on Cassius Dio and Augustus. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See chapter 7 for a review. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The editors would like to thank all of the contributors for agreeing to take part in this project and the anonymous reader who offered a number of important critiques and suggestions for improving the volume. Thanks also goes to Chris Baron for reading a draft of this introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Cumont and Cumont 1906, 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Bohnhoff *et al.* 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Bekker-Nielsen 2017, 482–483. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. φύσει δὲ ἦν τὸ ἦθος, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ γένος, βάρβαρος· τό τε φονικὸν πάτριον ἔχων καὶ ἐπιχώριον, ... ἐπιδούς τε αὑτὸν διὰ μέγεθος καὶ ἰσχὺν σώματος ἐς εὐτελῆ καὶ ἐπιχώριον στρατείαν. “Both by disposition and by inborn nature, he was a barbarian, with the violent habits of his ancestors ... on account of his great bodily size and strength, he joined a local army unit”. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Hannestad 2007, 85–87; Güney 2014, 609–612; Weissová 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Bowie 2014, 38–39. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 26–27. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Diod. Sic. 32.19–21; Polyb. 36.14–15; Liv. *Per*. 50.2–3; Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Bekker-Nielsen 2016, 380–381. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Corsten 2006, 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Güney 2012, 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Güney 2012, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Mitchell 1993, 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Madsen 2009, 84–87. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Güney 2012, 133–134 and table 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Capitolinus (*TAM* IV, 283) and Valerius Pomponius (*TAM* IV, 285). For *Galerius* in Güney’s table 3, read *Valerius*. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Asklepiodotos (*TAM* IV, 243–244); Aristainetos (*TAM* IV, 238). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. E.g., Aurelius Zosimos (*TAM* IV, 186); Aurelius Sokrates (*TAM* IV, 309). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. On enfranchizement of Bithynians under the empire, see Fernoux 2004, 201–208; Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. On the history of Nicaea in general, Merkelbach 1987; Guinea Diaz 1996; Foss 1996; Bekker-Nielsen 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. For the subsequent history of Nicaea’s walls, see Dalyancı-Berns 2017; 2020; Lichtenberger 2020; on elite sponsorship of building projects, Fernoux 2004, 389–390. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Haensch 1997, 312–314. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Waddington *et al.* 1904, Nicomedia 14, L. Mindus Balbus procos. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. The circumstances and date of the erasure are unknown; possibly it was a punishment for Nicaea’s allegiance to Pescennius Niger, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. E.g., Robert 1977, 19, who proposed that Nicaea was granted the title of *metropolis* alongside Nicomedia—“dédoublement du titre”—by Trajan and lost it during the reign of Hadrian, while Heller (2006, 294) suggests that one and the same emperor, the philhellene Hadrian, granted Nicaea the title and later retracted it. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Titus was acclaimed *imperator* in 70 CE following the fall of Jerusalem. On *autokrator* as a Greek gloss for *imperator* see Mason1974, 117–120. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Waddington *et al.* 1904, Nicaea 30 (between 43 and 48 CE), C. Cadius Rufus procos. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Merkelbach 1987, 13 attempts to explain the title *prōtē* by associating it with the office of Bithyniarch: when a Nicaean held the Bithyniarchate, Nicaea was entitled to use the title *prōtē*. This hypothesis comes up against the objection that other cities which produced Bithyniarchs (e.g., Cius or Prusias ad Hypium: Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 106–107) did not, to our knowledge, claim the title of *prōtē*. On the role and functions of Bithyniarchs and other “koinarchs”, see Fernoux 2004, 353; Bekker-Nielsen 2016, 371–373. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Translation after H.L. Crosby, Loeb Classical Library. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. The full story is told in the classic article by Louis Robert (1977). [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Şahin 1978, 14–15; *IK* IX,51–52, pp. 47–48. The niches presumably contained statuary, possibly figures of Plancius Varus. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Tac. *Ann*. 16.33; Cass. Dio 62[62].26.2 [Xiph.]; Stini 2011, 232. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Nyquist 2014, 15–20; Bowie 2014, 42–45; Bowie 2016, 16–20 [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Translation after Bowie 2014, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Nyquist 2014, 4 assumes that all three “obelisks” were triangular in cross-section. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Bowie 2014, 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Şahin 1978, 16–18; IK IX, 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. *IK* IX, 116; Bowie 2014, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Bowie’s argument (2014, 44 n. 39) for rejecting *presbys*—“perhaps too short for the space”—is not valid, since *presbys* would have to be followed by *kai*. Bowie’s *presbyteros kai* would extend the line almost to the end of the sarcophagus, creating a lopsided impression (see Madsen 2006, 77 for a good photo of the inscription). In any case, the stonecutter does not seem to have been overly concerned with balance or symmetry. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Contra Corsten 2016, 208, who assumes that Chrestus the proconsul’s friend and the Chrestus of the sarcophagus are two different persons. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. The date of Chrestus’ death is not known; Bowie (2014, 45) places it around 90 CE. If the fragment of a monumental architrave discovered in 1986 in the south-eastern sector of Nicaea’s walls and bearing an inscription dated to Domitian’s fifth consulate, March 78 to January 79 (*SEG* 51 no. 1709) is contemporary with the inscriptions over the east and north gates, then Chrestus was still alive and well in March 78 CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 75–77; 2016, 373. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Bekker-Nielsen 2020b, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Bekker-Nielsen 2016, 371. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. *TAM* IV.1, 329; Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 107–108. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Burrell 2004, 161–162; Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 47–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Burrell 2004, 147–152. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. A funeral inscription from Nicomedia (*TAM* IV.1, 368), now lost, identifies the defunct as δι[άκ]ονος / [τ]ῶν περ[ικ]λεῶν Κασσ[ί]ων, “a deacon, of the famous family of the Cassii”. The title διάκονος implies a date after 312 CE. See also Corsten 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. For the year of Cassius Dio’s birth, see Christol 2016, 451. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. For the career of Cassius Apronianus, see Halfmann 1979, 194 no. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Gounaropoulou and Hatzopoulos 1998, 168–169; 550, no. 69 = *AE* 1971, 430. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Roxan 1994, 133 = *AE* 1985, 821. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Gowing, 1990, 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Molin 2016, 432 n. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. This is the explanation given in the notoriously unreliable *Historia Augusta* (*HA* Av. Cass, 1.1). It may be significant that the author of the *Historia Augusta* found it necessary to explain the co-occurrence of two apparent *gentilicia*, Avidius and Cassius. There is no evidence that the name Cassius was passed on to Avidius’ children, as it should have been if it were in fact a second *gentilicium* and not simply a *cognomen*. As another parallel one might cite the Ephesian *grammateus* P. Quintilius Valens Varius(Quass 1993, 213; *IK* 13.455; 13.500; 14.712b; 14.986). In his case, Varius(normally a *gentilicium*) was clearly taken as a *cognomen*, since it comesafterValens*.* That Quintilius, not Varius, was the *gentilicium* is further confirmed by the names of his daughter: Quintilia Varilla (*IK* 13.429). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Even Xiphilinus, who should have been well aware that Nicaea was the *patris* of Cassius Dio, refers to him as ὁ Δίων ὁ Προυσαεὺς (Xiph. 87). [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Dio-Cassius>, accessed October 4. 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Dio Chrysostom’s wife was dead by the time of Pliny’s proconsulate of Bithynia (c. 110 CE): Pliny, *Ep*. 10.81. Even if the sexagenarian Dio Chrysostom had taken a second wife—of whom there is no trace in the sources—late in life, their daughter would be beyond the childbearing age by 162 CE. Millar (1964, 11–12) and Ameling (1984, 126) make Cassius Dio the great-grandson of Dio Chrysostom. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. How Dio acquired this cognomen is not known. He was never adopted by Nerva but may have taken the name to underline his close relation with the imperial house; or it may be an ironic nickname devised by his fellow Prusans. On Dio Chrysostom’s alleged intimacy with the emperors, see Bekker-Nielsen 2006, 116; 2008, 123–125; Madsen 2009, 111–112. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. E.g., Bowie 2016, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. I am grateful to Christopher Mallan for this reference. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Gowing 1990, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. E.g., Schwartz 1899, 1686: “ein zäher, charakterfester Bithynier”. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Ameling 1984, 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. The tenth book of Pliny’s *Letters* contains numerous references to overambitious and underfinanced construction projects in early second-century Bithynia; see also Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 71–72. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. For other references to Nicomedian events in the first person, see Cass. Dio 78[77].17.1–18.1 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]; 79[78].8.4. The latter anecdote takes place at the Saturnalia of 214/215 CE. See also Millar 1964, 20–21. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Scott 2018, 104: “it deals in common rumor and stereotypes”. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Translation after C.R. Whittaker, Loeb Classical Library. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Robert 1971, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Regarding the Nicaeans’ motives, see Bekker-Nielsen 2020a, 35–36. Robert 1971, 22 cites Cass. Dio 75.6.4 to the effect that the battle took place “dans les défilés entre Nicée et Kios, là ou coule l’émissaire du lac de Nicée” but this is impossible to reconcile with the following statements that archers in boats took part and that the πόλις (i.e., Nicaea)wasἐγγύς*.* The western pass is out of range for archers on the lake, while the distance to Nicaea is nearly fifty kilometres: an impossible distance for battle-weary troops to cover in the course of a single night. Dio relates howNiger’s forces traversed the western pass (τῆς Κίου) unopposed but found the entrance to the next pass (τῆς τε Νικαίας) held by the Severan army. (Like the pass at Thermopylae, the “pass” of Nicaea was not a mountain defile, but a stretch of narrow shoreline.) The battle took place between (μεταξύ) the two passes and the soldiers struggling to gain control of the shore road were easy targets for marksmen on the lake. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. According to Millar (1964, 36), Dio “does not use personal knowledge of the terrain to clarify his account of any military operation in his *History*”; for the opposite view, Ameling 1984, 136: “man spurt selbst durch die Epitome hindurch die genaue Ortskenntnis”. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. On Xiphilinus’ criteria when selecting passages for his epitome, see Mallan 2013, esp. 617–619. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. In book 80[80], Dio’s absence from Rome is cited as an explanation—and excuse—for his patchy knowledge of events in the years 229–230 CE (80[80].1.1 [Xiph.]). [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Parts of this chapter were presented at conferences at the University of Southern Denmark in December 2018 and at the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, University of Münster, in March 2019. I am grateful to the participants on both occasions and to the editors of this volume for constructive criticism and comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. See, e.g., Palm 1959, 81–82; Gabba 1959, 378; Millar 1964, 191; Swain 1996, 404–405; Kemezis 2014, 25–29; Burden-Strevens 2015. The surface facts are undeniable. Dio grew up in Nicaea and writes in Attic Greek, but his subject matter is the history of Rome *ab origine*, and his main self-identification is as a Roman senator. No one would mistake Dio for an outright philhellene in the mold of a Plutarch or an Aelius Aristides; rather, assessments of Dio’s self-identification have tended to fall on various points of the scale between “thoroughly Roman” (e.g., Palm, Gabba) to some version of culturally Greek/politically Roman (e.g., Millar, Swain, Burden-Strevens). Such assessments, however, have tended to depend on how each scholar defines Greekness and Romanness. As Kemezis (2014, esp. 26 and n. 49) points out, this over-personalized approach fundamentally misunderstands how ethnic terms like “Greek”, “barbarian”, and “Roman” tend to operate: that is to say, like other types of ideological terms, they take their meanings from their discursive contexts (and are thus subject to at least some degree of variability). (See note 3 below.) In what follows, I explore the presence and absence in Dio of strong trends in Hellenocentric rhetoric that we see in other imperial Greek authors (near-contemporary and contemporary), but I draw no conclusion about how Greek or Roman Dio “is”. He is Dio. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. In recent decades, classicists have begun to shift the question of what objective criteria we might use for determining ethnicity and race in antiquity to the question of ethnic “identity”, something subjective that emerges primarily through discourse. Jonathan Hall’s work has been particularly helpful in this regard. As Hall has argued, influenced by the new discipline of *Altertumswissenschaft*, which sought to determine the *Volkgeist* of various peoples, early nineteenth-century German scholarship saw ethnicity as a matter of objective reality that was determined by pre-existing biological, cultural, and linguistic facts. (This view is typified by Müller 1820 and 1824; see Hall 1995.) The idea that ethnic labels referred to objective and monolithic entities led to the sort of racial determinism that allowed the Nazis to claim superiority through their connection to the Dorians via Sparta; in the wake of World War II, classicists started describing Greek ethnic terms such as Ionian and Dorian as still objective but merely linguistic. Our recent understanding of ethnicity, however, as a matter of self-identity rather than (primarily) objective criteria, would say that one is an Ionian or Dorian—or Greek, for that matter—because one claimed to be such. A famous example of this is the case of Alexander I of Macedon, who according to Herodotus claimed his Greek lineage at the Olympic games by linking the “Argead” royal dynasty of Macedon to Peloponnesian Argos. The fact that such claims could be contested by others is proof of their subjectivity; years later, Demosthenes, who rejected the idea of Argead Hellenicity, argued that Philip was a barbarian from Macedonia. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Philost. *VS* 481, 507. Philostratus has the tradition pick up, after a fallow period, with Nero’s contemporary Nicetes of Smyrna (511). [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. See, e.g., Gleason 1995; Swain 1996, 9; Schmitz 1997; Whitmarsh 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Kim 2017 describes the tension between Atticism and “Asianism” as a defining tendency of imperial Greek literature and one that is largely responsible for its dynamic character. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. In evidence even from the beginnings of Roman historiography, with Fabius Pictor’s work composed in Greek. See Potter 2011 for the tradition of Greek writers composing Roman histories. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. E.g., 73[72].18.2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val*.]; 74[73].3.4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val*.]; 74[73].12 [Xiph.]; 75[74].1.4 [Xiph.]; 75[74].4.4­–6 [Xiph.]; 76[75].4.2 [Xiph.]. See Madsen 2009 and 2020. Burden-Strevens (2015, 290–295) notes that Appian also has this “we”, seeing its presence in both Dio and Appian as a mark of second-/third-century Greek integration into the Roman ruling class. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. For Dio’s Bithynian background, see also chapter 1 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Dio makes reference to his fellow countryman, clever Priscus the engineer (75[74].11.2 [Xiph.]); to the high quality of lodging and food in his native city of Nicaea (76[75].15.3 [Xiph.]); and to the divine revelation that led him to retire in Bithynia (80[80].5.2–3 [Xiph.]). [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Following Isocrates’s lead, for example, Aelius Aristides in his *Panathenaicus* upholds Athens as the centerpiece of Greek culture and the leader of the Greek cities and intimates the same of Alexandria in his paean to Rome. There is also Plutarch, whose classical heroes in the *Parallel Lives* are clearly meant to represent the Hellenic spirit of their respective *poleis*, be it Athens, Sparta or Thebes. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. See, e.g., Carlsen 2016; Mallan 2017; and Pownall 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Ancient authors did not necessarily agree on these criteria (see nn. 1 and 2 above on the subjectivity of ethnic terms). Herodotus in *Hist.* 8.144.2 has the Athenians refer to “Greekness, that is, having the same blood and language, and holding shrines of gods in common, and sacrifices, and similar customs” (τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐὸν ὅμαιμόν τε καὶ ὁμόγλωσσον καὶ θεῶν ἱδρύματά τε κοινὰ καὶ θυσίαι ἤθεά τε ὁμότροπα). Isocrates, on the other hand, asserted that “‘Hellenes’ are those who share our education rather than those who share common blood” (*Paneg*. 50: Ἕλληνας καλεῖσθαι τοὺς τῆς παιδεύσεως τῆς ἡμετέρας ἢ τοὺς τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως μετέχοντας, trans. Norlin). [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. On the Panhellenion see, e.g., Spawforth and Walker 1985 and 1986; Alcock 1993, 167 (a map on distribution of member-cities); Jones 1996; Boatwright 2000, 31; Romeo 2002; Doukellis 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Pausanias comes close: “Hadrian also built for the Athenians other buildings: a temple of Hera and Zeus Panellenios, and a sanctuary common to all the gods” (*Perig.* 1.18.9: Ἀδριανὸς…κατεσκευάσατο…καὶ ἄλλα Ἀθηναίοις, ναὸν Ἥρας καὶ Διὸς Πανελληνίου καὶ θεοῖς τοῖς πᾶσιν ἱερὸν κοινόν). [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. See, e.g., Walsh 1996 on Flamininus’ key role in creating the language of the *senatus consultum*. For the relationship between Dio’s text and Zonaras’ history, see chapter 8 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Cass. Dio 19.18 (= Zon. 9.18), Ὁ δὲ Φλαμίνιος τότε μὲν πάντας τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἐλευθέρους φῆκεν, ὕστερον δὲ συγκαλέσας αὐτοῦς καὶ ὑπομνήσας ὧν εὐηργέτηντο, παρῄνεσεν εὔνοιαν τῇ Ῥώμῃ τηρεῖν, καὶ τὰς φρουρὰς ἁπάσας ἐξήγαγε, καὶ πῆρε μετὰ παντὸς τοῦ στρατοῦ. Translations of Cassius Dio’s *Roman History* are adapted from Cary’s Loeb edition; all other translations of Greek and Latin texts are my own. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Dio invokes Flamininus’ name in another context, with a similar lack of commitment. The ostensible subject is how different Roman leaders—Flamininus, Mummius, Agrippa, and Nero—treated the Greeks, with Nero (unsurprisingly) coming out the worst of all: ἐς δὲ δὴ τὴν Ἑλλάδα ἐπεραιώθη, οὔτι γε ὡς Φλαμινῖνος οὐδ’ ὡς Μόμμιος ἢ καὶ Ἀγρίππας καὶ Αὔγουστος οἱ πρόγονοι αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ’ ἐπί τε ἡνιοχήσει καὶ κιθαρῳδήσει κηρύξει τε καὶ τραγῳδίας ὑποκρίσει. (“But [Nero] crossed over into Greece, not at all as Flamininus or Mummius or as Agrippa and Augustus, his ancestors, had done, but for the purpose of driving chariots, playing the lyre, making proclamations, and acting in tragedies”, Cass. Dio 62[63].8 [Xiph./*Exc*. *Val*.]). While there is a reference here to Flamininus’ behavior towards the Greeks, the real emphasis is on Nero’s desire to go to Greece for all the wrong reasons (which are not particularly flattering to Greece). [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. The most influential work on the subject is Hall 1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. There is one moment in which Greece and Rome are seen as fellow victims of (implied) barbarism. In his description of the Jewish revolt against Trajan, Dio places Greeks and Romans against the Jews of Cyrene in Libya, who he says destroyed both peoples alike (τούς τε Ῥωμαίους καὶ τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἔφθειρον 68[68].32.1–2 [Xiph.]). Dio’s preoccupation, however, is with the supposedly cannibalistic Jewish persecution of pagans—an astonishing precursor to blood libel, first attested in Josephus—not with the relative status of Greeks and Romans. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Swain 1996, 347–349. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. In 73[72].18.3–4 [Xiph.], Dio defends his practice of including the minutest details of Commodus’ excesses, and of all the events that follow, by pointing out that he witnessed them firsthand and was therefore, more qualified than anyone else to record them. In the second, longer passage, Dio notes that he was inspired to write about the violent wars and strife (πόλεμοι καὶ στάσεις μέγισται) following the assassination of Commodus, and describes his writing process in greater detail. Having written and published a treatise on dreams and portents for Severus (which encouraged the latter’s hopes to become emperor) and received a positive response, Dio dreamt that the divine force (τὸ δαιμόνιον) ordered him to write history. The narrative was well-received by Severus and others, so he decided to write a full history of the Romans and append the contemporary history to it, “in order that in a single work I might write down and leave behind me a record of everything from the beginning down to the point that will seem best to Fortune” (ἵν’ ἐν μιᾷ πραγματείᾳ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς πάντα, μέχρις ἂν καὶ τῇ Τύχῃ δόξῃ, γράψας καταλίπω). Dio then praises Fortune for her help, emphasizing the difficulty of his task, for which he took ten years to collect the data, and which took twelve years to write (73[72].23 [Xiph.]). [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. *Paideia* is attributed to Pyrrhus (9.40.3); Paulus Varro (15.57.23); Scipio (16.67.51); Sophonisba (17.57 = Zon. 11); Tiberius Gracchus (24.83.1); Cassius (47.33.4); Germanicus (57.18.6); Syriacus (58.3.7); Lucius Arruntius (58.27.4); Cornutus (62[62].29.2 [Xiph.]); the Quintilii (73[72].5.3 [Xiph.]), Sextus Condianus (73[72].6.1 [Xiph.]), and other victims of Commodus (73[72].7.3 [Xiph.]); Albinus (76[75].6.2 [Xiph.]); and Julianus Asper (78[77].5.3 [*Exc. Val*.]), who was insulted by Caracalla. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Kaimio 1979, 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Asirvatham 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. In Suetonius these figures are Tiberius, Claudius, Octavian-Augustus, Germanicus, Nero, Vespasian and Titus; in the *Historia Augusta*, they are Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, Pertinax, Septimius Severus, Elagabalus, and Severus Alexander (and others beyond the time period with which Dio deals). [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. We also find the inclusion of Latin-Greek translations in at least one Latin author who relied on Greek texts: Pliny the Elder (“Greek names have a scholarly pedigree, and Pliny’s use of Greek terminology amounts to a display of erudition as well as being in many cases unavoidable” [Doody 2011, 126]). We can distinguish both Pliny’s and Dio’s acts of translation from what we see in Cicero, the most famous Latin practitioner of competent code-switching (that is, a practice in which a speaker, fluent in both languages, switches between them at will; incompetent code-switching would be, by contrast, necessitated by a speaker’s inability to get their point across in one of the two languages). On code-switching in Cicero’s letters, see Adams 2003, 308–347. Whereas Cicero was fluent in Greek and used his knowledge of Greek literature to create a new kind of classical Latin literature (Bishop 2018), Dio’s main concerns are to a) inform his audience about problems in translation and b) put his solutions to translation problems on display for his audience’s admiration. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Freyburger-Galland (1997) catalogues Dio’s three methods of transmitting Latin institutional vocabulary, through (1) transliterations (or “Latinisms”); (2) translations of Roman terms using Greek roots; (3) and equivalences (or “Atticisms”). Building on Freyburger-Galland’s work, Coudry (2016) reorganizes the discussion by context, dealing first with Dio’s descriptions of Roman institutions at the very moments at which they arose during the Republic (the historical disappearance of which is of central concern to the historian), and second, with narrative passages in which the functionality (or lack thereof) of these institutions is at stake in the story itself. Coudry also provides two exhaustive appendices to her discussion, one on Dio’s terminologies for the workings of the comitia in Republican Rome, and the other on senatorial procedure. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Noted too by Mason, for example, in his discussions of Dio’s use of ἡγεμών (1974, 144–151) and πρεσβυτής (1974, 153–155). [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. See Coudry 2016, 293 for a brief comparison. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Cass. Dio 49.36.5: καὶ οἱ μὲν εἴτ ̓ οὖν διὰ τοῦτο εἴτε καὶ δι ̓ ἄλλο τι οὕτως ὠνομάδαται: τῶν δὲ δὴ Ἑλλήνων τινὲς τἀληθὲς ἀγνοήσαντες Παίονάς σφας προσεῖπον, ἀρχαίου μέν που τοῦ προσρήματος τούτου ὄντος, οὐ μέντοι καὶ ἐκεῖ, ἀλλ ̓ ἔν τε τῇ Ῥοδόπῃ καὶ πρὸς αὐτῇ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ τῇ νῦν μέχρι τῆς θαλάσσης. (“This is their name, whether the reason be what I have stated or some other; but certain of the Greeks in ignorance of the truth have called them Paeones, an appellation which, though no doubt old, does not, however, apply to that country, but rather to Rhodope, close to the present Macedonia, as far as the sea.) [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. There may be an example of this at 72[71].9.6 [Xiph.], when Dio points to the unwillingness of “the Greeks” to display knowledge of Latin or Roman conventions—even when they know better. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Cf. Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 74; *De fort. Rom.* 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Of these two terms, only σχολή appears often in Dio (18 times), but almost always with the meaning “leisure”. It appears twice as “school”: in this passage (Cass. Dio 39.50), and in reference to Marcus Aurelius’ attraction to the Stoic school (72[71].6.1). Φιλολογία also appears twice: here and in a passage from Xiphilinus (Cass. Dio 66 [66].13 [Xiph.]) on Vespasian’s expulsion of the philosophers. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Asirvatham 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. The proper term for the Roman Senate is σύγκλητος (with βουλή referring to local councils), but βουλή is common in literary texts and βουλευτής is Dio’s standard term for senators. See Mason 1974, 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Aul. Gell. *NA* 1.19: *Libri tres in sacrarium conditi “Sibyllini” appellati; ad eos quasi ad oraculum quindecimviri adeunt, cum di immortales publice consulendi sunt.* [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Plin. *NH* 13.27: *inter omnes vero convenit Sibyllam ad Tarquinium Superbum tres libros adtulisse, ex quibus sint duo cremati ab ipsa, tertius cum Capitolio Sullanis temporibus.* [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Madsen 2009. Birley (1997, 218) suggests that Arrian, Herodes Atticus and his son Herculanus may have been the first Greeks made senators by Hadrian. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. I am grateful to Jesper Madsen and Andrew Scott for kindly inviting me to speak on this subject in Odense in December 2018 and for their excellent editorial advice for the present piece; also to Marianne Coudry, Josiah Osgood, and Christopher Burden-Strevens for their helpful comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Translations of Greek and Latin texts are my own, except for those of Cassius Dio, which are drawn from Cary’s Loeb edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. On Dionysius’ account, see Fowler 1996, 62–69. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. For Appian and Dio, Gowing 1992, Hose 1994, and Rich 2020. For Dio and Herodian, Swain 1996, 406–407, Sidebottom 2007, 74–82 and Kemezis 2014. For all three, Bowie 1970, 10–18, Potter 2011, 328­–334, and Asirvatham 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Appian also seems to have written an autobiography of some description (*BNJ* 27 T 1); this does not survive. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Brodersen 1993, 353–354. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Kemezis 2014, 228 n. 5, with further bibliography. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Kemezis 2014, 236–237. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Litsch 1893, Kyhnitzsch 1894, and Rees 2011, 61–62. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Dillery 2006, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Cf. Polyb. 3.6.14. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. *Suda* s.v. Kephalion κ 1449 Adler = *BNJ* 93 T 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. *BNJ* 97; Sidebottom 2007, 52–53. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Schwartz 1899, 1603. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Schepens 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Hornblower 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. For civil war in Dio’s history, see chapter 18; for Dio’s Greek identity, chapter 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Schubert 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Rees 2011, 81–82. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. *FRHist* 1.173–4 (inclining towards the idea that it was). [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. *FRHist* 1.235. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. For Dio’s use of annalistic structure, especially in his books on the Late Republic, see chapter 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Whittaker 1969, xxxix–xliii. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Compare Nicolaus of Damascus’ one hundred and forty-four book history (*BNJ* 90 T 11a); Posidonius’, in fifty-two books (*BNJ* 87 T 1: I am indebted to Professor Pelling for this example), Strabo’s, in forty-three (*BNJ* 91 T 2), Pompeius Trogus’, in forty-four, and Theopompus’ *Philippika*, in fifty-eight (*BNJ* 115 T 17). On the other hand, Luce 1978 and others have argued that the original plan of Livy’s history was for one hundred and twenty books. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Goukowsky 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. E.g., App. *B Civ.* 1.1.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. For Dio’s senatorial status and viewpoint, see chapter 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. E.g., Hdn. 4.1.2, 5.5.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Rich 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Cf. Ginsburg 1981 (on Tacitus), Levene 1993, 35–37 (on Livy’s placement of prodigy lists), and, more generally, Rich 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. On Thucydidean lexis in Appian, see Strebel 1935; in Herodian, Stein 1957. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. For more on Dio’s use of speeches, see chapters 14–16. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. I am indebted to Dr. Guy Westwood for this parallel. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. This title is an explicit play on that of the classic article of Griffin 1997 on the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*. All dates are CE unless otherwise noted. Translations of Dio are from E. Cary’s Loeb edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. The information in this paragraph comes from Cass. Dio 80[80].2.1 [Xiph.], 4.2–5.3 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Leunissen 1989, 112; Parkin 2003, 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. On the methodological problems inherent in reading Severus Alexander’s appointments to second consulships as evidence of senatorial influence on his government, see Davenport 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Cass. Dio 77[76].2.1 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Scott 2018b, 10–14, who also provides a helpful overview of the range of scholarly views on this issue. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Cass. Dio 76[75].8.1–4 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. The prosopographical evidence for Severus’ executions is undeniable: see Alföldy 1970. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. On the reluctance of Dio (and many other senators) to choose sides, see Cass. Dio 76[75].4.1–2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Cass. Dio 73[72].23.1–3 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. This chapter does not consider the role of the Senate in the pre-imperial books, which would require an entirely separate article. For contributions on this topic, the reader is referred to Hinard 2005; Urso 2005; Madsen 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Cass. Dio 73[72].7.1–2 [Xiph]. Apronianus passed stories of imperial politics onto his son, as we know from Cass. Dio 69[69].1.1–4 [Xiph.] (about the death of Trajan and the adoption of Hadrian). On Dio’s family background, see chapter 1 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. For example, Cass. Dio 73[72].16.3 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*], 18.1–2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*], 20.1–2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*], 21.1–3 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Cass. Dio 73[72].18.3–4 [Xiph.]. The uniqueness of Dio’s narrative also underpins the famous statement about access to information under a monarchy: Cass. Dio 53.19.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Julianus’ speech: Cass. Dio 74[73].12.1–5 [Xiph.]. Macrinus’ letters: 79[78].16.1–17.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Davenport 2012a, 797. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. For Maximus’ career and writings, see Birley 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. See chiefly Molinier Arbo 2009 (concentrating on the reigns of Commodus, Pertinax and Didius Julianus), Kemezis 2012 (focusing on portrayals of individual senators). One should point out the many differences in their careers: while Dio did not serve in the civil wars of 193–197, Marius Maximus was a dedicated supporter of Septimius Severus, which enhanced his career progression at the time. See Molinier Arbo 2009, 285–290; Davenport 2012a, 799; Christol 2016, 448–9, 452–453, 463. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Aelius Antipater, tutor to Caracalla and Geta, *ab epistulis* and later elevated into the Senate as ex-consul, wrote about the deeds of Septimius Severus (Phil. *VS* 607). Asinius Quadratus, a senator attested under Caracalla (*IGRR* 4.1013), took his *1000-Year-History* in 15 books up to the reign of Severus Alexander (*Suda* K 1905). The emperors themselves also left their own versions of events: Cass. Dio 76[75].7.1–3 [Xiph.] (Severus); 79[78].2.1 [Xiph.] (Caracalla). [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. The exception to this is the thrilling account of Sejanus’ downfall and its aftermath, in which the Senate and its members figure prominently (Cass. Dio 58.5.1–16.7). Dio seems to have been particularly interested in Sejanus because the power he wielded, and his dramatic fall from grace, was parallel to that of the prefect Plautianus in his own time, as Dio points out at 58.14.4. On Dio’s contemporary narrative, see further Scott 2018b, Mallan 2021, and chapter 13 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. I include only some representative examples here. Oath: 68[68].2.3 [Xiph.] (Nerva); 68[68].5.2 [Xiph.] (Trajan); 69[69].2.4 [*Exc. Val.*] (Hadrian). Senatorial membership: 57.10.3–4 (Tiberius); 60.10.8, 61[60].29.1–2 [Xiph.] (Claudius); 67[67].13.1–4 [Xiph.] (Domitian). Speeches: 59.6.1–2 (Caligula); 61[61].3.1 [Xiph.] (Nero); 63[64].8.1–21 (Otho); 73[72].4.2–3 [Xiph.] (Commodus). [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Note, for example, in Dio’s original text, his attention to detail about how many praetors or quaestors held office in a year (56.25.4, 57.16.1) or the lengths of consulships (59.13.1–2). [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Cass. Dio 74[73].3.1–3 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]; see further Kemezis 2012, 396, on the events following the assassination of Commodus as the “greatest political memory” of Dio’s life. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Cass. Dio 74[73].12.1–5 [Xiph.]. Dio’s keen sense for bringing these events alive is noted by Coltelloni-Trannoy 2016, 627. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Cass. Dio 79[78].16.1–17.4, 36.1–5, 80[79].1.2–3.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. See Millar 1964, 18; Kemezis 2012, 404; Scott 2018b, 3. The theme is taken up in Mallan 2016, 272–274, who effectively contrasts Dio’s silence during his lifetime with the frank criticism of emperors found in his *Roman History*. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Cass. Dio 79[78].36.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Cass. Dio 77[76].6.1–3 [Xiph.] (quotation at 6.2). [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. On Dio’s involvement in the unsavoury events he describes, see Scott 2018a, 240–245. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. The importance of ritual and performances to the Roman monarchy is a key theme of Wallace-Hadrill 1982. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. This theme is discussed further in the next section. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Cass. Dio 74[73].17.4 [Xiph]. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Cass. Dio 74[73].17.2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. The *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone patre* is a striking example of the Senate’s version of events being promulgated as the official record in order to put an end to speculation and rumor. See Griffin 1997, 253–255 on its composition and publication. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Cass. Dio 79[78].18.2, 19.5, 21.1–22.1. See further Davenport 2012b, 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Cass. Dio 79[78].22.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Davenport 2012a, 812–813. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Cass. Dio 77[76].8.1–9.2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Ash 2021, 109–112. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Cass. Dio 53.1–2, justifying the inclusion of many laws in his narrative as relevant to events. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. The date of the suffect consulship has been the matter of some dispute, but should be placed in the reign of Septimius Severus, as shown by Cass. Dio 77[76].16.4 [Xiph.]. See further Millar 1964, 17, 204–207; Christol 2016, 453–455. There have been various reasons proposed for Dio’s career advancement under Severus Alexander, notably the alleged renewed influence of the Senate. These do not, however, stand up to scrutiny: see Davenport 2011, 284–285. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Senatorial meetings have already been discussed above. Funeral of Pertinax: 75[74].4.3 [Xiph.], 4.6 [Xiph.], 5.1–5 [Xiph.]. Banquet given by Pertinax: 74[73].3.4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]. Banquet to celebrate Caracalla and Plautilla’s marriage: 77[76].1.2 [Xiph.]. Advises Septimius Severus: 76[75].16.2–4 [Xiph.]; 77[76].17.1 [Xiph.]. Dio attends on Caracalla at Nicomedia: 78[77].17.3–4 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. In a stimulating paper, Scott 2018a argues that by writing the *Roman History*, Dio could be outspoken and critical of contemporary emperors in a way that he could not in his lifetime. This would put him in the same category as Claudius Aelianus, who published his invective against Elagabalus after the emperor was safely dead, an act of cowardice for which he was criticized by Philostratus of Lemnos (Phil. *VS* 625). [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Coltelloni-Trannoy 2016, 626–632. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Cass. Dio 59.24.1–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Reinhold 1988, 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. On Dio’s preference for a monarchical constitution, see Manuwald 1979, 8–26; Rich 1989, 95–96; 1990, 13–18. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. On this speech, see chapter 15 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Cass. Dio 52.19.1–3,.33.3–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Cass. Dio 52.32.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Cass. Dio 52.31.1–4, 32.1–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Rich 1989, 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Cass. Dio 53.21.4–7 (quotation from 21.6). While the Senate did continue to pass *senatus consulta* and hold trials, its reception of embassies became less frequent, especially in the second century. See Talbert 1984, 411–425. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. Cass. Dio 54.19.1, 56.43.4–44.2; with the discussion of Swan 2004, 13–17. See Madsen 2019, 102–103, 115–120 on Dio’s view that Rome needed a monarch to control the Senate. See further the chapter by Lange in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Dio not only depended on previous histories, but also did significant archival research, as shown by Letta 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Cass. Dio 54.6.1–4. Rich 1990, 178 notes that despite Dio’s testimony, the public disputes would have been between the supporters of Lepidus and Silvanus. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Cass. Dio 54.10.1–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Cass. Dio 52.42.1–5, 54.13.1–14.5, 54.18.3, 54.26.3–5, 55.3.1–6. Many of these measures were passed through Augustus’ *lex Iulia de senatu habendo* of 9 BCE. See further Talbert 1984, 10–13, 131–140, 222–224. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Cass. Dio 56.40.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Rich 1989, 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Some examples: Cass. Dio 60.4.3, 6.1, 10.1 (Claudius), 65[66].10.5­–6 [Xiph.] (Vespasian), 68[68].7.3 [Xiph.] (Trajan), 69[69].7.1 [Xiph.] (Hadrian). For discussion, see Mallan 2016, 271 (particularly on senatorial frank speech), and Madsen 2019, 118–119. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Cass. Dio 72[71].33.2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Cass. Dio 59.9.1–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. Cass. Dio 60.4.6. For Claudius’ attitude towards Caligula’s memory, see Flower 1996, 150–159. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Cass. Dio 60.22.3. See Varner 2004, 24–25 on archaeological evidence for defacement and withdrawal of Caligula’s coinage. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Cass. Dio 79[78].17.3–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. On the legal authority of *senatus consulta* under the Principate, see Talbert 1984, 432. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Cass. Dio 59.25.5 (Caligula), 67[67].2.4 [*Exc. Val.*] (Domitian). [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Cf. Platon 2016, who emphasizes the dysfunctionality of the relationship between emperor and Senate under Tiberius. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Cass. Dio 57.13.3. There is no date for this incident, coming as it does in the account of Tiberius’ general behavior as *princeps* at the beginning of book 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Dio gives the name “C. Lutorius Priscus”, but it is probably “Clutorius Priscus”, as in Tac. *Ann.* 3.49. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Cass. Dio 57.20.3–4. I present here the portrayal of this incident as given in Dio, rather than the fuller account of Tac. *Ann.* 3.49–51, which differs in emphasis, and crucially, does not have Tiberius command the Senate to pass the *senatus consultum.* [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Cowan 2016, 94–96, 98–100, convincingly argues that the trial of Clutorius Priscus signalled a change in political process and rhetoric under Tiberius, placing the onus on the emperor to exercise *clementia* in face of senatorial *severitas*. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Molin 2016, 434–437 provides the most recent overview of the modest career of Dio’s father, who was probably a new man who held a suffect consulship under Commodus. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. His descendant, *PLRE* I Cassius Dio, was *consul ordinarius* in 291, proconsul of Africa, and *praefectus urbi*. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. See the discussion of the Augustan revisions in Talbert 1984, 131–133. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Cass. Dio 52.19.1–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Cass. Dio 52.20.1–2. See further Talbert 1984, 16–19. However, male members of the imperial family usually benefited from preferred advancement, e.g., 55.9.2–4 (Gaius), 56.26.1 (Germanicus). [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Cass. Dio 52.20.3–4, 21.8–22.6. On this ethos in Dio’s Antonine narrative, see Kemezis 2012, 388–402. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Cass. Dio 52.19.4, 24.1–25.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. See, for example, Cass. Dio 56.25.4 (Augustus allows 16 praetors to hold office), 58.23.5–6 (extension of governorships under Tiberius). [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Kemezis 2012, 388. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. See especially Eck 1984; 2005. For its spread to the equestrian order, see Davenport 2019, 256–260. On Dio’s recording of his own career in book 80[80] as a literary equivalent of the documentary genre of an inscribed *cursus*, see Mallan 2021, 272–274. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Cass. Dio 62[63].17.1, 5–6 [Xiph.], 73[72].5.3–6.2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Cass. Dio 73[72].5.1–2 [*Exc. Val.*]. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Cass. Dio 63[63].25.1–3 [Xiph.]. For the phrase *capax imperii*, see Tac. *Hist.* 1.49. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Cass. Dio 78[77].6.1 [*Exc. Vat*.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Hopkins and Burton 1983. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. On the equestrian order under Augustus, see Davenport 2019, 15–17, 206–220. It is important to note that Dio recorded many examples of praetorian prefects who were awarded public statues by emperors, a sign that in many ways their ethos of serving the state was similar (Cass. Dio 69[69].18.1 [Xiph.], 19.1–2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]; 72[71].3.5 [Xiph.]). [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. For the shared aristocratic status of senators and equestrians (with the proviso that senators always ranked higher), see Cass. Dio 52.19.4–6, 21.3–4, 26.1–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. Cass. Dio 52.25.6–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. See Reinhold 1988, 189. It bears repeating, since these passages are often misunderstood, that Dio was not opposed to the involvement of equestrians in Roman government: Reinhold 1988, 197–8; Davenport 2012a, 797–798, 810–811; 2019, 356–357. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Cass. Dio 79[78].11.1–3, 14.4, 40.3, 41.1–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. Cass. Dio 79[78].13.1–14.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. This is the primary argument of Davenport 2012b. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Scheidel 1999, 260–261. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. It is likely that Dio did hold a praetorian proconsulship, but this is not firmly attested. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. There may also have been a rivalry with Marius Maximus, though this is not explicitly found in the *Roman History*. For the argument that Dio read and responded to Maximus’ imperial *Lives*, see Molinier Arbo 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Cass. Dio 79[78].21.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Cass. Dio 77[76].5.5 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. Davenport 2012a, 808–811. This article, building on Meckler 1999, proposes that Dio did not represent the viewpoint of all senators who lived through Caracalla’s regime. Not all scholars agree with this view: see Hose 2007 and Scott 2015 for different readings of Dio’s narrative. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Cass. Dio 51.17.2–3, 77[76].5.5 [Xiph.]. On Dio’s dislike of Egyptians, see Reinhold 1988, 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. One wonders what a history written by Marcius Claudius Agrippa or Aelius Coeranus, in which Dio appeared as a (minor) character, would have looked like. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Davenport 2015, 270–274. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. I am very grateful to the editors for their feedback on this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Boissevain 1895–1931, 1.ii–cii. Translations of Latin and Greek texts are mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. For the date of these codices, see Mazzucchi 1979, 125–131; Wilson 1983, 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. For the likely date and provenance, see Mazzucchi 1979, 94; Wilson 1983, 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Mazzucchi 1979, 125–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. For the *Excerpta Constantiniana*, see the exhaustive treatment by Németh 2018. Note too the classic treatment of Lemerle 1971, 267–300. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. E.g., scholars such as Theodosius the Deacon, John Tzetzes, and Cecaumenus, for whom, see Simpson 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Note Xiphilinus’ comment about the value of Dio’s history and its relevance for understanding the current πολίτευμα (“system of government”) (Xiph. 87.2–5). [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Scholarship on these authors has been summarized by Neville 2018, 147–149 (Xiphilinus), 191–199 (Zonaras). For Xiphilinus, see the studies of Mallan 2013; Treadgold 2013, 310–312; Berbessou-Broustet 2016; Neville 2018, 147–149; Kruse 2019; Bandini 2020, 694–696. For Zonaras, note Treadgold 2013, Bellissime/Berbessou-Broustet 2016, Mallan 2018, Kampianaki 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. For Xiphilinus’ biographical technique, note Mallan 2013. For the biographical trend in middle Byzantine historiography, see Markopoulos 2010; Németh 2018, 147–150. Note also Treadgold 2013, 470: “Middle Byzantine historians also showed so much interest in the emperors’ lives that most of their histories resemble a series of imperial biographies, although only the *Life of Basil* is formally biographical”. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. The current state of knowledge has been admirably established by Pérez Martín 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Specifically, those books dealing with the reigns of Antoninus Pius and the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. See also chapter 12 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Zonaras also follows Xiphilinus rather than Dio for books 68–80, although this may have been done more out of convenience than anything else. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. As noted by Wilson (1996, 388), “between 1204 and 1453 it is very hard to find satisfactory evidence of Byzantine readers using texts that we cannot read now”. The so-called Planudean fragments of Cassius Dio are more likely to derive from John of Antioch. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. For Planudes’ association with the Chora Monastery, see Wilson 1983, 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Barmann 1971; Pérez Martin 2015, 180; cf. Groß 2020, 394–395. *Iviron* 812, unquestionably the most important MS of Xiphilinus, has never been properly collated. A new edition of Xiphilinus remains a desideratum. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Pérez Martín 2015, 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Todd 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. For the identification of the scribe as Chrysococces, see Mazzucchi 1979, 137–139. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. For an (incomplete) list of manuscripts copied by Chrysococces, see Vogel and Gardthausen 1909, 86–87; Wilson 1983, 271–272. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Sabbadini 1905, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Omont 1887, 187. *Bib. publ. gr.* 48, f. 233. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. One is tempted to add, “at least before the twenty-first century”. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. The lacunae between 57.17.8 and 58.7.2, and 59.25.1 and 60.2.1 meant that books 57 and 58 were transmitted as book 57, and 59 and 60 were transmitted as book 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Aurispa *Ep*. 9. Cf. Aurispa *Ep*. 7 (p.11.18). [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. Aurispa’s translation altered the text so that it was Scipio, not Alexander, who was dubbed the greatest general. Cf. Marsh 1998, 30–31. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. As with Aurispa’s translation of Lucian from the same year, his translation of Dio was dedicated to the same man, Battista Capodiferro. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Boissevain 1895–31, 1.lxxv. The excerpt contains Cass. Dio 38.18.1–21.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. For Guarino’s relationship with Chrysoloras, see Thomson 1966, 69–76. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. For the problem of the date, see Diller 1961, 317; cf. Sabbadini 1905, 44–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Omont 1892, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. Diller 1961, 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. We must note, however, that the tituli preserved in manuscripts of Xiphilinus do not immediately make the provenance known. E.g., the tituli *of Codex Paris. Cois*. 320 and *Codex Vat. gr. 145* read δίωνος ῥωμϊακὴ ἱστορία. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Fryde 1983, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. In monetary terms, the collection was valued by contemporaries to be worth 15,000 ducats: Wilson 2017, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. For the catalogue of books Bessarion donated to the library, see Omont 1894, 149–179. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. The codex would lie unused in the Marcian library until its rediscovery by Morelli in 1797. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Rather than the brief *Chronological Table* attributed to Zonaras, for which see Dindorf 1868–1875, 4.383–388. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Müntz and Fabre 1887, 228–229. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. The latter codex was copied in 1439: Boissevain 1895–1931, 1.lxv. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Bolgar 1954, 470. It is unlikely that Paul II, that least bookish of fifteenth-century popes, ever read it. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. For an edition and translation of Politian’s *Miscellanies*, see Dyck and Cottrell 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. This work is not included in Boissevain’s list of editions and translations of Dio. Cf. Boissevain 1895–1931, 1.lxxxix–ci. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Not to be confused with the more famous Brentius, the German theologian of the sixteenth century. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. I thank Nigel Wilson for drawing my attention to the connection between Tribizias and *Vaticanus gr*. 145. Cf. *Repertorium griechischen Kopisten* 3A no. 123 [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. ITSC ic00243000 = Bod-Inc C-108. For a facsimile of Bembus’ work in the *Bibliothèque nationale*, see[ark:/12148/bpt6k604845](https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k604845) [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. Thus, Manzano 2016, 378–9, or 1490 according to Boissevain 1895–1931, 1.xc. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Now in Madrid (*Cod. Matr*. 4714), according to Manzano 2016. The collection contains numerous manuscripts once owned by Merula: Hall 1913, 327. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. For the two editions, see Ross 1976, 551–552. Digitized facsimiles of Egnatius’ editions from the *Bibliothèque nationale* may be found here: [ark:/12148/bpt6k58356c](https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k58356c) (1516), and here [https://books.google.com.au/books?id=yLDvcQAACAAJandprintsec=frontcoverandsource=gbs\_ge\_summary\_randcad=0#v=onepageandqandf=false](https://books.google.com.au/books?id=yLDvcQAACAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false) (1519). [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. In this respect, Egnatius’ programme is not that dissimilar to that adopted by Anthony Birley in his Penguin Classics partial translation of the *Historia Augusta* (titled *Lives of the Later Caesars*), which begins with confected lives of Nerva and Trajan (Birley 1976). [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Appian (excluding the *Hannibalic* and *Spanish Wars*) had been translated by 1454 by Pier Candido Decembrio, Polybius (books 1–5) in 1473 by Nicolaus Perrottus, and Diodorus Siculus (books 1–5) in 1449 by Poggio, which would then be rendered into English by John Skelton c. 1487. Politian’s translation of Herodian was completed in 1487. Christoforo Persona made a translation of Procopius (*Wars*) at the behest of Sixtus IV (early 1470s) and completed his translation of Agathias in 1481. Persona would be made prefect of the Vatican Library by Innocent VIII in 1484, a year before Persona’s death. See further Wilson 2017, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Wilson 2017, 176, who identifies Musurus’ “Dio” with Cassius Dio, rather than Dio Chrysostom. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. Wilson 2017, 134–136. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. E.g., Erasmus *Epist*. 1575 [ed. Allen] (date 1525). [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Wilson 2017, 134–135 [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. For a brief summary of the development of Greek printing in the first hundred years of the printing press, see Steinberg 1974, 112–114. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Bellissime 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Stephanus, quoted in Botfield 1861, 445–446. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. De Larroque 1874, 43 n. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Cf. *Codex Parisinus* 1691. For the *subscriptio*, see Boissevain 1895–1931, 2.iv. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. Thus, Pfeiffer 1976, 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Wolf’s edition was printed at Basel. It was dedicated to Antony Fugger. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. An exception to this was the flawed and misguided attempt by the Neapolitan Cardinal Nicolaus Carminius Falco to reconstruct the lost books of Dio’s history in the first half of the eighteenth century using Zonaras’ narrative. For this work, see Groetsch 2011, 103–124. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. For a brief description of Xylander’s early years and his work on Dio, see Fechner and Horbury 1971, 218–219. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. Fechner and Horbury 1971, 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. For Xylander’s contribution to the *editio princeps* of Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations*, see Farquharson 1944, 1.xii–xxviii. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. In order to circumvent the controversy, Jonson printed an elaborate apparatus which cited his authorities for the play. This was printed in the first folio edition of the play in 1605. For Jonson’s notes, see Herford and Simpson 1932, 4.472–485. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Herford and Simpson 1932, 4.351. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. There are no excerpts from Dio in the collection *De Insidiis*. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Boissevain 1895–1931, 1.xxi–xxxv; Németh 2018, 273–277. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. We may note also that the text of the *De Insidiis* (“Concerning Conspiracies”) also appeared first in Spain: Moore 1965, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Moore 1965, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. The well-traveled Augustinus had met Orsini at Rome in 1556. For the correspondence between these two men, see Wickerman Crawford 1913. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Danarius’ copy for Orsini is spread across two codices: *Codex Vaticanus* 1418 and *Codex Neapolitanus* III B 15. Boissevain 1895–1931, 1.xxx–xxxi; Moore 1965, 143–145. The parts of the *Excerpta de Legationibus* omitted by Orsini, specifically excerpts from Dexippus, Eunapius, Peter the Patrician, Priscus, Malchus, and Menander Protector, would be published in 1603 by David Hoeschel: *Eclogae Legationum* (Augustae Vindelicorum [Augsburg] 1603). [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. For comments, note Momigliano 1974, 11–12. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. The edition of Zosimus would lead to Leunclavius being summoned to appear before the Inquisition: Almasi 2013, 224 [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. It is likely that Leunclavius met Xylander in Heidelberg in 1562: Burtin 1990, 561–562. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. For more on the book numbering systems, see the introduction to this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. For comments on Leunclavius’ *Synopsis Basilicorum Maior*, see Stolte 2016, 197–198. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. Boissevain 1895–1931, 1.xcv. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. See Groetsch 2011, 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. The work was dedicated to Charles Boyle, Earl of Orrery, graduate of Christ Church, and a man known to posterity as one of Richard Bentley’s adversaries in the battle over the *Letters of Phalaris*. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. Bodleian MS Rawl. letters 8 fol. 308. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. Bodleian MS Rawl. letters 8 fol. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. Bodleian MS Rawl. letters 8 fol. 320. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. Bodleian MS Rawl. letters 8 fol. 316. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. Bodleain MS Rawl. letters 8 fol. 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. Doble 1889, 370 [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. BM Harley MS 6473, Harley MS 6474, Harley MS 6475. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. Bellissme 2016, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. Reimarus 1750, xxv–xxvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. For discussion of Reimarus’ work on Dio, see Groetsch 2011. Not all appraisals of Reimarus’ work were as favorable as those presented by Groetsch. Niebuhr (1849, 66) was particularly scathing about Reimarus’ grammatical competency: “What is defective in Fabricius, as well as in his son-in-law Reimarus, is grammatical knowledge”. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. Although it would not be until the following century too that the text of Zonaras’ *Epitome* would be incorporated into the editions of Dio’s history. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. I would like to thank the editors Andrew Scott and Jesper Majbom Madsen for their feedback on this chapter and for their role in organizing the symposium in Odense in December 2018 at which the outline of this contribution was threshed out. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. Chapter 39 is entitled “Roman Society from A.D. 70 to 180”. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. I, p. 103. References to *Decline and Fall* are from David Womersley’s Penguin edition (Womersley 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. Translations of Dio in this paper are taken from Cary’s Loeb Classical Library edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. For Gibbon and Wotton’s history see, e.g., Pocock 2003, 448–450. [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. See, e.g., I, p. 111 n. 15; I, p. 116 n. 28 for all three sources being cited. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. I, p. 118 n. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. I, p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. I, p. 131 n. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. Examples of blending: I, pp. 129–130: auction of empire by the Praetorians; I, pp. 143–144: casualties of Septimius Severus; I, p. 151: Caledonian war of Septimius Severus. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. I, p. 108. Other examples of citing one source when other evidence (or lack thereof) might be mentioned: I, p. 166: Herodian on the rites of Elagabal; p. 167: *Historia Augusta* on Elagabalus’ patronage of culinary sciences; I, p. 185: Dio on the crushing taxes of Caracalla. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. For other quotations in Latin from the *Historia Augusta,* see, e.g., I, p. 116 n. 29; I, p. 133 n. 19; I, p. 134 n. 24; I, p. 145 n. 62; I, p. 168 n. 59; I, p. 174 n. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. I, p. 109 n. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. On Gibbon’s use of sources: see discussions by Momigliano 1966, 40–41 and Matthews 1997, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. Some good examples of weighing one source against another: I, p. 143 n. 55; I, p. 164 n. 47; I, p. 169 n. 61; I, p. 171 n. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. E.g., writing of Pertinax, Gibbon notes (I, p. 121, n. 45): “Herodian (l. i. p. 48.) does justice to his disinterested spirit; but Capitolinus, who collected every popular rumour, charges him with a great fortune acquired by bribery and corruption”. See also I, p. 124 n. 52 and I, p. 125 n. 54; in the latter passage, Gibbon writes: “If we credit Capitolinus (which is rather difficult)…”. For simple incompetence see I, p. 134 n. 23: the king of Thebes as an ally of Niger—“I strongly suspect, mistaken”. Also see I, p. 161 n. 44 for the author of the *Historia Augusta* life of Macrinus reproducing the “venal writers” of Elagabalus on Macrinus. Note, too, I, p. 168 n. 60 for “the credulous compiler of his [Elagabalus’] life, in the Augustan History”; p. I, 190 n. 5: “this wretched biographer”. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. I, p. 132 n. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. I, p. 178 n. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
404. I, p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
405. I, p. 175 n. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
406. I, p. 113 n. 17. Note that elsewhere Dio is cited as recording “a real fact” not “a puerile figure of rhetoric” (I, p. 136 n. 32). [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
407. Libanius is faulted for “extravagant hyperbole” and Gibbon adds: “Rien n’est beau que le vrai:a maxim which should be inscribed on the desk of every rhetorician” (I, p. 933 n. 67). [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
408. I, p. 147 n. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
409. I, p. 138 n. 39 (drawing on Dio 75[74].4–5). Gibbon seems to have viewed the lengthy description as too indulgent of detail, and reproducing it would distract from the impression he wishes to give of Septimius’ swift and ruthless rise to power. Otherwise one could imagine Gibbon doing much with such details as the handsome youth who swatted away flies from the effigy of Pertinax with peacock feathers, as though it were Pertinax himself. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
410. I, p. 123 n. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
411. On Reimarus’ edition of Dio, see either Groetsch 2015, 177–223 or Groetsch 2011, as well as chapter 5 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
412. I, p. 32 n. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
413. See, e.g., I, p. 126 n. 55; III, p. 876 n. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
414. I, p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
415. I, p. 168 n. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
416. Reimarus 1750–1752, 1365. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
417. I, p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
418. Reimarus 1750–1752, 1203. [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
419. I, p. 163 n. 46. Cf. also I, p. 37 n. 24; I, p. 170 n. 62; II, p. 613 n. 148; II, p. 719 n. 79; III, p. 1020 n. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
420. Reimarus 1750–1752, 1331. [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
421. I, p. 525 n. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
422. I, p. 551 n. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
423. III, p. 1137. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
424. III, p. 1137. [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
425. Note also III, p. 876 n. 29, discussing the wives of the old Britons, for “Reimar’s judicious annotation”. Garrison 1978 and Palmeri 1990 discuss Gibbon’s habit of classifying his sources, often witheringly, in his footnotes. [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
426. For a discussion of this topic in Gibbon, see Bowersock 1977. Bowersock argues that Gibbon neglects its importance before 180 CE, but at the same time Bowersock does not fully acknowledge how prominent the theme is in the opening narrative of *Decline and Fall.* [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
427. I, p. 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
428. Gibbon makes similar choices elsewhere in his history, e.g., foregoing a detailed account of the successors of Pope Gregory VII in the years 1086–1305: “A repetition of such capricious brutality, without connection or design, would be tedious and disgusting” (III, p. 984). [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
429. I, p. 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. I, pp. 140–141. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
431. I, p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. I, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. I thank Andrew Scott for catching the echo of Dio in Gibbon here. [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. I, p. 145 (source of next two quotations). In comparison, note above all: “This long peace, and the uniform government of the Romans, introduced a slow and secret poison into the vitals of the empire” (I, p. 83). But also note such phrases as “the poison of flattery” (I, p. 172) or “the subtle poison of those artful sycophants” (I, p. 831). See further on the metaphor, and Gibbon’s inconsistent use of it, Bowersock 1977, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
435. I, p. 178. For a good discussion see Pocock 2003, 448–63. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
436. I, p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
437. I, p. 113 (drawing on Hdn. 1.10). [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
438. I, p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
439. I, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
440. I, p. 126 (drawing especially on *HA*, *Pert.* 14.7). [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
441. For a few examples, see 74[73].1 [Xiph.], 74[73].6.3 [Xiph.], 74[73].8–10 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*], 74[73].16.1–4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*], 75[74].2 [Xiph.], 78[77].4.2–5 [Xiph./*Exc. Vat*.], 78[77].9 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*], 79[78].28. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. Scott 2018, 148–153 provides a good commentary on and discussion of this remarkable conclusion to Dio’s *History.* [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
443. Gibbon cites Dio and also Reimarus’ note for the list of places (Illyricum, Mauritania, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Germany) (I, p. 176) [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
444. I, p. 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
445. I, p. 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
446. I, pp. 176–178. [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
447. Madsen 2016; Osgood 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
448. I, pp. 187–188. On Gibbon’s view of monarchy see Momigliano 1966, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
449. I, p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
450. I, pp. 155–156. [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
451. Madsen 2020, 25–56 offers a fine discussion of how Dio’s entire history is shaped as an exploration of the right kind of monarchy to govern Rome. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
452. Quoted from Craddock 1972, 338; for further considerations, see the discussion of Bowersock 1977, highlighting the likely importance of the American and French Revolutions for Gibbon’s change of heart. [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
453. Cartledge 2009 gives an overview. Womersley 1988, 80–88 highlights some deliberate mistranslations of Tacitus by Gibbon. For the Tacitean narrative of decline in the first book of *Decline and Fall,* see Pocock 2003, 17–31. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
454. I, p. 230. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
455. I, p. 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
456. I, p. 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
457. I, p. 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
458. I, p. 149 (*HA*, *Sev.* 18.11). [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
459. I, p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
460. Cf. I, p. 1063 n. 91 on Ammianus: “We might censure the vices of his style, the disorder and perplexity of his narrative: but we must now take leave of this impartial historian”. [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
461. For an eloquent summation of Dio’s achievement in writing a full history of Rome that systematically explored the best form of government for it see Madsen 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
462. Matthews 1993, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
463. Quoted from Bonnard 1969, 146–147. [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
464. I, p. 86 n. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
465. I, p. 93 n. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
466. I, p. 97 n. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
467. I, p. 527 n. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
468. I, p. 128: “the weakness of the civil government”. Similar phrases recur, e.g., I, p. 85: “the weakness of the constitution”; I, p. 98: “the weakness of the civil authority”. [↑](#footnote-ref-468)
469. I, p. 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-469)
470. I, pp. 119–120 n. 42 (citing Dio 74[73].3.2–4). [↑](#footnote-ref-470)
471. I, p. 157 (drawing on SHA *M. Ant.* 8). [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
472. I, p. 847 n. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
473. I, p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
474. I, pp. 175–176. [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
475. I, p. 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-475)
476. I, pp. 147–148. [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
477. I, p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
478. I, p. 148 n. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
479. II, p. 787. [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
480. II, p. 787 n. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
481. For help on earlier drafts of this paper I thank the editors of this volume and participants at the 2018 conference at Odense and I also thank all members of the Cassius Dio Research Network for much enlightenment over the years. [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
482. This survey includes works down to the end of 2021 in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, as well as some Russian-language references that I know only from western-language abstracts or as-yet-unpublished English translations. [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
483. Supplemented by Martinelli 2002. The *Oxford Bibliographies* article for Dio, by David Wardle, provides selective but thorough coverage through about 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
484. See also Millar 2016, a reflection on the author’s fifty-year engagement with Dio since writing his foundational 1964 monograph. [↑](#footnote-ref-484)
485. On this last, see also Salomies 2005. In general, the scholarly grounds for including “Cocceianus” in Dio’s name have been thoroughly undermined (since Gowing 1990), while the evidence for “Claudius” is not conclusive. [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
486. Guerber 2004 is also important regarding Dio’s jurisdiction over Asian cities in the late 210s. [↑](#footnote-ref-486)
487. Further possibilities for late dating are explored in Markov 2008, of which an updated English-language version will be appearing in the near future. [↑](#footnote-ref-487)
488. See also the briefer overview in Scanlon 2015, 265–267. [↑](#footnote-ref-488)
489. Two important earlier works on imperial Roman politics that give prominent consideration to Dio are Carsana 1990, 83–94 and Lendon 1997, *passim*, but see e.g. 141–145. [↑](#footnote-ref-489)
490. The recent Budé editions (see section 5 below) also apply many of these approaches at the detail level. [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
491. This line of inquiry builds on the earlier work of Hinard 2005 and Urso 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
492. For Caesar and monarchy, Cordier 2003 is also valuable. [↑](#footnote-ref-492)
493. Kemezis 2016a and Jayat 2021 take similar approaches, respectively to Caesar’s speech to mutineers in book 38 and to the Senate in book 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
494. Simons 2011 looks at this same speech from a specifically pedagogical angle, as part of a curriculum on ancient democracy. [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
495. Several other articles by Coudry and others in section 3 also deal with this episode, see also Rodgers 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-495)
496. Of the other Augustan speeches, the “marriage-laws” speech in book 56 is examined by Mastrorosa 2007 and Kemezis 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-496)
497. Foulon and Molin’s edition uses the “traditional” Leunclavius numbering rather than Boissevain’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
498. The recent scholarship of Németh 2016 and Németh 2018 is crucial for the *Excerpta* in general, with discussion in passing of Dio. [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
499. Also important but often neglected in this respect is Libourel 1974. [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
500. Sion-Jenkis 2002 considers Cicero’s “amnesty-speech” in Dio, and its reflection of Thucydidean thought. Kemezis 2022 considers Dio’s engagement with counterfactuals about Cicero writing history. [↑](#footnote-ref-500)
501. Many discussions are in unexpected places: see Strasburger 1977, 44–50 and Cordier 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-501)
502. Kemezis 2016a and Schubert 2018 discuss Thucydidean impact on particular speeches, for which see section 4 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-502)
503. Lachenaud 2003 is also useful for Dio and Herodotus. For Xenophon, there remains only the short list of passages in Lucarini 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-503)
504. Freyburger-Galland 1992 is the most recent general comparison of the two authors, likewise Freyburger-Galland 2009 for Suetonius. [↑](#footnote-ref-504)
505. For an overview of Dio in terms of classical narratology, see Hidber 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-505)
506. This last may usefully be read alongside Davenport 2021a, which gives an important reading of key methodological passages, esp. Dio 53.19. [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
507. An English translation of Makhlayuk 2009 is being prepared for publication. [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
508. Simons 2009 also offers a comprehensive reading of this portion of Dio. [↑](#footnote-ref-508)
509. Pelling 2006 and Pitcher 2009 are important comparative studies of historiographical accounts of Caesar, including Dio’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-509)
510. For the period from Nerva to Antoninus, Migliorati 2003 provides in effect a historical commentary, while Murison 1999 remains the first resource for the previous three decades. [↑](#footnote-ref-510)
511. For Dio’s narrative of the conquest of Britain, see also Hind 2007. Seelentag 2004, 484–492 has a useful reading of Dio’s critical comments on Trajan’s Parthian campaign. [↑](#footnote-ref-511)
512. The often neglected survey of Günnewig 2000 considers Dio's use of standard ethnic *topoi*. [↑](#footnote-ref-512)
513. Mundt 2012, while mainly concerned with Herodian, briefly examines Dio’s view of Rome as a stage for emperors’ self-presentation. [↑](#footnote-ref-513)
514. Langford 2021 and Langford 2022, along with a forthcoming third article, amount to a composite picture of Dio’s treatment of imperial women. See also Schnegg 2006 for women in military contexts. [↑](#footnote-ref-514)
515. Dio’s non-mentioning of Christianity is naturally difficult to address, but see Freyburger-Galland 2005 for considerations on the significant absence. [↑](#footnote-ref-515)
516. See also the comparative studies of Groot 2008 and (specifically on Nero) Devillers 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-516)
517. A fuller agenda for Dio’s imperial narrative is set by Pelling 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-517)
518. I am deeply grateful to the many authors cited in this article who shared recent or yet-to-be-published items, as well as to the Interlibrary Loan staff at the University of Alberta, whose promptness has many times astonished me. Thanks are also due to the editors of this volume for providing the opportunity and the scope for this exercise in bibliographical gluttony. [↑](#footnote-ref-518)
519. Trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert (Penguin, 1987). See chapter 10 of this volume for more on Dio’s portrait of Augustus. Subsequent translations in this chapter are my own unless otherwise indicated. [↑](#footnote-ref-519)
520. For analysis of these books, see chapter 13 of this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-520)
521. See Urso 2019 on this aspect of Dio’s work. [↑](#footnote-ref-521)
522. Similar to the situation with Dio’s work is that of Ammianus Marcellinus, from the late fourth century CE; and in a certain sense, Appian also provides a parallel (though we do have his preface in its entirety). [↑](#footnote-ref-522)
523. Millar 1964, 3. As fundamental as Millar’s monograph was, it is telling that he chose not to include the evidence for the first thirty-five books in his analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-523)
524. The exceptions in the interim being Libourel 1968 (his dissertation) and 1974; Fechner 1986; Hose 1994, 356–451 deals extensively with the fragmentary books and Dio’s treatment of the growth and expansion of Roman power. [↑](#footnote-ref-524)
525. Most notably, books by Urso (2005 and 2013) and Simons (2009). As recently as 2019, however, Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer could still write that “[i]t remains the case that Cassius Dio’s early books have hardly been studied for their own sake” (2019, 11). Their edited volume, as well as Burden-Strevens 2020, have now done much to repair the situation; see also a number of essays in Fromentin *et al.* 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-525)
526. See Mallan 2019, 78–83 for a recent discussion of the early textual transmission of Dio’s work; also, Fromentin 2016a. [↑](#footnote-ref-526)
527. Brunt 1980 remains fundamental; Most 1997; Baron 2013, 1–16. [↑](#footnote-ref-527)
528. The “Fragmenta Parisina”, representing frr. 57.53–60, 63–71, 76, 81, 83–86 and fr. 58.1–6, consists of text on parchment leaves which were used to repair the binding of a manuscript of Strabo in the thirteenth century. The leaves were taken from an eleventh-century manuscript of Dio’s work and probably belong to books 17 and 18 of the *Roman History*. The text of the Fragmenta Parisina was first published in 1839; see Boissevain 1895–1931, Vol. 1, pp. xxxv–xli for discussion and reconstruction; Rich 2016, 282–284. [↑](#footnote-ref-528)
529. Now the subject of a book-length study, Németh 2018; see also Mallan 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-529)
530. Boissevain 1895–1931, III.767–775, prints a small selection of excerpts from *EV* in parallel with the text of Dio’s direct manuscript tradition, in order to illustrate the various forms the relationship can take. The adverbs “largely,” “nearly,” and “normally” in my sentence above should always be kept in mind. [↑](#footnote-ref-530)
531. I have relied on the table at Rich 2016, 273; see also Boissevain 1895–1931, III.777–800 for his original compilation of the data. [↑](#footnote-ref-531)
532. Boissevain drew these from Bekker, *Anecdota Graeca* Vol. 1, pp. 117–80. Petrova 2006 has established that the *On Syntax* originates in the schools of Gaza in the sixth/seventh centuries CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-532)
533. Based on the work of Gutschmid 1894, with some adjustments, Boissevain divided the fragments of the first three decads into individual books. Urso 2013, 11–15, dismisses any such attempt due to the inherent unreliability of the evidence, but this seems excessive, at least for books 1–21: Mallan 2019, 79–80; cf. Rich 2016, 274–276. Of the handful of other Byzantine authors who cite Dio, the most significant for books 1–35 are Pseudo-Maximus (*Florilegium*) and John Tzetzes (*Chiliades*). [↑](#footnote-ref-533)
534. On Zonaras, see Mallan 2018; Fromentin 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-534)
535. Bellissime and Berbessou-Broustet 2016, 97–100. [↑](#footnote-ref-535)
536. See the thorough treatment of Bellissime and Berbessou-Broustet 2016, especially at 102–103 for a series of examples from the lost early books which should give us pause in treating Zonaras as an epitome of Dio; Briquel 2016 on the regal period; Fromentin 2019 on Zonaras’ treatment of the direct speeches he found in Dio. [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
537. Libourel 1968, 28 calculated that Zonaras’ treatment was approximately one quarter the length of Dio’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-537)
538. The lower section sometimes contains parallel columns, when the same passage is attested in another author (especially Tzetzes). While the Loeb edition usually includes these texts and translates them, Cary did not include their fragment numbers. [↑](#footnote-ref-538)
539. Sometimes with parallel material from Tzetzes or other sources (see previous note): 73 out of 320 possible pages (22.8%). [↑](#footnote-ref-539)
540. Plus, when the numbering system was created, the Planudean excerpts were believed to derive from Dio. However, Boissevain excluded these (rightly, according to the scholarly consensus), leaving gaps in the current list of fragment numbers. [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
541. Cf. Kemezis 2019, xxx. Cary’s Greek text and translation of Zonaras also lack section subdivisions. Since Zonaras’ “chapters” (as designated by modern scholars) can be quite lengthy, references to Cary’s edition quickly become cumbersome. [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
542. This is the end of Zonaras’ book 9 in our modern editions; but as Mallan 2018, 360–361 points out, Zonaras seems to have conceived of his work as consisting of only two books, the first being an “Archaeology” on the origins of the Hebrews and the Romans. The passage quoted here occurs at the end of this first book. Elsewhere, Xiphilinus similarly reports that Dio’s narrative of the reign of Antoninus Pius was not to be found in the versions of the *Roman History* available to him (70.1.1); see chapter 12 of this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
543. Zon. 9.31 = Dindorf II.339.10–16; the whole passage (Dindorf II.338.32–339.25) is printed in Boissevain’s apparatus criticus on p. 320 of Volume 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
544. There are nine citations in *On Syntax* and a handful of excerpts in *EL*. [↑](#footnote-ref-544)
545. Fragment 1.1 appears between 6.2 and 6.3; see discussion in the previous section. There is another tantalizing potential piece of the preface, fragment 6.7b preserved in *On Syntax*: “Dio in Book 1 (says): ‘For in the beginning of some affairs, when we are hoping to attain certain ends, we submit not unwillingly even to the expenses’” (trans. Cary). Boissevain, uncertain of its placement, included it at the end of the fragments attributed to book 1 (Vol. 1, p. 14); as he notes, Gutschmid suggested that it may belong to the preface. Fromentin 2013 argues that Zonaras incorporated a portion of Dio’s preface into his own, laying out the sequence of types of government under which the Romans lived. [↑](#footnote-ref-545)
546. The first clause of the Greek is missing a verb; Mai and Bekker both suggested the obvious supplement, “I have read” (Bekker also suggesting a μέν). Millar 1964, 33–34, proposed “I have gathered” (συνέλεξα); cf. Fromentin 2016, 180 n. 18. *Pace* Fomin 2016, 228–229, Dio here is probably not alluding to his method of composing speeches, limiting his “fine words” to those passages and thus distinguishing their style from that of the rest of his narrative. It seems far more likely that Dio’s statement refers to the general concern of the ancient historian for finding a balance between truth and pleasure. [↑](#footnote-ref-546)
547. See Baron 2021 for discussion of the placement of Dio’s Etruscan digression. Millar 1964, 45 points out that there are actually a fair number of digressions on a variety of topics throughout the *Roman History*. [↑](#footnote-ref-547)
548. Schettino 2006, 67–68. [↑](#footnote-ref-548)
549. Libourel 1968, 10 notes that *ES* contains 68 excerpts just from books 3–8, including extensive material from the first secession of the plebs and the career of Coriolanus. [↑](#footnote-ref-549)
550. It is curious, however, that this excerpt follows directly from the previous one in the manuscript of *ES* (noted by Boissevain, Vol. 1 p. 7), which concerns Romulus and Remus. [↑](#footnote-ref-550)
551. See Fromentin 2019, 36 for a list of direct speeches in Zonaras which most likely reflect ones found in Dio books 2–21. [↑](#footnote-ref-551)
552. Burden-Strevens 2020; see also Kemezis 2014, 104–112; Rich 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-552)
553. Rich 2019, 234–239; Burden-Strevens 2020, 157–162, on the potentially programmatic force of the speeches in book 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-553)
554. E.g., Lintott 1997, 2500. [↑](#footnote-ref-554)
555. Dio criticizes Romulus as well for his haughty attitude toward the Senate (fr. 5.11); Madsen 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-555)
556. See Rich 2016, 275–276 for his list of such “anchor” points (my terminology). [↑](#footnote-ref-556)
557. Urso 2013, 9; Millar 1964, 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-557)
558. Three fragments attributed to book 11 and concerning the First Punic War survive (43.32b, 29, and 30), and Zonaras (8.8.1) marks the outbreak of the war as a crucial moment in Roman history. [↑](#footnote-ref-558)
559. In this case, we have one citation attributed to book 21 which can be securely placed in the Third Punic War (fr. 71.2), and we know from Zonaras that Dio’s book 21 went down to 146 BCE (see above on Zon. 9.31). [↑](#footnote-ref-559)
560. Such comparisons are complicated not only by the fact that we lack roughly the final two-thirds of Livy’s work (only the uneven summaries contained in the *Periochae* survive), but also because, as Rich 2016, 277 points out, Dio’s extant books “are among the shortest of ancient prose books”—which seems likely to have been the case for his early books as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-560)
561. See Schulz 2019 on the importance of the regal period for Dio and his work. [↑](#footnote-ref-561)
562. Respectively, Zon. 9.22 = Dindorf II.313.16–18, and Zon. 9.25 = Dindorf II.324.8–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-562)
563. Moscovich 1983; Rich 2016, 283–285. [↑](#footnote-ref-563)
564. Urso 2019, 55 goes so far as to say that Livy was *not* a source for Dio, or at least not among those sources he considered particularly important. See Briquel 2016, 136–141 on the regal period; Urso 2016b on the Republic; de Franchis 2016 (as well as the two essays which follow by Simon and François) on Dio’s relationship with Livy’s work. [↑](#footnote-ref-564)
565. Briquel 2016, 135–136. [↑](#footnote-ref-565)
566. Urso 2016b, 156; de Franchis 2016, on this aspect of Dio’s speeches. [↑](#footnote-ref-566)
567. Urso 2005; Simons 2009, 33–114; Urso 2016b, 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-567)
568. Burden-Strevens 2020, summed up (20) as “[o]rality, morality, institutions, and empire”. [↑](#footnote-ref-568)
569. Lindholmer 2019; see also Madsen 2019, on Dio’s picture of how the men of the Roman elite, rather than the system of government, changed for the worse. [↑](#footnote-ref-569)
570. Litsch 1893, 45 (from his conclusion): *satis mihi videor demonstrasse Cassium Dionem Thucydidis libros non legisse sed lectitasse permultaque ex iis in suum usum convertisse*. [↑](#footnote-ref-570)
571. Millar 1964, 42; cf. Lintott 1997, 2500. [↑](#footnote-ref-571)
572. Lachenaud 2003; Baron 2021. Perhaps tellingly, Millar 1964 has no index entry for Herodotus. [↑](#footnote-ref-572)
573. Fr. 36.10: πολλὰ μὲν δὴ οὖν καὶ ἄλλα τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους θαυμάσειεν ἄν τις, οὐχ ἥκιστα δὲ τὰ τότε γενόμενα. [↑](#footnote-ref-573)
574. Fr. 35.7–8 (trans. E. Cary): ταῦτα μὲν ὅπῃ ποτὲ καὶ δι’ ἃς αἰτίας οὕτως ἔχει ζητεῖν ἄλλοις μελήσει. Dio uses a similar phrase after questioning the efficacy of divination (if fate cannot be avoided anyway), fr. 57.22: “So then, let each man consider these things in whatever way seems best to him” (ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ὅπῃ ποτὲ ἑκάστῳ δοκεῖ νομιζέσθω). See Baron 2021 for further discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-574)
575. Hersilia, fr. 5.5–7; Lucretia, fr. 11.18–19. See Rich 2019, 232–233. Versions of these discourses (as well as that of Veturia, mother of Coriolanus: fr. 18.8–10) were provided by many authors in the Roman historical tradition. Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ likely influence on Dio would also repay further attention: Fromentin 2016b; Burden-Strevens 2020, 95–100 (and elsewhere). [↑](#footnote-ref-575)
576. Fechner 1986, 10–11. A “fragment” of Dio not found in Boissevain’s edition is pertinent to this period: this is a reference in a poem by Theodosius Diaconus (961 CE) which seems to indicate that Dio called Sulla, at some point in his career, δημοκράτωρ. See Baldwin 1983; Urso 2016a, 29–30. [↑](#footnote-ref-576)
577. Kemezis 2014, 90–149, has been influential; but see now Lindholmer 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-577)
578. Coudry 2019, considering both the excerpts and Zonaras. [↑](#footnote-ref-578)
579. Burden-Strevens 2020 (see esp. 9). [↑](#footnote-ref-579)
580. See chapter 15 in this volume for a summary of the aims and methods of the so-called Agrippa-Maecenas debate and its role within Dio’s political and historiographical project. Translations in this chapter are from Cary’s Loeb edition with minor corrections, unless otherwise noted. [↑](#footnote-ref-580)
581. Fr. 83.4: ὅτι Μᾶρκος Ὀκτάουιος τῷ Γράκχῳ διὰ φιλονεικίαν συγγενικὴν ἑκὼν ἀντηγωνίζετο. καὶ ἐκ τούτου οὐδὲν μέτριον ἐπράττετο, ἀλλ᾽ ἀντιφιλονεικοῦντες περιγενέσθαι μᾶλλον ἀλλήλων ἢ τὸ κοινὸν ὠφελῆσαι, πολλὰ μὲν καὶ βίαια, **ὥσπερ ἐν δυναστείᾳ τινὶ ἀλλ᾽ οὐ δημοκρατίᾳ**, ἔπραξαν (“Marcus Octavius, because of a family feud with Gracchus, willingly became his opponent. Thereafter there was no semblance of moderation; but zealously vying, as they did, each to prevail over the other rather than to benefit the state, they committed many acts of violence **more appropriate in a despotism than in a democracy**”); see also 46.34.4: opposite to *demos*; 47.39.2: opposite to *autonomia*. [↑](#footnote-ref-581)
582. *Dynasteia* signifies the personal power exercised by citizens outside the legal framework of the rules, opposite to constitutional regimes, particularly the Republican one, and violating the fundamental rights of citizens. The usual translation in this sense is “personal power”. In Dio, it means also a form of political regime, used in the singular or in the plural, that represents a corrupted shape of the Republican regime from a point of view of political philosophy: in this sense, it can be translated as “despotism” or “dominion”. In this passage, *dynasteiai* signifies the periods in which this regime was exercised successively by one or a few prominent leader(s). On this topic, see also Kemezis 2014, 109–110; Carsana 2016, 547–548; Lindholmer 2018 and below. [↑](#footnote-ref-582)
583. Since Millar 1964—who initiated the rediscovery of the historian and his work and highlighted its historical quality, focusing specially on the Republican and contemporary books—the number of studies about the Republic, and especially on the Late Republic and the very beginning of the Principate, has proliferated. This includes: monographs (Fechner 1986 on the whole period; Lintott 1997 on the Late Republic; Simons 2009, on the early Republic; Kemezis 2014, whose focus is most on the Late Republican and Augustan books: 91); new editions (in the French collection of the Belles-Lettres beginning with books 50–51 by Freyburger-Galland and Roddaz 1991, and including now 36–37: Lachenaud and Coudry 2014; 38–40: Lachenaud and Coudry 2011; 41–42: Freyburger-Galland, Hinard and Cordier 2002; 45–46: Fromentin and Bertrand 2008; 47: Fromentin and Bertrand 2014; 48–49 : Freyburger-Galland and Roddaz 1994; 53: Bellissime and Hurlet 2018); commentaries (Berti 1987; the Dio project of the American Philological Association, the first of which was dedicated to books 49–52: Reinhold 1988; also Rich 1990, on the Augustan books 53–55.9); and many chapters in the two impressive recent networks: the French collection, Fromentin *et al.* 2016, consisting of two volumes and 46 chapters; and the Danish/American/Canadian project, which has published since 2016 edited volumes proceeding from five conferences (Lange and Madsen 2016; Osgood and Baron 2019; Lange and Scott 2020 ; Kemezis, Bailey, and Poletti 2022, and the present volume), among which one was specifically dedicated to the Late Republic: Osgood and Baron 2019. See also in connection with the findings of this network Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-583)
584. This topic has been one of the most explored, as recalled by Fromentin *et al.* 2016, 11–12; see, e.g., Gabba 1955; Millar 1964; Berrigan 1968; Roddaz 1983; Fechner 1986; Hose 1994; Sion-Jenkis 1999, 2000, 43–50; Kuhn-Chen 2002, 182–209; Cordier 2003; Kemezis 2014, 104–145. [↑](#footnote-ref-584)
585. Kuhn-Chen 2002; Kemezis 2014, 94–104; Fromentin 2016a; De Franchis 2016; Zecchini 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-585)
586. MacDougall 1991; Letta 2003; 2016; Westall 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-586)
587. Zecchini 1978; Manuwald 1979; Berti 1988; Dio’s independence is also evidenced for the early Republic: Urso 2016, esp. 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-587)
588. Gowing 1992; Rich 2016; Bertrand, Coudry and Fromentin 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-588)
589. Lintott 1997; Hinard 1999, 2005, 2006; Ferrary 2010; Lange 2016; Coudry 2016a; Bertrand and Coudry 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-589)
590. Fechner 1986; Kemezis 2014, 104–126; Carsana 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-590)
591. Lintott 1997, 2498. Admitting that Dio was inescapable for all historians interested in the Late Roman Republic, Lintott’s scope was to explore the reliability of Dio’s narrative, regarding the chronology, errors and omissions, and in doing so to understand his method (“how”). As for Millar, the question “how” is also a priority, and his judgement is without any illusion: “For Dio, who came to [the narrative of Late Republican political history] only as part of the whole sweep of Roman History, the chances of dealing with it in a way that was profound or original were small indeed” (Millar 1964, 46). [↑](#footnote-ref-591)
592. As is the case in the recent volume edited by Osgood and Baron (2019, 2). [↑](#footnote-ref-592)
593. Fr. 83.4, quoted above n. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-593)
594. For this transition, see also chapter 15 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-594)
595. Urso 2013, 10; Rich 2016, 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-595)
596. See Fromentin 2016b, 21–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-596)
597. Millar 1964, 39 already noted the importance of the end of each decad, but without analyzing the reasons for this. [↑](#footnote-ref-597)
598. The first hypothesis is that of Urso (2013); the second, that of Rich (2016, 276). [↑](#footnote-ref-598)
599. As broadly observed by, e.g., Millar 1964, 55–56; Lintott 1997, 2504. [↑](#footnote-ref-599)
600. See Fromentin and Bertrand 2008, xiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-600)
601. For a more precise study of this thematic decade, see Bertrand, Coudry and Fromentin 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-601)
602. Bertrand 2019, 27–28. [↑](#footnote-ref-602)
603. Bertrand, Coudry and Fromentin 2016, 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-603)
604. For a precise list and analysis, see Lintott 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-604)
605. Millar himself recognized the coherence of the Late Republican narrative, if not its originality (Millar 1964, 77).  [↑](#footnote-ref-605)
606. Despite the fact that there is not only one model of imperial biography, no more for Dio than for Suetonius or Plutarch: Coltelloni-Trannoy 2016, 354. [↑](#footnote-ref-606)
607. See Coudry 2016b. [↑](#footnote-ref-607)
608. Urso 2013, 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-608)
609. The text of the excerptor contains an allusion to the hope for triumph, but is certainly corrupted, since Dio could not ignore the fact that no triumph was ever granted for having concluded a treaty: see Urso 2013, 90–91. [↑](#footnote-ref-609)
610. Cato: 37.22.3; 42.13.4; Brutus and Cassius, who show no pursuit for *dynasteia* at all: 44.21.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-610)
611. Gowing 1992, 169, n. 19. This is particularly observable during their eastern campaigns in 44–42: Cassius appears as clement as Brutus toward his enemies, inflicting, e.g., not death but only financial punishment to the Laodiceans (47.30.7), Tarsians (47.31.3.4), and Rhodians (47.33.4); on the contrary, Appian mentions many executions by Cassius: *B Civ.* 4.62 (punishment of the Laodiceans) and *B Civ.* 4.73 (execution of fifty Rhodians); see more in Fromentin and Bertrand 2014, xlvii–xlviii. [↑](#footnote-ref-611)
612. Death of Cassius: 47.46.3–5: his death is first mentioned as one of the reasons for the non-result of the Battle of Philippi. The narrative is introduced with γάρ, and forms only a parenthesis; in contrast, Appian devotes a long development to the death of Cassius, as a real event in the narrative: *B Civ.* 4.113.474–475. Brutus’ death, which concludes book 47 (47.49.1–3), deserves greater attention, because it includes more detail, with Dio quoting one of the words Brutus reportedly uttered, alluding to the vanity of the term *aretē*—and yet no allusion to freedom, but a return to Republican values. Nevertheless, the attention Dio allots to his death is much less developed than Appian’s, who dedicates one chapter to it (*B Civ.* 4.131), plus one chapter to the portrayal of both characters (*B Civ.* 4.132). [↑](#footnote-ref-612)
613. Carsana 2016, 557: in Dio’s analysis, some of the last constitutional reforms of Caesar form “*una prima tappa nella formazione della monarchia imperiale*”. [↑](#footnote-ref-613)
614. I do not agree with the translation of *dynasteia* as “monarchy” in Cary’s edition, which misunderstands the coherence of Dio’s political analysis in Late Republican books. See also chapter 10 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-614)
615. This is also the case for Octavian and Sextus Pompeius, whose conflict is unavoidable: 48.45.5: ἔμελλον μὲν γάρ που καὶ ἄλλως, εἰ καὶ μηδεμίαν σκῆψιν εὗρον, πολεμήσειν. (“they were bound, of course, to go to war in any case, even if they had found no excuse”). [↑](#footnote-ref-615)
616. This reevaluation of the quality of the institutional information in the *Roman History* is one of the main steps forward in the recent rediscovery of Cassius Dio, as pointed out in Fromentin *et al.* 2016, 13, as well as in Osgood and Baron 2019, esp. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-616)
617. The liberties taken with standard terms of office for the mandates granted Caesar are pointed out: self-award of the title of ‘Prefect of the Morals’ for three years (43.3); appointment for the consulship and dictatorship for ten years (43.45.1); but this also applied to the military commands granted for five years, as from Pompey’s time. [↑](#footnote-ref-617)
618. 43.46.3–5: for the first time the consulship was not exercised by only two magistrates per year; this practice became current under the second triumvirate and represents thereafter a regular institutional practice under the Principate; see 48.35.2–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-618)
619. 43.45.1: οὐ μὴν ἀλλ᾽ ἐκεῖνα μὲν εἰ καὶ ὑπέρογκα ἔξω τε τοῦ καθεστηκότος τισὶν ἐδόκει εἶναι, οὔτι γε καὶ ἀδημοκράτητα ἦν· ἕτερα δὲ δὴ τοιάδε ἐψηφίσαντο δι᾽ ὧν καὶ μόναρχον αὐτὸν ἄντικρυς ἀπέδειξαν. (“Nevertheless, these measures, even though they seemed to some immoderate and contrary to precedent, were not thus far *unrepublican.* But the Senate passed the following decrees besides, by which they declared him a monarch out and out”.). [↑](#footnote-ref-619)
620. In Cary’s edition, the manuscript error τροφῶν for τρόπων has not been corrected; I corrected the text (τρόπων ἐπιστάτης) and the translation (“overseer of men’s conduct”). On this passage, see Fromentin and Bertrand 2008 *ad loc*. [↑](#footnote-ref-620)
621. On this topic in ancient historiography, see esp. Lintott 1972; Bringmann 1977. [↑](#footnote-ref-621)
622. Evans 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-622)
623. ὅτι Σκιπίων ὁ Ἀφρικανὸς φιλοτιμίᾳ πλείονι παρὰ τὸ προσῆκον τό τε ἁρμόζον τῇ ἄλλῃ αὐτοῦ ἀρετῇ ἐχρῆτο. The text of the excerptor contains “Scipio Africanus”, but there is obviously a confusion due to the excerptor himself: see Urso 2013, 112–113. The Loeb translation has here been modified according to the suggestion of A. Scott, whom I deeply thank. [↑](#footnote-ref-623)
624. It is this excessive search for honors and subsequent glory that drives them to make war e.g., Appius Claudius Pulcher (fr. 74.1); Sulla (fr. 102.2); Fimbria (fr. 104.1); and later, Caesar and Crassus (*passim*). [↑](#footnote-ref-624)
625. For a more detailed analysis of Dio’s narrative about these laws, see Bertrand and Coudry 2016, esp. 596–598; for a specific study of Caesar’s conquests: Bertrand 2019; Lindholmer 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-625)
626. The strong unity of the features of the Republican regime in the *Roman History*, in contrast with the idea of decadence which would distinguish three phases in the Republic (Early, Middle and Late), has been well highlighted in several chapters of Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer 2019 (Madsen 2019; Coudry 2019; Lange 2019; Lindholmer 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-626)
627. On this specific topic, see Coudry 2016c. [↑](#footnote-ref-627)
628. See more about this topic in Bertrand 2016. On the “*imperii consuetudo*”and subsequent damage see also Burden-Strevens 2016, 195–207; in this respect, for a focused and deep scrutiny on Dio’s critical narrative of Caesar’s conquests, see Lindholmer 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-628)
629. On how monarchy replaced the instability of democracy see also App. *B Civ.* 1.6. For Dio’s thoughts on monarchy versus democracy, see Kemezis 2014, 101, 121. Translations in this chapter are from the Loeb Classical Library, with minor changes. [↑](#footnote-ref-629)
630. Manuwald 1979, 271–278. On the mixed portrait see Tränkle 1969, 124–126 and Stekelenburg 1971, 121–124. [↑](#footnote-ref-630)
631. See Rich 1989, 95–97 on how Dio’s praise of Caesar’s clemency should be read as a subtle criticism of Octavian’s behavior during the civil war. [↑](#footnote-ref-631)
632. Rich 1989, 89, 101–102. [↑](#footnote-ref-632)
633. Gowing 1992, 91–92. [↑](#footnote-ref-633)
634. Kemezis 2014, 120–124. [↑](#footnote-ref-634)
635. Kemezis 2014, 125–126, 128–129. [↑](#footnote-ref-635)
636. Lange 2021, 352–355. Cass. Dio 48.14–15; 56.44.1–4. See also chapter 18 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-636)
637. Kemezis’ (2014, 120–124) view that Dio is less favorable towards Augustus is a noteworthy exception. [↑](#footnote-ref-637)
638. Markov 2019, 293–296. [↑](#footnote-ref-638)
639. See for instance Wiseman 1979, ix­–x; Woodman 1988, ix–xii. For a contrary view*,* Lendon 2009, 41–42. [↑](#footnote-ref-639)
640. Thu. 3.81–85; Price 2001, 12; Reinhold 1985, 22–23, 27, 30–31. See also Millar 1964, 6; Rich 1990, 11; Rees 2011, 79–80. [↑](#footnote-ref-640)
641. Laird 2009, 197. On how rhetoric in Dio serves to construct meaning, to explain the causes of events, and to give a realistic portrayal of why history unfurled in the way that it did, see Burden-Strevens 2020, 9–15. [↑](#footnote-ref-641)
642. Cass. Dio fr. 83.1–7; 36.43.1–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-642)
643. Cass. Dio 37.57.1–3 and 44.2.3–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-643)
644. Dio’s view that he himself was the best source for his own contemporary times, having himself lived through them as an eyewitness at the imperial court, testifies to his hopes that his history will meet the criteria of accuracy derived from autopsy (73[72].18.3–4). [↑](#footnote-ref-644)
645. See Toher 2017, 18–21 on Nicolaus of Damascus and his friendship with Augustus; on how Suetonius offers a positive portrait of Augustus see Wallace-Hadrill 1995, 110–112; Wardle 2014, 39. For Suetonius’ reservations about some of Augustus’ actions, see Wardle 2019, 404. For Plutarch’s coverage of the civil war, see Pelling 1988; Santangelo 2019, 340–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-645)
646. See Millar 1964, 85–87 for Dio’s knowledge and use of Suetonius. Manuwald (1979, 258–260, 267–268) concludes that Suetonius seems not to have been one of Dio’s main sources. See Millar 1964, 34–35 and Rich 1989, 89–92 for the view that Dio did not rely on a single source at a time. On the question of source criticism see also Gowing 1992, 39–50. [↑](#footnote-ref-646)
647. See Manuwald 1979, 28–30 on the differences and similarities between Suet. *Aug*. 94.4 and 94.10 and Dio 45.1–2. Dio, according to Manuwald, is unlikely to have relied on Suetonius’ biography of Augustus. See also Wardle’s analysis of the incident (2014, 512, 528). [↑](#footnote-ref-647)
648. For a similar account of the relationship between Caesar and his great-nephew see also Nicolaus of Damascus, *The Life of Augustus* 14, 24; Vell. Pat. 2.59.3; Suet. *Aug*. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-648)
649. For further references to how young Caesar was the legal heir to his father’s powers see also Nic. Dam. 113, 117, 131. See Toher 2017, 25, 254 for discussion of the “Hellenistic” reading of Caesar’s monarchy that Nicolaus provides. [↑](#footnote-ref-649)
650. Millar 1964, 92; Manuwald 1979, 29–30; Gowing 1992, 60–61; Madsen 2019c, 270. [↑](#footnote-ref-650)
651. Dio refers to Caesar as a monarch and to his powers as *monarchia*: see 44.2.1–5 and 45.1.2. See also Madsen 2019c, 269–270; Markov 2019, 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-651)
652. Gowing 1992, 61–63. See also Appian *B Civ.* 3.11–12 for how young Caesar’s plans were less ambitious. [↑](#footnote-ref-652)
653. For discussion of Antonius’ funeral address, see chapter 16 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-653)
654. See also Nic. Dam. 46; Suet. *Aug.* 10.1 is less clear on whether Octavian made an explicit promise to avenge Caesar. See also Velleius Paterculus’ swift summary of Octavian’s arrival at Rome (Vell. Pat. 2.60–61.) Augustus’ own version can be found at *Res Gestae* 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-654)
655. For Octavian’s criticism of Antonius. see App. *B Civ*. 3.15–16. [↑](#footnote-ref-655)
656. Plut. *Ant*. 16; App. *B* *Civ.* 3.31–38. [↑](#footnote-ref-656)
657. Kemezis 2014, 120–124. [↑](#footnote-ref-657)
658. Gowing 1992, 35. Kemezis 2014, 120–125. [↑](#footnote-ref-658)
659. See Gowing (1992, 90–93) on how Dio goes out of the way to excuse Octavian’s actions, and later (258) for the inconsistency in Dio’s description of Octavian. Manuwald (1979, 65–66, 73–74), however, argues that Dio is not offering a more positive portrait of Octavian, who appears just as unsympathetic, brutal, immoral and opportunistic as Lepidus and Antonius. [↑](#footnote-ref-659)
660. Wardle 2014, 204–205. The tradition that Antonius and Lepidus were keener on the proscriptions than Octavian is a well-established one: see Vell. Pat. 2.66.1; Liv. *Per*. 120; Flor. 2.16.6; Plut. *Cic*. 46.3.5. See also Hinard 1985, 30–32, 105–110. [↑](#footnote-ref-660)
661. See also Lange 2020, 208–209. [↑](#footnote-ref-661)
662. Gowing 1992, 250–253; Cass. Dio 47.4.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-662)
663. Lange 2020, 196; Lange 2021, 348–352. [↑](#footnote-ref-663)
664. 47.38.3 and 47.42.3–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-664)
665. See, e.g., Markov 2019, 293–296. [↑](#footnote-ref-665)
666. See Bucher on Appian’s preference for monarchy over democracy (2000, 429–434), *contra* Welch (2019, 439–441, 460–462), who argues that Appian was less dismissive about Rome’s democratic constitution than scholars tend to assume and that he saw civil war as a sign of decay rather than the outcome of a systematic failure with Rome’s Republican constitution. [↑](#footnote-ref-666)
667. For the scholarly debate on what happened at Perusia see Gowing 1992, 83–84; Madsen 2019b, 490–91; Welch 2019 456; Lange 2021; 348–352. [↑](#footnote-ref-667)
668. Lange 2021, 352–355. [↑](#footnote-ref-668)
669. For a detailed analysis see Lange 2021, 348–356, esp. 354. For further discussion of civil war in Dio’s *Roman History* see also chapter 18 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-669)
670. See Carter 1996, 394 for discussion of Appian’s use of Augustus’ memoirs to reconstruct the aftermath of Perusia. See also Vell. Pat. 2.74.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-670)
671. Lange 2019b, 252–256. [↑](#footnote-ref-671)
672. Cass. Dio 48.29.3; Lange 2019b, 238–239. [↑](#footnote-ref-672)
673. Lange 2019b, 247–255. See also App. *B Civ*. 5.77–78. [↑](#footnote-ref-673)
674. Rich 1989, 94–96. [↑](#footnote-ref-674)
675. Manuwald 1979, 8–26, esp. 25–26; Rich 1989, 101–102; Markov 2019, 289–296. [↑](#footnote-ref-675)
676. For thorough discussion of Octavian’s resignation speech see Manuwald 1979, 86–100; Rich 1990, 136–140; Reinhold and Swan 1990, 167–169; Burden-Strevens 2020, 108–111; 177–182. [↑](#footnote-ref-676)
677. 53.3–10. One possible source of inspiration could have been Augustus’ autobiography, where the author is likely to have offered his version of how the transition of power took place between the moment he offered to lay down his powers to the moment the Senate and the people offered him the extended *imperium*. [↑](#footnote-ref-677)
678. See also Bellissime and Hurlet 2018, xiii–xxx. See also Augustus’ own reference to the negotiation between him and the senate in *Res Gestae* 34–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-678)
679. Manuwald 1979, 100; Reinhold and Swan 1990, 167–169. [↑](#footnote-ref-679)
680. Bellissime and Hurlet 2018, xii–xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-680)
681. Vell. Pat. 89.2–6; Woodman 1983, 250–260. Similar favorable thoughts on Augustus’ reign are available in Strabo of Amaseia’s reading of Augustus’ reign, 6.4.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-681)
682. Manuwald 1979, 258–259. [↑](#footnote-ref-682)
683. Swan 1997, 2557; Millar 2016, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-683)
684. On how powers were transferred to Augustus see Cass. Dio 53.17. See Woodman 1983, 250 on how Velleius’ writing was without historical foundation. [↑](#footnote-ref-684)
685. On the measures Augustus took to motivate the senators see Talbert 1984, 57–58. See also Pettinger (2019, 58–60) for the reforms in 18 BCE and the ongoing negotiation been the *princeps* and his Senate. Russell (2019, 327–40) notes that the incentive to argue and criticize was low in Augustus’ Senate. [↑](#footnote-ref-685)
686. On how Maecenas had to intervene to prevent his friend and *princeps* from ruling too harshly see 55.7 and Swan 2004, 69–70. [↑](#footnote-ref-686)
687. Manuwald 1979, 120–128; Reinhold and Swan 1990, 167; Swan 2004, 147–150; Adler 2011, 147–154; Allen 2020, 47–53; Langford 2021, 436–442. On Dio’s approach to women in power see also chapter 17 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-687)
688. Adler 2011, 134; Langford 2021, 441. See Allen 2020, 56–61 for discussion of Dio’s Livia: he argues that she offers real solutions to the dilemmas that both Augustus and the historian’s contemporary emperors found themselves in every day. For the way in which this dialogue should be read in the setting of Late Republican Rome and how Dio uses the dialogue to defend Octavian’s actions, see Burden-Strevens 2020, 187–190. [↑](#footnote-ref-688)
689. For previous references to attempted plots against Augustus see e.g., 54.3.4–6. where Dio describes how Fannius Caepio and Licinius Murena were convicted *in absentia* and later executed by a firm Augustus who would not listen to any plea for mercy. For further conspiracies against Augustus and Agrippa, see 54.15.1–3. On *civilitas* see Wallace-Hadrill 1982, 44; Bono 2018, 94–7. See also Bono 2020, 55–56. [↑](#footnote-ref-689)
690. Mehl 2001, 134–135. [↑](#footnote-ref-690)
691. Tac. *Ann*. 1.10.7; Cass. Dio 56.45.3. See also Swan 2004, 350; Manuwald 1979, 140–141, 150. For a thorough discussion of the connection between Dio’s conclusion on the life of Augustus and Tacitus’ opening of book 1 of the *Annals*, see Manuwald 1979, 140–141; also p. 161 on Tacitus’ and Dio’s use of the same source. For the discussion of whether Dio knew Tacitus’ *Annales*, see also Goodyear 1972, 166–167; Swan 2004, 345. On the diversity in Tacitus’ and Dio’s views and how that diversity suggests shared sources rather than dependency see Devillers 2016, 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-691)
692. Strunk 2017, 179–181. The list of scholars who see a Tacitus who was in favor of some form of monarchical rule or benefited personally from the opportunities it offered those in good standing with the court is long, and includes Wirszubski 1950, 15–167; Syme 1958, 547–550; Morford 1991, 3442–3443; Shotter 1991, 3269–3271; Mellor 1993, 97–99; Woodman 2004, x–xi. Hammer 2014, 324–325 portrays a Tacitus who describes the way in which despotism created a political culture marked by terror and lack of clarity about laws and expectations which again prevented most senators from speaking truth to power. See also Kapust 2011, 170–171 for an analysis of Tacitus’ subtle criticism of monarchical rule. [↑](#footnote-ref-692)
693. Tac. *Ann*. 1.2.1. See also Woodman 2004, 1–2; Damon 2012, 3–4; Hammer 2014, 322, 343. [↑](#footnote-ref-693)
694. Tac. *Ann*. 1.2.1. Damon 2012, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-694)
695. Rich 1989, 97; Rich 1990, 14; Markov 2019, 293–296. [↑](#footnote-ref-695)
696. Rich 1989, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-696)
697. Reinhold and Swan 1990, 169–170. [↑](#footnote-ref-697)
698. Manuwald 1979, 12–21. Kemezis 2014, 146–149. [↑](#footnote-ref-698)
699. The text used throughout is Boissevain’s edition. The translations are from Cary’s Loeb edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-699)
700. On Dio as political theorist and historiographer see further (among many): Millar 1964; Reinhold 1986; Lange and Madsen 2016; Burden-Strevens 2019 and Schulz 2019. In addition, many of the papers in Winterling 2011 and Fromentin, Bertrand, Coltelloni-Trannoy, Molin, and Urso 2016 address Dio’s practice as a historiographer. [↑](#footnote-ref-700)
701. Ando 2016, 567. [↑](#footnote-ref-701)
702. On λόγος and ἔργον see Millar 1964, 97. On *parrhēsia* see Mallan, 2016. On the way in which Dio explores the impact of the gap between λόγος and ἔργον on the political life of the Principate see Ando 2016, 571. [↑](#footnote-ref-702)
703. On the text for the Neronian books see Gowing 1997, 2560–2563. Dio’s representation of Nero is given extended treatment in Gowing 1997 and Schulz 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-703)
704. On Cassius Dio on the Julio-Claudians see Edmondson 1992; Pelling 1997; Mallan 2015, 2021; Devillers 2016; Scheid 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-704)
705. On the role of Augustus as exemplar in Dio’s history see further: Reinhold 1986, 215; Rich 1990, 13–18 at 17; Swan 2004, 13–17 on the “Augustan paradigm”; Madsen 2016, 146–149 and Madsen 2019, 280–281. [↑](#footnote-ref-705)
706. On Dio’s attitude to Augustus see Swan 2004, 15–16 and chapter 10 in this volume with citations therein. [↑](#footnote-ref-706)
707. Millar 1964, 102–118 following Meyer (1891) suggests that the speech of Maecenas, especially after chapter 18, was a political pamphlet aimed at Severus Alexander (but whose addressee was likely to be Caracalla) but that the “writing of such a debate may have been prompted by Dio’s sources” following Suetonius’ observation that Augustus twice thought of restoring the *res publica* (*Aug*. 28.1) at 105”. See further Reinhold 1986, 220. Rich 1990, 14–15 argues that this is a misinterpretation and that “the speech should not be divorced from its dramatic context, and its function is complex”. On Livia’s advice and Dio’s ethical vocabulary see Mallan 2021, 96 and scholarship cited therein. On Dio and Thucydides see Swan 2004, 12, 26–27; Sordi 2001; and Zecchini 2016, 118–119. On the Agrippa-Maecenas debate see chapter 10 and 15 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-707)
708. Bleicken 1962; Rich 1990, 14–15; Madsen 2019, 265 and 278–279. [↑](#footnote-ref-708)
709. Swan 2004, 15. On civil war and the Principate, see scholarship in Cowan 2019, as well as chapter 18 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-709)
710. Cass. Dio 59.5.1: ὥστε τὰ τοῦ Τιβερίου ἔργα, καίπερ χαλεπώτατα δόξαντα γεγονέναι, τοσοῦτον παρὰ τὰ τοῦ Γαΐου ὅσον τὰ τοῦ Αὐγούστου παρ’ ἐκεῖνα παρενεγκεῖν. [↑](#footnote-ref-710)
711. The didactic nature of Dio’s work has been debated, see Schulz 2019, 259–260. On Dio’s views on his own times, see Millar 1964, 119–173; Reinhold 1986, 220 and 1988, 12–15; Urso 2016, 18; and Schulz 2019, 179–182. [↑](#footnote-ref-711)
712. For Augustus as *civilis princeps,* Wallace-Hadrill 1982. See further Bruun 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-712)
713. Madsen 2016, 148. Further patterns in the representation of the Julio-Claudians may be found in Devilliers 2016; Coltelloni-Trannoy 2016; and Platon 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-713)
714. Pelling 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-714)
715. On Dio on human nature see, Reinhold 1986, 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-715)
716. Ando 2016, 573–77 at 573. [↑](#footnote-ref-716)
717. Schultz 2016 and 2019, 169–265. [↑](#footnote-ref-717)
718. Schulz 2019, 182 [↑](#footnote-ref-718)
719. Lindholmer 2018, 561 [↑](#footnote-ref-719)
720. Chief among the epitomators of Dio’s narrative is Xiphilinus whose *Epitome of Cassius Dio*, composed in the eleventh century, sought to cover a period from 69 BCE to 229 CE (books 36–80) and comprised summaries and extracts from Dio’s work. Recent reconsideration of his *Epitome* has drawn attention to Xiphilinus’ dual roles as “plagiarist and innovator” and as a writer who viewed the history of Rome during these years as useful in his own time (Mallan 2013, 611, citing Xiph. 87.2–5). Of particular interest to Xiphilinus, as Mallan has demonstrated, were those aspects of Dio’s work which allowed the personality and deeds of individual emperors to be exposed and explored (Mallan 2013, 643: “Biographical material dominates Xiphilinus’ selection”). The *Epitome* is divided by reigns into eponymously titled sections which on the whole reproduce Dio’s narrative order and followed or interpreted Dio’s own words (Millar 1964, 2, see further Mallan 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-720)
721. Schulz 2019, 246. Schulz observes the operation of fear under Nero and Domitian at 245–246. See also Gowing 1992, 21 on the Senate’s fear of the emperor. [↑](#footnote-ref-721)
722. Of course, Dio also reports that Livia herself was suspected of murdering Augustus with poisoned pears, when she feared that he had reconciled with Agrippa Postumus: 56.30. On Dio’s depiction of Livia’s advice and influence see Adler 2011, Allen 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-722)
723. Millar 1964, 106, who nevertheless observes that Maecenas’ speech goes well beyond these conventions. [↑](#footnote-ref-723)
724. See most recently Schulz 2019 and scholarship cited therein. [↑](#footnote-ref-724)
725. Swan 2004, 248 notes Giua’s argument (1983) that this anecdote is intended to mirror a similar instance under Septimius Severus. [↑](#footnote-ref-725)
726. On Dio’s representation of Tiberius see Mallan 2015, 40–73, esp. 59 on Tiberius’ fear. [↑](#footnote-ref-726)
727. Mallan 2015 notes on 57.2.2 the close association of bodyguards and tyranny. See also Dio 52.10.3: “the multitude of bodyguards is gathered merely because of the multitude of conspirators”. [↑](#footnote-ref-727)
728. On Tiberius’ fear on his accession see further Suet. *Tib*. 24–25. On Dio’s use of Suetonius see now Mallan 2021, 8–9, who argues that Dio was familiar with Suetonius’ biographies but that “there are no traces of the *Life of Tiberius* strong enough to indicate that Dio used Suetonius as an authority of importance”. [↑](#footnote-ref-728)
729. Mallan 2015, 119–121 highlights the care with which the words in this passage have been selected. See further Denniston 1950 on the ironic tone of δῆθεν. [↑](#footnote-ref-729)
730. Tiberius’ fear of Germanicus is a driving factor in the actions and decisions of the new *princeps* and a key element of his representation in the text, which he mentions on several occasions (57.3.1, 57.4.1; cf. 56.6.2). [↑](#footnote-ref-730)
731. On gratitude as the correct response to the *princeps* see Roller 2001, 176–182 and Cowan 2016. Maecenas offers gratitude to Fortune for the success of Augustus 52.18.4 and characterizes those who are hostile to Augustus as ungrateful 52.26.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-731)
732. Gowing 1997, 2564–2565. [↑](#footnote-ref-732)
733. Gowing 1997, 2565. See further Schulz 2019, 188–261 on Dio’s deconstruction of Nero as emperor. [↑](#footnote-ref-733)
734. 59.30.1c: ἐμνημόνευόντε οἱ παρόντες τοῦλεχθέντος ποτὲ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν δῆμον “εἴθε ἕνα αὐχένα εἴχετε”, ἐπιδεικνύντες αὐτῷ ὅτι ἐκεῖνος μὲναὐχένα ἕνα σφεῖς δὲ δὴ χεῖρας πολλὰς ἔχοιεν. Compare Suet. *Gaius* 30.2 who mentions only the threat against the people by Gaius, not the people’s response. [↑](#footnote-ref-734)
735. Neither Suet. *Gaius* 58–59 nor Jos. *JA* 19.110 makes mention of cannibalism. [↑](#footnote-ref-735)
736. Schulz 2019, 245: “By showing what the emperor and his subjects feel, the text creates an atmosphere full of emotional paradoxes and fear”. [↑](#footnote-ref-736)
737. Millar 1964, 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-737)
738. On the arrival of Septimius Severus and its impact on Dio’s thinking see further Madsen 2016, 154–158. [↑](#footnote-ref-738)
739. I would like to extend my thanks to the editors, contributors and members of the Cassius Dio Network for their careful engagement with this chapter and for the wonderful hospitality I was treated to at Syddansk Universitet, Denmark in 2018. In addition, Chris Mallan and Bob Cowan both read drafts of this chapter which has benefited from their comments. This chapter was revised during the Covid-19 pandemic. I am very grateful for the support and patience of the editors during this time. [↑](#footnote-ref-739)
740. 65[66].2.3 [Xiph.] on Vespasian sending a provocative message to Domitian; 4.5 and 5.1, 4 [*Exc. UG*] on the tunnels dug from inside the city of Jerusalem by the Jews, stopped by Titus, and on the many casualties in the course of these operations, that also caused some of the Romans to desert and go over to the Jews, who treated them kindly anyway; 9.2 [*Exc. Val.*] on the banishment of the astrologers from Rome, when Vespasian did a favor to the astrologer Barbillus by permitting the Ephesians to celebrate sacred games; 15.3 [Xiph.] on Vespasian’s refusal to help the Parthians making war with some neighbors though they had formally asked him; 16.1 [Xiph.] on a quantity of wine that overflowed its cask and ran out in the street and on the Gaul opposer Sabinus who after hiding himself was discovered and brought to Rome; 67.11.6 [Xiph.] on the mysterious case of attackers smearing needles with poison and attacking lots of people randomly and causing their deaths, not only in Rome—many were discovered and punished. [↑](#footnote-ref-740)
741. I leave aside the Latin sources from the fourth century onwards, such as Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, and the *Historia Augusta*, as they tend to be disregarded to a large extent, either because they are epitomes of earlier materials, or because they are highly disputed among scholars (the *Historia Augusta*). Of course, the *Historia Augusta* provides extra information, to be taken cautiously but seriously into account, on the emperors from Hadrian to Commodus. [↑](#footnote-ref-741)
742. Barzanò, Stroppa and Galimberti 2000; Valvo, Stroppa and Migliorati 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-742)
743. Murison 1999; Migliorati 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-743)
744. E.g., as for Marcus: Instinsky 1972 on the campaign against the Iazyges; Martini 2010 on Marcus as a paradigm of emperorship as opposed to Caracalla in Dio’s work; Possienke 2011 on the connection between Dio’s representation and Marcus’ *Meditations*. As for Trajan: Vulpe 1964 on the Mesian campaign; Briquel 2007 on the Dacian campaign. As for Nerva: Murison 2004 on legislation in continuity with the Flavians. [↑](#footnote-ref-744)
745. As for Domitian, see Adams 2009 on Domitian’s sexual manners and legislation; Schulz 2014 and 2016 on Dio’s treatment of Domitian. As for Commodus: apart from Millar 1964, 122–134, who has offered the first assessment of Dio’s approach to the emperor, see Bering-Staschewski 1981, 23–36, and Molinier-Arbo 2012, 91–111 on the connection between Dio’s narrative and the *Historia Augusta*; see especially Hose 2011, 115–119 and Pistellato 2020b, 124–131 on Dio’s treatment of Commodus. [↑](#footnote-ref-745)
746. Millar 1964, 60–72 on Dio’s approach to Hadrian; Juntunen 2013a on Hadrian and the Iazyges; Davenport and Mallan 2014 on the essential role of Hadrian’s adoption speech for Antoninus Pius in Dio’s narrative plan. [↑](#footnote-ref-746)
747. Kemezis 2012 on the Antonine aristocracy in Dio (and in the *Historia Augusta*); Ando 2016 on the Antonines and imperial legitimacy as witnessed by Dio. [↑](#footnote-ref-747)
748. Full treatment of Dio’s tradition is offered in chapter 5 of this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-748)
749. On the reception of Dio by Peter the Patrician and John of Antioch, see Roberto 2016, (a) and (b). By Zonaras: Bellissime and Berbessou-Broustet 2016. By Xiphilinus: Mallan 2013; Berbessou-Broustet 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-749)
750. *Suda* Δ 1239. Mecella 2016, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-750)
751. Xiph. 256.28-32 Stephanus = Cass. Dio 70[70].2.2; Juntunen 2013b, 462. [↑](#footnote-ref-751)
752. Juntunen 2013b, 460–465; Banchich 2015, 87; Berbessou-Broustet 2016, 82 n.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-752)
753. Mazzucchi 1979; Mecella 2016, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-753)
754. Roberto 2016b, 75–76. [↑](#footnote-ref-754)
755. Though see Millar’s (1964, 67) criticisms of his method. [↑](#footnote-ref-755)
756. At 72[71].9.1–2, Xiphilinus abundantly complains about Dio’s account of the military operations of Marcus Aurelius in 174 CE against the Quadi and the Marcomanni, involving the twelfth *Fulminata* (Thundering) Legion. The episode is famous, as it is represented on Marcus’ Column in Rome. It concerns the extraordinary rain that occurred on that occasion. Xiphilinus does not accept Dio’s text, and introduces false elements that offer a “true” reconstruction of the events. On the episode, see Birley 2000, 251–253. [↑](#footnote-ref-756)
757. Berbessou-Broustet 2016, 87–92. [↑](#footnote-ref-757)
758. Bellissime and Berbessou-Broustet 2016, 101, 104–108. [↑](#footnote-ref-758)
759. The definition is by Németh 2018, 88–120. [↑](#footnote-ref-759)
760. Barzanò, Stroppa and Galimberti 2000, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-760)
761. Kornemann 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-761)
762. 66[66].18.1–3 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-762)
763. 66[66].26.1 [Xiph.]: μετήλλαξεν ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν ἐν οἷς καὶ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ. All translations used henceforth are from Cary’s Loeb edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-763)
764. Suet., *Titus*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-764)
765. 65[66].8.1 [Xiph.], 11.1–2 [Xiph.]. On Vespasian’s greed: 65[66].8.2–5 [Xiph.], 14.5 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-765)
766. This is the lengthiest narrative sequence of the entire Flavian period: 65[66].4–7 [*EL*/Xiph.]. Second is the account of the eruption of the Vesuvius in 79 CE: 66[66].21–23 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-766)
767. 65[66].15.3–5 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-767)
768. 65[66].12.1 [Xiph.], 2 [*Exc. Val*.], 13.1 [Xiph.]. On Helvidius, see Galimberti 2000; Brunt 2013b, 322–323. [↑](#footnote-ref-768)
769. 65[66].10.1a [Zon.], 2 [Xiph.], 2a [Zon.], 3 [Xiph.]; 66[66].19.3 [Xiph.]; 66.25 [Xiph.], 26.1 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-769)
770. 66[66].19.1–2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-770)
771. 66[66].19.3a [Zon.], 24.3–4 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-771)
772. See Scott 2020, 346–348. [↑](#footnote-ref-772)
773. Maternus, the sophist, spoke of tyrants in a rhetorical exercise, and was executed: 67[67].12.5 [Xiph.]. Pliny’s *Panegyric* also depicts Domitian as a tyrant: 1.6, 49.8, 54.5, 67.1, 84.1, 95.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-773)
774. See notably the impressive sequence at 67[67].8–9 [Xiph.]. As for Martial and Domitian, see Dion 2009. Mart. 9.72, composed after Nerva’s accession, and later on Juv. 2.29, 4.38, 5.153–154, harshly allude to Domitian. [↑](#footnote-ref-774)
775. Pain caused to people: 67[67].2.4–7 [Xiph./ *Exc. Val*.]), 3.1–2 [Xiph./Zon.], 31 [Xiph.], 42 [*Exc. Val*.], 32 [Xiph.], 41 [*Exc. Val*.], 8.3 [Xiph.], 11.3 [*Exc. Val*.], 14.1–3 [Xiph.]. Pain caused to the Roman state: 67[67].3.5 [Zon.], 4.5 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-775)
776. See Schulz 2014, 416–423, and 2016, 278–292. See also Adams 2009. As for vices and folly: 67[67].4.3 [Xiph.], 6.3 [Xiph.] (an earlier example, but probably the most famous one, is at 65[66].9.4 [Xiph.] about Domitian catching flies). Theocracy: 67[67].4.7 [Zon.]. Military inability: 67[67].6.4 [*Exc. Val*.], 7.2 [*Exc. UR*]. Fake triumphs: 67[67].7.4 [*Exc. UR*] (celebrating the victory over the Dacians of Decebalus in 89 CE). See also Dio’s comments at 67[67].9.6 [Xiph.] and 68[68].6.2 [Xiph.]. All elements cooperate in order to demonstrate Domitian’s ineptitude as a *princeps*. [↑](#footnote-ref-776)
777. 67[67].9.1–6 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-777)
778. 67[67].13.2–3 [Xiph.]. On Domitian as a new Nero, cf. famously Juv. 4.38. See also, in general, the collection of essays edited by Bönisch-Meyer *et al.* 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-778)
779. Schnurbusch 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-779)
780. Licinius Mucianus, the governor of Syria and one the leading collaborators of Vespasian, was a fierce anti-Stoic: 65[66].2.1–2, 5 [Xiph.], 13.1 [Xiph.], and especially 1a [*Exc. Vat.*]. [↑](#footnote-ref-780)
781. 65[66].13.2–3 [Xiph.]. Cf. Brunt 2013b. [↑](#footnote-ref-781)
782. Along with Stoic opposition, Vespasian had to face competitors such as Julius Sabinus, a wannabe emperor who in 70 CE operated in Germany and was the famous protagonist of an incredible escape from prosecution. See 65[66].3.1–2 [Xiph.], 16.1–2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-782)
783. On Dio’s overall assessment of Titus see 65[66].18.1–3, 5 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-783)
784. *HA*, *Marc.* 28.10; *Comm*. 19.2. The development of the canon was rooted in the early Principate, and based on Republican and Greek foundations. On its elaboration, see Pistellato 2020a. [↑](#footnote-ref-784)
785. See Grainger 2003, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-785)
786. 68[68].1–4 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-786)
787. 68[68].1.3 [Xiph.]. The polemic is mirrored in Pliny’s *Panegyric* of Trajan (10.1), and used to justify Trajan’s accession in 98 CE. On the situation in Rome, see also Suet. *Dom*. 23.1. On Fronto, possibly the son of the Flavian poet Silius Italicus, see Garzetti 1950, 116, no. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-787)
788. 68[68].2 [Xiph.] is quite telling in this respect. [↑](#footnote-ref-788)
789. 68[68].3.1 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-789)
790. Elkins 2017, 84 is a little cautious, but at 90–93 provides numismatic evidence that makes the connection clearer than he believes: see *RIC* 2.90. [↑](#footnote-ref-790)
791. 68[68].3.2 [Xiph.]. On Calpurnius see Garzetti 1950, 53–54, and 114–115, no. 32; Grainger 2003, 68–70. The Calpurnii—especially the Pisones—had been long-time opposers to the imperial regime, since the time of Tiberius. See, e.g., Pistellato 2020a, 291. [↑](#footnote-ref-791)
792. 68[68].4.1–2 [Xiph.]. The same spirit is at 69[69].20.2–5 [*Exc. UG*], when Hadrian adopted Antoninus. [↑](#footnote-ref-792)
793. Tac., *Hist*., 1.15–16; Plin., *Pan*. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-793)
794. On Dio’s origin, see chapter 1, and especially chapter 2 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-794)
795. Plin., *Paneg*., 1.2, 2.7, 36.1, 38.1, 44.2, 53.2, 74.3, 88.4–10, 89.1, 91.1, 94.3, 95.3 (this is just a quick, incomplete selection of Pliny’s obsession about Trajan as *optimus*). Cf. Cass. Dio 68[68].6.2 [Xiph.], 7.1–5 [Xiph.], 23.1–2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-795)
796. 68[68].17–33 [Xiph.] [↑](#footnote-ref-796)
797. 68[68].5.2–4 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-797)
798. 69[69].1.3 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-798)
799. 69[69].2.1 [Xiph.]. Cf. 68[68].5.1 [Xiph.]. In both circumstances, the dream announced absolute power by a symbolic passage. As for Hadrian, a fire descended from heaven, first upon the left side of his throat, then upon the right side. As for Trajan, an old man (clearly Nerva) impressed a seal, first upon the left side of his neck, then upon the right side. [↑](#footnote-ref-799)
800. 69[69].2.4 [*Exc. Val.*]. After all, Dio’s own historiographical inspiration was prompted by dreams: 73[72].23.4 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-800)
801. 69[69].2.5–6 [Xiph.]; 70[70].2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-801)
802. 69[69].3.3–69[69].4 [Xiph.]. On Hadrian as a painter, see in particular 69[69].4.2 [Xiph.]; as a poet, see also 69[69].10.31 [Xiph.], and especially *HA*, *Hadr*. 25.9 quoting epigrams of neoteric inspiration. [↑](#footnote-ref-802)
803. Dio is generic at 69[69].5.3 [Xiph.], 9.1, 5 [Xiph.]; specific at 69[69].9.4 [Xiph.] (on Germany), 11.1 [Xiph.] and 16.1–2 [Xiph.] (on Greece), 9.4 [Xiph.] and 12.2 [Xiph.] (on Egypt) [↑](#footnote-ref-803)
804. See, e.g., Speller 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-804)
805. Cf. Chaniotis 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-805)
806. Hadrian was a personal friend of, among others, Epictetus: *HA*, *Hadr*. 16.10. He also established a strict separation between philosophers, whom he supported, and sophists, whom he contrasted. See Modest., *lib. sec. de excusat.*, Dig. 27.1.6.8; Charis., *de mun. civ.*, Dig. 50.4.18.30. [↑](#footnote-ref-806)
807. On speeches in Dio’s work see Fomin 2016, as well as chapters 14, 15, and 16 of this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-807)
808. Davenport and Mallan 2014. See also Millar 1964, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-808)
809. 69[69].20.2 [Xiph.]: τὸ μὲν γεννώμενον, ὁποῖον ἂν δόξῃ τῷ δαιμονίῳ, γίγνεται, τὸ δὲ δὴ ποιούμενον αὐθαίρετόν τις αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ προστίθεται. [↑](#footnote-ref-809)
810. 69[69].15.2 [*Exc. UG*]; 70[70].1.1 [Xiph.], 2.1 [Xiph.]. See especially 70[70].3.1–3 [Xiph.] referring to Eusebius of Caesarea and Asinius Quadratus. [↑](#footnote-ref-810)
811. 72[71].1.3 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-811)
812. 72[71].6.1–2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-812)
813. 72[71].14.1–2 [*Exc. Val.*], 30.1 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-813)
814. 72[71].33.2 [Xiph.]: “ἡμεῖς γάρ” ἔφη πρὸς τὴν βουλὴν λέγων “οὕτως οὐδὲν ἴδιον ἔχομεν ὥστε καὶ ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ οἰκίᾳ οἰκοῦμεν.” (“As for us,” he said, in addressing the senate, “we are so far from possessing anything of your own that even the house in which we live is yours.”) [↑](#footnote-ref-814)
815. 72[71].32.3 [Xiph.], 34.2–5 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-815)
816. 72[71].36.3 [Xiph.]: ἀλλ’ ἔγωγε ἐξ αὐτῶν τούτων μᾶλλον αὐτὸν τεθαύμακα, ὅτι ἔν τε ἀλλοκότοις καὶ ἐν ἐξαισίοις πράγμασι αὐτός τε διεγένετο καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν διεσώσατο. [↑](#footnote-ref-816)
817. Eutr. 8.9.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-817)
818. An admirable overview is offered by Brunt 2013c. See also Brunt 2013a for a more general panorama. [↑](#footnote-ref-818)
819. 72[71].35.1–4 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]. [↑](#footnote-ref-819)
820. 72[71].31.3 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-820)
821. M. Aur. *Med.* 1.14; 3.5; 6.30, 44. Among Marcus’ masters was the Stoic philosopher Quintus Iunius Rusticus (Cass. Dio 72[71].35.1 [Xiph.]; Brunt 2013b, 327–328), perhaps a relative of the historian Iunius Arulenus Rusticus, a martyr of Domitian’s despotism and an adherent to political Stoicism. On the latter, see *FRR* 1.88, 573–574; Brunt 2013b, 325–326. [↑](#footnote-ref-821)
822. 72[71].17 [*EL*), 22.2–27.1 [Xiph.], 27.1a [*Exc. Vat.*], 27.2–31 [Xiph.], 28.1 [*Exc. Val*.], 27.32 [Xiph.], 28.2–4 [*Exc. Val*.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-822)
823. 72[71].24–26. See Brunt 2013c, 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-823)
824. See, e.g., Martini 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-824)
825. 52.14–40. See Possienke 2011. On the speech of Maecenas, see chapter 15 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-825)
826. 72[71].36.4 [*Exc. Val*.]: ἀπὸ χρυσῆς τε βασιλείας ἐς σιδηρᾶν καὶ κατιωμένην. [↑](#footnote-ref-826)
827. 73[72].15.6 [Xiph.]: καὶ τὸν αἰῶνα τὸν ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ χρυσοῦν τε ὀνομάζεσθαι καὶ ἐς τὰ γράμματα πάντα ὁμοίως ἐσγράφεσθαι ἐψηφίσθη. (And it was voted that his age should be named the “Golden Age,” and that this should be recorded on all the records without exception). [↑](#footnote-ref-827)
828. 73[72].4.1 [Xiph.]; 5.1–3 [Xiph.]; 7.3 [Xiph.]; 14.1 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-828)
829. 73[72].1.1–2 [Xiph.]; 4.2–3 [Xiph.]; 7.4 [*Exc. Val.*]; 10.2–3 [Xiph.]; 16.1 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-829)
830. 73[72].1.2 [Xiph.]. On Clarus and Falco see 73[72].22.2 [Xiph.]. This probably prompted the successful conspiracy against Commodus, on the last day of 192 CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-830)
831. 59.20.1–3. Cf. Suet. *Cal*. 26.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-831)
832. 73[72].16.1–2 [Xiph.]. Cf., as for Caligula: 59.18.1, 21.4–6, 28.8; as for Nero: 61[61].18.1–2 [Xiph.]; 63[63].11.2 [*Exc. Val.*], 17.1–2 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-832)
833. Cass. Dio 59.28.8. Cf. Suet. *Cal*. 22.2–3. On Dio’s view of Commodus’ divine attributions, see Bowersock 1973. [↑](#footnote-ref-833)
834. 73[72].17.3 [Xiph.]. Cf. 59.17.3 (Caligula); 63[63].20.3 (Nero). On Nero’s theatricality, see, e.g., Champlin 2003, 229; Beard 2007, 268–269; Pistellato 2021. On Commodus’ Herculean outfit, see Cadario 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-834)
835. 73[72].22.3 [Xiph.]. See Hekster 2002, 122–125. For a full assessment of Dio’s treatment of the Julio-Claudian emperors, see chapter 11 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-835)
836. 73[72].14.4 [Xiph.], 21.1–2 [Xiph.]. Cf. 67[67].11.6 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-836)
837. 73[72].8.6 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-837)
838. Cass. Dio 67[67].15.3–4 [Xiph.]; Herodian. 1.17.1–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-838)
839. For such an intriguing parallel, see, e.g., Kolb 1972, 38–41; Sidebottom 1998, 2783 n. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-839)
840. Herodian. 1.3.4, who reports Marcus Aurelius on the verge of death lamenting the young age of Commodus, and the risk for him to become like Nero and Domitian. Along this line, Herodian adds models taken from the Greek history: at 1.3.2–3, Commodus risks becoming a new Dionysius I of Syracuse (c. 405–367 BCE), a new Antigonus I Monophthalmus, king of Phrygia (306–301 BCE), or a new Ptolemy II Philadelphus, pharaoh of Egypt (283–246 BCE). [↑](#footnote-ref-840)
841. *HA*, *Marcus* 28.10; *Comm*. 19.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-841)
842. 73[72].4.2 [Xiph.], 7.1 [Xiph.], 16.3 [Xiph.], 18.2–4 [Xiph.], 19.5 [Xiph.], 20.1–2 [Xiph.], 21.1–3 [Xiph.]. On Dio’s contemporary historiography, see Schmidt 1997, as well as chapter 13 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-842)
843. See Birley 2012, 13, and again chapter 1 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-843)
844. For a full appreciation of Dio’s representation of the Senate, see chapter 4 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-844)
845. On Dio’s Republican books see chapters 8 and 9 in this volume. As Millar maintained, it is hard to identify a proper annalistic structure in many portions of Dio’s imperial narrative. See, e.g., Millar 1964, 60–72 on Dio’s Hadrianic narrative. [↑](#footnote-ref-845)
846. 53.19. [↑](#footnote-ref-846)
847. Although Dio claims to have been an eyewitness for much of what he narrates (see below), this could hardly have been the case, as he reports on foreign wars while in Rome and on affairs in Rome when he was outside of the city. His position as senator is crucial here—while he could not witness everything, he could rely on reports to the Senate or communication with senatorial colleagues. Still, our full understanding of Dio’s method is not completely clear, as he, like other Greek and Roman historians, does not frequently cite his specific source of information. See Madsen 2018 for a critique of Dio’s work in his contemporary books compared to earlier periods. The Greek text cited follows Boissevain; all translations are from Cary’s Loeb edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-847)
848. Millar 1964, 121. For Dio’s senatorial viewpoint, see chapter 4 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-848)
849. For Dio’s alleged lack of historical analysis, see, e.g., Schwartz 1899, 1690–1691; Millar 1964, 171–173; Gowing 1992, 21; Schmidt 1997, 2596. More recently, Molin (2016) assesses Dio’s account of 217–218 CE in comparison to other sources, including epigraphic ones, with a more positive conclusion. [↑](#footnote-ref-849)
850. For more detail on textual issues, see the introduction to this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-850)
851. On this passage, see also Kemezis 2014, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-851)
852. Cf. the comments of Marincola (1997, 92) on the memoir-like nature of Dio’s contemporary history, along with Kemezis 2014, 90–91 and Scott 2018b. This aspect of Dio’s contemporary work is certainly different from the claim of Thucydides, who set the standard for contemporary historiography and was an inspiration to Dio. At 1.1.1–3, for example, Thucydides states that he wrote about the Peloponnesian War because it was the greatest war ever fought; his contemporary status is seen as an ancillary aid to producing the most accurate account of that war. While Dio notes that following the death of Commodus there were “most violent wars and civil strife” (73[72].23.1 [Xiph.]), Dio’s position seems to be that he writes about his own time because he lived through it, despite the fact that it was perhaps less worthy of record than other periods. [↑](#footnote-ref-852)
853. This is largely true for both ancient and modern commentators. For the latter group, see especially Jacoby 1956, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-853)
854. Marincola 1997, 34–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-854)
855. The date of composition for Dio’s history remains an issue of debate, though the one thing we know for certain is that the history was completed after Dio’s retirement in 229 CE. For a recent overview of the issue, see Scott 2018a, 10–14, as well as the introduction to this volume. On Dio’s Bithynian background, see Ameling 1984 and chapter 1 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-855)
856. For the uniqueness of Dio’s dream, and its use in his history, see Marincola 1997, 50–51. [↑](#footnote-ref-856)
857. Aside from the content, this is confirmed by Dio’s report that Severus was pleased by both compositions. On these works, see Rubin 1980, 42–53; Slavich 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-857)
858. Cf. Zecchini 2016, 123–124. [↑](#footnote-ref-858)
859. See, e.g., Hose 2009, 464, who suggests that the civil wars of 193–197 CE, and especially the latter part of this period, greatly affected the outlook of the history, making it more negative. Similarly, several scholars have seen Dio’s contemporary history as a reaction to his stalled political career under Septimius Severus and Caracalla; see, e.g., Wirth 1888, Meckler 1999, and Davenport 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-859)
860. As suggested by Zecchini 2016, 121. See also the previous note. [↑](#footnote-ref-860)
861. For this “mixed” depiction, see the following section. [↑](#footnote-ref-861)
862. This view is also an outgrowth of the belief that Dio was writing his work serially as he experienced the Severan dynasty. See especially Millar 1964, 38–40, who argues that Dio had written up to the death of Severus by 219 CE. Important arguments for a later dating include Letta 1979 and Barnes 1984; see also the comments in Bowersock 1965. [↑](#footnote-ref-862)
863. On this issue, see Rantala 2017, 27–40. [↑](#footnote-ref-863)
864. Murison (1999, 11–12) uses the term “mixed”, though the idea can be observed in a number of others, such as Rubin 1980, 41; Bering-Staschewski 1981, 75; Hose 1994, 408; and Rantala 2016, 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-864)
865. Zecchini 2016, 122 stresses the important of a new *saeculum* under Severus. For Severus as the new Augustus, see Cooley 2007, Barnes 2008. On the *ludi* generally, see Rantala 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-865)
866. For the former point, we can observe Severus’ dying words to his sons, that they “be harmonious, enrich the soldiers, and scorn all other men” (77[76].15.2 [Xiph.]: “ὁμονοεῖτε, τοὺς στρατιώτας πλουτίζετε, τῶν ἄλλων πάντων καταφρονεῖτε”). For the latter, Dio writes that although Severus initially promised not to put any senators to death, it was not long before he did just that (75[74].2.1–2 [Xiph.]). On Dio’s relationship with the Senate, see Alföldy 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-866)
867. See Dio’s criticism of Severus’ Parthian campaign at 75[75].3.2–3 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-867)
868. Dio says that Severus did this, despite the fact that he often criticized Marcus Aurelius for passing power to Commodus; in doing so, Severus “allowed his love for his offspring to outweigh his love for his country” (τότε δὲ φιλότεκνος μᾶλλον ἢ φιλόπολις ἐγένετο, 77[76].14.7 [Xiph.]). [↑](#footnote-ref-868)
869. On this theme, see now Madsen 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-869)
870. For the period of “dynasts”, see 52.1.1, with Freyburger-Galland 1996; Sion-Jenkis 2000, 48–50; Kemezis 2014, 104–112; Lindholmer 2018; Lange 2019. See also chapter 9 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-870)
871. For the periodization of Dio’s history, see also Kemezis 2014, 94–104. [↑](#footnote-ref-871)
872. Cf. Appian, *B Civ.* 1.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-872)
873. For this theme, see Scott 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-873)
874. For the importance of hereditary succession for Dio’s view of his own period, see also Madsen 2016. A precursor to these examples of novel imperial representations can be seen in the figure of Nero the actor, on whom see Gowing 1997, 2568–2580. [↑](#footnote-ref-874)
875. See esp. Pliny, *Pan*. 9–10. [↑](#footnote-ref-875)
876. Mallan and Davenport (2014) have rightly pointed out that the speech points up some of Dio’s own anxieties about adoptive succession. Still, it seems prudent to believe that of the two systems, Dio was more supportive of adoptive than hereditary succession. [↑](#footnote-ref-876)
877. Especially Gibbon; see chapter 6 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-877)
878. According to Dio, Commodus was nineteen at the time of his accession and had been left as his advisors the finest men in the Senate (73[72].1.2 [Xiph.]). He quickly made a treaty with the foreigners and, scornful of hard work, returned to Rome and its ease of life (μισόπονός τε ὢν καὶ τῆς ἀστικῆς ῥᾳστώνης ἐπιθυμῶν). Dio then spends several chapters at the beginning of his narrative of Commodus’ reign detailing the individuals that Commodus put out of the way (usually through death) (73[72].4–7). [↑](#footnote-ref-878)
879. For Dio’s nostalgia for the Antonine age, expressed especially through these characters, see Kemezis 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-879)
880. Gowing 1992, 21–22. Schulz (2019, 323) notes that fear (and hate) were consistent aspects of Dio’s depiction of “bad” emperors. For similar fear under previous emperors, see chapter 11 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-880)
881. 73[72].7.2 [Xiph.], 15.2–6 [Xiph.], 16.1 [Xiph.], 20.2 [Xiph.], 22.3 [Xiph.]. [↑](#footnote-ref-881)
882. A similar depiction is found in Herodian (3.14.2). The *Historia Augusta* (*Sev*. 21.10) interestingly claims that Severus offered to his sons the speech of Micipsa from Sallust’s *Bellum Jugurthinum* (10.1–8) as a means of mending their relationship. [↑](#footnote-ref-882)
883. For details of the purge, see Sillar 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-883)
884. As noted already, Dio specifically states that Marcus Aurelius had Commodus educated well (72[71].36.4 [Xiph.]), and he makes a similar comment about Caracalla at 78[77].11.2 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]. On Caracalla’s education, see further Meckler 1999. The failure of these two is perhaps highlighted by the success of Augustus, who had been well educated by Julius Caesar, specifically in the art of ruling well (45.2.7–8). [↑](#footnote-ref-884)
885. Caracalla was murdered in a plot orchestrated by his praetorian prefect and eventual successor, Macrinus; Dio narrates the coup at 79[78].4–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-885)
886. As mentioned above, the return to a golden age can be seen in the celebration of *ludi saeculares* after a period of decline, in this case civil war, just as they had been celebrated by Augustus under similar circumstances (Rantala 2017, 34). [↑](#footnote-ref-886)
887. Most pointedly, Dio refers to the young emperor as the “False Antoninus” (Ψευδαντωνῖνος, e.g., 80[79].1.1). [↑](#footnote-ref-887)
888. For the tradition, see Cadario 2017, 40–42. [↑](#footnote-ref-888)
889. For an analysis of Commodus as Hercules, see Hekster 2001 and Cadario 2017 (the latter focusing more on Herodian’s account). [↑](#footnote-ref-889)
890. See also 78[77].18.2 [Xiph.] for Caracalla’s ignoring the advice of Julia Domna, which Dio characterizes as “useful” (χρηστά). [↑](#footnote-ref-890)
891. See 78[77].12.1, which details the break between way of life and activities in war, and also Boissevain’s comments *ad loc*. Boissevain notes that the quotation from *Exc. Val.* provided above must fall between numbers 367 and 369; the former deals with Caracalla’s way of life, while the latter relates to Caracalla activities in war. [↑](#footnote-ref-891)
892. Macrinus claimed to be part of the dynasty, taking the name Severus (79[78].16.2) and making his son Antoninus (79[78].19.1). Once he had been overthrown, however, Elagabalus tried to erase his tenure (80[79].2.6, with Scott 2018a, 115–116). [↑](#footnote-ref-892)
893. Icks 2012, 98–101; Scott 2018a, 111–112. [↑](#footnote-ref-893)
894. On this point, see Osgood 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-894)
895. Madsen 2020, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-895)
896. For Maecenas’ prescriptions, see 52.14.3, 15.1, 32.1; chapter 15 examines the entire Agrippa-Maecenas debate. For Dio’s depiction of Augustus’ reign, see, e.g., 53.21, with Reinhold and Swan 1990, 161–168, as well as chapter 10 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-896)
897. See also the speech of Maecenas at 52.37.5, which warns against freedmen gaining excessive power. [↑](#footnote-ref-897)
898. Dio’s point of view has entered into scholarly discourse on the period, as in the comment of Campbell (*CAH2* 12, 16): “Moreover, the senate was degraded by the use of people of low birth to perform important functions”. [↑](#footnote-ref-898)
899. Dio’s ambivalent attitude toward Macrinus can be seen in the introductory sentence of his biography: “Macrinus was a Moor by birth, from Caesarea, and the son of most obscure parents, so that he was very appropriately likened to the ass that was led up to the palace by the spirit; in particular, one of his ears had been bored in accordance with the custom followed by most of the Moors. But his integrity threw even this drawback into the shade. As for his attitude toward law and precedent, his knowledge of them was not so accurate as his observance of them was faithful” (79[78].11.1–2: ὁ δὲ δὴ Μακρῖνος τὸ μὲν γένος Μαῦρος, ἀπὸ Καισαρείας, γονέων ἀδοξοτάτων ἦν, ὥστε καὶ σφόδρα εἰκότως αὐτὸν τῷ ὄνῳ <τῷ> ἐς τὸ παλάτιον ὑπὸ τοῦ δαιμονίου ἐσαχθέντι εἰκασθῆναι· τά τε γὰρ ἄλλα καὶ τὸ οὖς τὸ ἕτερον κατὰ τὸ τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν Μαύρων ἐπιχώριον διετέτρητο· τῇ δὲ ἐπιεικείᾳ καὶ ἐκεῖνο συνεσκίαζεν, τά τε νόμιμα οὐχ οὕτως ἀκριβῶς ἠπίστατο ὡς πιστῶς μετεχειρίζετο). [↑](#footnote-ref-899)
900. See also chapter 4 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-900)
901. For the identity of these two individuals, see Scott 2018a, 86–87, 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-901)
902. Even by Millar 1964, 49–55 and 78–83, although he brought forth some interesting insights. For examples of this kind of criticism, see Van Stekelenburg 1976 or Gowing 1992, 244. [↑](#footnote-ref-902)
903. Pernot 2005, Marincola 2007. About Dio’s identity as a Greek intellectual, see the elaborate and up-to-date analysis of Burden-Strevens 2015, as well as chapter 2 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-903)
904. A stream of new editions, translations, and individual as well as collective monographs since 2010 bear witness to this development: cf. chapter 7 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-904)
905. Bellissime 2016, Burden-Strevens 2016, Mallan 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-905)
906. Kemezis 2014, 111–115, 126–135. [↑](#footnote-ref-906)
907. See the end of this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-907)
908. Marincola 2007 offers a precise and balanced approach to this question. See more generally Marincola 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-908)
909. *Hist. conscr*. 58. Translation by Fomin 2016, 217. See Pernot 2005 for the context and meaning of the treatise. [↑](#footnote-ref-909)
910. This was usual at least from the end of the first century CE, as we know from Quintilian and Theon. [↑](#footnote-ref-910)
911. See Pernot 2005, Fomin 2016, and Jones 2016 on Dio’s place and posture in this context. [↑](#footnote-ref-911)
912. Recent studies include Bertrand, Coudry and Fromentin 2016; Bellissime 2016; Burden-Strevens 2016, Coudry 2016, Burden-Strevens 2020, and Burden-Strevens 2021. See also Gowing 1992, 225–228 for a suggestive comparison between Appian’s and Dio’s use of speeches. [↑](#footnote-ref-912)
913. And reasserted by Rich 2019, 223–224. [↑](#footnote-ref-913)
914. This feature is exemplified in the preserved imperial books, but it was probably the same in all of them, and the scarcity of speeches can hardly be ascribed to the abridgement of the full text of Dio by Xiphilinus: see Burden-Strevens 2020, 184–185. For the peculiarities of oratory in the imperial books, see 315–316, and Burden-Strevens 2021, 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-914)
915. In this set of books, speeches occupy about 25% of the total text (I exclude Caesar’s abridged speech to his mutinying soldiers at Rome in 47: 42.53–54, on which see Burden-Strevens 2020, 106–107); in books 47 to 56, which correspond to the triumviral and Augustan period, about 21%. Proportions are very similar in Thucydides (24%), and higher in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (33%). Cf. Van Stekelenburg 1976 n. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-915)
916. The question of the more or less fictitious character of Dio’s speeches (in other words, their correspondence with those he could read in his sources, and his own invention) has long been debated. It can be answered in a very limited number of cases, as comparison is rarely possible. See Rich 2019, 220–221. It will not be investigated here, as our scope is different. [↑](#footnote-ref-916)
917. Among the most recent studies, see Burden-Strevens 2020, 60–69, 72–79, 85–89, 166–170, 252–264, 282–286; Burden-Strevens 2016; Coudry 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-917)
918. Namely Cicero’s oration *Pro lege Manilia*, uttered one year later in front of the assembly, when the tribune C. Manilius proposed that Pompey’s extraordinary command be extended to face Mithridates in Asia. See Burden-Strevens 2021, 155–156. [↑](#footnote-ref-918)
919. For an evaluation of Dio’s reworking of his material, see Coudry 2016, 34–38, 43, 47; Burden-Strevens 2020, 72–79, 85–89. [↑](#footnote-ref-919)
920. See Lachenaud and Coudry 2011, LXI–LXVI; Kemezis 2016; Burden-Strevens 2020, 100–104. [↑](#footnote-ref-920)
921. Suggested by Kemezis 2016. See also Burden-Strevens 2020, 171–174. [↑](#footnote-ref-921)
922. See Bertrand 2016, 686–689; Burden-Strevens 2020, 234–236. [↑](#footnote-ref-922)
923. Dio uses formulations borrowed mostly from Thucydides’ narrative, for instance the beginnings of the Peloponnesian War (Th. 2.60–64 and Dio 38.36–37), or the rebellion of Melos (Thuc. 5.105.2 and Dio 38.36.3). [↑](#footnote-ref-923)
924. See the analysis of the speech in Lachenaud and Coudry 2011, LVII–LXI, after the more developed study of Gowing 1998, and recently Burden-Strevens 2020, 53–60. [↑](#footnote-ref-924)
925. See Fromentin and Bertrand 2008, xx–xxxiii with bibliography and table of passages corresponding to Cicero’s *Philippics*, and more briefly Gowing 1992, 237–239; Burden-Strevens 2020, 79–84, 89–92. [↑](#footnote-ref-925)
926. See for instance Fomin 2016, 230–232. [↑](#footnote-ref-926)
927. Fromentin and Bertrand 2008, xix–xx. [↑](#footnote-ref-927)
928. As has been convincingly demonstrated by Mallan 2016, 264: “the speeches have a mimetic quality”. [↑](#footnote-ref-928)
929. Cf. Burden-Strevens 2016, 194: “How the historian used rhetoric to form a persuasive interpretation of why the Republic collapsed, and why the new Augustan regime was a successful replacement”. Burden-Strevens 2020 is a demonstration of this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-929)
930. See discussion of the term in Kemezis 2014, 107–110, who considers that it refers to a period of Rome’s history and defines a form of government. Most recent research has followed suit. However, this interpretation has been recently challenged by Lindholmer 2018, for whom it refers to the malfunctions of the Republic throughout its history. [↑](#footnote-ref-930)
931. Burden-Strevens 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-931)
932. Burden-Strevens 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-932)
933. See Rich 2019, 252–254; Burden-Strevens 2020, 3–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-933)
934. Bertrand and Coudry 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-934)
935. Rich 2019, 260–267. [↑](#footnote-ref-935)
936. As states Rich 2019, 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-936)
937. Bertrand 2016, 697–699. [↑](#footnote-ref-937)
938. See recently Rich 2019, 234–239 for a precise and careful appraisal of the fragments of speeches in this book. On the Agrippa-Maecenas debate, see chapter 15 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-938)
939. See Bellissime 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-939)
940. Which may be an invention of Dio: the question is evoked by Millar 1964, 81, and still debated; see Burden-Strevens 2020, 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-940)
941. A theme which surfaces three times in Antony’s funeral eulogy delivered to the people a few days after (44.36–49). [↑](#footnote-ref-941)
942. Cf. possibly an echo of the debates about the Second Punic War, mentioned above, and the part of Caesar’s Vesontio speech devoted to Roman conquest (Rich 2019, 267). [↑](#footnote-ref-942)
943. Kemezis 2014, 111–114 and 2016, 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-943)
944. Mallan 2016 on *parrhēsia* reaches a similar conclusion, and Burden-Strevens in his recent 2020 monograph provides an analysis of those speeches of dynasts on foreign policy along the same lines. [↑](#footnote-ref-944)
945. Lindholmer 2018 and 2019; Madsen 2019. See the “middle route” proposed Burden-Strevens 2020, 150–151. [↑](#footnote-ref-945)
946. Rich 2019, 272–278. See also Burden-Strevens 2020, 159–162 and Burden-Strevens 2021, 175–176, 183–185. [↑](#footnote-ref-946)
947. The difficulty arises because of Zonaras’ habit of omitting many speeches: see Fromentin 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-947)
948. See Rich 2019, 255–6. The translation is from Cary’s Loeb edition, slightly emended. [↑](#footnote-ref-948)
949. The question of adaptation of rhetorical style to characters should be further investigated, alongside what Burden-Strevens 2020, 167–169 has done for Pompey. I am grateful for his suggestion. [↑](#footnote-ref-949)
950. Rich 2019, 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-950)
951. Catulus’ speech against the *lex Gabinia* provides a good example. The way he describes the institutional system of the Republic is coherent with Dio’s own information scattered throughout the narrative, and to this point he could be considered as a spokesman of Dio. But later, when Dio comments on the negative consequences of Caesar’s assassination (44.1), stating that a democracy—that is the Republic—cannot manage an empire so widely developed as Rome’s at this time, it is clearly a condemnation of Catulus’ choice to stick to the traditional, Republican way of governing it. Catulus’ speech appropriately reflects the political positions of the *optimates* as Dio presents them throughout his narrative of the *dynasteiai*, but does not reflect Dio’s own interpretation of the most suitable regime for Rome at this time. In other words, it fits with the requirements of historiography: speeches must be consonant with the situation and with the character of the speaker. [↑](#footnote-ref-951)
952. I am grateful to Jesper Majbom Madsen and Andrew Scott for their invitation to join this editorial project, for the rich discussions during the Conference held in Odense in 2018, and for their careful reading of this chapter. I am particularly indebted to Christopher Burden-Strevens for his help in improving the draft version, and to John Rich, whose generous attention has been so helpful, as always. [↑](#footnote-ref-952)
953. So famously Syme 1939, 297; more recently Galinsky 2012, 33 and Beard 2015, 348. See Lange 2011, 2022 for an up-to-date re-evaluation of the strategy at Actium and the importance of the battle. Translations are taken from Carey’s Loebedition with my own modifications. [↑](#footnote-ref-953)
954. Cass. Dio 50.1.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-954)
955. For recent discussion of Rome after Sulla, see especially Rosenblitt 2019. For his reputation in particular, see Barden Dowling 2000, 2006; Eckert 2016; Urso 2016; Burden-Strevens 2019. On his reforms and their impact, cf. also the famous debate between Badian 1970 and Keaveney 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-955)
956. These are certainly the terms in which Dio describes Caesar’s rule; see Cass. Dio 44.4–6. On Caesar’s rule as a Hellenistic monarchy the classic survey of Rawson 1975 is still important. [↑](#footnote-ref-956)
957. For the alleged massacre at Perusia, see recently Lange 2021a. The most detailed survey of the historian’s attitude to Augustus remains Manuwald 1979, but it is important to note that Dio distinguished between Octavian the corrupt dynast and Augustus the good emperor: on this point see Reinhold 1988, 13; Rich 1989. See also chapter 10 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-957)
958. Suet. *Aug.* 28.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-958)
959. For a recent summary of Dio’s rhetorical source material and accompanying bibliography, see Burden-Strevens 2020, chapter two. However, many of the more commonplace arguments on the virtues of the ideal ruler it contains were certainly inspired by earlier texts. See Fishwick 1990 for the analysis, with further discussion below. [↑](#footnote-ref-959)
960. Especially so the famous constitutional debate on the government of the Persian Empire at Hdt. 3.80–82. It would be incredible to suggest that Dio had not studied Polybius’ work in his decade of reading, but he does not seem to have used him directly as a source; see Foulon 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-960)
961. E.g., Hammond 1932; Millar 1964; McKechnie 1981; Espinosa Ruiz 1981; Dorandi 1985; Kuhlmann 2010; Adler 2012; Markov 2013; Ando 2016; Vielberg 2016. Reinhold 1988, 165 calls it “the only theoretical analysis of Roman government and society from the third century”. [↑](#footnote-ref-961)
962. So the many articles and chapters which view the composition as basically a polemic of Dio’s against the Roman emperors of his day, e.g.: Meyer 1891; Millar 1964, 107; and Makhlajuk and Markov 2008 among many others; and most recently Fomin 2015, 5, wrongly calling book 52 “in essence a political pamphlet addressed against the ‘senatorial’ policy of Severus Alexander”. [↑](#footnote-ref-962)
963. See for example Kemezis 2014; Burden-Strevens 2016. The study of Adler 2012 is also important, demonstrating the consistency of the views expressed by both Agrippa and Maecenas with the historian’s own overarching historical, political, and ethical opinions. [↑](#footnote-ref-963)
964. Rightly emphasized as such by Kemezis 2014, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-964)
965. E.g., Hammond 1932; Gabba 1955; Bleicken 1962; Millar 1964; Fechner 1986; Reinhold 1988; Adler 2012. However, Rich 1990 rightly acknowledges in the introduction to his edition on the debate that Dio was indeed attempting to reflect on the specific issues that Octavian was facing at this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-965)
966. So Adler 2012, 478: “despite its age, in many ways Meyer’s 1891 dissertation, *De Maecenatis oratione a Dione ficta*, continues to set the intellectual parameters for the modern study of this debate.” [↑](#footnote-ref-966)
967. Makhlajuk and Markov 2008, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-967)
968. Burgess 1902, 206 n. 2; Zawadski 1983, 283. This view is rarely endorsed in modern work, but see Fomin 2015, 214, who treats the Agrippa-Maecenas debate as one of many examples of “the great extent of permeation of school rhetoric into Dio’s speeches”. Fomin does not, however, unfairly criticize the historian for this perceived aspect and the treatment he offers of Dio’s rhetorical art is a deal more nuanced than much earlier work. See also Fomin 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-968)
969. Millar 1964, 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-969)
970. This later dating is followed by Bleicken 1962; Espinosa Ruiz 1981; Barnes 1984; Reinhold 1988 and most recent work. The much earlier dating to 214 CE proposed by Millar 1964, 104 is a lone voice. [↑](#footnote-ref-970)
971. Millar 1964, 5–27 remains a solid summary of the historian’s life and career; the main details can be found at Cass. Dio 69.1.3, 74[73].12.2, 78[72].7.2, 80[79]5.1. See also the introduction to this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-971)
972. Hammond 1932, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-972)
973. Cass. Dio 52.25.1–5. See Mommsen 1875, II.2, 1012; also Hammond 1932, 94–65. Cf. 53.22.3–4, where Dio states explicitly that in his own time the distinction between the *aerarium* and the *fiscus* had become hopelessly blurred; Maecenas’ recommendations on this point are evidently a response to that. [↑](#footnote-ref-973)
974. Cass. Dio 52.22.1; cf. Mommsen 1875, II.2, 1081–1086. [↑](#footnote-ref-974)
975. It has long been known that Dio’s father Apronianus was a senator, governor of Dalmatia (69.1.3) as well as *legatus* in Cilicia (69.1.3, 73.7.2); it is probable that he also attained the consulship (*IGRR* 3.654). For a prosopography of father and son see *PIR*II,C 413 and *PIR* II,C 492. For fuller discussion of Dio’s provincial origins and his family as a local aristocracy see chapter 1 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-975)
976. Suet. *Aug.* 35; Aug. *RG* 8. For discussion and evidence see Hardy 1923, 54–60; Brunt 1984. At Cass. Dio 52.42, immediately after the close of Maecenas speech, Augustus takes precisely the course of action recommended by his advisor, and again at 54.13.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-976)
977. Cass. Dio 78[77].9.3–7 [Xiph./*Exc. Val.*]. [↑](#footnote-ref-977)
978. Cass. Dio 52.20.1–2. Cassius Dio was made praetor for 194 CE by the emperor Pertinax, and the appointment was seemingly not reversed by his successor (74[73].12.2 [Xiph.]). He was probably around thirty at the time. [↑](#footnote-ref-978)
979. Cass. Dio 52.23.2; cf. *RE* XII (1924), 1144 (“legatus”); Millar 2002, 271–291, 314–320. [↑](#footnote-ref-979)
980. Cass. Dio 52.22.2; cf. Mommsen 1875, II.2, 866 n.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-980)
981. Cass. Dio 52.26.1–2; cf. Anderson 1993 on the publicly-funded professors of rhetoric at Rome and Athens in the imperial period. [↑](#footnote-ref-981)
982. Cass. Dio 52.32.1–2; cf. Hammond 1932, 98: “when he further suggests that all legislation be enacted through the senate, he propounds what had by the time of Hadrian become recognized legal doctrine”. [↑](#footnote-ref-982)
983. Cass. Dio 52.30.9–10, 52.31.1. Dio and Tacitus give numerous examples of embassies from foreign states, such as client kings, to the Senate in Augustus’ time (e.g., 52.43.1, 55.33.5, 56.25.7; *Ann.* 2.42.5, 2.67.3), and the practice continued thereafter. As for the local aristocracies, the practice of appeals to the provincial governor in the first instance is well known: see Millar 1977 and, importantly Plin. *Ep.* 10.23, 10.31, 10.43–44, 10.47, 10.56, 10.58–60, among many others. [↑](#footnote-ref-983)
984. Cass. Dio 52.32.2–3; cf. Mommsen 1875, II.2, 960–962. [↑](#footnote-ref-984)
985. Cass. Dio 52.35–36. Cf. the classic discussion of Wallace-Hadrill 1982 on the importance of this point to the ideology of the Principate; further in Fishwick 1990 and Winterling 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-985)
986. See 52.41.1–2 for the view that Octavian put some of these suggestions into effect immediately, but saved others for his successors. [↑](#footnote-ref-986)
987. See again Wallace-Hadrill 1982. [↑](#footnote-ref-987)
988. This is the principal suggestion of Hammond 1932, and still important. [↑](#footnote-ref-988)
989. See most recently Madsen 2020 for discussion of Dio’s response to the emperors of his own time, and Kemezis 2014 for an excellent analysis of the historian’s desire to locate continuity between the “good emperors” of old and those of his own day. Bering-Staschewski 1981 provides a study of the *Zeitgeschichte* more generally; see also chapter 13 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-989)
990. For summaries of the Agrippa-Maecenas debate in the light of kingship literature and within the tradition of the *speculum principis*, see especially: Dorandi 1985; Fishwick 1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-990)
991. Plin. *Pan*. 52.3–5; Plut. *Mor*. 360c; 820f. See Fishwick 1990 for an excellent discussion of this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-991)
992. Cass. Dio 52.35.5: πᾶσα μὲν γῆ τεμένισμα ἔσται, πᾶσαι δὲ πόλεις ναοί, πάντες δὲ ἄνθρωποι ἀγάλματα ῾ἐν γὰρ ταῖς γνώμαις αὐτῶν ἀεὶ μετ᾽ εὐδοξίας ἐνιδρυθήσῃ; cf. Thuc. 2.43.3; Tac. *Ann*. 4.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-992)
993. Plut. *Mor*. 543d, 820f, *Demetrius* 10.2, 30.6–8; Plin. *Pan*. 55.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-993)
994. Lange 2021a; see also importantly Eckert 2014, who analyzes the proscriptions of the Sullan Civil War and their aftermath from the innovative perspective of cultural trauma. See also chapter 18 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-994)
995. Cass. Dio 55.14–21; see also chapters 10 and 11 in this volume, as well as Giua 1981; Adler 2011; and Allen 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-995)
996. Perhaps inspired by a tradition of individuals appealing to Livia to intercede with Augustus for mercy on their behalf in Ovid *Pont.* 2.7.9 and Suet. *Aug.* 65.2, as Barden Dowling 2006 notes. [↑](#footnote-ref-996)
997. Cass. Dio 52.31.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-997)
998. On Dio’s Greek vocabulary for Roman institutions, see Freyburger-Galland 1997 and Burden-Strevens 2016. Markov 2014 provides a recent study of the meaning of δημοκρατία in the *Roman History*; for Dio’s view of the Roman δημοκρατία in general (especially in the speeches), see Fechner 1986 and Burden-Strevens 2020. As Coudry 2016b has shown, his lexical choices are, moreover, often meaningful and deliberate. [↑](#footnote-ref-998)
999. Polyb. 6.2–18. [↑](#footnote-ref-999)
1000. For good surveys of the place and definition of tyranny in ancient (especially Greek) political thought, see McGlew 1993 and Lewis 2006. Béranger 1935, though old, is also still useful. [↑](#footnote-ref-1000)
1001. Or at least, in his dramatic *presentation* as a Republican statesman in this particular speech for Dio’s purposes. The historian later writes that Agrippa co-operated with the monarchical regime despite having advised against it (52.41.2), and did so as enthusiastically *as if* he had himself been in favor of empire from the outset (54.29.3: ὡς καὶ δυναστείας ὄντως ἐπιθυμητὴς). [↑](#footnote-ref-1001)
1002. Dunkle 1967. [↑](#footnote-ref-1002)
1003. Cass. Dio 52.2.4–7, 52.13.2, 52.15.3–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1003)
1004. Fromentin 2019, 49–50. [↑](#footnote-ref-1004)
1005. E.g., Kemezis 2014, 2016; Burden-Strevens 2016, 2020; Coudry 2016a; Rich 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-1005)
1006. On the place of tyranny in the Late Republic see: Hindard 1988; Kalyvas 2007. Burden-Strevens 2019 and 2020 argues that Dio viewed the dictatorships of Sulla and Caesar as basically tyrannical from the Republican Roman perspective, connected as they were to violent usurpation and murders. [↑](#footnote-ref-1006)
1007. Cass. Dio 41.54.1: Πομπήιος μὲν οὐδενὸς ἀνθρώπων δεύτερος, Καῖσαρ δὲ καὶ πρῶτος πάντων εἶναι ἐπεθύμει. [↑](#footnote-ref-1007)
1008. See Burden-Strevens 2020 for discussion and evidence. [↑](#footnote-ref-1008)
1009. So Kemezis 2014, comparing the successes of ambitious dynasts with the repeated failures of genuine Republicans who speak in the public interest in books 36 onward of the *Roman History*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1009)
1010. Cass. Dio 36.19.3; 39.22.3; 40.14.4; 40.42.1; 41.13.3; 43.20.2; 44.42.4; 50.1.2; 51.17.4. For a recent analysis of the historian’s perspective on Roman imperialism in the first century BCE see the fine contribution of Bertrand 2016, with accompanying bibliography. [↑](#footnote-ref-1010)
1011. Lindholmer 2017, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-1011)
1012. E.g., Cass. Dio 36.18.2; 36.41.1; 38.10.1; 39.56.1; 40.12.1; 43.9.2; 45.14; 45.26, among innumerable others. For surveys of the historian’s view of the moral degradation of the Late Roman Republic, with further discussion on his perspective as compared to our other historiographical sources, see Sion-Jenkis 2000; Kuhn-Chen 2002; Rees 2011; Burden-Strevens 2020, chapter 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1012)
1013. So McKechnie 1981, 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-1013)
1014. Cass. Dio 52.15.1–4. For a recent study of the importance of σπουδαρχία and φθόνος in Dio’s interpretation of the collapse of the Republic, see Burden-Strevens 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1014)
1015. Cass. Dio 52.19.3: οὕτω γὰρ σύ τε πολλοῖς συνεργοῖς χρήσῃ, καὶ τοὺς κορυφαίους ἐξ ἁπάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐν ἀσφαλεῖ ποιήσῃ, καὶ οὔτε ἐκεῖνα νεοχμώσει τι μηδένα ἐλλόγιμον προστάτην ἔχοντα. [↑](#footnote-ref-1015)
1016. Cass. Dio 52.20.4: οὕτω γὰρ οὔτε τινὲς νεοχμώσουσι, στρατοπέδων κύριοι ἐν τῷ τῶν ὀνομάτων φρονήματι γενόμενοι, καὶ χρόνον τινὰ ἰδιωτεύσαντες πεπανθήσονται. [↑](#footnote-ref-1016)
1017. Cass. Dio 52.23.2: ὅτι αἱ μακρότεραι καὶ πολυχρονιώτεραι ἐπαίρουσί πως πολλοὺς καὶ ἐς νεωτεροποιίαν ἐξάγουσι. [↑](#footnote-ref-1017)
1018. Cass. Dio 52.23.4. Cf. the speech of Catulus at 36.31 for a similar idea: he argues that it is perilous to entrust continuous commands, one after another, to a single individual—the practice breeds ambition. This is Dio’s analysis of the problematic distribution of military power in the final decades of the Republic, and of course he was correct. See Eckstein 2004 for an excellent analysis of this point, with further comments in Burden-Strevens 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1018)
1019. Cass. Dio 52.33.6–7. For the historian’s view of the importance of freedom of speech or παρρησία in the ideal monarchy, and its excessive misuse by the squabbling politicians of the Late Republic, see recently Mallan 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1019)
1020. Some related comment on this point can be found in Reinhold 1988. [↑](#footnote-ref-1020)
1021. Cass. Dio 53.2.6. It is important to note that in having Octavian “decline” power in this way, our historian is absolutely mimicking Octavian’s historical strategy of *recusatio* and *dissimulatio* vis-à-vis the Senate: see Rich 2010 and Vervaet 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-1021)
1022. The *recusatio imperii* of book 53 in fact mirrors Augustus’ justification for his regime in the *Res Gestae* very closely, including his many alleged refusals of power; see Burden-Strevens 2020, chapter 2 for a more developed argument. [↑](#footnote-ref-1022)
1023. Compare Cass. Dio 53.11 with Tac. *Ann.* 1.11 on the senators’ cynicism toward the “resignations” of Octavian and Tiberius respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-1023)
1024. 53.12.1–2, 52.13.1–5. On the so-called “senatorial” and “imperial” provinces, see especially Millar 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-1024)
1025. 53.21.3; 54.3.3, 54.17.5, 54.30.4; 55.4.2–3, 55.7.2–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1025)
1026. 53.24.4–6, 54.15.4–8, 54.23.1–4; 55.7.2–3, 55.22.1–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1026)
1027. 53.27.3; 54.1–2, 54.25.3, 54.27.2, 54.35.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1027)
1028. 53.23.3–4, 53.27.3–4, 53.32.3–4; 54.22.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1028)
1029. At 53.19 the historian shows his awareness of the regime’s penchant toward secrecy and the necessity of dissimulation and cover-ups to keep it secure. Ando 2016 has recently given a fine analysis of the Agrippa-Maecenas debate from this perspective, using it to show Dio’s awareness of the profound (and eventually deligitimizing) disconnect between the reality of the emperor’s power and the falsity of its presentation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1029)
1030. 53.23.5–7; 54.3. On Gallus’ monumental stela and his ambitions in Egypt, see Minas-Nerpel and Pfeiffer 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-1030)
1031. 53.24.4–6; see Philipps 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-1031)
1032. On the oft-forgotten plots against Augustus’ rule, see Vio 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-1032)
1033. 52.17.2: τίς γάρ σου φείσεται, ἄν τε ἐς τὸν δῆμον τὰ πράγματ’ ἀνώσῃς, ἄν τε καὶ ἑτέρῳ τινὶ ἐπιτρέψῃς, παμπόλλων μὲν ὄντων τῶν ὑπὸ σοῦ λελυπημένων, πάντων δ’ ὡς εἰπεῖν τῆς μοναρχίας ἀντιποιησομένων. [↑](#footnote-ref-1033)
1034. 53.23.4: αἴτιον δὲ ὅτι τὰ φιλανθρωπότατα καὶ τὰ εὐκλεέστατα τά τε συμφορώτατα καὶ συμβουλεύων οἱ καὶ συμπράττων οὐδ’ ἐπὶ βραχὺ τῆς δόξης αὐτῶν ἀντεποιεῖτο. [↑](#footnote-ref-1034)
1035. 55.7.3: ὅσα αὐτὸς ὑπό τε τῆς ἑαυτοῦ φύσεως καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν πραγμάτων ἀνάγκης καὶ παρὰ τὸ προσῆκον ἐθυμοῦτο, ταῦτα τῇ τῶν φίλων παρρησίᾳ διωρθοῦτο. [↑](#footnote-ref-1035)
1036. E.g., Kordoš 2010; Rich 2019, 221. Translations of Greek and Latin passages have been adapted from those in the Loeb Classical Library. [↑](#footnote-ref-1036)
1037. The “Athenian Funeral Oration Project” run by David Pritchard (https://hpi.uq.edu.au/project/athenian-funeral-oration-project). [↑](#footnote-ref-1037)
1038. Butler and Cary 1927, 152: “to a large extent of [Dio’s] own or some other historian’s rhetorical imagination”; Millar 1961, 14–15: “Dio’s preoccupations in inserting speeches are not historical”; Millar 1964, 101: “If any authentic record of [the] oration survived, Dio failed to follow it; … it can be assumed that it was a composition by Dio made up to suit the occasion”; Ramsey 2003, 293: “The version in Dio … is pure invention”; Swan 2004, 325. See also Burden-Strevens 2020, 307, against Manuwald 1979, 133–140; Kuhn 2021, 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-1038)
1039. Dio does not discuss his practice; Rich 2019, 220–221 cites Lucian *Hist. conscr.* 58 as a reasonable parallel. Marincola 2007 surveys oratory in historiography. [↑](#footnote-ref-1039)
1040. Schulz 2016, 276. [↑](#footnote-ref-1040)
1041. We might suspect that Suetonius had access to a transcript of Tiberius’ speech for Augustus, although none is mentioned or quoted. [↑](#footnote-ref-1041)
1042. Fomin 2016, 233. [↑](#footnote-ref-1042)
1043. Jones 2016, 301–302; for how Dio’s funerary speeches can also be paired with those attributed to Cicero (on the amnesty for the murderers, 44.23–33) and to Brutus (after the expulsion of the kings, book 3) see Burden-Strevens 2020, 237 and 20, respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-1043)
1044. Fomin 2016, 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-1044)
1045. For “speech occasion”, see Fomin 2016, 233. [↑](#footnote-ref-1045)
1046. Haslam 1980; Ameling 1994; Bellissime 2016, 372. [↑](#footnote-ref-1046)
1047. Fomin 2016, 233. [↑](#footnote-ref-1047)
1048. See Mallan 2013, 618–619; Rich 2019, 273. It is clear enough that if there were other eulogies in the books which do not survive, they can have been very few at most. [↑](#footnote-ref-1048)
1049. A valuable wider point about the distribution of speeches in general in Dio is made by Burden-Strevens 2020, 185: “After the death of Augustus, speeches in the *Roman History* become far shorter and less frequent. It is hard to escape the conclusion that, after completing the central story-arc of his *Roman* *History—*the rise and decline of the Republic and its replacement by Augustus’ regime—Dio’s history became more descriptive and diegetic, and less interpretative and expansive. The explanatory possibilities offered by direct speech thus assumed less importance”. The two funerary orations frame this. [↑](#footnote-ref-1049)
1050. See n.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1050)
1051. Rich 2019, 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-1051)
1052. Bertrand, Coudry and Fromentin 2016, 308. [↑](#footnote-ref-1052)
1053. Antony and Tiberius address the Senators, but it seems that “the people” (ὁ δῆμος) were the most affected by Antony (44.35.2, 44.50.1)—see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-1053)
1054. Kemezis 2014, 111 in a different context: “[Dio] means to portray rhetoric itself, and how it functioned, what sorts of propaganda were effective, and how impotent more enlightened forms of discourse could be”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1054)
1055. Bellissime 2016, 373–4; Cic. *De or.* 2.341, *scribuntur ad funebrem contionem* (“written for funerary gatherings”); Tac. *Ann.* 13.3.1, *oratio a Seneca composita* (“the speech composed by Seneca”). [↑](#footnote-ref-1055)
1056. Identified by Swan 2004, 327–8 and Fomin 2016, 233 as echoes of Thucydides 2.35.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1056)
1057. Like predecessors such as Thucydides and Sallust, Dio both reports speech in direct quotation and explicitly acknowledges the unreliability of his words: Antony’s speech is introduced ἔλεξε γὰρ τοιάδε (“He said the following sorts of things”, 44.35.4); and a similar expression introduces Tiberius’ speech λόγον… τοιόνδε ἐπελέξατο (“He gave a speech of the following sort”, 56.34.4). [↑](#footnote-ref-1057)
1058. Kuhn 2021, 125–6 suggests that Tiberius’ references to Romulus, Alexander (56.36.3) and Hercules (56.36.4) were anachronisms. [↑](#footnote-ref-1058)
1059. See also Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.17.3 for the indigenous nature of Roman funerary oratory. Pernot 2015, 8–9 identifies funerary oratory as Roman society’s earliest epideictic. [↑](#footnote-ref-1059)
1060. *Ad Herennium* 3.6.10–8.15. At 3.8.15 it says *si interierit, cuiusmodi mors eius fuerit, cuiusmodi res mortem eius sit consecuta* (‘If [the subject] has died, [consider] what sort of death it was, and what the consequences of his death were’). [↑](#footnote-ref-1060)
1061. Kierdorf 1980; Crawford 1941. For example, the *de obitu Theodosiani* and *de obitu Valentiniani* of Ambrose*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1061)
1062. Burgess 1902, repr. 1980; Kuhn 2021, 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-1062)
1063. Millar 1964, 83; Burden-Strevens 2016, 214; Rich 2019, 221. [↑](#footnote-ref-1063)
1064. Bellissime 2016, 372–375. [↑](#footnote-ref-1064)
1065. Rich 2019, 221: “A key part of most of [Dio’s] speeches’ function is dramatic irony”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1065)
1066. Cf. Swan 2004, 326, “The sophistication of rhetoric is on show everywhere, supremely in the peroration”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1066)
1067. Burden-Strevens 2020, 307–10, against Rich 1989; quotation from 307. [↑](#footnote-ref-1067)
1068. Kuhn 2021, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-1068)
1069. Marcellus (23 BCE), Agrippa (12 BCE), Drusus (9 BCE), Lucius (2 CE) and Gaius (4 CE). [↑](#footnote-ref-1069)
1070. Millar 1964, 101; Mallan 2021, 139–40. [↑](#footnote-ref-1070)
1071. Rich 2019, 221 and Burden-Strevens 2020, 314 on Dio’s generation of dramatic irony with his speeches. [↑](#footnote-ref-1071)
1072. Woodman 1988, 91–98 on the relationship between historiography and epideictic rhetoric in Latin theory and practice. [↑](#footnote-ref-1072)
1073. On Tacitus and the funeral laudation, see Syme 1958, 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-1073)
1074. Seneca the Elder seems to collapse the distinction between funerary oration and obituary notice in historiography when he says “whenever the death of some great man is narrated by historians, a summary of his whole life is usually given, as if a funerary oration. Just as this was done once or so by Thucydides and similarly adopted by Sallust for a very few individuals, Livy generously offers for all great men. Subsequent historians did this much more fully” (*Suas.* 6.21: *quotiens magni alicuius (uiri) mors ab historicis narrata est, totiens fere consummatio totius uitae et quasi funebris laudatio redditur. hoc, semel aut iterum a Thucydide factum, item in paucissimis personis usurpatum a Sallustio, T. Liuius benignus omnibus magnis uiris praestitit. sequentes historici multo id effusius fecerunt*). [↑](#footnote-ref-1074)
1075. E.g., Tacitus, Lucian, Ammianus, etc.; see Rees 2010a, 105–8, with bibliography. [↑](#footnote-ref-1075)
1076. Petkas 2018, 194–195. [↑](#footnote-ref-1076)
1077. See also *Ad Herennium* 3.8.15; Lactantius *Div. Inst.* 1.15.13; Rees 2010b; Pernot 2015, 21–28. [↑](#footnote-ref-1077)
1078. Pernot 2015, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-1078)
1079. In his preface, Dio claimed to have read everything written about the Romans (fr. 1.2). If Dio had read Cicero (and it seems unlikely that he had not), he may have known how he had railed against the corrupting effects of *laudationes funebres* on the historical record; if he had read Livy, Sallust, Tacitus, and Suetonius, he would have known that they did not report *laudationes funebres* in their work. Millar 1964, 86: “there can be no proof that Dio used Suetonius directly, though it is an attractive possibility”; see Aalders 1986, 293 and Letta 2021, 74–9 for Dio’s knowledge of Latin authors. [↑](#footnote-ref-1079)
1080. Perhaps Dio took his lead in this respect from Appian (see above on *B Civ.* 2.144–6); full dramatization of Antony’s oration for Caesar would be undertaken by Shakespeare. [↑](#footnote-ref-1080)
1081. My thanks to an audience at Liverpool for their reactions to an early version of this; and to the two editors for their suggestions, help and patience. [↑](#footnote-ref-1081)
1082. All text of Dio is that of Boissevain 1898–1931. Translations are my own. [↑](#footnote-ref-1082)
1083. See Madsen 2016 on Dio’s overarching criticism of the Severan dynasty and Rantala 2016 on Dio’s critical portrait of Severus. [↑](#footnote-ref-1083)
1084. By contrast, Julia Domna had a prominent position in Severan propaganda during the reign of her husband (see Hekster 2015, 148). [↑](#footnote-ref-1084)
1085. While there are no comprehensive studies on women in Dio, various individuals have merited analysis. See Mallan 2014 on Lucretia; Jones 2021 on Teuta; Moscovich 1997 on Sophonisba; Sion-Jenkis 2016 on Livia; Adler 2011 on Livia’s speech on the conspiracy of Cinna Magnus; Bertolazzi 2014 on comparisons between Livia and Julia Domna; Langford 2021 on Livia; Adler 2008, Gillespie 2015, 2018 on Boudica; Kettenhofen 1979, 9–20, Mallan 2013, Scott 2017 on Julia Domna. On the Severan women in Dio, see Nadolny 2016, 136–157. On gender and power, see Mastrorosa 2019. For recent work on women and gender in Dio, see chapter 7 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-1085)
1086. See Rich 2019 on speeches in books 1–35 of Dio’s history and Fomin 2016 for a reassessment of Dio’s speeches as rhetorical commonplaces or representations of the author’s views; cf. Adler 2012, 483 nn.23–25 for scholarship on speeches in Dio. See chapters 14 and 15 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-1086)
1087. Dio’s complete narrative for this period is lost, and what remains and has been transmitted in the *Excerpta Constantiniana* and by Zonaras focuses on conflict and the demonstration of virtue and vice. On the transmission of Dio’s text see chapter 5 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-1087)
1088. Cf. Livy 1.13.2–3, Plut. *Rom*. 19.4–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1088)
1089. Mallan 2014, 760. [↑](#footnote-ref-1089)
1090. Cato the Younger’s suicide is the last suicide of this type in Dio (43.10–13), as was pointed out to me by Estelle Bertrand. [↑](#footnote-ref-1090)
1091. See Rich 2019, 233 on the style of her speech. [↑](#footnote-ref-1091)
1092. Mallan 2014, 769. [↑](#footnote-ref-1092)
1093. Gowing 2009, 346–347 explains that these figures are less relevant for Dio’s third-century audience than emperors and imperial senators. [↑](#footnote-ref-1093)
1094. Gowing 2009, 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-1094)
1095. Livia similarly delays announcing the death of Augustus until Tiberius returns from Dalmatia (56.31.1), and Plotina conceals the death of Trajan until the adoption of Hadrian is announced (69[69].1.2–4 [Xiph.]). [↑](#footnote-ref-1095)
1096. Schulz 2019, 317 argues that Tanaquil and Tullia foreshadow the Severan women, especially Julia Domna and her sister Julia Maesa. [↑](#footnote-ref-1096)
1097. For comparisons between the status of the Vestal Virgins and imperial women, cf. 47.19.4, 56.46.2 (Livia), 59.3.4 (Antonia and the sisters of Caligula), 60.22.2 (Messalina). [↑](#footnote-ref-1097)
1098. See Murison 1999, 219–220 for evidence of one or two Vestal trials under Domitian. [↑](#footnote-ref-1098)
1099. Swan 2004, 229 argues for 213/214 CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-1099)
1100. See Jones 2021 on Teuta in the context of Dio’s depictions of politically powerful women. [↑](#footnote-ref-1100)
1101. Cf. Liv. 30.12.11–15.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-1101)
1102. See Rich 2019, 268–269 on Zonaras’ version of events (9.13.2–6) and Sophonisba, whose dying utterance invites comparison with Hersilia, Lucretia, Porcia, and Cleopatra. [↑](#footnote-ref-1102)
1103. Moscovich 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-1103)
1104. Reinhold 1988, 92 argues that Dio is skeptical of such rumors. [↑](#footnote-ref-1104)
1105. Reinhold 1988, 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-1105)
1106. Reinhold 1988, 134–135 argues, “Dio’s intent here was to portray the victory of virtue over vice”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1106)
1107. Cf. Plutarch, *Ant*. 78–86; see Powell 2013, 180–183 on the various sources for Cleopatra’s suicide. [↑](#footnote-ref-1107)
1108. On this statue, cf. App. *B Civ.* 2.102. [↑](#footnote-ref-1108)
1109. Her speech in Dio (62[62].3–6 [Xiph.]) has a parallel in Tacitus’ *Annals* (14.35.1–2); see Adler 2008, Gillespie 2015, Gillespie 2018, 69–90. [↑](#footnote-ref-1109)
1110. Gowing 1997, 2580–2581. [↑](#footnote-ref-1110)
1111. E.g., Octavian became engaged to the daughter of Fulvia, Antony’s wife, with the knowledge that Caesar carried out his plans against Pompey despite their kinship bond (46.56.3). Cf. 19.65.1, 36.14.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1111)
1112. See Treggiari 1993, 60–80 for a summary of these laws. [↑](#footnote-ref-1112)
1113. See Kemezis 2007, 275 on the general nature of the speeches. Cf. Fomin 2016, 225–227 on the rhetorical commonplaces in the speeches and a comparison to Libanius(*Prog*. 13.1). [↑](#footnote-ref-1113)
1114. Kemezis 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-1114)
1115. Cf. Plin. *Ep.* 3.16.7: *“Paete, non dolet”*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1115)
1116. Cf. Mutilla Prisca, wife of Gaius Fufius Geminus, who commits suicide in the Senate (58.4.6). [↑](#footnote-ref-1116)
1117. Rich 2019, 271 contrasts the demonstration of the woman with Livy’s sober conclusion to the episode (Livy 34.8.1–3). [↑](#footnote-ref-1117)
1118. Pelling 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-1118)
1119. Langford 2021, 427 argues that Dio employs women as a gauge for judging emperors and their relationship with the senate. See further Sion-Jenkins 2016, 730–735. [↑](#footnote-ref-1119)
1120. See Cluett 1998 on the literary sources for Fulvia as villain and Octavia as honorable Roman matron. On Fulvia see Vell. Pat. 2.74; Plut. *Ant*. 10.3, 10.28–30. See further Hallett 2015, Schultz 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-1120)
1121. E.g., Polla informs Cassius of a plot against his life and the life of her son, thereby saving both (47.24.6). [↑](#footnote-ref-1121)
1122. See Swan 2004, 147–154 on the dialogue and a comparison of sources, as well as a comparison with the speeches of Agrippa and Maecenas in book 52, Augustus’ *recusatio* speech in book 53, and Tiberius’ funeral eulogy of Augustus in book 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-1122)
1123. Allen 2020, 47 argues, “Her character’s emphasis on truth and reality is unusual and, I argue, has much to do with Dio’s view of his present circumstances under the Severans, even while it also constitutes his analysis of the Augustan project”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1123)
1124. Allen 2020, 46–47. [↑](#footnote-ref-1124)
1125. Adler 2011, 143, 134. Allen 2020, 48 n. 4 distinguishes his reading from Adler, clarifying, “Livia is not doing what is expedient in order to survive so much as advising what is wise in order to govern”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1125)
1126. On Augustus in Dio, see chapter 10 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-1126)
1127. Contra Langford 2021, 426, who sees Dio’s treatment of Livia as “consistent over the two reigns” and argues that Dio characterizes her, as he does with the other dowager empresses Agrippina the Younger and Julia Domna, as “self-interested, duplicitous, and eager to rule over their male relatives or on her own”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1127)
1128. On the role of fear in the death of Claudius, see chapter 11 in this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-1128)
1129. See Kragelund 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-1129)
1130. For Antonia Caenis’ tombstone, see *CIL* 6.12037. Cf. Suet. *Vesp*. 3. Due to the Julian marriage laws, she would not have been considered his legal wife; see Treggiari 1991, 51–52, 61–64. [↑](#footnote-ref-1130)
1131. See Murison 1999, 170–172 on the relationship of Titus and Berenice and 171 *ad* 15.4 for the suggestion that Vespasian insisted on her removal. [↑](#footnote-ref-1131)
1132. See Murison 1999, 213–216 on the question of whether a divorce and remarriage took place. [↑](#footnote-ref-1132)
1133. Cf. Suet. *Dom*. 4.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1133)
1134. Cf. Suet. *Dom*. 17.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1134)
1135. Cf. Schulz 2019 on Dio’s depiction of the regal period as foreshadowing Severan emperors and contemporary issues. [↑](#footnote-ref-1135)
1136. On which see Kemezis 2014, 141–149. [↑](#footnote-ref-1136)
1137. Mallan 2013. While Mallan argues that Dio’s evaluation of Julia is ultimately positive, Langford 2013, Levick 2007, and Scott 2017 conclude the opposite. [↑](#footnote-ref-1137)
1138. Cf. Pelling 1997; Gowing 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-1138)
1139. Swan 2004, 154 n. 152 suggests Livia’s speech on clemency may be a rebuke of Caracalla, who didn’t heed the advice of his mother. Cf. Giua 1981 on the episode’s connection to Livia and Augustus. [↑](#footnote-ref-1139)
1140. Levick 2007, 24; contra Mallan 2013, 748. [↑](#footnote-ref-1140)
1141. Scott 2017, 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-1141)
1142. See Sommer 2004, 103–104 on the contribution of the Severan women to the negative literary portrait of Elagabalus. [↑](#footnote-ref-1142)
1143. See Osgood 2016, 183–185 on Dio’s satirical portrait of Elagabalus, demonstrated through his emphasis on Elagabalus’ effeminacy. [↑](#footnote-ref-1143)
1144. Lange 2017; 2019b; 2019c; 2020; 2021; Madsen 2019a; Scott 2020; in general, Lange and Scott 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1144)
1145. Rees 2011 shows us just how fundamental Thucydides is for Dio, especially when it comes to human nature, and we may add, *stasis* and civil war. Dio comes across as more positive than Thucydides—not so regarding human nature, however—because he saw civil war as the catalyst for positive constitutional change. See also Bertrand 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-1145)
1146. According to Burden-Strevens 2020, the speeches conveyed Dio’s overall analysis of the fall of the Republic and the rise of the Principate. It is the speeches, and not Dio’s few *propria persona* statements about the fall of the Republic, which were the main vehicle for political analysis. There is little reason to disagree with the importance of the speeches in the overall narrative, but even if his conclusion may after all seem too extreme, it is a nicely provocative one. [↑](#footnote-ref-1146)
1147. Translations in this chapter are drawn from the Loeb Classical Library. [↑](#footnote-ref-1147)
1148. See Nawijn 1931, s.v. δυναστεία, 222–223; regarding dynasts, see Kemezis 2014, 104–112; Lindholmer 2018, as well as chapter 9 in this volume. According to Lindholmer (2019), Dio viewed institutional political competition, rather than ambitious individuals, as the reason for the fall of the Republic (= democracy). This however more than anything creates artificial barriers between the institutions of the Roman Republic and the dynasts (as well as other political protagonists). The dynasts are part of the political institutions and part of the unfolding crisis of the Republic. How can we separate competition from individuals, and, just as important, how can we limit discussion to one book (book 39)? Only by talking the whole of the Late Republican narrative into account, including the numerous and important statements about dynasts, is such an interpretation possible. The so-called Second Triumvirate was institutionally embedded, but at the same time a joining of dynasts, as clearly realized by Dio. Leaving out the so-called Second Triumvirate—echoing, perhaps involuntarily, Flower 2010 and the idea that Rubicon brought about the fall of the Republic—does not help his argument and simply does not equal Dio’s take on the Late Republic. [↑](#footnote-ref-1148)
1149. See Potter 2022 for a particular take on my 2019c article which does not capture accurately the point I endeavored to express. Like Dio, I suggest that *dynasteia*is the product of the systematic breakdown of the Republic; ultimately ending in civil war (*dynasteia*is certainly not a form of government). Thuc. 3.82 is relevant for our reading of Dio because it provides basic lessons about the nature of civil war. Certainly *stasis*was not only an issue in democracies, and my article makes no such claim; rather, I have written that Dio emphasizes that *stasis*and later civil war were the *product*of democracy in Rome (in his take always equalling poor government). Systemic breakdown, *stasis*, and civil war was furthered by dynasts. Dynasts were the result of the acquisition of empire, and Rome consequently needed to get rid of them. Potter suggests that Dio saw a distinct period from the *lex Gabinia*to Actium. Though attractive, this suggestion is problematic for three reasons. First, it is an illusion conjured by the textual tradition: the *lex Gabinia*of course seems the beginning of a new narrative phase since that is where the fragments give way to a coherent and continuous narrative. Secondly, monarchy did not of course start with Pompeius: Caesar was the first to come close to getting rid of dynasts, but monarchy was not fully established. Third and finally, it is indisputable that Dio saw a direct connection between the form of government and the causes of political stability and ultimately civil war; 44.1 states this explicitly. The ending of civil war brought, at last, the end of dynasts and the establishment of monarchy. As civil war returned, so did the dynasts. Monarchy returned with the Battle of Actium (50.1.2; 51.1.1–2; 56.30.5), and finally the “settlement” of 27 BCE (53.17, 19.1). Potter’s framework seems to me to underestimate the centrality of civil war within Dio’s political thought. [↑](#footnote-ref-1149)
1150. Freeman 2018, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1150)
1151. For an analysis of this phenomena, see Malešević 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-1151)
1152. One often forgotten aspect of civil war is its transnational nature. Cocyra was a clear-cut transnational civil war, with Athens and Sparta intervening in a local civil war. Foreign intervention in a civil war, but a civil war no less (cf. Cass. Dio 48.39). [↑](#footnote-ref-1152)
1153. Plut. *Mor.* 786D–E = *FRHist*. 2.22 [F26]: ὁ δὲ Σύλλας, ὅτε τῶν ἐμφυλίων πολέμων τὴν Ἰταλίαν καθήρας προσέμιξε τῇ Ῥώμῃ πρῶτον, οὐδὲ μικρὸν ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ κατέδαρθεν, ὑπὸ γήθους καὶ χαρᾶς μεγάλης ὥσπερ πνεύματος ἀναφερόμενος τὴν ψυχήν· καὶ ταῦτα περὶ αὑτοῦ γέγραφεν ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν (“And Sulla, when he first entered Rome after freeing Italy of its civil wars, did not sleep at all that night, he was so borne aloft in spirit by great joy and gladness as by a blast of wind. This he has written about himself in his memoirs”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1153)
1154. For a more developed argument, see Lange and Vervaet 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-1154)
1155. Fr. 109.4; see Lange 2020 and 2021 for discussion of this aspect. [↑](#footnote-ref-1155)
1156. On Sulla’s cruelty, see Urso 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1156)
1157. Straumann 2017, 142; for *stasis* in Greek sources, see Rogan 2018, 373–383. In Latin, *bellum* could be equally polyvalent; see Cic. *Phil.* 12.17; Lange 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-1157)
1158. Cass. Dio 52.16.2: ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον οἴκοι καὶ ἐντὸς τοῦ τείχους κατὰ συστάσεις ἐστασιάσαμεν, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ ἐς τὰ στρατόπεδα τὸ νόσημα τοῦτο προηγάγομεν (“At first it was only at home and within our walls that we broke up into factions and quarrelled, but afterwards we even carried this plague out into the legions”; Lange 2017; see further below). [↑](#footnote-ref-1158)
1159. See Fromentin 2013. Alternatively, the main aspects of this reflection will have come in a speech (see Burden-Strevens 2020). The best candidates for this are Cicero’s Amnesty speech in book 44, Caesar’s address to the Senate in book 43, and perhaps the fragments of Brutus’ speech in book 3. I owe this interesting idea to Christopher Burden-Strevens. [↑](#footnote-ref-1159)
1160. On this usage of πόλεμος, see Madsen 2019a, 476. [↑](#footnote-ref-1160)
1161. *Contra* Madsen 2019a, 474. [↑](#footnote-ref-1161)
1162. Libourel 1974; see Lange 2019c for examples of *stasis* and violence in Rome’s earlier history. [↑](#footnote-ref-1162)
1163. Rees 2011, 18–21; Bertrand, Coudry and Fromentin 2016, 313–314; Rich 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1163)
1164. 44.2.4; 47.39.1–5; see Bertrand 2016; 2019; 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1164)
1165. Lange 2019a; Cornwell 2017 on *pax.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1165)
1166. See Lange 2019b; 2021; cf. Madsen 2019a; 2019b. [↑](#footnote-ref-1166)
1167. Cf. Appian *B Civ*. 5.48–49, who mentions the autobiography of Augustus (App. *B Civ*. 5.42–45; *FRHist*. 2.886–889 [F8]), but does not mention the three hundred murdered at Perusia. [↑](#footnote-ref-1167)
1168. Allen 2020: pessimism is part of this. According to Bew (2016, 17), “Realpolitik is not, as is often assumed, as old as statecraft itself. Nor is it part of a seamless creed stretching back to Thucydides and running through Niccolo Machiavelli, Cardinal Richelieu, Thomas Hobbes, …”. He continues: “Real Realpolitik” originates in mid-nineteenth-century Europe. Apparently, the concept was part of trying to explain how to build a stable state and nation in a rapidly changing and unsteady environment. Applied to foreign policy this is about how to achieve goals and balance in a world that does not follow (Enlightenment) rules. Surely *Realpolitik* originated in a misreading and misunderstanding of Thucydides—an understandable one—not the least *The Melian Dialogue* in book 5: Athens tries to force Melos out of neutrality. They decline and are all killed! This resembles Thucydides 3.82.8: neutrality is impossible because neither faction will trust the neutral party (cf. Cass. Dio 45.8.3–4)—or at least followed the lead of Thucydides when it comes to civil war. This is also similar to Kalyvas’ modern approach (2006): civil war was and is associated with wickedness and personal animosities, thus clearly echoing Thucydides. [↑](#footnote-ref-1168)
1169. See also Madsen 2016, 154–158; Scott 2020: “[T]he evil that spread to Rome in 193–197 and 218 is not civil war, but rather the beginning and eventual renewal of the Severan regime”. Perhaps one does not have to exclude the other. [↑](#footnote-ref-1169)
1170. On sound, see Butler and Nooter 2019; Whately 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-1170)
1171. Whately (2017, 68) is correct in pointing out that Dio was a man with military knowledge. One may add that Philippi (47.42) and Pharsalus are very different (one has sounds, the other does not). Both are undisputedly civil war battles. [↑](#footnote-ref-1171)
1172. For more examples of battle cries, see Whately 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-1172)
1173. Harari 2007, 266: “For the reality of battle is truly extraordinary, and the abnormally dichotomical nature of battle is not a mere literary device, but rather a real characteristic of battle”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1173)
1174. Sheffield 2014, 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-1174)
1175. Ernste Tage, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 31 July 1914; see Verhey 2000, 46–47: “A powerful excitement has taken hold of our whole city. Everything is changed… Over everything lies an enormous seriousness, a frightening peace and quiet... Inside in their quiet rooms wives and young women sit with their serious thoughts concerning the near future. Separation, a great fear of the horrible, a fear of what might come”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1175)
1176. See, however, Cass. Dio 56.38.1–5; Urso 2016; Osgood 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1176)
1177. Millar 1964, 142; Rich 1989, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-1177)
1178. Thuc. 3.82.4: καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιώσει. τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη, μέλλησις δὲ προμηθὴς δειλία εὐπρεπής, τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἅπαν ξυνετὸν ἐπὶ πᾶν ἀργόν· τὸ δ᾽ ἐμπλήκτως ὀξὺ ἀνδρὸς μοίρᾳ προσετέθη, ἀσφαλείᾳ δὲ τὸ ἐπιβουλεύσασθαι ἀποτροπῆς πρόφασις εὔλογος (“Words had to change their ordinary meaning and to take that which was given them. Reckless audacity came to be considered the courage of a loyal supporter; prudent hesitation, specious cowardice; moderation was held to be a cloak for unmanliness; ability to see all sides of a question incapacity to act on any. Frantic violence became the attribution of manliness; cautious plotting a justifiable means of self-defence”). [↑](#footnote-ref-1178)