

## REVIEW–DISCUSSION

### TAKING STOCK OF CASSIUS DIO\*

Valérie Fromentin, Estelle Bertrand, Michèle Coltelloni-Trannoy, Michel Molin, and Gianpaolo Urso, edd., *Cassius Dion: Nouvelles lectures*, 2 vols. *Scripta Antiqua* 94. Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2016. Pp. 881. Paperback, €45.00. ISBN 978-2-35613-175-1.

Cassius Dio was assuredly not an artist of the miniature. He is known for only one partially preserved work, but its scale and variety are formidable, intimidating, and often unappreciated in modern scholarship. To do him justice in a single collection requires an uncommon depth of engagement with his text and breadth of scholarly resources. This collection, with nearly 900 pages, five editors, and forty-eight articles by thirty-one authors, is well fitted for the task. The insights it produces will gratify specialists greatly, while allowing Roman historians of many periods to make much more sophisticated use of a crucial source.

The volume is the fruit of a grant-supported project, titled *Dioneia*, which aimed to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Fergus Millar’s foundational and still indispensable monograph on Dio by opening new avenues of scholarship not explored in that book or the subsequent literature.<sup>1</sup> Thus the book is not a typical essay collection whose topics are primarily dictated by the contributors’ interests. It follows a preconceived editorial plan, but it is also not a ‘companion volume’ in the sense of a comprehensive selection of overview pieces on ‘[xyz topic] in Dio’. Rather it falls into several focused sections of essays on large subfields within the study of Dio. These include: the Byzantine sources of Dio’s fragmentary text; the structure and narrative technique of his work; his literary relationship with earlier historical traditions; and, above all, his treatment, both descriptive and analytical, of Roman political institutions and practices. The book does not present itself as the first or last word on all questions one may have about Dio, and in their desire to find new approaches, the editors have stayed away from many of the better-trodden scholarly paths. But the areas the volume does tackle in depth are judiciously chosen, and its admirably thorough contributions stake out significant new territory for the

\* The reviewer expresses his apologies for the lateness of this review and gratitude for the patience of the editors.

<sup>1</sup> Millar (1964).

study of Dio, and the editors have fulfilled their aim to ‘ouvrir des nouvelles pistes visant à combler les déficits les plus criants de la bibliographie’. (12)

This collection is a critical component of a major international increase in Dio scholarship in recent years. On the Francophone side, a new Budé edition of Dio has been in progress since the 1990s, and the editors of recent volumes are all among the contributors to this volume.<sup>2</sup> In addition, a parallel English-language scholarly network centred in Denmark published a volume of essays in 2016 and has more planned, including contributions from several of the main authors in this French collection.<sup>3</sup> And when one includes work published by these same scholars in other venues, the amount of new and planned scholarship on Dio in the years since 2010 is rather astonishing, and this review is not the place to survey it fully. I will, however, include references below to recent publications that complement articles in this collection, on the understanding that those publications will not have been available in time for the authors of the collection under review.

The volume (see Table of Contents below) is divided into three principal sections on ‘Tradition et réception du texte’, ‘Écrire l’histoire de Rome sous les Sévères’, and ‘Cassius Dion, historien du pouvoir’, each with its own further divisions that will be dealt with below. Of the forty-eight contributions, the majority are in French, except for six in Italian, three in English, and one in German. Most of the contributors are members of the *Dioneia* network and include both established Dio experts with contributions in the Budé project and early-career scholars whose doctoral work centred on Dio. In addition, there are several well-known senior scholars from outside the network who have written on subjects of their own expertise in relation to Dio. The topics covered are weighted rather more toward the earlier parts of Dio (including the republican fragments) than the Augustan or contemporary narratives, and their approach is more often philological or historical (political and intellectual) than the kind of rhetorical-literary analysis common in current Anglophone scholarship on historiography, though the contributions of Bellissime on speeches and Gotteland on *ekphrasis* and *enargeia* are important exceptions.

It is difficult to single out particular strengths in a collection that will appeal in different ways to different scholars. However, the most notable achievement of the volume as a whole is that it rehabilitates Dio as a political thinker, above all about the magistracies and institutions of the Roman state, among which he had his career. Several articles in the second half demonstrate his close acquaintance with the governing traditions of the republic and their evolution

<sup>2</sup> The current Budé offerings cover Books 36–42, 45–51, and 53, with further volumes in progress.

<sup>3</sup> Lange and Madsen (2016). The present reviewer is among the organisers of this network.

through and past the transition to monarchy. Dio emerges as an insider with keen insights into the relationship between power and formal structures in politics, but also an author who cares about integrating these insights into a coherent narrative. This is a welcome replacement for the persistent stereotypes of Dio as a conservative senatorial fossil or a blinkered Greek who can only see Roman politics through anachronistic Classical and Hellenistic lenses.

Several articles can be singled out for the novelty of their conclusions or for filling long-recognised *desiderata*: these include the contributions by Mecella, Roberto, Berbessou-Broustet, and Bellissime on later sources for Dio's text; Rich's argument that Dio did not use annalistic structuring in his early books; Coudry's and Coltelloni-Trannoy's treatments of the 'annalistic vs. biographical structure' question; Molin's overview of the external evidence for his career; Ando's examination of Dio's view of imperial legitimacy; the various arguments of Bertrand, Christol, and Coudry on Dio's view of imperial expansion; and Sion-Jenkis' examination of Livia's role in Dio's history.

Similarly, overall weaknesses of the book are not easy to pick out. The planned-out but not all-encompassing structure invites one to suggest articles that might have been included, but the overall structure works well on its own terms. My one recurring complaint was that several articles had very little engagement with the existing specialist literature on Dio and in some cases seem to consider him a scholarly *tabula rasa*.<sup>4</sup> It must be stressed that the phenomenon is not widespread or based on linguistic bias. The volume as a whole does an admirable job of bibliographic engagement, and points out a good deal of important new continental work on Dio that has yet to be properly considered in Anglophone scholarship.

## 1. Text and Reception

The volume opens with a brief preface by Fergus Millar, in which he gives new considerations on Dio's significance as a representative cultural figure and a historical source, based on the insights of the fifty-odd years since the original publication. There follows a similarly brief Editors' preface and then several contributions on the manuscript and textual tradition of Dio.

Fromentin's first contribution on 'Dion et les historiens grecs' sheds light on two related philological questions. The first is the paratextual devices found in the manuscripts of Dio, notably the *pinakes* or brief summaries at the start of

<sup>4</sup> Contributions that would particularly have benefited from engagement with a substantial existing literature include Bellissime (on 'fiction et rhétorique dans les prosopées'), Brizzi, Christol, Lachenaud, Molin (on 'Dion et la société'), and Platon.

each book.<sup>5</sup> These are known to be ancient but are not (in Fromentin's widely held view) Dio's own, and she makes enlightening observations on the role such apparatus played in the physical layout of papyrus rolls. The second half of the article puts Dio in the context of the copying and excerpting work that went on in ninth- and tenth-century Constantinople, and the work of the Constantinian excerptors.

Marion Bellissime's study of 'le *Parisinus graecus* 1689 et l'édition *princeps*' is a consideration of Robert Estienne's 1548 *editio princeps* and the one inferior manuscript from which it was taken. On the whole, Estienne's attempts to correct his inadequate materials seem to have stood up quite well in the instances where better manuscripts allow us to check his readings or his marginal notes.

The next five essays on 'la fortune de Dion' form an invaluable unit for scholars of Dio. They provide much interesting information on his early reception but, more crucially, they examine most of the principal sources from which we reconstruct the roughly two-thirds of Dio's text that has not survived complete. Scholars who use the first two and last two Loeb volumes of Dio are often understandably confused as to whose words they are supposed to be looking at. The essays in this volume represent a tremendous step forward in this respect, and any historians who engage in word-level analysis of Dio's fragmentary books should consult them. It is to be regretted, however, that there is no contribution dealing with the *Excerpta Constantiniana*. This cannot be an oversight, and one would have liked to know the circumstances of the omission.

Laura Mecella's article on 'la ricezione di Cassio Dione alla fine dell'antichità' surveys the traces of Dio's readership from his own time to the apparent flourishing of interest in the sixth century. The chief witnesses are Herodian and the *Historia Augusta*. In both cases Mecella takes a sensible middle-ground position, arguing that while it is clear that the former knew Dio's work and likely that the latter did, in neither case is Dio an exclusive or dominant source such that we can confidently reconstruct his text from his later readers.<sup>6</sup> To these well-known examples Mecella adds valuable background on such sources as Paeanius' Greek translation of Eutropius, and various notices suggesting that a complete copy of Dio's history was widely used in Palestine throughout the fifth to seventh centuries, which gives important clues as to the work's circulation.

<sup>5</sup> This same feature of Dio's text has also recently been considered in Mallan (2017), who admits at least the possibility that the *pinakes* are Dio's own work.

<sup>6</sup> The topic would benefit from a fuller examination to update the overly doctrinaire approach of Kolb (1972).

Umberto Roberto then considers, in separate articles, two important sixth-century authors who used Dio heavily and give important secondary supplements to our reconstructed text. The first, and more important, is Peter the Patrician. Several important historical notices from Peter's text can be ultimately traced to Dio, and Roberto provides a useful survey of Peter's thematic preoccupations (notably informers, charismatic divine sanction of emperors, and suicide as a response to tyranny) and peculiarities of technique, including his disconcerting habit of creating direct-discourse speeches from what in Dio's own text was third-person narrative. The second author Roberto considers is John of Antioch, who comes across as a somewhat more independent author than Peter, tending to rely more on Herodian than Dio for the period covered by the former, and willing to incorporate traditions independent from Dio or to develop his own characterisations.

The two fullest 'epitomes' of Dio, Xiphilinus and Zonaras, are covered next. Bénédicte Berbessou-Broustet handles Xiphilinus and gives useful considerations of his organisational principles and where he falls on the 'epitomator'–'independent author' scale. Overall, the verdict is that while in practice Xiphilinus is in most instances a faithful transmitter of his source, his programmatic statements and a few exceptions reveal just enough independence to give the modern reader pause. The essay also includes a valuable though brief treatment of the apparent absence of references to Christianity in surviving Dio (91–2) and raises the possibility that his text did contain negative opinions that were then suppressed by our later witnesses.

The same scholar, along with Marion Bellissime, adds a contribution on the latest of our principal witnesses, the twelfth-century epitomator Zonaras, who is critical for our knowledge of Dio's first twenty-one books. The authors give an overview of what sections of Zonaras' history rely on Dio (foundation to 146 BCE, then the Second Triumvirate to the Flavians, though in the latter case often indirectly through Xiphilinus) and compare Zonaras' work as an epitomator with Xiphilinus'. There are several intriguing case studies of Zonaras' technique in abridging surviving Dio, and also Plutarch and Eusebius, as well as consideration of how he treats speeches and expressions of Dio's personal opinion.<sup>7</sup> On the whole, the authors present Zonaras as perhaps a more valuable witness to Dio than one often sees in previous literature, albeit still to be used with much caution.

## 2. Sources and Models

The next several pieces deal with Dio's relationship to earlier historians of Rome. In a sense this is a re-opening of source-critical questions that have been

<sup>7</sup> On the question of speeches in Dio–Zonaras, see now also Fromentin (2018).

largely in abeyance since Millar's book, and certainly these essays have much new to say on the question of where Dio got his material from.<sup>8</sup> However, in the 'sources et modèles' vein of contemporary Francophone scholarship on historiography, these earlier authors are seen also as objects of emulation and literary self-positioning, and many important insights emerge as to how Dio characterises his literary project relative to what went before.

Giuseppe Zecchini's piece on 'Cassius Dion et l'historiographie de son temps' begins by positioning Dio relative to the historiographical genre of his era and some key predecessors (113–20). The last section (120–4) is an imaginative reconstruction of Dio's decision to write history. In Zecchini's view, the history was originally conceived around 202 as a complement to Severus' self-presentation as a new Augustus bringing order after a civil war. The end of the republic and the emergence of the monarchy are in Dio's view necessary parallels for the understanding of his own experience. The historian then becomes progressively disillusioned with the dynasty's failure to maintain order or to follow Roman cultural norms: in Zecchini's chronology, most if not all of the history will in fact have been written by the 'late, disillusioned' Dio. He ends with a suggestive parallel to Tacitus' experiences from Nerva through Hadrian.

Dominique Briquel delivers a comprehensive assessment of Dio's account of the regal period that makes a case for Dio's independence and originality in this portion of his narrative.<sup>9</sup> Briquel demonstrates in some detail that Dio cannot be seen as relying solely on Livy or Dionysius but, whether by synthesising sources himself or relying on an unknown third tradition, has an account that is its own and in some instances (Briquel cites the prodigies at the end of Tarquinius Superbus' reign) more coherent than either of the other two authors. Briquel then (136–41) identifies some key thematic characteristics of Dio's account. For Briquel, Dio is here preoccupied with delivering moral judgements and with conveying antiquarian data, on occasion in the form of long digressions, with less attention to military or institutional history than in his republican narrative. Briquel sheds a very welcome light on this aspect of Dio, but he speaks with sometimes remarkable confidence about such a fragmentary author, and might more explicitly have posed the question whether these interests and absences reflect Dio's own mentality or that of the epitomators and compilers who have transmitted his text.

Similarly to Briquel, Gianpaolo Urso's contribution on the (regrettably slight) surviving witnesses of Dio's early-republican books argues strongly that Dio's is an independent tradition that draws directly on a variety of pre-Livian

<sup>8</sup> Though see Westall (2016) on the 40s–30s BCE, a period not covered by any of the essays in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> Dio's regal and early-republican narratives have also been the subject of a recent Anglophone volume, Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer (2018).

annalists and testifies to narratives that were otherwise driven out of the record in the years from Sulla to Augustus.<sup>10</sup> Urso goes into detail through several important divergences between Dio and Livy or Dionysius, first on the origins of magistracies (146–8) and then on key events of especially the south-Italian wars of the fourth century (148–56). Urso synthesises and engages with a great deal of source-critical scholarship (much of which mentions Dio only peripherally) but does not neglect to address the cultural-historical significance of his model of Dio's work. In Urso's view, Dio's desire to go beyond Livy and 'remonter aux sources' is paralleled by the interest shown by Antonine authors in early annalists and by Ulpian in republican jurisprudence.

Éric Foulon considers the relationship of Dio to Polybius in an avowedly aporetic (176) but still very thorough survey of the question. Foulon begins with a detailed survey of various positions going back to Schwartz's foundational study (159–64) before making a full-scale comparison of his own. This consists mainly of several long lists (165–73) of passages in which the two historians give differing and often incompatible versions of the same events, followed by rather shorter lists of those where they seem to agree (173–4) or to have a complicated relationship perhaps mediated through Livy (174–5). The overall conclusion is largely negative: one cannot prove that Dio did not read Polybius, but at all events he did not find him a congenial source. Foulon speculates all too briefly on why this might have been, concluding that Dio found Polybius' view of Roman imperialism too ambiguous to suit the later author's full identification with the Roman imperial project. Some more analysis of the ideological aspects of the various specific divergences between the two authors might have given this point a more solid basis.

Fromentin, in a second contribution, is more optimistic about seeing Dio as a reader of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. She begins (181–2) with some general considerations on Dionysius' popularity and relevance in Dio's time. Her main focus, though, is on a few episodes centred around speeches where it appears that Dio took Dionysius as a specifically rhetorical model, by including speeches or arguments that paralleled those of the Augustan author. The episodes in question are Brutus' speeches after the Rape of Lucretia (Dio F 2.13<sup>a</sup> and 2.19 ~ D. Hal. *AR* 4.72–5); Servius Tullius' speeches after the murder of Tarquinius Priscus (Zon. 7.9.5–8 ~ *AR* 4.9–11) and the efforts of M' Valerius Volusus, dictator of 494, to advocate for plebeian debtors (Zon. 7.14.4 ~ *AR* 6.43–4). The state of surviving Dio makes it difficult to come to a definite conclusion on these points, but if one accepts Fromentin's arguments, and if Dio is using Dionysius mainly to inform speeches as opposed to factual narrative, this sheds considerable light on the later historian's methods and attitudes toward the rhetorical tradition. If anything, Dio seems to be treating

<sup>10</sup> See also on this question Urso (2018).

Dionysius more like he treats Cicero than like a ‘historical source’ as understood by modern *Quellenforschung*.<sup>11</sup>

The predecessor who has always received the most attention in studies of Dio is, however, Livy, and the volume has three articles devoted to the relationship between the two authors. The first, by Marielle de Franchis, makes a convincing argument that while the traditional source-critical approach, going back to Eduard Schwartz, has proven a long blind alley, there is still much to be gained by seeing Dio as emulating rather than copying Livy. Of all post-Augustan historians, Dio comes closest to Livy in his scope and ambition, and in De Franchis’ view, Dio himself and at least a significant portion of his (potentially Latin-speaking) readers are highly conscious of the parallel (200–2). She identifies speeches in particular as a key area where Dio sought to position himself relative to Livy, and provides a useful interpretative table (203–4) of the (surprisingly many) historical events for which we can tell that both Livy and Dio composed set-piece speeches, although typically only one is preserved.

There follow two case-study comparisons of Livy and Dio. The first, by Mathilde Simon, is of their treatment of the Battle of Sentinum (295 BCE), notable for a pre-battle omen involving a wolf chasing a deer and for the *devotio* of the younger Decius Mus. Simon argues convincingly (*contra* Stephen Oakley) for Dio’s independence (as reflected in Zonaras), while pointing out some interesting differences of emphasis.

Paul François’ contribution is a comprehensive and painstaking analysis of the divergences between Dio/Zonaras’ material on the Second Punic War and the parallel narrative in the third decade of Livy. It consists largely of listing and summarising the various divergences, and the source-critical conclusions that follow. Readers will get a good overall idea of the points on which Dio/Zonaras appear to offer independent information, but the piece could have used more synthesis and more sense of what larger thematic differences can be detected between the two narratives, as well as whether Dio is best seen as following the Livian tradition with occasional departures, or as following an entirely separate tradition that periodically converges with Livy.

Olivier Devillers then gives an overview of Dio’s relationship to the Latin historiography of the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods. The exiguous state of the Latin material renders this a thankless task, which Devillers nonetheless approaches with formidable authority and expertise. Without reaching definite conclusions, Devillers places Dio judiciously along the axes of ‘senatorial/non-senatorial’ and ‘biographical/annalistic’ that have traditionally been used to characterise this material. His interspersed remarks on Dio’s potential use of Tacitus himself are a welcome contribution, although it would

<sup>11</sup> These two pieces may usefully be read alongside the recent study of Rich (2015) on Appian’s use of the same authors.



have been useful to see a separate article on this topic, or on Dio's relationship (source, model, or otherwise) to Antonine predecessors such as Arrian, Appian, and even Plutarch.

Cesare Letta's contribution on 'L'uso degli *acta senatus*' diverges considerably from the other literary-source-based studies in arguing that Dio's imperial narrative frequently, though never consistently, makes direct use of official documents including the recorded proceedings of the Senate. Letta's considerable authority on Dio's work is supported by a series of readings of individual episodes going back to the 50s BCE that (in Letta's view) derive from these records. These readings make up almost the entire article, however, and there is little methodological argumentation.<sup>12</sup> Whatever one feels about any particular episode, it is difficult to accept the implicit premise, namely that any non-contemporary passage of Dio whose language or content are reminiscent of the *acta* may be seen as resting on Dio's direct consultation of that source, and not any intermediate author or alternative channel. Such a position would further seem to imply either that (a) Dio consulted documents much more than any of his literary predecessors, since they did not furnish him this information, or that (b) even when another author had consulted the *acta*, Dio felt compelled to replicate his labour personally. It is not clear from the article which of these alternatives Letta envisions, and the model of Dio as a documentary historian (even sporadically) is more counter-intuitive than he acknowledges.

Michel Molin concludes the section on sources by briefly considering the portion of Dio's later-Severan narrative that survives in the manuscript *Vat. Gr.* 1288. Molin compares the text with other traditions and epigraphic records on points of official detail, notably the nomenclature and titulature of the three emperors (Caracalla, Macrinus, Elagabalus) that it covers.

The next section of the collection deals with a series of formal issues around narrative and structure. The first essay, by John Rich, is an important reconsideration of the content and form of the initial thirty-five now-lost books in which Dio treated Rome's history down to 70 BCE. Rich has two main contentions: the first is that scholars have placed too much confidence in Boissevain's assigning of fragments to Books; this Rich demonstrates amply with arguments very much in line with the Dutch editor's own too-seldom-heeded expressions of tentativeness. The second is that for large sections of early republican history (from late fifth to early third century BCE, possibly also the early to mid second century) Dio did not organise his material annalistically, owing to a combination of too little space and too little material that met his standards for inclusion. Rich's arguments are persuasive on their face: it appears that Dio gave himself five Books (Books 4–8: see p. 275) to cover 225

<sup>12</sup> Letta argues somewhat more fully for his position in Letta (2016), though questions remain.

years (508 to 283), his books are short, and statements in Zonaras are suggestive. This raises important questions about the significance for Dio of annalistic form. To us the form seems essentially republican, yet Dio seems if anything to maintain it more strictly for the years of monarchy and dysfunction than for the period of city-state government for which it might seem best suited. It is for him as much a symbolic and stylistic device as a structural technique.

Coudry's insightful essay on 'Figures et récit' deals with techniques of characterisation and how they are integrated into the narrative of Books 36–44 (i.e., 69–44 BCE). Coudry considers a series of secondary figures (Clodius, Catiline, Cato, Lucullus, Mithridates, Cicero) as well as Pompey and Caesar, around whom (sequentially) the narrative of these books is heavily structured. Coudry does much to nuance the common observation that Dio's late-republican narrative is affected by the 'biographical' technique of his imperial books. It is true that Dio structures his narrative rather more around a few principal figures than does Appian, but as Coudry points out, characterisation remains very much at the service of narrative and analysis. The character traits that Dio brings out tend to be dictated by the historical situation rather than the narrative being determined by the traits. Sometimes this makes for inconsistencies, as with Lucullus (291–2). Furthermore, Dio generally describes character traits at the points when they are most relevant to narrative explanation, as in Caesar's ambition in 59–58 (298–99). Dio remains above all a storyteller and an analyst rather than a portraitist.

A contribution by Coudry, Bertrand, and Fromentin on 'Temporalité historique et formes du récit' surveys the different ways in which Dio adapts the basic annalistic form of his late-republican narrative to fit the thematic content and his own analytical and rhetorical objectives. These include straightforward analepses (such as that in Book 47 on the actions of the Assassins in 44–42 BCE) and less often prolepses. Also examined are the narrative function of speeches and the ways in which extended themes such as corruption and *pleonexia* affect narrative form. Lastly, the authors consider how the post-Philippi narrative changes shape as ever greater teleological emphasis falls on the disappearance of the republic and the coming of one-man rule under Augustus.

Devillers' second contribution on 'l'évolution de l'annalistique' is an extended and revealing comparison of the annalistic narrative techniques of Dio and of Tacitus for those periods of the Julio-Claudian era for which the *Annales* can be compared with Dio's complete text. As Devillers shows, even in his sections of 'republican-style' narrative, Dio remains focused on the actions of the emperor, how he enacts his political role, and who his potential heirs are. Tacitus is much more concerned with the *libertas* of the Senate and the exemplary value of such characters as Aemilius Lepidus. Dio is still making an ideological statement with his annalistic structure, but the monarchy is fully integrated into the ideology as it was not for his Latin predecessor. Devillers

proceeds to several illuminating readings of key parallel episodes in the two historians, such as the Boudiccan revolt and the trial of Cremutius Cordus.<sup>13</sup>

Dio's principate narrative is further treated by Michèle Coltelloni-Trannoy's essay on 'temporalités du recit imperial'. She begins with a useful overview range of devices Dio uses to structure time during this period (exact dates, consular dates, regnal years, book-sequence). This is followed by a long and important treatment of a longstanding question regarding the apparent tension between annalistic and biographical narrative structures in Dio's imperial books. Coltelloni-Trannoy's is much the most systematic and sophisticated consideration of the question to date, and does much to elucidate how Dio integrates the evaluative and analytical aspects of his task into a continuous narrative, producing a technique that is distinctly his own rather than the uncomfortable hybrid of Tacitus and Suetonius that some previous scholarship had diagnosed.<sup>14</sup>

The speeches of Dio get their consideration in Marion Bellissime's article on 'Fiction et rhétorique dans les prosopopées de l'*Histoire romaine*'. Her main focus is on how Dio's speeches relate to the formal canons of rhetoric in his time, and in particular to notions of *vraisemblance*. Bellissime is to some degree reacting against an older scholarship that saw 'rhetoric' negatively, as categorically opposed to the requirements of historical truth. Thus she speaks in terms of the constraints ancient historians faced (due to the requirements of *vraisemblance* above all, as embodied in traditional canons for various rhetorical genres) and the room for manoeuvre they still possessed (in being able to vary traditional forms).<sup>15</sup> The piece contains illuminating comparisons of Pompey's mock-*recusatio* in Book 36 with Octavian's in Book 53, and Antony's funeral oration for Caesar with Tiberius' for Augustus. While Bellissime makes a case for *vraisemblance* as critical, it would have been useful to consider more sophisticated concepts of fictive belief than the somewhat simplistic dichotomies she refutes.

Sophie Gotteland's article on '*Ekphrasis et enargeia* dans l'*Histoire romaine*' addresses Dio's battle descriptions, which are routinely censured as rhetorical pictures rather than accurate descriptions. As with Bellissime, Gotteland takes formal rhetorical figures as objects of meaningful analysis rather than points of criticism. After a very useful brief introduction (381–5) to ancient rhetorical theory on *ekphrasis* (extended description) and *enargeia* (the technique of vividness used in such descriptions), she argues that these features can be fully

<sup>13</sup> New work on these and similar Tacitus–Dio parallels includes Gillespie (2015) and Markov (2016b).

<sup>14</sup> Here Coltelloni-Trannoy builds in part on important insights of Pelling (1997).

<sup>15</sup> Fomin (2016) is another recent analysis of Dio's speeches in terms of the formal categories of declamatory rhetoric.

integrated aspects of Dio's narrative rather than ornamental flourishes.<sup>16</sup> In particular she looks at the Battle of Naulochus, with its Thucydidean emphasis on audience reaction and the final showdown between Pompey and Mithridates, which in Dio is a night battle. Gotteland does much to show that there is more at stake for Dio in these instances than an isolated effect, but rather that descriptive passages convey meaning that is crucial to understanding Dio's overall narrative.

The section concludes with Guy Lachenaud's piece on 'Récit et discours chez Cassius Dion', which deals with the relationship between Dio's narrative and the the beliefs and opinions on general topics that he expresses in his own voice and that of characters. Lachenaud engages in lengthy analysis of Dio's 'énoncés sententieux', (403–12) that includes many pertinent observations and develops an overall picture of Dio as a 'personnalité clivée: d'un côté, le réalisme pragmatique et le machiavélisme, de l'autre les préoccupations d'une conscience soucieuse d'authenticité'. Lachenaud's argument is not always easy to follow, but delivers an unusually subtle view of Dio as a dialectical thinker and a reflector on his own experiences.

### 3. Dio: Historian of Power

The third and longest section begins with consideration of Dio's context, including a treatment by Michel Molin of the known biographical data on Dio, including his nomenclature (431–4), his family background and father's career (434–7), and then his own (437–44), with some thought-provoking reflections on Dio's engagement with the traditional senatorial ethos and a useful table of biographical data (445–6). Molin is very thorough in his citation of epigraphic evidence and possible genealogical links, and on the whole judicious in the connections he draws among the disparate data points, without proposing any revolutionary new hypotheses. On vexed existing questions, Molin opts for a nomenclature of 'L. Claudius Cassius Dio', with no 'Cocceianus', and a first consulship dated around 207. This article should now be the standard point of departure for anyone looking into Dio's personal history. However, Molin treats Dio as a prosopographical subject rather than an author, and as such there is very little direct consideration of the dating of his history or other literary productions.

Michel Christol's essay on 'Marius Maximus, Cassius Dion et Ulpian' has an ambitious historical agenda. He begins by sketching and comparing the career paths of these three close contemporaries. This is characterised by ample prosopographical context and includes (453–7) an illuminating discussion of the date of Dio's first consulship, opting also for the mid-200s. The

<sup>16</sup> On the visual aspects of Dio's battle-descriptions, see now also Potter (2016).

second part of the article (457–67) maps these careers on to what Christol sees as the critical political debates running continuously from the 190s to the 220s, above all over military expansion. For him, Dio and Ulpian, as a traditionalist aristocrat and a rising jurist, represent an anti-expansionist strain that sought to rein in the expense and power of the military. Maximus, the civil-war general and presumed source of the *Historia Augusta*, is rather more comfortable with expansionism and militarism. The contrast between Dio and Maximus is well drawn and rings fundamentally true. It fits in well with the arguments about Dio and expansionism made by Bertrand elsewhere in the volume. The detail-level foundations of the argument, however, are not as strong as they might be. The reading of Dio as anti-expansionist relies too heavily on a relatively few passages (as well as on an early chronology for the history, with strict sequential composition) and does not take into account his description of Marcus' northern wars.<sup>17</sup>

Molin's third contribution, on 'Dion et la société de son temps', reads Dio's contemporary narrative and sketches out Dio's thoroughly pessimistic view of the Severan Empire. The essay moves through various segments of society from army to court and senate and demonstrates in each instance how Dio sees a 'bouleversement de la hiérarchie sociale' stemming from moral decline. Molin aptly contrasts the contemporary narrative with the rigidly hierarchical model of society laid out by Maecenas in his speech in Book 52. The survey is comprehensive and welcome, although its causal analysis is somewhat circular. How can we tell that Dio sees social breakdown as the cause of moral decline rather than its effect?

The three sections, comprising eleven total articles, that follow from this point all consider how Dio dealt with the technical and conceptual aspects of Roman governmental institutions, both republican and monarchical. The first section ('Dire en grec les choses romaines') addresses questions of language.

The insights found in Marianne Coudry's opening piece on 'Les choix lexicaux de Cassius Dion' have critical implications for the wider discussion of Dio's literary aims. Her analytical conclusions are informed by the basically descriptive work of Vrind and Freyburger-Galland, but are based on her own profound examination of the text, as demonstrated in the two appendices on vocabulary for assembly and senatorial procedure. She finds that Dio aims primarily at maximum clarity, both in describing institutions and narrating political maneuvering. Where precise technical vocabulary serves this end, he employs it, but he is quite content with plain language when that will do the job better, as with the senatorial action at the start of 49 BCE (498). Coudry notes also that where Dio discourses at length on the meaning of a term, it is

<sup>17</sup> It would also have been useful to engage with (among others) the recent arguments of Molinier Arbò (2009) on Maximus and Davenport (2011) on the reign of Alexander. See also now Markov (2016a).

typically to highlight something unsatisfactory in customary Greek usage, or to make a Thucydidean point about the discrepancy between something's name and the way it actually worked (488). The piece, which is characterised as an *ébauche*, is in itself a model of how thorough analysis of a text's technical aspects can enhance our understanding of its larger literary aims.

The immediately following piece, also by Coudry on 'Le cas de César', gives a further case-study of the approach just sketched, but in relation to the development of monarchy. Coudry follows Dio's narrative from the ambitious young Caesar to the civil-war victor of Books 41–2, the incipient monarch of Book 43, and then the object of moral debate after his assassination in Book 44. Dio's discussion increases both in the richness of vocabulary and the variety of modes of expression (narratorial comment, direct or reported speech, etc.).

Next, it is for Marion Bellissime to consider Dio's use of *dēmokratia*, *monarchia*, and the related Aristotelian vocabulary. Her thorough and nuanced analysis shows that Dio is rigorous in his usage and fully aware of the tension between *dēmokratia/monarchia* as ideological abstractions and as quasi-technical terms for the actual political systems in use before and after the Augustan settlement. She examines both his *propria persona* statements and the speeches of Agrippa-Maecenas, and concludes that in Dio, both *dēmokratia* and *monarkhia* are recognised as legitimate forms of government, as opposed to lawless and arbitrary *dynasteia*, against which *monarkhia* is pragmatically better equipped to offer stability.

Chiara Carsana's piece on 'La teoria delle forme di governo', although placed in a new section ('Penser la *πολιτεία* romaine'), is a clear complement to Bellissime's, given it deals mainly with *dynasteia*, a term that is somewhat of a Dionian trademark in his narrative of the end of the republic.<sup>18</sup> Carsana gives this much-invoked term the perceptive analysis it deserves, and argues that Dio's usage is very close not only to Appian's but to the Plutarchan *De unius in re publica dominatione*. It refers to arbitrary military power that is nonetheless based on a constitutional office that the holder abuses. She then relates this to Dio's portrait of Caesar, above all his powers in the year before his death. For Carsana, *dynasteia* has a key role in Dio's developmental story of the Roman polity, and Caesar, in trying to effect a transition from that state to *monarchia*, is for Dio 'il fondatore della monarchia imperiale' (555).

Coltelloni-Trannoy's next short article on the '*πολιτεία* impériale' makes some thought-provoking claims about Dio's principate as a 'mixed constitution', building on Carsana's earlier work, but adding the idea that for Dio the principate is (or should be) not a hybrid of discrete republican and monarchical elements but rather a 'forme binaire' in which a monarch is fully integrated

<sup>18</sup> The common notion that Dio sees *dynasteia* as particularly characteristic of the late republic as against earlier periods has recently been challenged by Lindholmer (2018a).

into a hierarchical citizen body whose various segments have properly defined roles that in the case of the elite amount to genuine political power.<sup>19</sup> Regrettably, the scope of the article does not allow for full development of this thesis, and Coltelloni-Trannoy's analysis is confined to three passages of the Tiberius–Caligula narrative. Her readings do shed significant new light on the conduct of these emperors, but her argument has broader implications that require more extensive engagement with Dio's Principate narrative, some of which may be found in her further contribution on 'Procédures sénatoriales'.

Clifford Ando's 'Cassius Dio on Imperial Legitimacy' begins from two important related insights about Dio as theorist and analyst of the Roman monarchy. First, Dio's criteria for a legitimate emperor, as seen in his principate narrative, rely on a monarch's conduct while on the throne rather than the qualifications or processes involved in his attaining that station. Secondly, this absence finds its analogue in Books 52–3, when Dio lays out the theoretical basis for the monarchy. He is far more concerned with establishing the standards of appropriate conduct for an emperor than in establishing normative grounds why there should be an emperor or why anyone in particular should be the emperor. Ando spends much of the article fleshing out these observations from the text, but he also posits a causal link that is crucial for Dio's whole view of politics. As Ando sees it, Maecenas' version of monarchy (based as it is on an artificial relationship between emperor and senatorial elite) entails a gap between political vocabulary and the realities of power. This in Ando's view fatally inhibits the 'legibility' of imperial politics from the start of the Principate, and the crisis under the Severans is likened to the final explosion of a time bomb (576). Much existing scholarship on Dio takes a rather different view, in which Dio establishes the Augustan principate as a meaningful norm (though tempered by some realism in Book 53) that the Antonines embodied and from which the Severans departed. There is much in Dio to support this latter view, but any further articulation of it will have to reckon with the limits and absences Ando has acutely detected.

The next several essays move from the grand-theoretical level to that of institutional specifics. Much recent work on Dio has brought out his pre-occupation with the magistracies and procedures of the republican political system, their origins and their eventual transformation into the monarchical state in which he lived.<sup>20</sup> The opening pair of contributions on 'Les mutations de l'*imperium militiae*' concentrate on the development from the 80s to 20s BCE of the conceptual basis for the Principate as Augustus founded it. Frédéric Hurlet's piece has relatively little to say about Dio himself beyond to caution against the impression one might get from his Book 53, that Augustus invented

<sup>19</sup> Carsana (1990) 83–94 devotes a chapter of her study of Roman theories of the mixed constitution to Dio.

<sup>20</sup> Key contributions include Urso (2005), Hinard (2005), and Simons (2009).

the Roman monarchy from whole cloth in 27 BCE. Instead, Hurlet draws on a great deal of recent scholarship to give a concise sketch of the several anomalous forms of *imperium* enjoyed by various actors from Pompey to Julius Caesar to the Assassins to the Triumvirs, whereby the notion of *imperium* became progressively abstracted from the elected annual magistracies that had been its original basis.

It is then for Bertrand and Coudry to set forth Dio's own view of this process. Their contribution illustrates how Dio often shows great interest and precision in charting the various grants of *imperium* to late-republican figures, but also varies his level of attention and detail to suit the needs of his own narrative. This is brought out in an extended reading (599–605) of the debate in Dio's Book 36 on the *Lex Gabinia* giving Pompey command against piracy in 67.<sup>21</sup> The various speeches all lay out positions that are coherent in themselves and to some degree historically authentic, but they also manage to incorporate themes that Dio will echo in his own voice at various later stages of his narrative. In conclusion, Bertrand and Coudry set out two related themes that they see as recurring throughout the late-republican to Augustan books: first, the conceptual incompatibility of extended supra-provincial commands with the nature of republican magistracy and, second, the tendency of such commands to lead to *dynasteia*, the form of personal domination that is for Dio the fatal disorder of the republic. Such a progression both weakens the existing political structures of the Republic and leaves the public sphere exposed to internal violence. This essay makes a great step toward revealing Dio's narrative as a fully conceived and articulate piece of political analysis.

Coudry's next contribution, on 'Sénat et magistrats à la vielle de la guerre civile', shows as it were the other side of this coin, how the traditional components of the republican polity descended into dysfunction during the 60s and 50s. Coudry traces Dio's many notices regarding violations of precedent, the increasingly erratic or corrupt functioning of the consulship, censorship, and tribunate of the *plebs* (613–20), and the growing impotence and irrelevance of the senate (620–2), and in conclusion how during the war of 49–48 the institutions of the republic ceased to be the arena in which political struggles were played out, and became instead itself the question over which those struggles were fought. This piece shows in ample detail how, in between describing the duels of the great dynasts, Dio also gives a nuanced picture of the fatal damage that conflict wrought on the system as a whole, amounting to 'une histoire de la République comme régime politique' (624).

The following piece by Coltelloni-Trannoy on 'Procédures sénatoriales à l'époque impériale' is an exhaustive consideration of this subject in Dio. Topics covered include the attendance rules; the role of presider; the location of

<sup>21</sup> On which see also Coudry (2016) and now Lindholmer (2018b).



meetings; the placement, costume, and conduct of the emperor; the content and timing of public vows and other gestures of respect toward living and dead emperors; the procedures and rules of precedence for debate and voting. While there is a great deal of relatively dry detail, Coltelloni-Trannoy also has much to say about how Dio incorporates this material, usually in narratives of historically significant occasions, and how he sees senatorial functioning as evolving from Augustus' reforms down to his own day. Dio in this view has a clear view of the realities of the monarch's power over the Senate, but also of the significance of the political theatre through which that power was manifested.

Marie Platon's piece on 'Senat et pouvoir impérial' in Books 57–8 of Dio is a thorough and judicious survey of Dio's account of Tiberius' reign.<sup>22</sup> Platon argues for the critical role of the Senate in the narrative, though, as she admits, this role is often highly reactive and undignified. She considers first Dio's portrayal of the formal powers of the senate (654–62) and then the narrative of the degenerating relationship between *patres* and *princeps*. Her final argument (671–5), that Dio apportions blame for the disastrous reign between the emperor and the senate, raises many questions that are crucial for one's understanding of the principate narrative as a whole. Granted that Dio portrays the Senate surprisingly negatively (except during the Antonine period), does that necessarily mean that the Senate has meaningful moral agency and responsibility? Platon evidently believes this is the case, but one might alternatively argue that the Senate's moral status is mainly a function of the emperor's: if, like Marcus, he acts correctly toward them, they respond well; if not, not.

The final section deals with more thematic topics and begins with two contributions by Estelle Bertrand. The first, on 'Point de vue de Cassius Dion sur l'impérialisme romain' considers this topic in the context of Dio's primary focus on political institutions. Bertrand begins by suggesting a revealing pattern whereby, up to the outbreak of the Punic Wars, Dio accords with traditional Roman views of their war-making as basically just and defensively necessary. After 264 and especially in the era of Pompey and Caesar, Dio puts greater emphasis on self-aggrandisement and greed, both collective and individual, as driving Roman aggression. In a neat comparison, Bertrand argues that where for Polybius Rome's superior *politeia* was the cause of its expansion, Dio emphasises that expansion is a destabilising threat to the *politeia*, not only (as in many other authors) because it brings wealth and luxury but because it causes individual generals to disrupt the political process in their desire for worlds to conquer. This is, she concludes, a crucial element in his his analysis of the late republic, but also his negative view of Trajan's and

<sup>22</sup> See on this part of Dio now also Bono (2018).

Septimius Severus' offensive wars in the east. Given that the relationship of imperial expansion to the end of the republic was of such abiding concern to Appian, Florus, and indeed Livy, Bertrand provides a valuable insight by highlighting the originality (not to say contrariness) and topicality of Dio's own answer to the problem.

The same scholar then adds the next, complementary, piece on 'Géographie et *imperium Romanum* dans l'*Histoire Romaine*'. Bertrand surveys the geographic and ethnographic material in Dio (exhaustively documented in the notes) and concludes that these topics remain for him secondary and auxiliary to narrative and political development.<sup>23</sup> A coherent rhetorical agenda persists, however, in line with Dio's view of Roman imperialism. As Bertrand sees it, Dio provides stereotyped images of barbarian lands and peoples that support a model in which on one hand Roman occupation of existing territory is a positive for the geographical knowledge and settled *polis* civilisation it brings, but further expansion (esp. under Caesar, Trajan, and Severus) does little to advance these goods, while destabilising the political system for the benefit of individual rulers.

Karin Sion-Jenkis' contribution on 'Frauenfiguren bei Cassius Dio' is (the plural of the title notwithstanding) a thorough case-study of Dio's treatment of Livia. Sion-Jenkis concentrates heavily on Dio's factual accuracy regarding the emergence of Livia's public persona in honours, titles, and other formal aspects of her role. Dio gives us the means to reconstruct the conflict between Tiberius and his mother as a power struggle fought by political and institutional means, rather than a family intrigue driven by personal hatreds (735–9). The article concludes with a few remarks on how Livia compares to Dio's other imperial women (as close to the positive Plotina as the negative Agrippina). This is a masterful analysis of the fullest continuous treatment of Livia extant and the fullest treatment of a woman character in surviving Dio.

The contribution of Giovanni Brizzi on 'Campagne d'Oriente' treats Dio secondarily, as an adjunct to the events he narrates. Brizzi surveys those principal Roman military actions in Syria, Judaea, and Mesopotamia from Crassus' time to Macrinus' for which Dio is a principal or important subsidiary source (above all the Trajanic and Severan offensives and the Jewish revolts of the 60s and 130s). Particular attention is given to Roman responses to guerrilla and other tactics that were asymmetric relative to legionary infantry. The article will be useful to anyone seeking to put these parts of Dio in their larger historical context alongside our full range of sources (especially epigraphic). There is relatively little systematic analysis of Dio's text for its own sake: Brizzi's final pages (766–71) do seek to place Dio's negative view of offensive wars in the east in the context of how hereditary aristocrats such as he became

<sup>23</sup> See also on this topic Bertrand (2015).

progressively distanced from their military role over the course of the second century.<sup>24</sup>

Jérôme France's piece on 'Financer l'empire' takes an illuminating look at the portions of the Agrippa–Maecenas debate in which each speaker raises questions of imperial revenue (at 52.6 and 52.28–29 respectively). France especially emphasises that Maecenas gives (at 52.28.1) a *quid pro quo* justification of taxation: the people must have security from their ruler; for this the ruler needs soldiers; soldiers need money; that money is provided through taxes on the people. In France's view such reasoning was current in Augustus' own time, and Dio's speakers are reflecting their own historical moment. The idea that Dio has significant insights into the ideological basis of the Roman fiscal-military machine is a highly attractive one and helps round out our picture of him as theorist of the Roman monarchy.<sup>25</sup> However, perhaps because of his focus on potential Augustan ideological sources, France does not fully develop the Severan context for Dio's own thinking. In the Severan books the general picture is that excessive taxes go to pay too much money to soldiers who in turn are agents of disorder rather than security. If in Book 52 he is introducing a positive relationship between taxes, soldiers, and security, he must intend a sharp contrast with reality as his imagined readers know it.

The volume ends with John Scheid's contribution on 'Cassius Dion et la religion dans les livres 50–61'. Scheid catalogues and comments on the numerous places where Dio comments on cult, sacerdotal, or ritual affairs during the Augustan and Julio-Claudian narratives. These include the various Augustan priestly reforms and cult restorations, along with the beginnings of emperor-cult, the special priestly status of Antonia under Caligula, and the secular or centennial games carried out by Augustus and Caligula. Scheid illustrates further how the notices attached to each emperor correspond to his overall portrayal and later reputation.

Overall the book is well produced. The presentation is simple, but easy to read, and typos are difficult indeed to locate. Visuals are few, though their absence is seldom felt (Brizzi's article would have benefited from a map). The several valuable tables and appendices might have been presented in a way more distinct from the main text. The two soft-cover volumes and slipcase stand up well to use.

This book is in itself a remarkable display of scholarly acumen and editorial skill. In the larger context of current Dio scholarship it is incontestably a milestone. Once the current rush of scholarship about Dio subsides, he will become a richer and more accessible object of ongoing study, and this volume

<sup>24</sup> Brizzi's argument can usefully be read alongside (among others) Isaac (1983), Migliorati (2003), Kemezis (2012), Juntunen (2013), and Estelle Bertrand's contributions in this volume.

<sup>25</sup> Important considerations on this question can also be found in Smyshlyayev (1991).

will set a good part of the agenda for that study. Its emphasis and methodology are (for the most part) distinctively Gallic and as such will serve Anglophone scholars as an advertisement for the benefits of diverse national approaches to our shared field.

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