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Fromentin (V.), Bertrand (E.), Coltelloni-Trannoy (M.), Molin (M.), Urso (G.) (edd.)
Cassius Dion: nouvelles lectures. In two volumes. (Scripta Antiqua 94). pp. 881.
Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2016. Paper, €45. ISBN: 978-2-35613-175-1.

I apologise for the lateness of this review.

This ambitious publication arrives as one of the many fruits of the *Dioneia* round table, a collaboration between twenty-four scholars funded by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche. From 2011, *Dioneia* had as its principal object the translation, commentary, and re-edition of many books of Cassius Dio's Roman History in the Belles Lettres texts of the Collection des Universités de France. Eight fine new editions of Dio's books have now appeared in the collection, with translation and commentary. In keeping with the scope of *Dioneia*'s task—and as a complementary summary of the findings of the équipe—Cassius Dion: nouvelles lectures revisits all portions of Cassius Dio's Roman History, exploring questions of tradition, reception, theme, and style.

The two volumes contain forty-eight contributions (including a preface by Fergus Millar and general introduction by Valérie Fromentin). These are organised into three main parts: i) “the tradition and reception of the text of the Roman History” (pp. 21–112); ii) “writing Roman history under the Severans” (pp. 113–414); and iii) “Cassius Dio: historian of power” (pp. 431–798). Helpfully, these intimidatingly broad categories are divided into smaller sections. Almost all of the contributions are in French, with half a dozen in Italian, two in English, and one in German.

To draw together Dio's manuscript tradition, later reception, speeches, lexicon, sources and literary models, and narrative strategy is no easy task. For postgraduates, much of this will be very new and thought-provoking indeed. For Diophiles, however, some of the questions posed will already be familiar, and the answers given to those questions equally recognisable. Nevertheless, some of the individual contributions within these well-trodden sections are innovative: for example, Christol's analysis of Dio alongside Marius Maximus and Ulpian (pp. 431–446), Platon on the much neglected Books 57–58 (pp. 653–678), and Urso on the non-Livian tradition for the first decad (pp. 143–158).

Although there is inadequate room to give a full discussion of each of the chapters on offer, a survey of noteworthy examples in each of the volume's sections will illuminate its scope and the generally high quality of the contributions.

Chapters 2 and 3 are broad summaries of the transmission of the Roman History, first in the *editio princeps* (Bellissime, pp. 33–40) and then more widely as a source consulted in antiquity, from Herodian to John Lydus (Mecella, pp. 41–50). These short chapters necessarily paint with a broad brush, and the treatment is descriptive. Hence in her discussion of the debate surrounding Herodian's relationship with Dio, it is sufficient for Mecella to conclude that Herodian may have directly consulted the Roman History without a *Zwischenquelle* (pp. 43–44), but Mecella avoids comment on why Dio may have been an attractive option and what this indicates about the character of both works.

Chapters 4 and 5, both by Umberto Roberto, are especially enjoyable. These cover the reception of the Roman History in Peter the Patrician (pp. 51–68) and in John of Antioch (pp. 69–80). Roberto argues that both authors drew from Dio, having in mind contemporary

political concerns for which the Roman History was an ideal foil; but in using this source, both took varying liberties. Peter, often epitomating drastically, sheds precious light on the tradition of factoids, but the extent of his modifications renders him less useful for “reconstructing” the Roman History (p. 67). On the other hand John of Antioch altered quite entirely Dio’s view of the Republic. For John, the *res publica libera* was Rome’s golden age, ruined by the decadence of monarchy. Accordingly, John resisted the urge to be influenced by the complex view of his source on Octavian, preferring instead a much more hostile portrait (p. 76). These excellent studies provide sound guidance on the uses to which Peter and John may, and may not, be put in our search for lost portions of Dio’s narrative.

Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the epitomators of the Roman History, Xiphilinus (Berbessou-Broustet, pp. 81–94) and Zonaras (Bellissime & Berbessou-Broustet, pp. 95–112). Both deal with the critical question of the epitomators’ fidelity to their original source. As is shown in these studies, Xiphilinus’ and Zonaras’ treatment of their source can have dramatic implications for our understanding of Dio. For example, comparison of Xiphilinus’ account of Pompey’s landing at Brindisi with the direct tradition (p. 88) demonstrates that the epitomator modified the original vocabulary, so creating a foreshadowing of monarchy where Dio’s original in fact did not. Thus, while the raw content may be faithful, there occur changes in emphasis. Oddly, these two chapters rarely speak to one another. The differences between the two Byzantines are noted (p. 108) yet the direct comparison is brief (p. 101). A more synoptic overview would be a welcome conclusion to this otherwise excellent duet.

Chapters 10–13 represent a third of the section devoted to Dio’s sources and models. Of these, the contributions of Gianpaolo Urso (Chapter 10, pp. 143–158) and Valérie Fromentin (Chapter 12, pp. 179–190) are especially persuasive. Through a rich set of examples, Urso argues that Dio frequently followed pre-Livian sources in crafting his vision of early Roman history. Especially striking are the points at which Dio clearly deviated from the tradition—for example his (unique) detail that the dyarchy of consuls was a much later development than Livy suggests (p. 144–145), and his treatment of the “disaster” (not so, it would seem) at Caudium (pp. 152–153). Valérie Fromentin’s chapter considers Cassius Dio’s use of Dionysius as a literary model, with particular emphasis on the speeches. Through comparison of Dio’s speeches on the birth of the Republic (p. 184) or on Menenius Agrippa’s fable (p. 188) with Dionysius’ version, Fromentin suggests that Dionysius may have served as a rhetorical model for our historian.

Éric Foulon’s study of Dio’s use of Polybius (Chapter 11, pp. 159–178) proposes that the significant differences between the two historians, from the beginning to the end of the Punic Wars, preclude a source-relationship (p. 176). The analysis, driven forward by comparison of specific passages (pp. 165–176), is convincing, and Foulon adduces sympathetic reasons for which Dio looked elsewhere (p. 177). De Franchis’ contribution (Chapter 13, pp. 191–204) returns to the vexed question of Dio’s relationship with Livy: *modèle, ou contre-modèle?* As De Franchis notes, this is a problematic task, and some readers may question whether this analysis fulfills it. The discussion rarely moves beyond the general and the raw material is restricted to a few pages: for example, a few points on the lengths of speeches (pp. 196–197) and broad comments on the historians’ envisaged readership (p. 200–201). The perspective of Schwartz 1899 is given disproportionate treatment (pp. 191–194), and readers may question whether it is still necessary that Schwartz set the tempo.

Chapters 19–20 and 24–25 make up half of the fourth section of the volume, devoted to the Dio’s narrative technique. John Rich (Chapter 19, pp. 271–286) convincingly shows that Dio used an annalistic structure down to Book 35 with significant flexibility, sometimes even abandoning year-by-year narration altogether. In particular, the historian was more selective in the intervening periods between major conflicts. An excellent follow-on to this chapter is provided by Marianne Coudry (Chapter 20, pp. 287–301). Thanks to the editors’ thoughtful distribution, Coudry neatly picks up the thread with a study of Dio’s narrative methods from Books 36–44. Coudry demonstrates the historian’s increased use of biographical techniques as his subject progressed. Importantly, Coudry argues that the historian deployed these character-sketches in order to explore historical problems integral to his explanation of the decline of the Republic (esp. pp. 293, 295).

Later in this section of the volume, Marion Bellissime (Chapter 24, pp. 363–378) investigates Dio’s margin of artistic license in composing the speeches. Eschewing the traditional approach which has traditionally dominated this topic, Bellissime shelves questions of “historicity” and instead suggests that we search for “verisimilitude”. This, as Bellissime convincingly argues, is far more appropriate to the tenets of rhetorical education. There is sensible discussion here of Dio’s training in the progymnasmata—a topic usually (and oddly) ignored in the study of Dio’s speeches (e.g. pp. 364–365, 368–369). This chapter is followed neatly by Sophie Gotteland’s contribution on Dio’s use of ἔκφρασις and ἐνάργεια in the battle-narratives (Chapter 25, pp. 379–396). In a fresh analysis on the battles of Naulochus (pp. 386–390) and Cappadocia (pp. 390–393), Gotteland shows that the historian not only crafted such set-pieces to show his mastery of the rhetorical schools. Rather, such use of ἔκφρασις could fulfil explanatory functions also, turning the spectators of Naulochus into active participants and so underscoring the universal impact of civil war: in civil war, no one is truly a mere spectator.

Volume II of this collection consists of shorter sections, opening with a collection of three chapters on Dio’s identity as a Roman senator of the Severan age. Notable here is Michel Molin’s contribution (Chapter 29, pp. 469–484), which uses the programmatic speech of Agrippa and Maecenas in Book 52 as a point of departure for exploring wider questions about Dio’s perspective on his own age. This is a familiar approach, and some of the conclusions are widely understood: for example, that Dio articulates here a view of a collaborative and ‘senatorial’ monarchy (pp. 469–470), or retrojects into Augustus’ time concerns about the Severan age (pp. 471–476). Likewise, many readers will already recognise the picture of a conservative senator painted in the conclusions.

The next section, “writing Roman history in Greek”, is also a collection of three contributions, opening with a rigorous study by Marianne Coudry of Dio’s Greek institutional lexicon for Republican practices (Chapter 30, pp. 485–518). In a marked departure from purely philological work (p. 485), Coudry rather explores why Dio chose between translation, transliteration, or equivalence of Latin institutional terms, and how his commentary on these terms fits within his political reflection on the outgoing Republic. Coudry shows that Dio often translated with high levels of precision in order to explore topics of political significance, for example the term *legatus* (p. 488–489); likewise, Dio’s remarkable care for institutional vocabulary could serve polemical functions (p. 488). Furthermore, Coudry shows that where Dio seeks less precision, using catch-all terms such as νομοθετεῖν for the legislative process, this emerges not from ignorance, but rather a deliberate simplification in order to focalise the central issues at stake (p. 497).

A very different study of the historian's political reflection is given by Clifford Ando (Chapter 35, pp. 567–580) in a further collection of three chapters devoted to Dio and the Roman πολιτεία. In an innovative analysis, Ando pairs the Agrippa–Maecenas controversy of Book 52 with Book 53 in order to explore Dio's view of the paradox of imperial rule. Ando makes three claims (pp. 576–577): first, that for Cassius Dio "legitimacy" was based on the conduct of the emperor in office, not the means by which he attained it; secondly, that the tension between the conventional communication of power on the one hand, and the corrosive effect of possessing it on the other, was an unresolved (and perhaps unresolvable) problem; and thirdly, that Dio viewed historiography as a potential remedy. Maecenas' proposals to Augustus establish a dichotomy between public communication and the realities of power which from the very birth of the Principate would be deleterious and irreconcilable. The analysis is incisive and a delight to read.

The subsequent section consists of five chapters centered around the function and dysfunction of institutions, following on neatly from Ando's contribution. Of these I restrict my comments to two case studies: Marianne Coudry on Senate and magistrates in the 50s (Chapter 38, pp. 609–624), and Marie Platon on the Senate under Tiberius (Chapter 40, pp. 653–678). Coudry explores Dio's presentation of matters of constitutional law and convention, followed by discussion of the magistrates in Books 36–40. What clearly emerges is Dio's historical interest in the destructive impact of innovation and dysfunction (p. 613): thus the exiled Senate in Thessalonica clings to titles at once both traditional and yet an inversion of the proper order (p. 623). These books are not a story of "great men" but rather a history of the Republic as a political regime (p. 624). In a similar way, Marie Platon suggests that we may view the Imperial portions of Dio's work as much a "senatorial" history as an Imperial history. Platon shows that for Dio, the gradual breakdown in relationship between Tiberius and the Senate in Books 57–58 was attributable not only to the flaws in the *princeps*' character, but also to fundamental structural issues: notably, the corrosive cycle of flattery prevalent in monarchies (pp. 617–675). Dio's Tiberius and Dio's Senate simply do not understand one another, and communicate in radically different ways.

The closing part of Volume II addresses Dio's responses to imperial expansion in six chapters. This section opens with Estelle Bertrand's study of Cassius Dio's view of Roman imperialism (Chapter 41, pp. 679–700): this is an authoritative and convincing synthesis which provides excellent context for the ensuing five chapters. As Bertrand notes (p. 679), Dio's theoretical view on Rome's empire is usually studied from the perspective of political changes (μεταβολαί). But here instead, Bertrand attributes these μεταβολαί explicitly to Roman imperialism in Dio, not only for the Republican period but for the Imperial period also. Bertrand connects, rather than divides, these two periods in a meaningful way: for example, her survey of Dio's lexicon shows that his Greek translation for imperium populi Romani only appears with the subjugation of Egypt in 30 BCE and recurs regularly thereafter (pp. 684–685), revealing a gradual development. The discussion is crisp and persuasive. To move from Bertrand's synthesis to a more specific case-study, Giovanni Brizzi focusses on eastern campaigns in the Roman History (Chapter 44, pp. 741–772). Brizzi shows that Dio's general attitude to Roman imperial expansion in the east is unfavourable, from Crassus (pp. 744–747) to Septimius Severus. This long and scholarly chapter is rich in evidence and gives a wide treatment of Dio's account. Analysis of the Roman History itself is, however, rather brief, and

many of the wider questions are left unexplored, for example the degree to which Dio complements or corrects other narratives or introduces distinctive material.

In sum, this is a fine collection. All sections hang together and the contributions are coherently organised, often in meaningful series. Although many chapters revisit familiar questions, several interrogate these in thought-provoking ways; a few break new ground. Moreover, the presentational standard is very high (minor errors on pp. 42, 575, 660, 741, 790), including a full bibliography and Index Locorum. The contents page at the back of each volume is a luxury the reader can manage without (pp. 415–417, 799–881), and in view of the impressive range of topics such space might be more helpfully devoted to an editors' conclusion, akin in scope to the general introduction (pp. 11–16). Nevertheless, this excellent volume fulfills its aim—to synthesise over 50 years of research since Millar's *Study*—and will remain for many years an essential resource for any specialist working on this now much better-understood historian.

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