

REVIEW

CASSIUS DIO AND THE AUGUSTAN SETTLEMENT

Marion Bellissime and Frédéric Hurlet, edd., *Dion Cassius: Histoire romaine: livre 53*. Collection des universités de France. Série grecque, 537. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2018. Pp. lxxxviii + 106. Paperback, €39.00. ISBN 978-2-251-00621-5.

Book 53 of Cassius Dio's history stands in an important position with regard to both our historical understanding of the reign of Augustus and our interpretation and appreciation of Dio's *magnum opus*. The Book survives almost entirely in its original form and details the years 28–23 BCE, which are crucial to the reconstruction of the so-called 'Augustan settlement'. It also includes a lengthy speech, young Caesar's *recusatio imperii* (chs 3–10), as well as one of Dio's most explicit statements about historiographic method (ch. 19). The book bridges the gap between Republic and Principate, or in Dio's terms 'democracy' and 'monarchy'. Since Dio was a supporter of monarchy at Rome and Augustus served as a sort of model emperor for him, analysis of Book 53 is important for what it tells us about Dio's overall historical viewpoint.

This volume, another in a series from Les Belles Lettres that aims to cover the entirety of Dio's work, is divided into four main sections. There is a lengthy introduction (vii–lxxvi, including bibliography) that provides a general overview of the book, with more detailed analysis of certain parts and themes. There follows a briefer section on the textual tradition of Book 53 (lxxvii–lxxxviii, including bibliography), then the Greek text with facing French translation (1–38). The volume concludes with a philological and historical commentary (39–99), plus indices and a few maps.

In the introduction, the editors lay out the significance of the book, noting that their interest is as much in the narrative choices and emphases that Dio gives to this period as in the precision of the historical material that he includes (viii). This point is crucial, since Dio's narrative of events, written centuries after the fact and doubtless informed by his own experiences as well as the historical debates of his predecessors and even peers, cannot be understood as presenting a bare and fully factual recounting of events, but rather one that has been filtered through these concerns and considerations. This is of course true of almost all historians, but it should be stressed in Dio's case since his history has usually been mined for historical information and the author castigated for his inaccuracies.

After a brief outline of the structure of Book 53, the editors treat the speech of young Caesar. Bellissime has previously written on this speech ('Fiction et rhétorique dans les prosopopées de l'Histoire romaine: Les marges de liberté de l'historien', in V. Fromentin et al., edd., *Cassius Dion: Nouvelles lectures* (Paris, 2016) 363–78), and the conclusions here are similar to that earlier paper. To summarise, Dio has young Caesar combine elements of self-praise and figured speech in an oration that is also layered with various rhetorical types (deliberative structure, *depositio tyrannidis*). One of the main points here seems to be to provide a counterpoint to a traditionally negative view of Dio's version of the speech. Instead, we should see the speech as a product of Dio's rhetorical training. The overall point is well taken, and the suggestion that this is a 'figured speech' is interesting insofar as it connects Dio with a type of rhetoric that is frequently associated with authors of the Second Sophistic, and it also is in tune with recent readings of Dio that see his speeches as frequently ironic. The layering on of rhetorical types, however, which might be perceived as muddled, will perhaps redound more to Dio's discredit (as has traditionally been the case) than prove his skilfulness.

Several other portions of the introduction are dedicated to rhetorical aspects of Book 53. A second example is Dio's description of Augustus' Arabian expedition. Dio uses the passage to show how Augustus has brought the world under Rome's dominion, and in doing so he provides a less precise account than Strabo or Pliny the Elder. This section, the editors suggest, puts the historical record in service of rhetoric, in order to attract the reader and bring pleasure. They are quick to add, however, that Dio does not do harm to his historical information; rather, he chooses his emphases differently. These are important points, and again they relate to Dio's authorial choices.

In general, the remainder of the introduction does a good job of highlighting Dio's authorial choices and then contextualising them within modern scholarship on the respective issues. The editors repeatedly stress that for Dio 27 BCE was the key point in the transition in Roman governance (though this initial part of the process seems to have played out over the years 28–27 BCE). For example, Dio cites the birth of monarchy three times for this date (51.1.1, 52.1.1, and 53.17.1); on this point the editors might have made more of the fact that this trope runs throughout Dio's narrative of the Late Republic, as he sees the monarchy beginning in fits and starts, not quite monarchy yet at several points, e.g., 44.2.1 and 50.1.1, before becoming a 'true' monarchy in 27 BCE. Dio's focus, however, is peculiar to his history and his insistence on this date has led scholars to see it as pivotal, perhaps more pivotal than it should be. Still, the editors are correct to point out that this does not impugn Dio as an historian, only that he argued for a particular point of view. Similar is Dio's approach to Augustus' reform of provincial management, as Dio presents a series of changes in the provinces that took place throughout Augustus' reign as if they came into existence at a precise moment in 27 BCE.

This situation pertains to Dio's take on the events of 23 BCE as well. Dio does not give as much attention to the events of 23 as he does to those of 27, but still he is the only source to provide a detailed account of the main events of the year, and chapters 30–3 function as the final part of the settlement. Notably, Dio differs from Suetonius on Augustus' illnesses—the editors point out that they employ different sources, but that Dio might also be compressing the illnesses into one. This latter point is well taken, since Dio also calls greater attention to the event. Another example of Dio's emphasis or even authorial manipulation of his source material is his depiction of Agrippa's move to Lesbos as one to ease tension between Agrippa and Marcellus over succession. Despite modern approaches emphasising its importance, Dio downplays Augustus' taking of *tribunicia potestas* in 23, in comparison to the importance that he places on 27.

Some points throughout the introduction might have been expanded further. For example, the editors acknowledge the need to understand Book 53 in the context of Book 52. This is indeed an important point, though the editors do not provide much detail about the speeches of Agrippa and Maecenas in Book 52 that they find relevant for their discussion of 53. The reader might of course look at the commentary on Book 52 in this series, but for the purposes of this introduction more specific appeal to key passages would have been useful. Similarly, the editors entitle one subsection 'L'analyse d'un sénateur romain de culture grecque' (xxx), yet there is little engagement with either aspect, despite the fact that scholarship on Dio has long considered both issues.

Following the introduction proper, the editors include a section on the text that they have used, based primarily on the magisterial edition of Boissevain. This analysis of the textual tradition of Book 53 provides an in-depth look at the text of Dio as we have it today. This section is particularly refreshing, since such considerations have not been a part of English-language commentaries on Dio, especially volumes that are part of the Dio Project, and the commentaries in this series nicely fill this void. Variant readings are noted throughout the Greek text and expanded upon in the commentary, where necessary.

The commentary, as noted above, is intended to be both philological and historical. With regard to the former focus, it fleshes out some of the variant readings noted in the text and provides important insights into Dio's language. For example, we find at 53.11.5 that the editors preserve the plural form of the verb *διεπράξαντο*, given in two manuscripts, rather than the singular form *διεπράξατο* conjectured by Bekker (Xiphilinus has *διεπράξοντο*). This has the effect of making the senators the subject of the verb and the ones who passed a decree increasing the pay for the praetorians, thus suggesting that they were working in concert with the wishes of Augustus. At 53.12.1, the editors point out that the phrase *τὴν μὲν φροντίδα τὴν τε προστασίαν τῶν κοινῶν πᾶσαν* is a

translation of the Latin *cura et tutela rei publicae universa*. Attention to language can also be observed in the note at 53.18.2, where the editors connect Dio's use of ἀξιωμα in this passage to the translation of *auctoritas* in the *Res Gestae*. Likewise, at 53.20.1, the editors note that Dio employs a form of the verb αὐξω to describe the Tiber rising over its banks in a sentence in which he also notes Caesar's receipt of the name Augustus; αὐξω, they note, is from the same root as *augere*, *augustus*, or *augur*.

Tying in with some issues raised in the introduction, the editors, in their commentary, point out Dio's seeming anachronisms, which they helpfully noted earlier as authorial choices. Thus, at 53.12.3, Dio projects Augustus' total control of legions in provinces, which was not true in 27 and took years to solidify. For the section of the provinces (53.15.1), the editors point out that it reflects provincial organisation in the high empire, with some Augustan specifics thrown in. They also note that because Dio places the beginning of monarchy in 27 BCE, he deals with tribunician power at 53.17.10, even though Augustus would not have this power until 23. Similarly, the description of the emperor's freedom from the laws does not fit in 27 either (53.18.1) but should be placed in 24 (cf. 53.28.2).

The historical aspects of the commentary are generally strong. There is, perhaps not surprisingly, an inclination towards Francophone scholarship, which at times feels limiting (e.g., there is no mention of Richard Talbert's *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (Princeton, 1984), though there are numerous occasions when it might have been brought into discussion). Much of the same ground has also been covered already by John Rich's commentary (*Cassius Dio: The Augustan Settlement* (Warminster, 1990)), which results in much overlap. For example, in the passage on Sextus Pacuvius (or Apudius) and the *devotio Iberica* (53.20.2), the citations, both ancient and modern, are practically identical. At times, however, this commentary is more expansive than Rich's, as, for example, at 53.21.3, where more space is devoted to the issue of public debate and advice for Augustus' laws before official passage. Similarly, with this volume coming almost three decades after Rich's, there is opportunity for updated bibliography, as, for example, in the discussion of Agrippa's *imperium* at 53.32.1.

If there is one area where the commentary could have been more expansive it is on 53.19, which by most accounts is the most important statement that Dio makes about his historiographic method and, indeed, on his view of the flow and control of information in his own day. This passage has implications for every chapter of Dio's history that follows, yet the editors devote less than half of a page to discussion. This move is in concert with the tendency in the commentary not to try to chase down Dio's sources, a choice that I generally agree with. Yet on the other hand, Dio himself raises the issue, and further investigation would have been welcome.

This is a solid contribution to the growing number of works on Cassius Dio's history. Overall, the work focuses more on issues of language, textual concerns, and related topics, rather than on strictly historical content. This is a strength of this volume, and it is also in line with the re-evaluation of Dio that we have seen recently. The editors should be commended for tackling various aspects of Book 53 (textual, philological, and historical/historiographic considerations) within a brief compass and producing a work that brings a fresh perspective to this crucial book of Dio's history.

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