

INTRODUCTION

Cassius Dio
The Senator and His Caesars

Caillan Davenport and Christopher Mallan

I

The age of the Severan emperors (AD 193–235) was a period of exciting cultural, artistic, literary, and intellectual development in the Roman world.¹ Novels, poems, histories, dialogues, and treatises in both Greek and Latin on a range of topics from animals and wonder-workers to matters of religion, administration, and law attest to this flourishing. Most of these texts did not deal explicitly with emperors and politics, but it was rare for any literary work to entirely escape the spectre of Roman imperial power.² One small group of Roman intellectuals, however, endeavoured to explicitly define the political system in which they lived. Among these were three prominent jurists – Ulpian, Papinian, and Paul – who all served at the court of the Severan emperors. Their works do not survive as they were written, although copious fragments are preserved in the legal compendia of the age of Justinian.³ Their titles, such as *De officio proconsulis* ('On the Office of Proconsul') and *Imperiales sententiae in cognitionibus prolatae* ('Imperial Decisions given in Official Hearings'), tell us much about the ways in which these men tried to explain the constitutional framework of their world. But this attempt to analyse the evolution and functioning of the Roman empire was not confined to the technical works of jurists. The eighty-book *Roman History* of the Bithynian senator Cassius Dio, completed sometime after AD 229, likewise attempted to articulate what the imperial system actually was in both idea and in practice.⁴

The title of this chapter deliberately echoes that of Wallace-Hadrill 1983, which deals with Suetonius, another important witness to the Roman imperial system. All translations come from E. Cary's Loeb Classical Library edition, with some tacit modifications.

¹ See the papers collected in Swain, Harrison and Elsner 2007.

² This is a central theme of Swain 1997. Note, for example, Smith 2014 on the work of Aelian.

³ For an overview of these individuals and their work, see Ibbetson 2005.

⁴ A few preliminary attempts to reconcile the worlds of Dio and Ulpian have been made: Millar 2005; Christol 2016. A full-length study may prove illuminating.

The ideal came first. In Books 52 and 53, Dio presented an outline of how the Roman imperial government should operate.⁵ Prior to this point in the narrative, Dio devoted serious attention to the corruption of the Republican system (*demokratia*), both in terms of the institutions of government and the ambitions of generals which were inimical to the order of the state.⁶ The new monarchical *res publica* was a means to harmonise the discordant elements in Roman society (44.1–2). Provided that the state did not descend into a tyranny of the sort outlined by Agrippa in his defence of democracy at the start of Book 52, the monarchical system would provide a place for everyone and would endure so long as everyone knew their place.⁷ Perhaps more significantly, the importance of the personality or individual character of the *princeps* is peripheral to the discussion.

For the remainder of Dio's imperial narrative (Books 53–80[80]) the reality appears, at least on first inspection, to play out differently from the ideal. Dio's narrative is focussed tightly on the emperor and his immediate associates. Although the picture is exaggerated by the editorial choices of Dio's epitomators,⁸ Dio seems to show little interest in the history of the empire writ large, except as it affects the transformation of the Roman state and the conduct of its rulers and their associates. The men who inherit or seize the imperial purple are seldom model rulers of the sort found in panegyric or treatises *On Kingship*. They are men driven by human emotions and urges – fear, lust, jealousy.⁹ Unlike the meditations on this theme found in Books 52 and 53, in his narrative of the Roman imperial monarchy, here we find that the character and behaviour of the emperors matter.¹⁰ We are left with little doubt that life under Marcus Aurelius is very different from living under Caligula, at least for the senatorial and equestrian elite.¹¹ As for the emperor's associates, they too are seen to be products of the system. Dio's portrayal of these men provides us with a unique glimpse into the psychology of the ruled. Occasionally the

⁵ The 'Agrippa–Maecenas' debate occupies the bulk of Book 52 and puts forward the case *contra* and *pro* monarchy. 53.12–18 provides an overview of the imperial system. For a discussion of the relationship between Books 52 and 53.12–18, see Kemezis 2014: 126–39.

⁶ For Dio's approaches to this period, see now the collection of studies contained in Osgood and Baron 2019.

⁷ Note the injunctions of 'Maecenas' at 53.37.5–11.

⁸ On this point, note Brunt 1980: 488–93; Mallan 2013; Berbessou-Broustet 2016.

⁹ For elements of Dio's ethical vocabulary, see Kuhn-Chen 2002.

¹⁰ See the full analysis in Chapter 11 by Barbara Saylor Rodgers.

¹¹ Cf. Syme 1971: 146: 'As the imperial system developed, it disclosed its various *arcana* one by one. How much does the personality of the ruler matter? Less and less, it should seem.'

offhand comments are illuminating, as when Dio describes the impotent fury of senators under Tiberius just after the fall of Sejanus. These were men, according to our historian, who ‘would have gladly eaten the flesh’ (τῶν σαρκῶν ἂν αὐτοῦ ἠδέως ἐμφαγεῖν) of the emperor but instead voted him honours (58.17.1).

Thus, in Dio’s mind, we are confronted with a twofold image of the imperial system. The *Roman History* shows that there was more to imperial history than the lives of emperors, but equally, the history of the Roman state cannot be written without emperors. To understand this, we need to acknowledge the fact that the figure of the emperor was perhaps the dominant motif in the political imagination of the inhabitants of the Roman empire. Historians could largely avoid emperors if one turned to the Republican past, or to Greek antiquities, as many authors did during the Antonine period.¹² But for writers of imperial history and biography, emperors were an inescapable reality. The extent of imperial influence can be seen even in the grammar and syntax of these works. In his discussion of Suetonius’ *Lives of the Caesars*, Tristan Power has shown how Suetonius’ emperors control the narrative, by looking at the proportion of sentences where the emperor is the grammatical subject.¹³ Much the same observation holds for the imperial books of Cassius Dio. From the constitutional debate between Agrippa and Maecenas in Book 52 onwards, emperors and emperorship are Dio’s joint points of focus. His concern is with what emperors did, the impact of their actions, and how others perceived them. The Roman Republican narrative of the *Roman History* shows that as a historian Dio was interested in sovereign power, and how power was used by the individuals or groups who held it.¹⁴ Moreover, he possessed a palpable interest in the psychology of power – that is, how the possession of power influenced the actions of the possessor and those who were subject to his power. In Dio’s mind this could be explained in terms of human nature. This aspect of his work has traditionally been seen to be Dio at his most Thucydidean. But there is much that is un-Thucydidean about Dio’s imperial narrative and meditations on power: the narrow focus on individuals, the presence of women, the sometimes-gossipy tone of the contemporary books. This suggests a vastly different political world from that described by the historian of the Peloponnesian War.

In formulating and defining the term ‘political culture’, Gabriel Almond stated that ‘[e]very political system is embedded in a particular pattern of

¹² Kemezis 2010; Kemezis 2020. ¹³ Power 2014b: 5–6.

¹⁴ On the different forms of power possessed by emperors, see Harris 2016: 166–88.

orientations to political action'.¹⁵ With the title of this book, *Emperors and Political Culture in Cassius Dio's Roman History*, we signal our intention to explore not only the centrality of emperors and the monarchical system of government to Dio, but also the historian's concern with the fundamental way emperors shaped individuals, groups, and communities.¹⁶ For, as Lucian Pye has written, '[a] political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the individuals who currently make up the system; and thus it is rooted equally in public events and private experiences'.¹⁷ The world inhabited by Dio and other Romans was both an explicit evolution and transformation of the Roman Republic into a new, monarchical form, as well as a lived experience, one that was often anxious and traumatic. We do acknowledge, as Emma Dench has recently explored, that the Roman world was home to a multiplicity of 'cultures' that can in various ways be considered political.¹⁸ Our use of the singular here is designed to emphasise that we are discussing the vision of the empire as a political system in the mind of one man – Cassius Dio.

As editors, we have made no attempt to impose any orthodoxy on the chapters in this volume: indeed, contributors have been encouraged to approach their topics thorough whichever methodological or theoretical framework they choose to discuss Dio's (and his epitomators') representation of emperors and political culture in the *Roman History*. Thematically, these chapters fall into four sections: Dio's construction of political narratives under the Principate; his portrayals of individual emperors; his representations of political groups and their place in the wider political culture; and finally, the ways in which later generations of scholars in Late Antiquity and in the Byzantine Middle Ages engaged and reworked the imperial narrative of Dio's *Roman History* to suit the interests and political realities of their own times.

II

Dio's *Roman History* spans the period from the foundation of Rome to AD 229, the year of his own second consulship in the reign of Severus Alexander. According to the conventional periodisation of Roman history used by modern scholars, Books 1–2 covered the Regal Period, Books 3–51 the Republic (509 BC–29 BC), and Books 52–80 the Roman empire

¹⁵ Almond 1956: 396.

¹⁶ Thus, the definition of 'political' provided by the *OED* s.v. 'political' A. 1a: 'Of, belonging to, concerned with the form, organization, and administration of a state'.

¹⁷ Pye 1965: 8. ¹⁸ Dench 2018, esp. 16–17.

(28/27 BC–AD 229).¹⁹ This is not quite the way that Dio conceived of the history of Rome in his own work, however. As the programmatic statement at the start of Book 52 shows, he considered the age of the kings as a separate period (*basileia*) but then divided the Republican government into *demokratia* and *dynasteiai* (52.1.1).²⁰ The latter period, roughly corresponding to the late Republican and triumviral periods (133–31 BC), represents a new stage of Rome's story in the *Roman History*, as the *demokratia* breaks down through the competition for power between great men, such as Marius and Sulla, Pompey and Caesar, and Octavian and Antony. Adam Kemezis has argued that this division corresponds to a transition between 'narrative modes' in the *Roman History*, as each period takes on distinct characteristics which reflect the political situation of the times.²¹

The transition to *monarchia* in the *Roman History* is marked both by the Battle of Actium in 31 BC in Book 52 and Octavian's assumption of the *cognomen* Augustus in 27 BC in Book 53 (52.1.1, 53.17.1). It is the second turning point which occasions Dio's famous methodological statement about how the history of the Roman imperial monarchy must be written in a different way from that of the Roman Republic:

In this way the government was changed at that time for the better and in the interest of greater security; for it was no doubt quite impossible for the people to be saved under a republic. Nevertheless, the events occurring after this time cannot be recorded in the same manner as those of previous times. Formerly, as we know, all matters were reported to the senate and to the people, even if they happened at a distance; hence all learned of them and many recorded them, and consequently the truth regarding them, no matter to what extent fear or favour, friendship or enmity, coloured the reports of certain writers, was always to a certain extent to be found in the works of the other writers who wrote of the same events and in the public records. But after this time most things that happened began to be kept secret and concealed, and even though some things are perchance made public, they are distrusted just because they cannot be verified; for it is suspected that everything is said and done with reference to the wishes of the men in power at the time and of their associates. (53.19.1–3)²²

¹⁹ For the structure of Dio's early books, see Rich 2016. As Rich has shown, the conventional book divisions for Dio's early and mid Republican narrative are speculative.

²⁰ The decadic structure is noticed by Photius (*Bib. cod.* 71). On turning points occurring within the Republican narrative, see Millar 1964: 39; Simons 2009: 120–86. cf. Rich 2016: 276.

²¹ Kemezis 2014: 94–104. Cf. Lindholmer 2018, whose argument does not undermine the distinct narrative modes discussed by Kemezis.

²² ἡ μὲν οὖν πολιτεία οὕτω τότε πρὸς τε τὸ βέλτιον καὶ πρὸς τὸ σωτηριωδέστερον μετεκοσμήθη· καὶ γὰρ που καὶ παντάπασιν ἀδύνατον ἦν δημοκρατομένους αὐτοὺς σωθῆναι. οὐ μόντοι καὶ ὁμοίως τοῖς πρόθεον τὰ μετὰ ταῦτα πραχθέντα λεχθῆναι δύναται. πρότερον μὲν γὰρ ἔξ τε τῆν βουλῆν καὶ ἔξ

In this passage, Dio identifies a fundamental change in political culture. The *res publica* of the Republican period was characterised by accessibility and openness in the transmission of information, whereas the monarchy resisted such transparency, preferring to keep official news secret and concealed. He did not conceive of this change in terms of political debate or the capacity of the Roman people to influence laws or policies. The decline of popular sovereignty is not the issue, at this juncture (27 BC), in part, no doubt, because Dio believed that monarchy was the best form of government for Rome at this point in its development, given its geographical size and large population.²³ This is amply shown by Tiberius' funeral oration for Augustus, which establishes the parameters for good monarchical government for future *principes* to follow.²⁴ Instead, it is access to information about the deliberations of state which changes the political culture of the empire and thus the type of history Dio is able to write. In the words of Adam Kemezis, this passage shows 'Dio's explicit recognition that profound political changes call for a radically different kind of narrative'.²⁵

The first two chapters of this volume, by Adam Kemezis and Caillan Davenport, offer different but complementary readings of this famous passage and its ramifications for understanding the depiction of the Roman imperial monarchy in Dio's work. In Chapter 1, Kemezis draws attention to Dio's solution to this methodological conundrum, namely his profession that he will describe all events as they were reported, regardless of how they actually happened (53.19.6). Kemezis explores Dio's use of information in terms established by anthropologist James Scott. These are the 'public transcript', or official version of events, and the 'hidden transcript', which offers a counterpoint (sometimes deliberately subversive) to the public one. Dio presents the 'public transcript' of imperial regimes and

τὸν δῆμον πάντα, καὶ εἰ πόρρω που συμβαίη, ἐσεφέρετο· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πάντες τε αὐτὰ ἐμάνθανον καὶ πολλοὶ συνέγραφον, κακὸν τούτου καὶ ἀλήθεια αὐτῶν, εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα καὶ φόβῳ τινὰ καὶ χάριτι φιλῖα τε καὶ ἔχθρα τισὶν ἔρρηθη, παρὰ γοῦν τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς τὰ αὐτὰ γράψασιν τοῖς τε ὑπομνήμασι τοῖς δημοσίοις τρόπον τινὰ εὐρίσκετο. ἐκ δὲ δὴ τοῦ χρόνου ἐκείνου τὰ μὲν πλείω κρύφα καὶ δι' ἀπορρητῶν γίνεσθαι ἤρξατο, εἰ δὲ πού τινα καὶ δημοσιευθεῖη, ἀλλὰ ἀνεξέλεγκτά γε ὄντα ἀπιστεῖται· καὶ γὰρ λέγεσθαι καὶ πράττεσθαι πάντα πρὸς τὰ τῶν αἰεὶ κρατούντων τῶν τε παραδυναστευόντων σφίσι βουλήματα ὑποπτεύεται.

²³ Millar 1964: 74–6; Aalders 1986: 297–9. Cf. Dio's comments about the decline of frank speech (sc. *παρρησία*) following the battle of Philippi (47.39.2–3), and the destruction of the democratic element within the state which came with the defeat of Brutus and Cassius. Manuwald (1979: 8–26) has shown that Dio does present negative aspects to monarchy. One key problem for Dio was hereditary succession, which did not always secure a good ruler: see further Davenport and Mallan 2014; Ando 2016; Madsen 2016; and Chapter 11 by Barbara Saylor Rodgers.

²⁴ This crucial speech is discussed further below, and in Chapter 5 by Christina Kuhn.

²⁵ Kemezis 2014: 96.

the behaviour of individual emperors, as he avows in 53.19, but he does set these beside alternate interpretations. He does not suggest that these different viewpoints, or 'hidden transcripts', are based on detailed historical investigation or research in the archives. But Dio nevertheless indicates that they represent contemporary evaluation of emperors, vocalised through specific groups, such as senators and the *populus Romanus*.

In Chapter 2, Caillan Davenport examines the tendency towards secrecy and the restriction of official information which Dio highlighted in 53.19. The lack of reliable news and information in the new monarchical regime resulted in the generation of rumours as a way for people to make sense of political happenings. Davenport shows how the presence of rumours in Dio's late Republican narrative increases as one comes closer to Octavian assuming sole rule, before becoming an integral part of the monarchical books. In the *Roman History*, the recourse to rumour and speculation in order to interpret the decisions of the emperor is not confined to people far away from the centre of power, but also affects those closest to the emperor at court. In historical terms, political rumours did exist and flourish under the Roman Republic, so the historicity of Dio's interpretation is certainly open to challenge. But by identifying rumour as a facet of monarchical political culture, Dio highlights the peculiarity of a system of government in which everything depended on the wishes and whims of one man, whose real thoughts and intentions usually remained opaque.

In seeking out the 'official transcript' of the imperial regime, Cassius Dio consulted a wide range of literary and documentary sources, as Cesare Letta proposes in Chapter 3. The historian rarely cites literary works and their authors by name in his imperial books, with only a few exceptions such as the autobiography of Hadrian (66.17.1 [Xiph.], 69.11.2 [Xiph.]). However, it remains the case that Dio used an extensive range of previous historical works for his account of the early Principate during his ten years of research (73[72].23.5 [Xiph.]). In a fragment which should be placed at the very beginning of the *Roman History*, Dio proclaims that he has read nearly everything that has ever been written about the Romans (F 1.2 [ES]). This extensive research thus represented a key part of Dio's credibility as a historian.²⁶ We cannot specifically identify these histories, not only because Dio does not cite them by name, but also because he reworks the material into his own original narrative of the Roman empire, as Letta argues in his chapter. Dio is much more extensive in his reference to documentary sources, such as *senatus consulta* ('senatorial decrees'),

²⁶ Millar 1964: 37–8; Marincola 1997: 105–6.

imperial letters and speeches, which he refers to or quotes directly. But we can also posit the use of these documents in interesting and original ways, which goes beyond mere namechecking. For example, in Chapter 5, Christina Kuhn shows how Tiberius' funeral oration for Augustus in Book 56 uses the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* as a key point of reference. Kuhn demonstrates that that Dio reworks the themes of the *Res Gestae* to serve the themes of his portrayal of Augustus and Roman emperors in the *Roman History* at large, particularly in his desire to highlight the official view of Augustus' regime promulgated by the *domus Augusta* at his death.

The use and quotation of original documents increases in the contemporary portion of the *Roman History*, from Commodus to Severus Alexander. Indeed, Kemezis has proposed that this section of the work forms its own distinct 'narrative mode'.²⁷ Beginning in the reign of Commodus, Dio presents himself as a reliable eyewitness to events (73[72].4.1–2 [Xiph.]).²⁸ The most famous claim comes in Book 73(72):

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. (73[72].18.4 [Xiph.])²⁹

The view that autopsy results in authenticity and reliability was a commonplace of ancient historians who wrote contemporary history.³⁰ But it is particularly interesting that Dio's programmatic statement quoted above emerges from his account of Commodus' outrageous and transgressive behaviour in the arena (73[72].16.1–18.4 [Xiph.]).³¹ The theatre, circus, and arena were venues for entertainment, but they were also key political battlegrounds, in which the people could engage with and challenge the emperor. The emperor was always supposed to be a spectator, never a performer, at the games. Commodus' fighting as a gladiator and engaging in extravagant beast hunts were shocking to (at least some elite) Roman sensibilities, which did not expect emperors (or senators for that matter) to participate themselves. Dio vouched that he was present and witnessed this transgression of political and social norms first-hand.³² The account of

²⁷ Kemezis 2014: 96–8, 141–5. ²⁸ Millar 1964: 120.

²⁹ καὶ μέντοι καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα τὰ ἐπ' ἐμοῦ πραχθέντα καὶ λεπτοურγήσω καὶ λεπτολογήσω μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ πρότερα, ὅτι τε συνεγενόμην αὐτοῖς, καὶ ὅτι μηδένα ἄλλον οἶδα τῶν τι δυναμένων ἐς συγγραφὴν ἄξιαν λόγου καταθέσθαι διηκριβωκότα αὐτὰ ὁμοίως ἐμοί.

³⁰ Marincola 1997: 79–81.

³¹ For proper imperial behaviour in entertainment venues, see Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 42.

³² See the discussions in Schmidt 1997: 2596–7; Scott 2018a: 231–3.

Commodus' gladiatorial antics thus takes the form of a 'wonder narrative', in which a historian recounts an event which might seem to be completely unbelievable. As Rhiannon Ash explores in Chapter 4, the wondrous and the incredible play a pivotal role in the *Roman History*, increasing as one enters the contemporary narrative, as Dio 'himself becomes one of the astonished internal viewers in his own text'.³³ It was standard practice for ancient historians to offer autopsy as a guarantee of the reliability of their own wonder narratives.³⁴ In the *Roman History*, this authorial strategy explicitly marks out Dio's account of the Commodan and Severan regimes as wondrous, but nevertheless completely true.

The extensive citation of documentary evidence in the contemporary narrative is a narrative strategy which serves to bolster Dio's authorial persona as a reliable witness and political insider. Readers might be amazed and horrified at Caracalla's massacre of the Alexandrians, emotions that would be amplified by Dio's pronouncement that Caracalla wrote to the senate to say that he did not care how many had died, for their fate was entirely deserved (78[77].22.3 [Xiph.]). But as Cesare Letta shows in Chapter 3, verbatim quotations from imperial letters are a feature of Dio's account of the reigns of Caracalla, Macrinus, and Elagabalus in particular, allowing the reader to experience the emperors in their own words. It is particularly fortunate that much of the original text of Dio's narrative of Macrinus survives in a manuscript, *Codex Vaticanus graecus* 1288, which covers 79(78).2.2–80(79).8.3.³⁵ Dio takes the reader into the senate house in Rome when letters from the Macrinus in far-off Syria, allowing them to read the emperor's words and gauge contemporary senatorial reaction. An example of this is Macrinus' dispatch about Caracalla's failings and his own attempts to set matters right as emperor:

Then he added in his letter something to the following effect: 'I realize that there are many who are more eager to see an emperor killed than they are to live themselves. But this I do not say with reference to myself, that anyone could either desire or pray that I should perish.' At which Fulvius Diogenianus exclaimed: 'We have all prayed for it.' (79[78].36.5)³⁶

This passage demonstrates how Dio was able to make the transition from citation of documents to contemporary reactions. The witty apophthegm of Diogenianus provides the reader with amusement, as well as a sense of

³³ Section II. ³⁴ Marincola 1997: 82–3. ³⁵ Boissevain III.iii-ix; Scott 2018b: 2.

³⁶ ἔπειτα καὶ τοιοῦνδε τι προσενέγραψεν, ὅτι “πολλοὺς οἶδα μᾶλλον ἐπιθυμοῦντας αὐτοκράτορα σφαγῆναι ἢ αὐτοὺς βιώναι. τοῦτο δὲ οὐ περὶ ἑμαυτοῦ λέγω, ὅτι τις ἢ ἐπιθυμήσειεν ἂν ἡ εὐξαίτο με ἀπολέσθαι”. ἐφ’ ᾧ δὴ Φούλουιος Διογενιανὸς ἐξεβόησεν ὅτι “πάντες εὐξάμεθα”.

the senatorial disregard for Macrinus. Indeed, one of the features of Dio's contemporary books is the recounting of political events with a certain black humour.³⁷ In Chapter 4, Rhiannon Ash examines the arraignment of a bald-headed senator on a charge of treason during the reign of Septimius Severus, an incident which Dio describes as 'an extraordinary affair even in the hearing' (παράδοξα ὄντα καὶ ἀκουσθηῖναι) (77[76].8.1 [Xiph.]). This story begins as a comical tale of senators feeling their own heads to make sure they cannot be identified as the culprit, but then takes a dark turn as the guilty man is dragged out of the senate to be beheaded. Here we have a story that reflects the incredible dangers in which senators found themselves under the Severan regime, coupled with the gratitude and guilt felt by those, such as Dio, who were fortunate enough to escape with their lives.

Dio's claim to being an eyewitness must be tempered by the fact that while he was sometimes present when events occurred (as in the case of the trial of the bald-headed man), very often he was not.³⁸ For example, Dio wintered with the court of Caracalla in Nicomedia (probably in 213/14), but after the emperor left in April 214, Dio never saw him again.³⁹ He also spent a considerable portion of the reign of Elagabalus outside Rome, an absence which does not reduce the level of scandalous detail in the *Roman History*.⁴⁰ As Kemezis points out in his chapter, 'Dio's final claim about his own worth as a historian is more about his social position and education than his personal experience'.⁴¹ The reader is thus expected to respect Dio's position as a senator and his ability to be a reliable witness in the contemporary narrative. This is bolstered by a wealth of prosopographical detail about Dio's senatorial coevals, as Christopher Mallan explores in Chapter 12. The 'born prosopographer' creates a world full of distinguished nobles and generals, whose deserved promotions and unwarranted executions reflect on the emperors of the day.⁴² Yet once again, caution is required. Dio presents himself as a spokesperson for the senatorial order as a whole, frequently using the first-person plural in the contemporary narrative to express the views and experiences of the *amplissimus ordo*.⁴³ Now, we know

³⁷ See Chapter 1 by Adam Kemezis in this volume and Osgood 2016 on the reign of Elagabalus.

³⁸ For Dio's career, which often took him away from Rome or other places where events were happening, see Millar 1964: 13–17; Chapter 12 by Christopher Mallan in this volume.

³⁹ Davenport 2017: 93–4. For the dating, see Molin 2016a: 441. ⁴⁰ Millar 1964: 168–9.

⁴¹ See Chapter 1, Section VI by Kemezis in this volume. See also Chapter 5 by Christina Kuhn and Chapter 7 by Shushma Malik.

⁴² The quotation is from Millar 1964: 164.

⁴³ Marincola 1997: 199–200. Whittaker (1969: xlvi) notes the necessity of comparing Dio and Herodian's accounts, for example, on Severus' return to Rome, which offers a 'salutary warning against assuming that Dio [...] speaks for the whole senate'.