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The Fall of Cassius Dio’s Roman Republic

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Summary: This article reinterprets Dio’s view of the fall of the Republic by arguing that Dio viewed institutional political competition, rather than ambitious individuals, as the central destructive driving force in the Late Republic. Dio’s interpretation is hereby unique among ancient historiography. This interpretation has been skilfully interwoven in the general narrative and only by reading Book 39 as a whole, does the interpretation emerge. According to Dio, institutional competition became inherently destructive in the Late Republic and Book 39 is absolutely fundamental in understanding this transformation and the consequent failure of the Roman δημοκρατία.

Keywords: Cassius Dio, Pompey the Great, Caesar, Political Competition, Roman Republic

Introduction

The book divisions of ancient authors are increasingly seen as meaningful structural devices. Thus both the books of Cicero’s and Pliny’s letter collections, the historiographical books of Livy and Tacitus and the poetry books of numerous poets have all been identified as important tools for the respective authors. According to most scholars, these books were mainly used for aesthetic purposes and were at best “a blunt instrument” interpretatively. Nonetheless, the instrumental use of books in a wide range of ancient genres and by numerous authors has recently been explored. However, no such work has been done on the Severan historian Cassius Dio. This is problematic since, in contrast to other historians such as Thucydides or Livy, Dio very rarely steps back to present interpretations in his authorial voice. Consequently, scholars have tradition-

1 Levene 2010, 33.
2 These are only examples of a very pervasive trend in scholarship of taking books seriously as important authorial tools: Cicero: Beard 2002 and recently Martelli 2017; Pliny the Younger: Gibson – Morello 2012; Livy: Vasaly 2002 and Oakley 2015; Tacitus: Strunk 2016, 170–179; poetry: Hubbard 1983.

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ally assumed that Dio lacked political interpretations altogether and therefore viewed him as a poor historian. However, rather than pronounce them clearly, Dio in fact interweaves his interpretations into his narrative and close-reading of Dio’s individual books is therefore essential to understanding his broader political interpretations.

Until recently, scholars assumed that Dio completely lacked such interpretations and that his narrative was derivative or at best controlled by contemporary concerns. Recent work, exemplified by two important volumes from 2016, has countered this view and emphasised Dio’s complexity and independent interpretations. Yet, even some of the newest and more positive works include traditional criticisms of Dio as being overly controlled by his own time as well as unoriginal and lacking convincing interpretations. This is seen in for example Rees who asserts that Dio differs from the parallel sources, “if he differs at all, only in the intensity of his account. […] he might have struggled to make his mark on a well-worn period”. This is mirrored in another recent work where Dio is portrayed as “conventional and sometimes downright banal”. The traditional criticisms of Dio are thus still influential and form part of the foundation on which Dio is evaluated even in some of the most recent scholarly works.

Furthermore, despite the recent revision, only a small handful of works have focused on Dio’s explanation of the fall of the Republic. Dio’s Late Republic thus remains an understudied area which is, however, central to understanding Dio’s work as a whole. The first thorough reinterpretation of Dio’s Late Republic accorded human nature the central role: Rees greatly developed previous work on human nature in Dio’s Republic to argue that this factor was the central cause of the fall of the Republic in Dio’s eyes. Hereafter, scholars have focused on a number of more specific elements, such as problematic commands or φθόνος (jealousy), and their role in the deterioration of the Late Republic. All these works view Pompey and Caesar as central to the downfall of Dio’s Republic.

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3 Fromentin 2016; Lange 2016. See also Rees 2011; Kemezis 2014; Burden-Strevens 2015.
4 Rees 2011, 4. See also 186–189.
5 Kemezis 2014, 93. See also 103.
6 Hose 1994, 436; Sion-Jenkis 2000, 184 f.; Kuhn-Chen 2002, 243–246. The latter asserts that human nature could be tempered by education. Sion-Jenkis 2000, 96–101 additionally sees the involvement of the people in government as a central problem for Dio.
7 Rees 2011, 6 f.
8 Burden-Strevens 2015 85, 167–174, 254–258; Coudry 2016, 44 f. See also Kemezis 2014 who takes a literary approach and focuses on different narrative modes as well his later work 2016 which underlines the problem of mendacious rhetoric.
9 See e.g. Rees 2011 who focuses extensively on Caesar or Bertrand – Coudry 2016 whose central focus is Pompey. For a contrasting perspective, see the works listed in footnote 12.
thermore, these new approaches are all heavily focused on Dio’s speeches rather than the general narrative and not a single work has so far examined the role of Book 39 in Dio’s Late Republican interpretation. In fact, except for my recent article, Dio’s books have in general never been studied individually outside of commentaries10 which by their more linguistic and detail-oriented nature do not capture Dio’s broader political arguments, nor how these are developed throughout his narrative.

In this article, I propose a new approach: I will focus on a close reading of Dio’s neglected Book 39 since Dio in this book most clearly presents his sophisticated interpretation of the fall of the Republic. In this interpretation, political competition is the central driving force.11 Dio’s interpretation has been skillfully interwoven in the general narrative and only by reading Book 39 as a whole, does this interpretation emerge. According to Dio, the institutional element of political competition became inherently destructive in the Late Republic and Book 39 is absolutely fundamental in understanding this transformation and the consequent failure of the Roman δημοκρατία. The factors for the fall of Dio’s Republic presented by other scholars, such as human nature, envy or problematic commands, are certainly important. However, through close reading of Dio’s narrative, and Book 39 in particular, it becomes clear that these aspects are all manifestations of the larger and more severe problem of destructive political competition. Furthermore in Book 39, Dio significantly downplays the common singular causes for the fall of the Republic, such as the deaths of Julia and Crassus or the meeting at Luca and thus also the roles of Pompey and Caesar. Contrary to the opinions of modern scholarship on Dio’s Republic, it was thus not singular events or problematic individuals which brought down the Late Republic, but rather the institutional problem of destructive competition – a novel approach in Late Republican historiography.12 The division in books was for Dio thus not only tied to aesthetics or a “blunt instrument” interpretatively: rather it was a central tool as Dio used Book 39 to present a coherent and compelling interpretation of the fall of the Republic on its own terms, through an original perspective organised around competition.

10 See Lindholmer 2018 and e.g. Swan 2004 or the more recent commentaries by Lachenaud – Coudry 2011 and 2014.
11 Competition as a problem in Dio’s Republic has only received very brief attention: Bertrand 2016, 606–608, 695–697 and Bertrand – Coudry 2016, 607f. briefly mention competition, but mainly among the dynasts rather than as the general problem I propose here. See also Lange – Madsen 2016, 2.
12 I have argued for this focus on institutional competition through different avenues elsewhere: Lindholmer 2016; 2018a; 2018c; forthcoming 2019.
In the first part of Book 39, Dio presents the three most important tools and manifestations of this competition, namely violence, bribery and political manipulation. These tools, especially violence and bribery, are a consequence of the transformed institutional competition as ambitious politicians in the Late Republic, due to the influx of resources as a result of empire, had vast resources available for bribery and for buying the allegiance of the people, who could be incited to violence. The tools are liberally used for political competition and politicians who refuse to utilise them are perpetually futile, exemplified most consistently by Cato. It is thus only self-interested politicians using these thoroughly destructive tools who are successful and Dio’s Republic is hereby inevitably at the mercy of its enemies and bound for civil war. Dio purposefully manipulates his narrative to bring the institutional problem of competition to the fore and posit it as key for the breakdown of Republican politics and the ensuing civil war. For this purpose, Dio incorporates an exposition of the three abovementioned tools in the first half of the book whereafter he demonstrates how they were used to devastating effect in the second half.

### Competition

However, before we commence, the term ‘competition’ should be clarified as this is, I shall argue, the central problem in Dio’s interpretation of the decline of the Republic. Competition refers to the political struggle for different types of resources such as prestige, offices, military victories, commands, alliances or money. Political competition in the Late Republic is often selfish, disregarding the good of the state and is at times highlighted through linguistic markers such as φιλοτιμία and φθόνος. The political competition plays out either internally, revolving around Rome and its elections, laws and decrees, or externally where commands and military victories are in focus. Dio never formulates an explicit definition of competition himself but he portrays political competition as a zero sum game where all attempts to further one’s own interest impinge upon other political actors. This is clear in Dio’s interpretation of the reasons for Pompey’s desire for the consulship:

“The fact, however, that Caesar’s influence was increasing [...] was a cruel thorn in Pompey’s side (δεινῶς αὐτὸν ἠνία). So ambitious was he (φιλοτιμίᾳ ἐχρῆτο) that he undertook to disparage and undo all that he himself had helped to gain for Caesar, and that he was dis-

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13 See also Lindholmer 2016, 13–18.
pleased with him both because he was greatly praised and because he was overshadowing his own exploits, and he blamed the people because they slighted him and were excessively enthusiastic over Caesar. Especially was he vexed to see that they remembered the former achievements of a man just so long as nothing new occurred, that they rushed with the greatest haste to each new achievement, even if it were inferior to that which had preceded, because they became tired of the usual and liked the novel, and that, actuated by envy (ὑπὸ τοῦ φθόνου), they overthrew everyone who had once been in high repute, but, urged on by their hopes, helped to exalt one who was just emerging. Because of this he was vexed (δι᾽ οὖν ταῦτα δυσχεραίνων).”\(^{14}\)

The power and influence of Pompey is here clearly linked to Caesar in an inverse relationship where every success of the latter undermines the former.\(^{15}\) However, Dio also underlines that this interrelation between the influence and achievements of different politicians is a general aspect of Roman politics that is not merely confined to Caesar and Pompey, which accords with the actual form of Republican government where a large number of politicians strove for a limited number of offices.

Furthermore, Dio’s notion of political competition also demonstrates his resistance to traditional interpretations based on moral decline. It is not, in contrast to other ancient writers, the character of Caesar or Pompey that is at fault in the above quote, but rather the process of competition. The “process of competition” in this article signifies the tools and mechanisms through which competition was performed. As an example, in Book 39, Dio demonstrates the destructive process of competition in the Late Republic as violence, bribery and political manipulation are rife, which stands in sharp contrast to the traditional, peaceful ideal process of competition based on public speaking and constitutional acts.\(^{16}\)

The process of competition has in short degenerated markedly. This destructive and institutionally generated competition in the Late Republic constitutes an ‘institutional problem’ for Dio: institutional competition, for example for offices or commands, is part of the very foundations of the Republic but has degenerated and turned destructive in itself, a transformation where the dynasts, such as Pompey or Caesar, become manifestations rather than causes. Dio thus posits an institutional rather than a character-driven interpretation of the Late Republic centred on the destructively transformed process of institutional competition, the central problem of this period according to Dio. Dio does of course accord

\(^{14}\) Cass. Dio 39.25.1–26.1. Adapted from Cary 1914–1927. All translations of Dio are from Cary 1914–1927, and for other quoted authors, I have likewise used the Loeb Classical Library. Any adaptations of the translations have been noted, as here.

\(^{15}\) See also Kuhn-Chen 2002, 179 on φθόνος.

\(^{16}\) Dio, however, also breaks with this idealisation for the earlier Republic: Libourel 1974; Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer 2018.
individuals importance and all the parallel sources do not completely disregard political institutions. However, a notable difference remains: the parallel sources centre on the individuals set in a political world, whereas this political world is Dio’s main area of investigation and the characters become tools herein. Essentially, while the Republic in other accounts is driven to destruction mainly by the leading characters, Dio posits the institutional makeup of the Republic itself and the consequent destructive competition as the central driving force which locks the individuals in a certain behavioural pattern as seen in the quotation above.\footnote{For the behavioural pattern see Kemezis 2014, 101 f. See also Lange – Madsen’s intriguing but brief suggestion that Dio approaches Republican history in a structural fashion: 2016, 3.}

The Fall of the Republic

The difference between the two types of history written by Dio and the parallel sources can be clearly illustrated through a brief overview of the treatment of the traditional causes for civil war in the different authors. This overview will demonstrate how Dio purposefully deviates from the parallel sources and downplays the conventional causes, thereby depriving his reader of singular factors with which easily to explain the outbreak of civil war. The \textit{Periochae} is too brief to offer a cohesive interpretation but Velleius Paterculus focuses on individual causes, especially the first triumvirate\footnote{Vell. Pat. 2.44.1.} and the death of Julia.\footnote{Vell. Pat. 2.47.2.} However, the main cause for civil war in Velleius’ narrative is Curio “who, more than anyone else, applied the flaming torch which kindled the civil war”\footnote{Vell. Pat. 2.48.3.} by shattering a fair agreement between Pompey and Caesar.\footnote{Vell. Pat. 2.48.4–5.} Plutarch accords importance to the deaths of Julia and Crassus\footnote{Plut. Cato 41.1; Pomp. 53.5–6.} but asserts that the creation of the triumvirate was the main reason for civil war: “For it was not, as most men supposed, the quarrel between Caesar and Pompey that brought on the civil wars, but rather their friendship.”\footnote{Plut. Caes. 13.5. See also Plut. Pomp. 53.7 on the meeting at Luca.} Appian’s focus is rather similar as the death of Julia\footnote{App. Civ. 2.19.} and the triumvirate, which Appian calls “Tricaranus (the three-headed monster)”\footnote{App. Civ. 2.9. See also App. Civ. 2.9, 2.17 on the meeting at Luca.}, are underlined as the most important causes. Suetonius, lastly, does not give the triumvirate, Julia or
the death of Crassus much importance at any stage and it is instead Caesar’s pro-
longed commands and inherent ambition that are the main causes for civil war: “[Caesar] grasped the opportunity of usurping the despotism which had been his
heart’s desire from early youth.”26 All the parallel sources thus focus on Caesar
and Pompey and on individual events, most often the forming of the triumvirate
or the death of Julia or Crassus, as the central causes for the fall of the Republic.

Dio also invests the triumvirate with some significance but omits the meeting
at Luca, which severely undermines the importance of the triumvirs, as I will
argue later in this article. Moreover, the importance of the death of Julia is sig-
nificantly downplayed: She is only briefly mentioned at the actual time of her
death in 54, that is in Book 39, but the political importance of her demise is in fact
detailed only towards the end of Book 40 when civil war was imminent.27 Crassus’
death, likewise, is mentioned outside the battle narrative for the first time only in
50 where Dio merely notes that “Crassus was dead”28, thereby drastically reduc-
ing the importance of this factor as well. Even the scene of Caesar’s infamous
crossing of the Rubicon that would thrust responsibility for the civil wars on him
is also omitted by Dio – uniquely in the source tradition.29 In sharp contrast to
the parallel sources, we are hereby left without important singular events with
which to explain the outbreak of civil war. This conscious and highly systematic
restructuring of the common narrative of the end of the Republic should give us
pause and encourage us to explore which causes Dio instead presents as the most
significant in the fall of the Republic: Pompey’s sole consulship of Book 40 is
important as a last nail in the coffin of peace, but it is in fact, as will become clear
below, the unavoidable product of the internal unrest of the time which has its
narrative roots firmly in Book 39. Furthermore, this unrest is created by the inter-
nal destructive competition explored in the same book. The fundamental reasons
for the civil war and the downfall of Dio’s Republic are thus, as argued below, to
be found in his exploration of institutional competition in Book 39.

Against this background, it is striking that Book 39 is so sparsely treated in
the newer attempts to explain the fall of Dio’s Republic. Rees only touches briefly
on the book in connection with the consulship of Crassus and Pompey but besides
this, mainly concentrates on the preceding narrative and speeches. One reason
for this could be that Rees’ numerous aspects of human nature undermining the
Republic are sparse in Book 39, which reveals a problematic hole in his argu-

26 Suet. Caes. 30.5.
27 Cass. Dio 40.44.2–3
28 Cass. Dio 40.44.2.
29 App. Civ. 2.35; Plut. Caes. 32; Suet. Caes. 31–33; Vell. Pat. 2.49.4.
ments. Kemezis, likewise, focuses on the 60s (that is Book 36 and 37) but then moves directly to Pharsalus in 48 and the subsequent Augustan settlement. Burden-Strevens’ work from 2015 on Dio’s Republican speeches, furthermore, mostly ignores Book 39 since it includes no speeches and none of the chapters from the recent two volumes from 2016 focuses specifically on this Book. These works all offer interesting explanations and constitute important advancements in scholarship but they also demonstrate a gap in the research tradition as Book 39 has been largely ignored. This overview emphasises the need to complement the current research by a focused, in-depth analysis of Book 39 which, I argue, will yield an alternative explanation of the fall of the Republic, centred on institutional competition.

I have divided the following into two subchapters: the first deals with Dio’s thematic presentation of the three main internal destructive tools and thereby lays the foundation for the second subchapter which explores the use of these tools in relation to the consular elections of 56 and the events surrounding the restoration of Ptolemy. Caesar’s campaigns also feature in Book 39 but these are part of a broad exploration, spanning several books, of the malfunctioning of Late Republican imperialism. Here I will instead focus on the rest of Book 39 which constitutes a sustained and concentrated investigation of internal competition and how this was executed in practice.

Violence, Bribery and Political Manipulation

Violence

The first destructive tool, violence, is initially presented in the first part of the internal narrative, dealing with the return of Cicero and the ensuing conflict with Clodius. The descriptions of the groups of combatants are instructive as we are told that the consul Spinther “aided Cicero’s cause in the senate, partly as a favour to Pompey and partly to avenge himself upon Clodius, by reason of a private enmity (ἰδίας ἔχθρας) which had led him as a juror to vote to condemn Clodius for adultery”\(^{33}\). The state is here disregarded and only private benefits

\(^{30}\) Φιλονεικία is e.g. only mentioned once: Cass. Dio 39.58.2; Rees 2011, 27–29 and φιλοτιμία likewise once: Cass. Dio 39.58.2; Rees 2011, 27–29.
\(^{31}\) Kemezis 2014, 112–120.
\(^{32}\) On this, see Lindholmer forthcoming 2020b.
\(^{33}\) Cass. Dio 39.6.2.
prioritised, and the supporters of Clodius are similarly described, as he “was supported by various magistrates, including Appius Claudius, his brother, who was praetor, and Nepos, the consul, who had a private grudge (οἰκείας τινὸς ἔχθρας) against Cicero”\textsuperscript{34}. This line-up of combatants shows that there are no heroes in Dio’s Late Republic as Dio primes the reader to understand the ensuing events as essentially self-interested.

Significantly, the involvement of both consuls is explicitly linked to an increase in violent competition in Rome: “These men, accordingly, now that they had (ἔχοντες) the consuls as leaders (ἡγεμόνας), made more disturbance than before, and the same was true of the others in the city […]. Many disorderly proceedings were the result.”\textsuperscript{35} The involvement of the consuls in destructive competition is, as Dio notes, a new development and this he connects through the participle (ἔχοντες) to increased competition, which manifests itself in Clodius’ attempt to disrupt the vote on Cicero’s return:

“during the very taking of the vote (ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ διαψηφίσει) on the measure Clodius, knowing that the multitude would be on Cicero’s side, took the gladiators that his brother held in readiness for the funeral games in honour of Marcus, his relative, and rushing (ἐσεπήδησεν) into the assemblage, wounded many and killed many others. Consequently (οὖν) the measure was not passed.”\textsuperscript{36}

The use of gladiators to even kill senators is a completely new development in Late Republican politics and Dio goes to some length to stress the outrage of Clodius’ acts: he emphasises Clodius’ disregard for due political process through the demonstrative pronoun in predicate position (ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ), he notes that Clodius took the gladiators from the funeral games of his own relative and he adds drama by the use of ἐσεπήδησεν. However, Dio also emphasises the effectiveness of this increase in violence as he creates a clear causal link (οὖν) between the use of this tool in rivalry and political success, here in the form of disrupting the measure to recall Cicero.

Milo then attempts to bring Clodius to trial by lawful means but fails utterly, which demonstrates the powerlessness of constitutional avenues and traditional authority in Late Republican competition in Dio. Clodius’ highly successful use of violence is only countered when Milo, after the futility of the lawful attempts, gathers his own gladiators “and kept continually coming to blows with Clodius, so that bloodshed occurred throughout practically the whole city”\textsuperscript{37}. This new

\textsuperscript{34} Cass. Dio 39.6.3.
\textsuperscript{35} Cass. Dio 39.7.1.
\textsuperscript{36} Cass. Dio 39.7.2–3.
\textsuperscript{37} Cass. Dio 39.8.1.
strategy results in immediate success: “Nepos, accordingly, inspired with fear [...], changed his attitude; and thus (οὕτως) the senate decreed [...] that Cicero should be restored.”\(^{38}\) Through οὕτως, Dio creates a direct causal link between the violence and the resultant fear on the one side and the political success of Cicero’s recall on the other. Dio hereby highlights the importance of violence in Late Republican competition but also reveals an important problem: violence creates serious unrest in the city but is unavoidable if one desires political success. The Late Republic is therefore bound for increasingly violent and destructive institutional competition.

This violent victory, however, breeds further problems as Cicero upon his return convinces the senate to give Pompey an extraordinary command as commissioner of the grain supply: “So now in the case of the grain supply, as previously in the case of the pirates, he was once more to hold sway (ἄρξειν) over the entire world then under Roman power.”\(^{39}\) Through his allusion to the lex Gabinia, Dio cleverly conjures up Catulus’ criticisms and marks this extraordinary command too as deeply problematic. Furthermore, the cause of this command is in fact to be found in violence:

“A sore famine had arisen in the city and the entire populace rushed into the theatre [...] and afterwards to the Capitol where the senators were in session, threatening at first to slay them with their own hands, and later to burn them alive, temples and all.”\(^{40}\)

The explicit evocation of the lex Gabinia invites the reader to compare the two situations: regarding the lex in Book 36, the people merely “gave a great threatening shout”\(^{41}\) and although they had exhibited violence earlier it was never on the same level as the threat of burning both temples and senators. It is here clear that the violence of the populace has increased and intensified greatly. This extreme use of violence is thus an important feature of Book 39 and is here the sole reason for the need of another problematic extraordinary command. Furthermore, the violence is again imminently effective as a tool to gain objectives as the traditional authority of the senate is powerless and forced to accept Cicero’s proposal.

Dio has in short created a highly focused narrative at the start of Book 39 where every chapter is concentrated on the intensified problem of competition manifested in violence and he hereby achieves an effective communication of important interpretative points: Dio presents violence as an absolutely essential

\(^{38}\) Cass. Dio 39.8.2.  
\(^{39}\) Cass. Dio 39.9.3.  
\(^{40}\) Cass. Dio 39.9.2.  
\(^{41}\) Cass. Dio 36.30.3.
tool used both by individual politicians and the people as a group in order to gain political advances. Constitutional attempts and traditional authority, on the other hand, are clearly connected to political impotence and failure. Consequently, only egoistic and destructive politicians can achieve success, whereas the senate or less problematic politicians are consistently defeated, which demonstrates the institutional nature of the problem of competition in Dio’s Late Republic.

Bribery

Bribery, the second central competitive tool, is explored in the account of King Ptolemy’s request for Roman help that follows the return of Cicero. In a parallel to the case of violence, the problem of bribery receives intense focus in the next handful of chapters and has severely increased compared to earlier books. Dio sums up the previous events relating to Ptolemy to show that bribery had permeated Roman relations with him even before his accession: “He had spent large amounts upon some of the Romans, part of it out of his own purse and part borrowed, in order to have his rule confirmed and to receive the name of friend and ally.”

Bribery is thus at the very heart of Ptolemy’s success and Rome is shown to be highly susceptible to this tool.

Ptolemy proceeds to collect money forcibly from the Egyptians, is forced to flee to Rome and here claims to have been deposed. The Egyptian people send a hundred men to Rome to bring counter-complaints but most are assassinated by Ptolemy “and others he either terrified by what had happened or by administering bribes persuaded them neither to consult the magistrates touching the matters for which they had been sent nor to make any mention at all of those who had been killed.”

Ptolemy uses bribes to great effect and is again successful, which demonstrates the importance of this tool. Dio then proceeds to emphasise that the problem of bribery was not limited to the Ptolemy affair:

“The affair, however, became so noised abroad that even the senate was mightily displeased; it was urged to action chiefly by Marcus Favonius, on the double ground that many envoys sent by their allies had perished by violence and that numerous Romans had again on this occasion taken bribes.”

42 Cass. Dio 39.12.1.
43 Cass. Dio 39.13.2.
44 Cass. Dio 39.14.1 (my emphasis).
This shows that bribery in political competition was in fact a general problem, as “numerous Romans had again” accepted bribes, and also demonstrates the importance of this tool.

Yet again, the attempts of traditional authority in the shape of the senate to solve the problem are completely futile as

“they summoned Dio, the leader of the envoys, who survived, in order to learn the truth from him. But this time, too, Ptolemy had such influence with his money that not only did Dio fail to enter the senate-house, but there was not even any mention made of the murder of the dead men, so long at least as Ptolemy was there”\textsuperscript{45}.

Dio, furthermore, emphasises at the conclusion of the account that no one was punished for taking bribes at this time and that Pompey even supported Ptolemy,\textsuperscript{46} which collectively constitutes an increase and intensification of the problem of bribery compared to earlier books. Thus, the constitutional and legal measures taken, first by the Egyptians in sending envoys and later by the senate in summoning the envoy Dio, are thoroughly ineffectual in the face of the influence of Ptolemy’s money and selfish competition. Dio clearly goes to great lengths here to emphasise this problem as he highlights the affair as outrageous through the assertion that a full hundred men were sent but the dead were not even mentioned and no one punished. Ptolemy’s complete success through bribes against the senate and his opposers here exemplifies the workings of institutional competition in Roman politics, which is further highlighted by Dio’s description of bribery as a general problem. Thus, the narrative shows yet again that egoistic politicians who use destructive tools are consistently successful against traditional authority. Furthermore, it is striking that the \textit{Periochae} asserts that Ptolemy was the wronged part as he “left his kingdom and came to Rome because of the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of his people”\textsuperscript{47}, while Plutarch states that Pompey’s “ambition was not of such a mean and base order”\textsuperscript{48} as to exploit the Ptolemy affair for his own benefit. In Dio’s account by contrast, Ptolemy is a ruthless oppressor and Pompey is selfishly colluding with him. Dio hereby appears to have either manipulated his sources or chosen them very carefully in order to degrade Ptolemy and inculpate Pompey, which supports the portrayal of Roman politics as problematic and rife with bribery but also as lacking heroes and permeated by egoistic competition.

\textsuperscript{45} Cass. Dio 39.14.2.
\textsuperscript{46} Cass. Dio 39.14.3.
\textsuperscript{47} Liv. Per. 104.
\textsuperscript{48} Plut. Pomp. 49.7.
That Dio’s purpose is indeed to focus on bribery is clearly seen in the omens that follow the Ptolemy affair: “While mortals were acting thus under the influence of money, Heaven at the very beginning of the next year struck with a thunderbolt the statue of Jupiter erected on the Alban Mount.” Dio has here clearly exploited the annalistic tradition of including omens in order to criticise the bribery in his authorial voice and the omens add divine backing to his criticisms. Even the Sibylline verses were found to warn against aiding Ptolemy “with any great force.” However, the Romans are unable to correct their behaviour as Gaius Cato, a tribune, forces the priests to announce the verses even though “it was unlawful to announce to the populace any of the Sibylline Verses, unless the senate voted it.” The Romans here respond to divine anger by violating more religious laws and the selfish rivalry also continues unabated as it is suggested that Pompey should escort Ptolemy home: “But the senators, fearing that Pompey would by this means obtain still greater power, opposed it, using his connection with the corn-supply as an excuse (προφάσει).” Dio here, through προφάσει, portrays the senate as disingenuous and part of the constant selfish competition. Even in the face of divine warnings, the Romans thus fail to correct themselves and in fact become more corrupted in the process, all of which is rooted in the problematic competitive tool of bribery.

In conclusion, Dio uses the account of Ptolemy to deliver a damning exploration of the excessive and increased use of bribes in Roman politics. Dio’s approach is strikingly thematic here as bribes had been almost absent in Book 39 before this point. Furthermore, from the above it appears clear that Dio structured his narrative carefully in order to bring out these points as the cura annonae, for example, is invested with importance but treated only briefly, whereas the bribery of King Ptolemy is explored and exploited to full effect in order to highlight the problem of bribery. Thus Dio, as in the case of violence, shows how bribery is used as a central tool of institutional competition, which is intimately connected to political success and decisively thwarts traditional authority.

49 Cass. Dio 39.15.1.
50 On the manipulation of the annalistic tradition in Dio, see Lindholmer 2016, 38–60; Lindholmer (forthcoming 2020a).
51 Cass. Dio 39.15.2.
52 Cass. Dio 39.15.4.
53 Cass. Dio 39.16.2.
Political Manipulation

Through bribery and violence, the Roman politicians broke the rules of the Late Republic. However, Dio now turns to the manipulation of these rules where they, though kept intact, were exploited to further political aims and Dio again incorporates an intense focus on this subject in the next handful of chapters. In fact, Dio exploits the annalistic conventions to make the transition to this third destructive aspect as he includes the generally ignored priestly elections for this purpose:

“The year before there had occurred an incident of a private nature which, however, has some bearing upon our history. It was this. Although the law expressly forbade any two persons of the same gens to hold the same priesthood at the same time, Spinther, the consul, was anxious to place his son Cornelius Spinther among the augurs, and since Faustus, the son of Sulla, of the Cornelian gens, had been enrolled before him, he transferred his son to the gens of Manlius Torquatus; thus, though the letter of the law (νόμος) was observed, its spirit (ἔργῳ) was broken.”

Dio very rarely marks an episode out for special attention in his authorial voice, which indicates the story’s significance. Spinther here thoroughly manipulates the religious rules as part of the constant competition and this political manipulation is no less problematic than bribery or violence as Dio notes that the “ἔργον” of the laws was still broken. Furthermore, it seems that Dio has purposefully included the above annalistic notice and moved it from “the year before” in order to make an abrupt transition that allows him to highlight the new topic in a clear fashion. Had he merely continued with the narrative of Clodius, which follows the above quote, the new focus on political manipulation might have escaped the reader.

This theme of political manipulation is clearly continued in the following chapter where Clodius attains the aedileship, not to serve Rome but “being anxious to avoid the lawsuit, he had got himself elected by a political combination.” Clodius here exploits the sacrosanctity of magistracies for his own personal benefit and as part of the general competition. Moreover, Clodius then “instituted proceedings against Milo for providing himself with gladiators, hereby charging him with the very thing he was doing himself and for which he was likely to be brought to trial. He did this, not in the expectation of convicting Milo […] but in order that under this pretext (ἐπὶ τῇ προφάσει) he might not only carry on a campaign (προσπολεμοίη) against Milo but also insult his back-

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54 Cass. Dio 39.17 (my emphasis).
55 Cass. Dio 39.18.1.
ers”56. Clodius here purposefully exploits the laws as he manipulates the justice system to attack Pompey rather than Milo and even charged the latter for using gladiators which he himself had been the first to do. Clodius thereby again uses political manipulation as part of the constant competition. Furthermore, Dio’s wording here is illustrative of his view of the Late Republic as Clodius is successful through mendacity, πρόφασις, and politics have turned into an actual war as seen in the word προσπολεμοίη.

Dio then elaborates on the political manipulation:

“No Pompey could not control himself and keep quiet, nor would he stoop to a trick like that of Clodius [...]; thus nominally Milo was the defendant, but in reality Pompey was being convicted without even offering a defence. For Clodius, in order to embarrass him the more, would not allow the lex curiata to be introduced; and until that was enacted no other serious business could be transacted in the state or any suit instituted.”57

Strikingly, as in the case of the gladiators, Clodius is highly successful because he is willing to use methods too corrupted for his enemies and Dio emphasises Pompey’s inability to oppose Clodius because of the former’s relative uprightness. This feature of Clodius is also evident as he even paralyses the state through his obstruction of the lex curiata in order to embarrass Pompey, and he seemingly disregards completely the adverse effects on the state. Political advances are thus again connected to egoistic political manipulation in a clear parallel to violence and bribery, and Dio hereby creates a consistent picture of a Republic where the politicians who most consistently use these three tools achieve the highest degree of success. Dio has here included an unprecedented concentration of manipulations where the letter of the law is observed but the spirit broken, exactly as in the case of Spinther’s son.

Comparable to the previous omens regarding bribery, Dio now writes that threatening and destructive omens occurred:

“And the soothsayers, being anxious to find a remedy, said that some divinity was angry with them because some temples or consecrated sites were being used for residence. Then Clodius substituted Cicero for Milo and not only attacked him vigorously in a speech because the site of the house he had built upon was dedicated to Liberty, but even went to it once, with the intention of razing it to the ground”58.

The omens can again be seen as divine anger, here due to the corrupted political manipulation, and the Romans are also now unable to correct themselves as

56 Cass. Dio 39.18.
57 Cass. Dio 39.19.2–3 (my emphasis).
58 Cass. Dio 39.20.2–3.
Clodius exploits the soothsayers’ explanation for his own ends in another manipulation. The political rivalry now even deteriorates as

“no quarter was shown on either side, but they [Clodius and Cicero] abused and slandered each other as much as they could, without refraining from the basest means. The one declared that the tribuneship of Clodius had been contrary to the laws and that therefore his official acts were invalid, and the other that Cicero’s exile had been justly decreed and his return unlawfully voted”59.

Both parties here attempt to manipulate and undermine the laws in order to weaken each other and political manipulation has thereby again been used as a tool in political competition. However, Clodius’ transfer to the plebeian order had indeed been contrary to the laws60 and Cicero’s return had only been effected through Milo’s use of gladiators. The political system is thus now so corrupt that the validity of laws is undermined and they hereby become ripe for manipulation.

Dio ends his exploration of political manipulation by positing Cato as a positive contrast:

“the consuls proposed in the senate that he [Cato] be given the praetorship, although by law he could not yet hold it. And though he was not appointed, for he spoke against the measure himself, yet he obtained greater renown from this very circumstance.”61

Cato here refuses manipulation of the law and through this puts the preceding egoistic manipulations in an even sharper negative light. However, despite winning great renown, Cato gains nothing concrete and instead quickly attracts Clodius’ hostility.62 The upright but unsuccessful Cato hereby functions to support Dio’s portrayal of politics throughout Book 39 where self-serving and destructive acts are depicted as highly effective, whereas uprightness and constitutional means lead to impotence. This is a central institutional problem in Dio’s Late Republic as consequently only egoistic politicians can gain success, whereas the upright are a priori unsuccessful.

In conclusion, Dio has presented three main tools of the corrupted political competition of the Late Republic, namely bribery, violence and political manipulation. These problems have here been presented in their most extreme forms through a thematic treatment of each in turn which largely eschews the common

59 Cass. Dio 39.21.3–4.
60 Cass. Dio 37.51.1–2; 38.12.1–2.
61 Cass. Dio 39.23.1.
62 Cass. Dio 39.23.2–3.
narrative focus on the dynasts. Moreover, Dio has clearly shown that these tools were absolutely essential for political success and that constitutional opposition and traditional authority were powerless in the face of egoistic politicians who availed themselves of them. Strikingly, Book 39 has so far not been intensely focused on the leading characters even though Pompey was present in Rome. Dio has instead concentrated his criticism on the general destructive process of political competition and the myriad problematic politicians that were involved in it. Through this narrative prioritisation, Dio relieves the leading dynasts in the triumvirate of part of the responsibility for the downfall of the Republic and shifts it onto the institutional competition in the Late Republic instead.

The Main Tools in Practice

The Consulship of Pompey and Crassus

Dio now turns to the application of the main tools of violence, bribery and political manipulation by the dynasts during central events of Book 39, firstly the consular elections of 56. Here Dio demonstrates how Crassus and Pompey first employ political manipulation to circumvent laws prohibiting them from canvassing for office and thereafter use violence liberally in order to win the consulships. This is set against the previous presentation of violence and political manipulation as pervasive problems in Roman political competition. The success of Crassus and Pompey thus becomes a manifestation of the effectiveness of these unconstitutional tools as well as of the impotence of traditional authority and constitutional methods. In order to present this interpretation more forcefully, Dio even omits the meeting at Luca so as to avoid detracting from his central focus, namely the destructive workings of competition for office. Thus, as mentioned in the Introduction, Dio does not present his interpretations explicitly but rather incorporates them in the general narrative. Consequently, only by reading this narrative closely can we glean Dio’s interpretations of the Late Republic.

As mentioned previously, Caesar’s success is a prime mover in Pompey’s desire for the consulship of 55 as it elicits φιλοτιμία in the latter. It is noteworthy that this situation is the only place in Book 39 where φιλοτιμία is mentioned, especially in view of the importance of this book for the outbreak of the civil war. The scarcity of φιλοτιμία in this crucial book is problematic for Rees’ psychological-
cal or moral perspective and for his assertion that φιλοτιμία is “the dominant and most destructive vice in Dio’s history”\textsuperscript{64}. Pompey’s φιλοτιμία here is important as it spurs him on to seek the consulship but it grows out of the political competition of the Republic as set out above. This is thus a prime example of the political nature of seemingly moral aspects in Dio’s Late Republic which is essentially focused on institutional competition.

This focus is evident, as the tool of political manipulation is immediately in focus when the narrative moves to the consular elections of 56 themselves and the involvement of Crassus and Pompey herein:

“When they began to canvass for the office outside of the period specified by law, and, among others the consuls themselves [...] made it plain that they would not allow them to be elected, they tried to bring it about, through the agency of Gaius Cato and others, that the elections should not be held that year, in order that an interrex might be chosen and they might then seek and secure the office in accordance with the laws.”\textsuperscript{65}

Dio here shows the importance of political manipulation in Late Republican politics as it crucially enables Pompey and Crassus to stand for the consulship.

Furthermore, Gaius Cato, not to be confused with the better known Marcus Porcius Cato, continues the manipulation of the laws as he attempts to stop the senators from undertaking measures opposing Pompey and Crassus: “[Cato] rushed out of the gathering [and called in any one he met in the market-place(?)] in order that no decision might be reached; for, if any person not a senator were inside, they might not give their vote.”\textsuperscript{66} The senators then attempt to counter this by constitutional means as they changed their dress in order to frighten Cato and addressed the people, hereby bringing them “to a state of extreme sorrow”\textsuperscript{67}. These acts by the senate are of course traditional and constitutional Republican aspects. However, Clodius likewise addressed the people and the senate now resorted to violence to counter this:

“the senate confronted him [...], while at that moment he was surrounded by the knights and would have been torn limb from limb, had he not raised an outcry, calling upon the people for aid; whereupon many ran to the scene bringing fire and threatening to burn his oppressors along with the senate-house if they should do him any violence. Thus Clodius was saved after coming so near perishing.”\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{64} Rees 2011, 15.
\textsuperscript{65} Cass. Dio 39.27.3. The above insertion with “?” is Cary’s (1914–1927) suggestion.
\textsuperscript{66} Cass. Dio 39.28.2–3.
\textsuperscript{67} Cass. Dio 39.28.4.
\textsuperscript{68} Cass. Dio 39.29.2–3.
Essentially, this part of the narrative exemplifies the constantly escalating use of different tools in order to fulfil political aims in Dio’s Late Republic. The senate attempts to act in a constitutional fashion and appeal to the people but then have to resort to violence to counter the address made by the popularis politician Clodius. However, their opponents are, predictably, vastly more powerful in the use of violence as they are supported by the people, whose threats of burning the senate-house and the senators exemplify the intensification of violence that is occurring in Book 39. Through these consular elections, by far the most detailed described in Dio’s Late Republic, Dio shows the importance and practical use of political manipulation and violence by major dynasts and their supporters. However, these dynasts are not the main focus; rather it is the problematic process of political competition which they exemplify that is Dio’s central arena of investigation.

Notably, Pompey is “not alarmed at all by” the violence surrounding Clodius and instead he and Crassus terrify the senators into passivity whereafter they spend the rest of the year without further official business “exactly as if they were enslaved (ὡσπερ δεδουλωμένοι)” Through δεδουλωμένοι and the emphatic suffix on the conjunction, the corruption of the political system through violent competition is clearly emphasised and taken to an extreme as it has completely paralysed the state. However, the use of this strategy by Pompey and Crassus has immediate advantages for themselves:

“Crassus and Pompey were appointed consuls after an interregnum as no one else of the earlier candidates opposed them. To be sure, Lucius Domitius [...] set out from his house for the assembly just after dark, but when the slave who carried the torch in front of him was slain, he became frightened and went no farther. Hence, since no one at all opposed them, and furthermore since Publius Crassus [...] brought soldiers to Rome for this very purpose, they were easily chosen.”

This shows that violence backed up by sufficient force is key to unlocking political success, whereas the seemingly law-abiding Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus or the previous constitutional measures of the senate are completely ineffective; the senators’ change of garments for example seems almost comically futile in the face of determined violence.

69 Cass. Dio 39.30.1.
70 Cass. Dio 39.30.4. Adapted from Cary 1914–1927. On Dio’s use of the trope of enslavement, see Lavan 2013.
71 Cass. Dio 39.31.
72 This tactic consistently seems ineffective in Dio: e.g. 37.33.3, 43.3; 38.16.3.
This is restated later as Dio even asserts explicitly that Crassus and Pompey “had secured their office by violence (βίᾳ)”\(^{73}\), which forcefully highlights the importance of violence for political success. Cato illustrates this point by contrast as Pompey and Crassus bar him from becoming a praetor “for Cato did not see fit to offer any violence (βίαιον)”\(^{74}\). Dio here creates a clear contrast between the consuls, who obtained their office through βία, and Cato who is rendered politically impotent and unsuccessful by his refusal to use the selfsame tool. The importance of violence as a political tool again comes into focus when Cato and Favonius oppose the consuls’ measures: “their outspokenness (ἐπαρρησιάζοντο) was of no avail”\(^{75}\) and Cato “well understood that even if he employed the whole day, he could not persuade them to vote anything that he wished”\(^{76}\). Their opponents instead resort to forceful measures: “the attendants of the tribunes drove them both out, wounded the rest who were with them, and actually killed a few. After the law [the lex Trebonia giving new extraordinary commands to Crassus and Pompey] had been passed in this way […].”\(^{77}\) Cato and Favonius here use the time-honoured constitutional tactic of public speaking, despite Dio’s emphasis of the awareness of Cato that this tactic was bound to be ineffectual. Pompey’s use of the decidedly unconstitutional tool of violence is, on the other hand, strikingly successful. This problem is restated immediately hereafter:

“Ateius took Gallus, who had been struck in being forced out of the gathering, and led him, all covered with blood, into the presence of those still on the spot, showed him to them, and by making such remarks as might be expected, stirred them mightily.”\(^{78}\)

Ateius here again uses the constitutional tool of public speaking but as the consuls “had a considerable bodyguard they intimidated the men, immediately called a meeting, and put to vote the additional measures [another extraordinary command] relating to Caesar. The same persons tried to speak in opposition to these, too, but were unable to accomplish anything”\(^{79}\). In the above quotations, the futility of public speaking is underlined twice and the power of violence is highlighted by the fact that all three dynasts achieve new extraordinary commands. This contrast between the \textit{a priori} futility of παρρησία and constitutional

\(^{73}\) Cass. Dio 39.37.1. Adapted from Cary 1914–1927.

\(^{74}\) Cass. Dio 39.32.2.

\(^{75}\) Cass. Dio 39.34.1.

\(^{76}\) Cass. Dio 39.34.3.

\(^{77}\) Cass. Dio 39.35.5–36.1.

\(^{78}\) Cass. Dio 36.1

\(^{79}\) Cass. Dio 36.2
measures on the one side and the perpetual success of violence on the other is a shrewd presentation of the institutional problems of the Republic.

Pompey and Crassus actually attempt to remedy the problematic situation in Rome by curtailing personal expenditures

“although they themselves went to every length of luxury and indulgence; but they were prevented by this very circumstance from enacting the law. For Hortensius, [...] making use of their own mode of life to support his arguments, persuaded them to give up their intention.”

Furthermore, the consuls were wary of appearing to debar other people through jealousy from the same privileges they had enjoyed. They are here caught in a web of internal corruption where every attempt to break the pattern through one’s position is hindered by the corruption used to obtain it. There is also a noteworthy contrast between Pompey and Crassus’ earlier successes through violence and their present failure when attempting to use constitutional means to remedy the problems of Rome. This is the mark of an inherently unworkable system and demonstrates the impossibility of change within the structure of the Late Republic.

The impotence of constitutional measures is again evident later in the consulship of 55 as the tribunes opposed the levies of the consuls:

“the consuls, although they did not dare to use any violence, did, however, along with their partisans in the senate, change their clothing as if for a calamity. They immediately repented, and without offering any excuse went back to their accustomed dress.”

The consuls refrain from violence and attempt to use constitutional measures but are completely unsuccessful and repent this course. Crassus changes tactic and

“looked to the force of arms (τῶν ὅπλων ἰσχύν). The tribunes, then, seeing that their outspokenness, unsupported by arms, (παρρησία αὐτῶν ἄοπλος) was too weak to hinder any of his undertakings, held their peace for the most part.”

Dio here explicitly states that the tribunes and their παρρησία were powerless without access to armed force and the consequent threat of violence. Strikingly, successful tribunes earlier in Dio’s Late Republic, such as Gabinius and Cornelius,
did in fact back up their παρρησία with violence, achieved through the people. Via the feeble opposition of the peaceful tribunes against Crassus and its contrast to the earlier, violently successful tribunes, Dio shows that the achievement of political goals is closely linked to the use of the important tool of violence. This is further supported as Crassus is highly successful exactly through this tool. In this situation, Dio thus again emphasises the weakness of traditional Republican authority in the face of the violent dynasts, which is a manifestation of the problematic process of political competition.

Bribery is only mentioned briefly in relation to the consulship of Crassus and Pompey but political manipulation and especially violence receive intense focus both before and during. Furthermore, the use of these brings great success as Crassus, Pompey and Caesar are all rewarded with new extraordinary commands, despite enmity between especially Pompey and Caesar. However, Dio in fact omits the meeting in Luca in 56 where the triumvirs formed this plan, whereas Appian and Plutarch, as mentioned earlier, invest the event with noteworthy importance. Lintott calls it “the most striking error of omission” but it is unlikely that Dio was simply unaware of this development which was, as mentioned above, often recorded in the parallel sources. Rather, the omission in fact plays a key role in Dio’s narrative as it detracts from the importance of the triumvirate. This is a continuation of Dio’s narrative and interpretative shift away from the leading men and onto the institutional problems of the Republic, seen previously in Book 39. The omission thus diminishes an important factor in the outbreak of the civil wars as the triumvirate in Dio’s account is hereby portrayed as having basically disintegrated by 56, a presentation that is supported by the abovementioned enmity between Caesar and Pompey. Through this, the explicit political influence of the triumvirate is in Dio confined merely to the years 60 and 59. The absence of the meeting at Luca is therefore not an error but a conscious omission that enhances the importance of institutional competition as a cause for the downfall of the Republic. However, Dio needed to explain why Caesar was also given an extraordinary command if the triumvirate had broken down. According to Dio, the consuls feared that Caesar would obstruct their measures

84 Gabinius: Cass. Dio 36.30.3–4; Cornelius: Cass. Dio 36.39.3.
85 Cass. Dio 39.37.1.
86 Cass. Dio 39.25–27.
87 App. Civ. 2.17; Plut. Cato 41.1.
88 Lintott 1997, 2512. On the omission of Luca, see also Schwartz 1899, 1713 f. and Rees 2011, 207.
89 So Schwartz 1899, 1713 f. However, Schwartz offers no wider explanation. See also Rees 2011, 206–209.
and therefore gave him an extraordinary command as well.\textsuperscript{90} Intriguingly, Dio here adds: “to state the actual fact (ὡς γε τἀληθὲς εὑρίσκεται)”\textsuperscript{91}. It seems that Dio was aware of his omission of Luca and wanted to emphasise the accuracy of his own alternative explanation, further highlighted by the addition of the emphatic γε and the use of τἀληθὲς.

Dio thus in the narrative of Crassus’ and Pompey’s consulship explores how especially political manipulation and violence were used to great effect in Late Republican political competition and through this also emphasises the ineffectualness of traditional authority and constitutional methods. Furthermore, through the omission of Luca and the alternative narrative centring on the \textit{lex Trebonia}, Dio puts the institutional competition and its destructiveness at the centre of his explanation of the degenerating Republic. It is also instructive that the \textit{lex Trebonia}, like the \textit{lex Gabini}a and the \textit{lex Manilia}, is another piece of tribunician legislation used by dynasts to achieve their goals, which shows how the restoration of the power of the tribunes furthered the problem of competition. However, the whole narrative of the consulship of Crassus and Pompey is set against the background of Dio’s thematic treatment of the main themes in the first half of the book. Through this interconnection, only perceivable through a largely diachronic reading, Dio shows that the use of violence and political manipulation by Crassus and Pompey is not a singular moral problem related to these two dynasts. Rather, these tools are part of the grander institutional problem of competition. Dio’s close treatment of Pompey and Crassus here is, then, not due to a preoccupation with these individuals as seen in other sources, which is further supported by their relative absence in the first half of Book 39. They are instead used in Dio’s exploration of the destructive process of institutional competition. Book 39 thus shows great narrative sophistication and premeditation on the part of Dio and suggests the presence of an interpretative framework centred on political competition.

**The Restoration of Ptolemy**

The last part of the narrative of Book 39 is concerned with the restoration of Ptolemy. While Dio in the narrative of the consular elections of 56 focused on violence and political manipulation, he here structures his narrative purposefully to present bribery as a highly destructive problem in Roman politics. Furthermore,

\textsuperscript{90} Cass. Dio 39.33.3
\textsuperscript{91} Cass. Dio 39.33.3.
the use of bribes, as violence and political manipulation earlier, consistently brings successes while any constitutional methods are inherently powerless. Presented after the previously analysed portrayal of bribery as a central problem in Late Republican political competition, the power of bribery and the impotence of constitutional efforts in connection with the restoration of Ptolemy become emblematic of a far wider problem, namely the destructive workings of political competition in the period.

In fact, Dio even starts with a summary of events which explicitly underlines the problem of bribery that will be in focus:

“About this time Ptolemy, although the Romans had voted not to assist him and were even now highly indignant at the bribery he had employed, was nevertheless restored and got back his kingdom. Pompey and Gabinius accomplished this. So much power had domination and abundant wealth as against the decrees of both the people and the senate (αἵ τε δυναστείαι καὶ αἱ τῶν χρημάτων περιουσίαι καὶ παρὰ τὰ ψηφίσματα τά τετοῦ δήμου καὶ τά τῆς βουλῆς ἴσχυσαν), that when Pompey sent orders to Gabinius, then governor of Syria, and the latter made a campaign [... as the result of a bribe, they restored the king contrary to the wish of the state, paying no heed either to it or to the oracles of the Sibyl.”

This use of a summary is a highly efficient strategy as it primes the reader to focus on the problem of bribery in the ensuing narrative. Dio alludes to the earlier description of Ptolemy’s extreme use of bribery and assassinations in order to further criticise his restoration and to emphasise the impotence of the opposing senate. This is further supported as Dio in the above quotation, through the structuring of his sentence and the comparative preposition παρὰ, has created an explicit contrast between δυναστεία and money on the one side and official authority on the other, in which the latter is clearly inferior. This contrast informs the treatment of Ptolemy’s restoration and is a continuation of Dio’s focus on the weakness of official authority. Dio here also emphasises that not even religious scruples stood in the way of Gabinius and Pompey, which adds a further layer of criticism as the Romans, due to excessive competition, are unable to correct themselves even when confronted with divine guidance.

Dio has thus in the summary highlighted the external problems that competition through bribery will cause (i.e. Gabinius’ campaign and restoration of Ptolemy) but then turns the attention of the summary to internal matters:

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92 Cass. Dio 39.55.1–3. Adapted from Cary 1914–1927, who rather inexplicably translates δυναστεία as “official authority”. On Dio’s complex use of this word and its role in his broader interpretations, see Lindholmer 2018b. On δυναστεία in Dio, see also e.g. Freyburger-Galland 1996.
“Gabinius was later brought to trial for this [the restoration of Ptolemy], but on account of Pompey’s influence and the money at his command was not convicted. To such a state of confusion had affairs come with the Romans of that day, that when some of the magistrates and jurors received from him but a very small part of the large bribes that he had received, they took no thought for their duty, and furthermore taught others to commit crimes for money, showing them that they could easily buy immunity from punishment.”

Dio here again primes the reader to focus on bribery and to understand the following trial of Gabinius according to Dio’s perspective. In this perspective, Gabinius, and others, could act with impunity due to the competitive tool of bribes and Dio also emphasises the destructive precedence created here, which further corrupted society and taught others to follow Gabinius’ problematic example. Bribery is, then, presented as a main tool of destructive competition and as highly effective. Dio does note that Gabinius was eventually convicted. However, “this was a matter of great surprise to him [… and …] also a surprise to Pompey”

Here Dio uses even the conviction to underscore the problematic process of Late Republican competition as the incident is portrayed as abnormal and surprising. Through the condensed and easily communicable form of a summary, Dio thus succeeds in presenting destructive competition as the main problem and bribery as a central tool that forces further degeneration.

Dio now turns to the narrative itself and relates how Ptolemy paid a huge sum to Gabinius who consequently went on campaign against Egypt

“notwithstanding the law forbade governors to enter territory outside their own borders or to begin wars on their own responsibility, and although the people and the Sibyl had declared that the man should not be restored. But the only restraint these considerations imposed was to lead him to sell his assistance for a higher price. He left in Syria his son Sisenna”

Dio is here highly consistent as the theme of bribery is kept centre stage and presented as decidedly effective, whereas the weakness of constitutional restraints in the shape of the traditions and laws of Rome is underlined as they function not as limitations but rather to increase the amount Gabinius demands. Furthermore, Gabinius seemingly attempts to keep the province of Syria within his own family as he even places his own son at the helm. This extreme disregard for Rome and its laws is yet again part of the destructive competition in which bribes remain a central tool.

93 Cass. Dio 39.55.4.
94 Cass. Dio 39.55.5–6.
95 Cass. Dio 39.56.4–5.
Gabinius continues his corrupted search for increased bribes as he in fact purposefully releases Archelaus, a strong enemy leader captured earlier, since “he hoped that he could exact even a larger amount in view of the cleverness and renown of Archelaus; moreover he received much money besides from the prisoner himself, and so voluntarily released him, pretending that he had escaped”\textsuperscript{96}. Gabinius here acts in direct contravention of military interests by releasing Archelaus solely to obtain further bribes, which is unprecedented in Dio’s earlier narrative. Gabinius succeeds in restoring Ptolemy but has meanwhile inflicted great damage on Roman territories:

> “the Syrians cried out loudly against Gabinius, especially since in his absence they had been terribly abused by the pirates, and the tax-gatherers, being unable to collect the taxes on account of the marauders, were owing numerous sums.”\textsuperscript{97} 

In short, Gabinius has, through his own personal quest for riches and fuelled by the widespread use of bribes, significantly undermined Roman interests. However, yet again this is set against the background of the earlier thematic treatment of the main competitive tools, which places Gabinius’ behaviour within the larger problem of bribery in institutional competition. Furthermore, the above continues the demonstration of the incredible importance of these main tools in competition as bribery is the central narrative driving force and highly effective.

This focus on bribes continues as the narrative moves back to Rome and the impending trial of Gabinius. Crassus is here won over because of a bribe from Gabinius and the following consul, Claudius, “expected to get bribes from Gabinius, if he should cause any disturbance”\textsuperscript{98}. Dio is here highly consistent as he posits bribery as a central cause of action for several individuals and as a fundamental and highly effective tool of Roman politics. Before the trial, the Tiber rose and wreaked havoc in Rome, “as was surmised, by the act of some divinity”\textsuperscript{99}. Cicero’s letters demonstrate that this disaster actually happened after the first trial of Gabinius\textsuperscript{100} and Dio thus appears to have moved the disaster in order to focus the anger of the gods on the restoration of Ptolemy. Furthermore, the divine calamity also acts as an important narrative catalyst: The Romans were distressed at the disaster, which was thought to be punishment for restoring Ptolemy, and desired to condemn Gabinius to death:

\textsuperscript{96}  Cass. Dio 39.57.3.  
\textsuperscript{97}  Cass. Dio 39.59.1–2.  
\textsuperscript{98}  Cass. Dio 39.60.3.  
\textsuperscript{99}  Cass. Dio 39.61.1.  
\textsuperscript{100}  Cic. Q. Fr. 3.5.8.
“So insistent were they that although nothing about punishment was found in the Sibylline oracles, still the senate passed a decree that the magistrates and populace should accord him the bitterest and harshest treatment.”

However: “While this was going on, money sent ahead by Gabinius caused him to suffer no serious penalty either while absent or upon his return, at least for this affair.” Furthermore, Gabinius is acquitted although Cicero “accused him with all the force of his oratory.” This is yet another damning criticism of Republican politics and a forceful reminder of the immense power and importance of bribes in Late Republican competition. Dio also again emphasises the complete impotence of the senate and traditional Republican tools as the senate’s decree and Cicero’s oratory are easily overwhelmed and rendered ineffective by bribes.

Dio continues this emphasis as Gabinius is only convicted when the people threateningly force the issue after the first acquittal:

“The people accordingly were almost for putting the jurymen to death also, but, when they escaped, turned their attention to the remaining charges against him and caused him to be convicted on those at any rate. For the men who were chosen by lot to pass judgment on the charges both feared the people and likewise obtained but little from Gabinius.”

The threat of violence through the people and Gabinius’ relative lack of bribes are here portrayed as the main causes for the latter’s conviction. Furthermore, the supporters of Gabinius surprisingly attempt to win the case through constitutional means as Pompey

“addressed them [the people] at length in behalf of Gabinius, and not only read to them a letter sent to him by Caesar in the man’s behalf, but also besought the jurymen, and not only prevented Cicero from accusing him again but actually persuaded him to plead for him.”

These constitutional attempts by Pompey’s camp are, unsurprisingly, completely futile as they lack the necessary bribes or the use of violence to counter the opposition. This situation hereby demonstrates the institutional nature of the problems of the Republic eminently as political success is evidently not tied to powerful individuals such as Pompey or Caesar but rather to the use of certain destructive methods whose consistent dominance is dictated by the way institutional competition functions. Thus even the conviction of the corrupt Gabinius is

101 Cass. Dio 39.61.4.
102 Cass. Dio 39.62.1.
103 Cass. Dio 39.62.2.
104 Cass. Dio 39.63.1–2.
105 Cass. Dio 39.63.4–5.
used to communicate and support Dio’s presentation of the effectiveness of the three main destructive competitive tools and the consequent weakness of constitutional methods.

The narrative surrounding the restoration of Ptolemy essentially explores the corrupt state of Roman competition by focusing on the extreme use of bribes which renders constitutional measures consistently futile. It should also be noted that bribery, as violence and political manipulation previously, is exceptionally effective and political success is clearly tied to the use of it. However, the abundant bribery is not part of a classic moralistic narrative of degeneration by Dio. Rather, Ptolemy’s restoration and the subsequent trials are the narrative continuation of the previous exposition of the bribery problem and thereby, like the consulship of Pompey and Crassus, cumulatively become part of the grander institutional problem of competition. Dio has thus yet again managed to use central Late Republican events to present his institutional explanation, centred on political competition, of the deterioration of the Republic, which is another testament to the premeditation of his narrative and interpretation.

Conclusion

In the above, I have shown how Dio presents violence, bribery and political manipulation as three fundamental tools in the institutional competition of the Late Republic. These tools were institutional and political in origin and effect as they emerged directly from the institutional political competition and then proceeded to degenerate it further. There is of course a moral aspect of these three tools, but they are represented by Dio as generated by and part of the political problem of institutional competition which is Dio’s main interest. In order to communicate and support these interpretations, Dio explores the tools thematically by moving the focus away from the dynasts and thereby emphasises that these elements were not the products of a few individuals’ acts but rather part of an institutional problem that permeated the Republic. In the second half of Book 39, Dio then proceeds consistently to portray these tools as the keys to political success, whereas the rejection of them necessarily leads to failure – another demonstration of the institutional nature of Dio’s interpretation.

It has long been argued that the decad was used as a structuring device by Dio as each one ends with central events. However, this article has demonstrated that also individual books were used as significant self-contained examinations

106 Millar 1964, 38 f.; Rees 2011, 41–43; Urso 2013, 9 f.; Rich 2016, 276 f.
of central problems of Dio’s Republic, as Book 39 through its interrelated structuring explores the destructively problematic workings of institutional competition. The book as a structural unit for Dio is thus not only aesthetically important, as argued for other authors,\(^{107}\) but a significant interpretative tool. Furthermore, Dio’s institutional perspective is again evident as the institutional competition and consequent disorder in fact cause the civil war between Pompey and Caesar. In Book 40, Dio spends the first three quarters on external wars, but then continues the narrative from Book 39 of the rivalry between the camps of Clodius and Milo, which quickly ends with the former’s death. This, combined with constant destructive competition in relation to the consular elections, creates the need for the sole consulship of Pompey. Dio comments: “elated by the novelty and unexpectedness of the honour, he [Pompey] no longer formed any plan to gratify the populace, but was careful to do everything that pleased the senate.”\(^{108}\) In Dio’s view, Pompey has now chosen the side of the senate, which causes his estrangement from Caesar and ultimately civil war. Strikingly, however, Pompey’s sole consulship which causes this estrangement is fundamentally the result of institutional competition that has its narrative and interpretative roots in Book 39 and then merely reaches a conclusion in the last quarter of Book 40. Furthermore, Dio skilfully downplays or removes all the commonly accepted singular causes for civil war, such as the triumvirate and Luca, the deaths of Julia and Crassus or the crossing of the Rubicon. We are hereby left without singular events with which to explain the outbreak of civil war and it is instead Dio’s exploration of competition that takes centre stage. It is, then, not in Book 40 but in Book 39 and its thorough examination of the institutional problems of political competition that Dio’s central exploration of the source of the civil wars is to be found. Dio hereby posits an institutional explanation centred on institutionally generated competition of the outbreak of the civil wars and the fall of the Republic – an explanation that is only perceivable through a close analysis of the organisation of the highly cohesive Book 39.

This highly consistent and interconnected institutional interpretation suggests that Dio’s work was premeditated and governed by an interpretative framework with institutional competition at its centre. This interpretation is unique in the source tradition and undermines both the assertion that Dio was unoriginal and the moral and psychological perspective that culminated in Rees.\(^{109}\) Furthermore, Dio’s focus on the very Republican problem of political competition and the central role of Republican institutions in Dio’s interpretation show that

\(^{107}\) See e.g. Gibson – Morello 2012 for Pliny the Younger or Vasaly 2002 for Livy.

\(^{108}\) Cass. Dio 40.50.5.

\(^{109}\) Hose 1994, 436; Sion-Jenkis 2000, 184 f.; Kuhn-Chen 2002, 243–246; Rees 2011, 6 f.
the portrayal of the Late Republic in his narrative is not overly influenced by or merely a mirroring of the problems of his own time, the Severan age, as has so often been claimed. The issue of traditional political competition had largely ceased to be relevant in Dio’s own time and Dio’s focus on this area is thus rather part of his interpretation of the fall of the Republic. This does not mean that Dio’s Late Republic is wholly divorced from his own time but that the relationship is much more complex than a simple mirroring. Thus, the Late Republic plays an important role in Dio’s overall narrative, but his portrayal of this period is also an exploration of the fall of the Republic on its own terms through an original perspective organised around competition.

Moreover, Dio has often been criticised for a poor understanding of the Republic but modern scholars have also frequently focused on the institutional problems of the Roman Republic as a cause for its downfall. Commonly, they too attempt to detract from the importance of individuals and see the problems of the Republic in a broader perspective that is not solely concentrated on Caesar and Pompey. Dio is therefore, in fact, the ancient source that most closely resembles modern explanations. This suggests that modern scholars would gain from according Dio’s interpretation of the Late Republic attention in its own right, a historical explanation that ought not to be rejected out of hand.

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110 This approach is seen from Millar 1964, 103 f. to Rees 2011, 255 and Kemezis 2014, 11–14.

111 Schwartz 1899, 1690 f.; Millar 1964, 47–49; Lintott 1997, 2514–2517.

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