

# Zosimus and his Historical Models

*Daniel C. Scavone*

IT HAS BEEN well established that for the particular events of his *Historia Nova* Zosimus relied upon Dexippus of Athens, Eunapius of Sardis and Olympiodorus of Egyptian Thebes as sources.<sup>1</sup> Just as certain is the belief that had he lived to finish his work, it would have extended to his own day, around the turn of the sixth century.<sup>2</sup> There are numerous internal indications of this intention in the *History*.<sup>3</sup> If this is the case, as it seems, then Zosimus would have required recourse to other historical sources before he reached the point at which he was an eyewitness, or at least a contemporary, of events and in a position to write as a real primary source.

Even as his work stands it evidences considerably wider reading than merely the writings of Dexippus, Eunapius and Olympiodorus. To be sure, they provided his *materia historiae*, but there are passages

<sup>1</sup> See Rudolf K. Martin, *De fontibus Zosimi* (Diss. Berlin 1866) 20. Compare, e.g., Zos. 3.2.4 with Eunap. fr.9; Zos. 4.20 with Eunap. fr.41. For the fragments of Eunap. *Néa Έκδοσις*, see C. Müller, *FHG IV* (Paris 1885) 11–56. But Ludwig Mendelssohn, ed., *Zosimi comitis et exadvocati fisci Historia Nova* (Leipzig 1887) xxxix–xlvi, suggested Magnus of Carrhae as source for Julian's Persian expedition, a view which has been demolished by W. R. Chalmers, "Eunapius, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Zosimus on Julian's Persian Expedition," *CQ* 10 (1960), and others. Mendelssohn's suggestions that Julian himself might belong among Zosimus' sources still require more proof than the great editor could muster. Finally, however, Alberto Olivetti, "Osservazioni sui capitoli 45–53 del Libro II di Zosimo e sulla loro probabile fonte," *RivFC* 43 (1915) 321–33, and Norman Baynes, "A Note of Interrogation," *Byzantion* 2 (1925) 49–53, argued with force that Zosimus had recourse to a panegyric or epic source for his discussion of the victory of Constantius at the battle of Mursa in 351.

<sup>2</sup> Zosimus' work lies unfinished in the midst of Book 6. Compare the extremes of chronology adjudged by Franz Ruhl, "Wann schrieb Zosimos?" *RhM* 46 (1891) 146–47, who felt that there was no need to place Zosimus before 518, the end of Anastasius' reign, but then using 2.38, settled upon 501; and Ludwig Jeep, "Die Lebenszeit des Zosimos," *RhM* 37 (1882) 425–33, who asserted that Zosimus flourished in 425. There is now near certainty that Ruhl's late date is correct. It was adopted by Mommsen, "Zosimus," *BZ* 12 (1903) 533, and by Professor Alan Cameron, as communicated to me *via* an article, as yet, to my knowledge, unpublished.

<sup>3</sup> See 2.7, 3.32, 4.21, 4.28, 4.59, *et al.* Translations of Zosimus in subsequent parts of this paper are those of James J. Buchanan and Harold T. Davis, *Zosimus: Historia Nova* (San Antonio 1967), except for minor deviations.

which betray influences ranging from Herodotean anecdotes to Neoplatonic ideas; and Zosimus' "miracle mentality" reflects not only the pagan theurgical practices of his day, but also, and demonstrably so, I believe, his exposure to prevalent Christian miracle stories.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, if the last of the pagan historians displays to different degrees nearly all of the characteristics of the pagan historiographical tradition from Herodotus to Ammianus Marcellinus, we ought not to be surprised to discover the influence of Christian historiography—born with Eusebius, and so in Zosimus' day nearly two hundred years in existence, easily long enough to have made its impact upon the literary world.

To begin at the beginning, the theological tone which extends through the work of Zosimus found precedent in Herodotus himself.<sup>5</sup> This involved an insistence upon the regular presence of divine signs as guides for men, which was part of the dominant theme of the *Historia Nova*.<sup>6</sup> The remarkable absence of military insight—or even concern for accurate military descriptions—in Zosimus' work is also a regular ground for complaint against the Father of History.<sup>7</sup>

Trifling anecdotes of an Herodotean character appear throughout the *History*. For the most part they reflect a poverty of judgement on the part of Zosimus. Such stories were used to embellish some factual account; but history is not necessarily served by a description of the skill at archery of an unnamed member of Aurelian's Persian body-guard.<sup>8</sup> A second example illustrates the remarkable naïveté of which Zosimus was capable. The war of Probus against the barbarians near the Rhine had just begun

when a famine broke out everywhere in that area. Then a tremendous storm burst forth, pouring down grain in addition to raindrops,

<sup>4</sup> See Ramsay MacMullen, "Constantine and the Miraculous," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 81–96.

<sup>5</sup> W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus I* (Oxford 1928) 43: "... With Herodotus the philosophy of history is wholly theological."

<sup>6</sup> Among numerous other citations, see Hdt. 1.86, 1.209, 6.98, 7.137, 8.14, 8.35ff and 9.65. For Zosimus see below, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> See How and Wells, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) II, n. on 5.118.3, whose remark, "Herodotus, as usual, shows complete ignorance of tactics," reflects the general consensus of scholars. I plan to illustrate elsewhere that Zosimus' battles are regularly mere rhetorical exercises. See, *e.g.*, 2.18–19.

<sup>8</sup> Zos. 1.54. See other instances at 1.29, 1.33 and 1.62; also 1.69–70, which Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch.12 n.31, calls "long and trifling," and 2.8, which Gibbon, ch.14 n.13, calls "foolish," while A. H. M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (New York 1949) 57, accepts it as true; also 4.13, 4.40, 4.44, 5.9 and 5.29.

such that heaps of it automatically piled up in certain places. All were stunned by this marvel, and at first did not dare to touch the grain and appease their hunger. But when necessity became stronger than every kind of terror, they baked loaves and devoured them. Thus at one and the same time they shook off their hunger and very easily won out in the war, thanks to the emperor's luck. (1.67)

On at least two occasions the Herodotean epithet was deserved precisely. An echo of the tale told by Herodotus about Pisistratus' recapture of power in Athens by means of a pseudo-Athena (1.60) appears in Zosimus at 1.51 where the sophisticated Antiochenes were duped by a bogus Emperor Aurelian. The spirit is quite similar to that of Herodotus, who seemed to be poking fun at his precocious Athenians.<sup>9</sup>

Again, Zosimus' account of the escape of Hormisda at 2.27 reminds us of the young thief's rescue of the body of his brother from the guards of the Pharaoh Rhampsinitus in Herodotus 2.121:

Hormisda they bound in fetters and kept under guard on a certain hill situated in front of the city. Some time having elapsed, his wife contrived his escape in the following fashion. She caught a fish, inserted a large iron file in its stomach, sewed it up, and gave it to her most trustworthy eunuch. Him she commanded to tell Hormisda 'to eat the fish when no one was present and use for his own deliverance what he should find in its stomach.' Having hit upon this course she dispatched camels laden with wine and abundant food, providing a feast for her husband's guards. And when they applied themselves thereto Hormisda, who had torn open the fish and found the file, severed the fetters that bound his feet, seized the eunuch's stole and made his departure through the midst of the already intoxicated guards.

If it be conceded that the common elements of the rescue and the drunken guards might be coincidental (in Zosimus, Hormisda's wife frees him living; Herodotus has the thief retrieve his brother's corpse at the command of their mother—a woman was instrumental in both instances), we are confirmed in our belief that Zosimus had the

<sup>9</sup> It is possible to discern sometimes in Zosimus' treatment of the Antiochenes a reflection of Julian's attitude toward them (though by and large Zosimus is not bitter in his criticism). Thus at 3.11 he calls them naturally fond of spectacles, in the same paragraph in which he refers to Julian's *Misopogon*. It is as if he was trying to bring home a point, for earlier (1.61) he had described Aurelian's successful attack on Antioch while the citizens were viewing a horse-race.

story of Herodotus in mind by his assertion that “these things I have narrated exactly as they happened,” which calls to mind Herodotus’ appendix to his Egyptian story-group: “Anyone may believe these Egyptian tales if he is sufficiently credulous; I myself keep to the general plan of this book, that is, to record the traditions of the various nations just as I heard them related to me.” One final reminiscence of Herodotus is evoked by a one-of-a-kind remark of Zosimus. Julian had departed from Antioch against unfavorable omens; regarding his reasons Zosimus says, “I know why, but will not tell” (3.12). This sort of remark was used by Herodotus to maintain an air of mystery and romance around his travelogues.<sup>10</sup> By such similarities, at the same time not so frequent in Zosimus as to be considered part of his own mentality or style, his familiarity with the *Histories* of Herodotus appears quite certain, especially in the light of the more general affinities already mentioned.<sup>11</sup>

That Zosimus had read Polybius rests on firmer ground. On three occasions he is actually named.<sup>12</sup>

Polybius of Megalopolis, having undertaken to set down the events of his own time that were worthy of remembrance, thought it correct to show through the evidence of the facts themselves that the Romans, though they had fought with their neighbors for 600 years after the founding of the city, had not attained great power. But then, having gained dominion over a certain part of Italy, which they in turn lost after Hannibal’s passage through it and after their defeat at Cannae, and having seen the enemy pressing upon their very walls, they were raised to such great fortune that in scarcely fifty-three years’ time they had acquired not only Italy but all of Africa as well, while in the west they had subdued the Spaniards. They sought yet more: they crossed the Ionian Gulf, conquered the Greeks and dissolved the Macedonians’ realm, capturing alive him who was currently their king and taking him back to Rome. Now of such things no one would attribute the cause to human strength, but rather to the Fates’ necessity, or the stars’ revolutions, or God’s will, which is attendant upon those pursuits of ours that are righteous. (1.1)

For just as Polybius narrated how the Romans acquired their sover-

<sup>10</sup> Hdt. 2.123 and 2.171. For the story group see 2.121–23.

<sup>11</sup> Finally, one cannot read in Zosimus (5.6) that Athena Promachos warded off Alaric from her Athens without comparing Apollo’s defense of Delphi against the Persians (Hdt. 8.36–39).

<sup>12</sup> Zos. 1.1, 1.57 and 5.20. Herodotus was mentioned at 4.20.

eignty within a brief period of time, so I am going to tell how they lost it through their own blind folly within no long period of time. (1.57)

As Polybius dealt with Greek history as prologue to his major theme of the greatness of the Roman Republic, so Zosimus surveyed the important events of Greek and Roman history, as he saw them, which led up to his own narrative proper, which began really with Constantine early in Book 2. The *History* of Zosimus, setting out as it does with an allusion to the Trojan War, that is, one of the earliest 'historical' events of pagan antiquity, may be considered an attempt at universal history in the Polybian sense.

Another similarity appears in the first passage cited above where the later historian indicates a conception of the historical process not unlike that of his predecessor. He imagined a superhuman force at work governing events. In a spirit of tolerance which was a mark of the Graeco-Roman attitude toward the multitude of cults which comprised paganism even in Zosimus' day, he was ready to call this force either *Μοιρῶν ἀνάγκην ἢ ἀστράων κινήσεων ἢ θεοῦ βούλησιν*. Polybius implied the same idea at 1.4, where "*Τύχη* inclined almost all the affairs of the world in one direction and forced them to converge at one and the same point." Zosimus echoed his model in reverse at 5.41: "It was fated (*ἔδει*) that everything having to do with the city's destruction should coincide." The apparent disagreement about what to call the controlling force of the universe can be attributed to the lack of any dogmatism among pagan thinkers; but from the 'Zeus' of Homer, the 'Logos' of Heraclitus and the 'Nous' of Anaxagoras to Zosimus' indecision regarding which term to use, there was near unanimity among pagans in their belief in the existence of such a force. That, finally, Zosimus subscribed to the political philosophy expounded in the famous Book 6 of Polybius can be seen from his own statement of preference for republican government.<sup>13</sup>

As a result they kept adding something to their Empire year in and year out (so long as the authority of the aristocracy was maintained), because their consuls strove to outdo one another in feats of valor. But when the civil wars of Marius and Sulla and thereafter of Julius

<sup>13</sup> I. Fridericus Reitemeier noted this in the *Disquisitio* of his edition of the text of Zosimus (Leipzig 1784) xxii. E. Condurachi, "Les idées politiques de Zosime," *Revista Clasica* 13-14 (1941-42) 115-27, overstressed it. See also Walter E. Kaegi Jr, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton 1968) 105-08.

Caesar and Pompey the Great had destroyed the Republic, they abandoned the aristocracy and chose Octavian dictator. To his discretion they committed the entire administration without realizing that they had riskily entrusted this great power to the impulse and license of a single individual. For even if he should undertake to rule with rectitude and justice, he would not be able to do the right thing for everybody . . . Again, he would not be able to discover enough magistrates who would be ashamed not to live up to a vote of confidence placed upon them . . . If on the other hand he transgressed the limits of his power and got carried away into tyranny, upsetting the magistrates' offices, overlooking graft, thwarting justice with bribes, reducing subjects to the status of slaves (such has been the case with most autocrats, in fact almost all of them with few exceptions), then it followed of necessity that the brute power of him who got possession of authority spelled calamity for the public at large. (1.5)

Among the reading material to which Zosimus was exposed must have been the histories written by Christians and covering the same events as Zosimus' own. His digressions include accounts of several extraordinary phenomena which were intended to point up the remaining power of the old gods.<sup>14</sup> At least two of these, his inquiry into the origins of the *ludi saeculares* (2.1–7) and of the pontifical office (4.36), seem to have been inspired by the challenge of the ecclesiastical historians. By presenting the *New Testament* as an extension of the *Old Testament*, Eusebius had thrown back Christian origins to the beginnings of things, where it could meet paganism on equal chronological footing; it is altogether likely that Zosimus was consciously reasserting the great antiquity of the old *cultus* in answer to Eusebius and his company.

His search for an oracle predicting the greatness of Byzantium does display this intent (2.36–37). It parallels from the pagan point of view a passage in the church historian Sozomenus.<sup>15</sup> In the latter, God is said to have appeared to Constantine and to have led him by the hand to the site of Byzantium. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Zosimus was replying to this, a current Christian story about his hometown. His own oracle, though extremely ancient, foretells the growth and success of Constantinople, antedating any Christian version in

<sup>14</sup> Zos. 2.1–7, 3.32, 4.36, 5.5–6, 5.24 and 5.38.

<sup>15</sup> Soz. 2.3, borne out by *Cod. Theod.* 13.5.7.

doing so. Moreover, he countered the Christian's reference to God with a comparable devotion: τῷ θεῷ βραχὺς αἰεὶ τε ὄντι καὶ ἐκομένῳ. This is no isolated coincidence. The two historians again match arguments in their accounts of the story of Pope Innocent's granting of permission for the conduct of pagan rituals in the hope of thwarting Alaric's take-over in the city of Rome. Zosimus avers that the rites were never held because of public apathy, with the result that Alaric had to be bribed at great expense to the state and the ruin of the citizens. Sozomenus (*HE* 9.6) implies, at least, that they *were* performed, but naturally proved ineffectual, with the same result.

The most striking example of Zosimus' retaliation against Christian history occurs at 2.16. The appearance of the monogram of Christ to Constantine before the battle of the Milvian Bridge must have been household fare throughout the Empire. It was surely a key moment in the success of the new religion. Once again the Count has at hand a pagan version, which was at least as old as the Christian account since Lactantius, hired by Constantine as tutor for his son, also recorded it: it was really a *pagan* prophecy which had spelled out Maxentius' defeat. Constantine's victory in reality had done homage to the old gods! While Lactantius had appended the Christian miracle account to the one above, Zosimus totally ignored it.<sup>16</sup> If these similarities are not sufficient proof that the latter had read Sozomenus, it is at least unassailable that he was replying to stories among Christians and recorded by their new breed of historians.

Eusebius had not created Christian historiography *ex nihilo*. Christian apologists had established the apologetic tenor of the new genre. But Eusebius derived much more from these colleagues, as well as from the pagan historiographical tradition. The beginnings of a new Christian chronology were contributed by Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus and Hippolytus of Rome; to the ancient lists of kings, magistrates, scholars found in pagan writings were added successions of bishops of the most important sees. The problem of chronology was one of the keenest to be felt by Christian historians: how to reconcile Adam and his descendants with Deucalion and the misty generations of classical mythology, how to impose upon the new

<sup>16</sup> A. Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome*, transl. H. Mattingly (Oxford 1948) 16–18, has suggested that even if the vision of Constantine appeared merely in a dream, which is all that Lactant. *Mort.pers.* 44.5–6 records, we must accept it as an historical fact, an overwhelming experience for Constantine. For a larger view than is here presented, see MacMullen, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4).

composite Biblical-mythical chronology the Christian view of God's providence so that intervention of the true God was as patent within pagan contexts as in church history, *i.e.*, Christian times. Thus Christian historiography had a built-in philosophy of history.<sup>17</sup>

One other issue must be mentioned here—in a discussion that is far from exhaustive—and that is, the Roman persecution of Christians, while the exclusiveness of the Jews was exempted. The Roman position seems to have been that as an ancient nation within the Empire the Jews were legally entitled to follow their ancestral religion. Christianity was, on the other hand, a conglomerate of many peoples and could make no claim of antiquity.<sup>18</sup> Eusebius attempted to meet this distinction by establishing the idea of Christianity as a nation, though different from the other nations of the Empire. He accomplished this by depicting a continuity between the *Old* and *New Testaments*, thereby pushing back Christian origins beyond the beginnings of the pagans' awareness of their own civilization. The founding of comparative chronology was not the least of Eusebius' accomplishments.<sup>19</sup>

In Eusebius, too, the doctrinal debates which had taken place among pagan philosophers were paralleled by narratives dealing with the establishment and continued purity of Christian dogma. Similarly, from the pagan school of history writing was borrowed and perpetuated the strong biographical character. This characteristic derived from Tacitus and Suetonius especially, but even before them it was a dominant aspect of Xenophon's view of his art, whose individual heroes, Cyrus, Socrates and Agesilaus, are the prime movers of history in his pages.

Eusebius in turn began almost immediately to influence other writers, both pagan and Christian. Among the latter, imitators, continuators and translators abounded: the realization that here was something new seems evident even among Eusebius' contemporaries. His disavowal of set speeches, though it resulted in a loss of *ethos* such as Livy achieved in portraying the national Roman character and such as Herodotus and Thucydides attained in their vivid characterizations, became the practice in all historiographical circles during

<sup>17</sup> D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Eusebius of Caesarea* (Westminster [Md.] 1961) 139–49. See, too, Glanville Downey, "The Perspective of the Early Church Historians," *GRBS* 6 (1965) 57–70.

<sup>18</sup> E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge 1965) 111.

<sup>19</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.17) 156.



the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>20</sup> By this time it was clear to all that the invented speech, which was a most conspicuous feature of the rhetorical tradition, betrayed what Collingwood termed a “lack of interest” in what was really said, that is, simply, in the truth.<sup>21</sup> Truth was lost when an imaginary speech was inserted by an historian or when, obedient to the demands of a “literary canon of homogeneity of style,” a real speech was translated into the style of the writer. It may well be called a rule in the pagan tradition of historiography never to reproduce documents or speeches in their original form.<sup>22</sup> In response to the new canon established by Eusebius, the invented speech is almost nonexistent in Zosimus. Of the eight occurrences of *oratio recta* which I have traced, the longest, a seven-line recommendation of the Emperor Julian by Eusebia, wife of Constantius, is so qualified that the speech is not given in her own words, but she spoke *τρόπω τοιῶδε*. The others are short one- or two-line remarks, pithy and epigrammatic in character. These cases are in addition to Zosimus’ regular use of direct quotations of oracles; to cite oracles was nothing new, however, for it had been a habit of Herodotus.<sup>23</sup> Of the several ‘speeches’—I use the word for want of a more accurate—presented in direct discourse by Zosimus, the longest, as I have indicated, does not purport to be an actual quotation, as Eusebia was describing Julian’s virtues “in such terms as”

He is young and of artless character. His entire life he has devoted to the pursuits of knowledge and thus is totally unfamiliar with practical affairs—so much the better for our purposes hereafter. For in his administration of affairs he will either succeed or fail. In the former case the happy outcome will be publicly registered in the Emperor’s name, while in the latter he will perish and Constantius will have no one of the imperial family to be called to the imperium.

(3.1)

Significantly, this short *oratio recta* contains two of the key ideas in Zosimus’ estimate of Constantius: his habitual expropriation of the credit for his staff’s victories, and his reason for elevating both Julian and his brother Gallus to the purple.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> M. L. W. Laistner, “Some Reflections on Latin Historical Writing in the Fifth Century,” *CP* 35 (1940) 243ff.

<sup>21</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York 1956) 30.

<sup>22</sup> J. B. Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians* (New York 1958) 229–30.

<sup>23</sup> Zos. 2.6 and 2.37 are the best examples; see too 1.57.4.

<sup>24</sup> Zosimus characterized Constantius as “deceitful” (2.44, 45 and 46), “suspicious”

Aurelian's siege of Palmyra was embellished by Zosimus' recording of the citizens' insults to the Emperor and the elimination of the worst offender among them by the expert archery of one of Aurelian's bodyguard, who was made to remark, "If you so command you shall see this insolent man a corpse" (1.54.3).

A short speech of Julian, which points up the amazing presence of mind with which our historian endows him, is given at 3.25. Having miscalculated the steepness of the opposite bank in a river-crossing operation, with the result that the enemy had set fire to his men's boats, "the Emperor counteracted by stratagem his calamitous mistake, saying, 'They have *succeeded* in their crossing and have obtained possession of the bank; for that fire which attaches to their boats signifies the very thing I myself enjoined the soldiers on board to do as a token of their victory.' Thereupon all, just as they were, boarded the boats and crossed over."

At 4.36 Gratian's refusal of the pontifical robe was prophetically commented upon by one of the priesthood: "If the Emperor does not wish to be called Pontifex, soon enough there will be a Pontifex, Maximus." The prophecy was *post factum*, for it was Maximus who had just (4.35) put Gratian to death and usurped his place: hence the pun.

Another epigrammatic speech, shorter than two lines in length, was given to Theodosius upon hearing of the dislike of the eastern court for Rufinus: "Unless they lay aside their jealousy of Rufinus, they will soon see him ruling" (4.51.2).

A brief statement of Stilicho's was introduced at 5.29. Peace should be made with Alaric "because Alaric spent all that time in Epirus for the Emperor's benefit, to the end that along with me he might make war on the eastern Emperor, strip Illyria from his realm and annex it to Honorius'."<sup>25</sup> To this the lone dissenting reply of Lampad-

(3.1-2), and "envious" (3.5 and 3.8). Amm. Marc. 16.12.68-70 also points out Constantius' custom of claiming credit for others' military victories. See Eusebia's speech just quoted for the same notion, verified among modern scholars by Baynes, review of E. Stein, *Geschichte des spätrömischen Reiches*, in *JRS* 18 (1928) 222.

<sup>25</sup> Zosimus recited this policy of Stilicho on two other occasions (5.26 and 27), and it was picked up by J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian II* (London 1923) 110-11, 120 and 169. Norman Baynes, "A Note on Professor Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire*," *JRS* 12 (1922) 211-16, took issue. His position, relying on Zos. 5.11, was that the eastern government feared Stilicho's takeover of Constantinople itself and not merely the Prefecture of Illyricum. The latter view is supported by contemporary evidence, e.g., Claud. in *Rufin.* 2.4-6 and *III Cons.Hon.* 157-58.

ius was a model of brevity: *Non est ista pax sed pactio servitutis ὁ δηλοῖ δουλείαν μάλλον ἢπερ εἰρήνην εἶναι τὸ πραττόμενον.*<sup>26</sup>

At 5.40 the envoys announced to Alaric besieging Rome that the citizens were armed and ready to fight, to which he replied neatly, “Thick grass is more easily cut than thin,” and demanded every bit of wealth in the city before he would raise the siege. To the envoys’ question, “If you should take all these things, what would be left for those who are inside the city?” Alaric retorted simply, “Their lives.” This compact interchange is the closest thing to a dialogue in all the pages of Zosimus.

Finally, the grain supply from Africa having been cut off, the starving people of Rome begged to be allowed to purchase the corpses of slain gladiators with the cry, *Pretium inpone carni humanae τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν, ὄρικον τῷ ἀνθρωπίνῳ κρέει τιμήν.*

Explanation of these seven passages as a group is not obvious. One is tempted to think that Zosimus’ rhetorical predilection for remarks which seemed to him clever caused him to seek out a vehicle or context by which to present them, and that what we have seen above is the result. The objection that he must have found these *dicta* in his sources, especially in Olympiodorus the examples containing Latin, surely carries weight; but its force is reduced by the observation that even in epitomizing, Zosimus retains them. For all we know, he may have condensed longer speeches in Eunapius and Olympiodorus to arrive at the epigrammatical remarks which we now read in his work. But by avoiding lengthy invented speeches Zosimus does reflect an awareness of current stylistic practice and standards of veracity.

One should not be dogmatic about the routes by which the diverse influences discussed in this essay reached Zosimus so as to be reflected in the *Historia Nova*. But, as a public official and historian, or simply as a literate person, he may actually have read Herodotus, Polybius, Sozomenus and other works in addition to those of Dexippus, Eunapius and Olympiodorus—a range which most scholars seem reluctant or unwilling to allow him.

ELMHURST COLLEGE  
February, 1970

<sup>26</sup> Zosimus’ use of Latin, which he immediately paraphrased in Greek, appears only in parts of the *Historia Nova* drawn from Olympiodorus, and was presumably one of the bolder aspects of the latter’s work; see E. A. Thompson, “Olympiodorus of Thebes,” *CQ* 38 (1944) 43–52.