

The Style, Method, and Programme of Xiphilinus' *Epitome* of Cassius Dio's *Roman History*

Christopher Mallan

IN TERMS OF SCALE ALONE Xiphilinus' *Epitome* of Cassius Dio's *Roman History* is one of the more ambitious works of middle Byzantine historiography.¹ Its historical vision, covering the period from 69 B.C. through A.D. 229, on first inspection, sits uncomfortably with the other works of history written during the eleventh century. Moreover, Xiphilinus' laborious and uninspired method of composition, which saw him copy and abbreviate large swathes of Dio's *History* verbatim, has meant that he has won few admirers as an author.² As a result, Xiphilinus has received limited scholarly attention from Roman historians and Byzantinists alike.³

¹ The standard edition is U. P. Boissevain, *Cassii Dionis Historiarum Romanarum quae supersunt* III (Berlin 1901), who retains the pagination and line numbers of Dindorf. The text is awaiting a new edition, in light of the discovery of a previously uncollated manuscript: B. C. Barmann, "The Mount Athos Epitome of Cassius Dio's Roman History," *Phoenix* 25 (1971) 58–67. Translations of Dio here are Cary's (Loeb), sometimes adapted.

² For an illustration of Xiphilinus' method see F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (Oxford 1964) 195–203.

³ Millar's comments are typical (*Study* 2): "Xiphilinus' work is not so much a précis of Dio as a rather erratic selection from his material, substantially, but not invariably, in Dio's order and often keeping very close to Dio's wording. Thus a large amount of material is omitted without trace, some is given in brief, and some, especially where there is a coherent narrative or anecdote of some special interest, is reproduced almost in full. Occasionally he adds material or comments of his own, mostly concerned with the history of Christianity. Read as a work in its own right, the

However, changing attitudes towards works once thought of as ‘merely derivative’ in the field of Classical historiography, combined with the ongoing revolution in the reading of Byzantine historical texts, invites us to reconsider Xiphilinus’ *Epitome*.⁴ It is a work not without its interesting features, not least because its author provides something like a programmatic statement governing his selection of material (Xiph. 87.2–5):

λέξω δὲ καὶ καθ’ ἕκαστον ὅσα ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι καὶ νῦν μάλιστα,
διὰ τὸ πάμπλου ἀπηρτησθαι τῶν καιρῶν ἐκείνων τὸν καθ’ ἡμᾶς
βίον καὶ τὸ πολίτευμα μνημονεύσθαι.

I shall relate each and every thing as far as is required, and especially so in the present time, because a great deal of benefit for our way of life and political situation depends on remembering those critical events.

Consider the corresponding section of Dio’s text (53.22.1):

λέξω δὲ καὶ καθ’ ἕκαστον ὅσα ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι μετὰ τῶν ὑπά-
των, ἐφ’ ὧν ἐγένετο, μνημονεύεσθαι.

I shall relate each and every act as calls for mention, together with the names of the consuls under whom they were performed.

Comparison of these passages reveals Xiphilinus as both plagiarist and innovator. He follows Dio word-for-word (λέξω δὲ καὶ καθ’ ἕκαστον ὅσα ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι), before deviating drastically from his exemplar. By doing so, he usurps Dio’s

Epitome provides only a spasmodic and often barely intelligible narrative.” For studies of individual sections see L. Canfora, “Xifilino e il libro LX di Dione Cassio,” *Klio* 60 (1978) 403–407; M. Schmidt, “Cassius Dio, Buch LXX. Bemerkungen zur Technik des Epitomators Ioannes Xiphilinos,” *Chiron* 19 (1989) 55–59; C. T. Ehrhardt, “Dio Cassius Christianised,” *Prudentia* 26 (1994) 26–28.

⁴ For a sample of some of the directions in classical scholarship in this area see M. Horster and C. Reitz (eds.), *Condensing Texts – Condensed Texts* (Stuttgart 2010). For a summary of the debate in Byzantine studies see the various positions presented in J. Ljubarski et al., “*Quellenforschung* and/or Literary Criticism: Narrative Structures in Byzantine Historical Writing,” *SymbOslo* 73 (1998) 5–73.

authorial voice, and reveals here his belief in the usefulness of history, specifically Dio's *History*, as a means for understanding his own eleventh century "way of life and political situation."⁵

If nothing else, the presence of such a statement of intent must prompt us to think of Xiphilinus as an author in his own right, whom we cannot assume to have had the same authorial agenda as Dio. Hence, the aims of this article are twofold: to position Xiphilinus and his work in their eleventh-century historical and literary contexts; and to define the compositional agenda of his *Epitome* as revealed by his method of selection and presentation of material drawn from Dio's *Roman History*.

Intellectual elites, intellectual trends

Xiphilinus occupies an ill-defined position in our understanding of eleventh-century intellectual life. What little we know of his life and works tends to pale to insignificance when set against the giants of the age—John Mauropous, Constantine (Michael) Psellus, and John Italus. Yet Xiphilinus was very much a product of this world of vibrant scholarly activity and, as a man of letters, was receptive to the literary trends of his age. A survey of his oeuvre shows him to have been a man of catholic interests: aside from the *Epitome* (a work of secular historiography), he wrote a series of fifty-three homilies (written in the style of John Chrysostom), and a *menologion* dedicated to Alexius I Comnenus, which survives in a Georgian translation.⁶ Xiphilinus' works enjoyed a certain degree of popularity throughout the Byzantine Middle Ages, with his *Epitome* copied regularly. As an author he seems to have acquired a positive reputation, and it is with some surprise that we find the anon-

⁵ Kaldellis sees this statement correctly as evidence for the Byzantine identification with their Roman political heritage: A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformation of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge 2007) 47–119, esp. 63 (for Xiphilinus).

⁶ For a brief summary of Xiphilinus' works and bibliography see now E. Trapp, "Johannes Xiphilinos der Jüngere," in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* 3 (1992) 618–619; cf. K. Ziegler, "Xiphilinos," *RE* 9A (1967) 2132–2134.

ymous Georgian translator of the *Menologion* speak of him as the “philosopher Xiphilinus.”⁷

In the sole autobiographical note in the *Epitome*, Xiphilinus identifies himself as the nephew of John (VIII) Xiphilinus the patriarch of Constantinople, and states that he is writing during the reign of Michael VII (87.5–11).⁸

λέγω γὰρ τοῦτο οὐκέτι ὡς ὁ Δίων ὁ Προυσαεὺς ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ Σευήρου καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων γενόμενος, ἀλλ’ ὡς Ἰωάννης ὁ Ξιφιλῖνος ἀδελφόπαις ὄν Ἰωάννου τοῦ πατριάρχου, ἐπὶ δὲ Μιχαὴλ αὐτοκράτορος τοῦ Δούκα τὴν ἐπιτομὴν ταύτην τῶν πολλῶν βιβλίων τοῦ Δίωνος συνταττόμενος.

I say this no longer as Dio of Prusa [sic] who flourished under the emperors Severus and Alexander, but as John Xiphilinus, being the nephew of John the patriarch, and [who] is putting together this epitome of the many books of Dio under the emperor Michael Doukas.

From this statement we may infer something about Xiphilinus’ background and his connections. We do not know precisely when he was born, although, given his relationship to his uncle who was born around 1010, a date close to 1030 would appear reasonable.⁹ Xiphilinus’ *Menologion* presents at least a general terminus post quem of 1081 (the year of Alexius’ accession) for Xiphilinus’ death. The absence of a formal dedication in any of

⁷ K. Kekelidse, “Ioann Kyeefelen, prodolsatel Semeona Metafracta,” *Christianskij Vostok* 1 (1912) 325–347, at 340. Kekelidse’s text (with facing Russian translation) is the only available printed text of the *Menologion*.

⁸ P. A. Brunt, “On Historical Fragments and Epitomes,” *CQ* 30 (1980) 477–494, at 488, conflates the author of the *Epitome* with his uncle the patriarch; Xiphilinus the epitomator was never patriarch. Similarly, H. J. Scheltema, “Byzantine Law,” in *CMH*² IV.2 (1967) 55–77, at 70, identifies him as the grandson of the Patriarch. See N. G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London 1983) 179.

⁹ For the various dates of the elder Xiphilinus’ birth see M. Gedeon, *Πατριαρχικοί Πίνακες* (Constantinople 1890) 329, who suggests 1006; J. M. Hussey, *Church and Learning in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford 1937) 44–45, suggests a date between 1010 and 1013.

the known manuscripts of the *Epitome* prevents us from asserting any secure date for its completion or anything about its intended audience, although the passage quoted seems to have been written early in Michael's reign, at least before the death of the elder Xiphilinus in 1075. The passage affords a glimpse of Xiphilinus' self-representation. By highlighting his familial connection with his esteemed uncle, and thus defining himself in relation to his uncle as opposed to any other member of his family, Xiphilinus appears acutely aware of his own social status as a member of an ascendant political family.¹⁰

As would be expected of the child from such a family, the younger Xiphilinus was well-educated, and it is possible that he would have attended either (or both) of the schools of law and philosophy established during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachus, which the elder Xiphilinus and Psellus played such integral roles in founding.¹¹ The elder Xiphilinus was one of the foremost men of the age and had friends in high places—intellectually and politically.¹² The elder Xiphilinus, like his nephew, wrote widely: aside from writing legal commentaries, he dabbled in hagiography, and as a young man wrote both a *vita* and a collection of miracles concerning St. Eugenius, a

¹⁰ The appearance of another member of the family as patriarch (George II Xiphilinus) in the late twelfth century suggests something of the enduring political importance of the Xiphilini in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. See C. D. Cobham, *The Patriarchs of Constantinople* (Cambridge 1911) 376. For a summary on the Xiphilini in the period see A. Kazhdan, "Xiphilinos," *ODB* 3 (1991) 2210–2211.

¹¹ The elder Xiphilinus was the first to hold the newly-created position of νομοφύλαξ at the school of law at Constantinople. For the reopening of the university under Constantine IX see Hussey, *Church and Learning* 51–72, and M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1024–1204. A Political History*² (London 1997) 63–69.

¹² The most conspicuous of these friends was of course Psellus, who wrote and delivered his funeral oration. The elder Xiphilinus was not the only member of the family to have been a friend of Psellus. There survives a letter from Psellus (205) to a certain Constantine Xiphilinus on Aristotle's works on logic (Sathas, *MB* V 499–502).

martyr of the Diocletianic persecution.¹³ His tenure as patriarch reveals him to be an adroit political player, and his apparent reluctance to accept the post is not reflected in the rigorous manner in which he attended to his duties.¹⁴ This elevation to the patriarchate broke a period of self-imposed monastic exile, which had seen him withdraw from the turbulent court of the last years of Constantine IX. The date of the younger Xiphilinus' entry into the monastic life is not known, although it would not be too great a speculative leap to link it with his uncle's. After all, Xiphilinus would have been a man in his late 20's or perhaps early 30's at the time of his uncle's withdrawal from court, and the decision of the younger man may have been born of a similar sense of political expediency.

The court of Michael VII appears to have been conducive to the fortunes of eloquent and ambitious men: the final draft of Psellus' *Chronographia* was certainly a product of this reign; Michael Attaleiates composed a legal work during this period; and the polymath Symeon Seth produced a work on medicine. History of the more distant past was in vogue as well. Psellus' *Historia Syntomos*, which appears to have been composed for Michael VII, presents an immediate precedent for Xiphilinus' *Epitome*, in so far as the former indicates a ripening interest in the lives and manners of the early emperors.¹⁵ This nostalgia for Roman antiquities is pronounced throughout the works of

¹³ Trapp, *Kirchenlexikon* 3 (1992) 617. Cf. S. Efthymiadis, "Byzantine Collections of Miracles. A Chronological and Biographical Survey," *SymbOslo* 74 (1999) 195–211, at 207.

¹⁴ For Xiphilinus' patriarchate see J. M. Hussey (rev. A. Louth), *The Orthodox Church and the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford 2010) 138–140.

¹⁵ Ed. W. J. Aerts, *Michaelis Pselli Historia Syntomos* (Berlin 1990). For its authorship and purpose see J. Duffy and E. Papaioannou, "Michael Psellos and the Authorship of the *Historia Syntomos*: Final Considerations," in A. Avramea et al. (eds.), *Byzantium, State and Society: In Memory of Nikos Oikonomides* (Athens 2003) 219–229; A. Markopoulos, "From Narrative Historiography to Historical Biography. New Trends in Byzantine Historical Writing in the 10th–11th Centuries," *BZ* 102 (2010) 697–715, at 712–713.

the mid-eleventh century,¹⁶ with Attaleiates' digression comparing of the Romans of the Republic with those of his own age being perhaps the most conspicuous example.¹⁷ Indeed, on a superficial level at least, Xiphilinus' decision to begin his *Epitome* with Pompey fits into this revival of interest in the Republic, or more accurately in some of the individuals of the Republic: for (as a rule) Xiphilinus shows little interest in Dio's constitutional discussions on the republican system.

Character and biography interested Xiphilinus more than formal constitutional discussions. For several key authors of the period, historical developments were interpreted as reflections of the emperor's character.¹⁸ Attaleiates is perhaps most explicit in his articulation of these beliefs (14.11, p.86 B.):

διὸ καὶ κακία καὶ ἀρετῇ βασιλικῇ τὰς δυσπραγίας καὶ ἀθίς τὰς εὐπραγίας οἱ νουνεχῶς συμβάλλοντες τὰ πράγματα διεμέριζον.

That is why those who think carefully about events made a distinction between things that were done well and things that were done badly, ascribing the former to the emperor's virtues and the latter, accordingly, to the emperor's failings.

The notion that the value of any particular regime was dependent on the moral character of the ruler was hardly a uniquely Byzantine concept, and its roots were firmly classical. Yet there

¹⁶ For this revival see P. Magdalino, "Aspects of Twelfth-Century Byzantine Kaiserkritik," *Speculum* 58 (1983) 326–346, at 343–344; A. Markopoulos, "Roman Antiquarianism: Aspects of the Roman Past in the Middle Byzantine Period," *Proceedings 21st Intern. Congr. Byzantine Studies* (Aldershot 2006) 277–297; D. Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Tempe 2012) 52–69, 192–199.

¹⁷ Attaleiates 24.1–5, pp.193–198 Bekker (text and transl. A. Kaldellis and D. Krallis, *The History* [Cambridge (Mass.) 2012]). Note also Attaleiates' emphasis on Nicephorus Botaneiates' descent from the republican Scipiones and the Fabii (27.8–12, pp.218–220 B.). For discussion of Attaleiates' digression see Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates* 192–199.

¹⁸ Cf. A. Kaldellis, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia* (Leiden 1999) 23–27; C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire* (Oxford 2005) 30–35, with respect to Psellus' *Chronographia*.

is a sense of marked intensification of this assumption in middle Byzantine historiography.¹⁹ It may be taken that it was in response to this trend that Xiphilinus made the decision to emphasise Dio's biographical details, ostensibly by transforming Dio's annalistic history into a series of twenty-five biographically focussed sections from Pompey to Severus Alexander. Certainly, there were compositional benefits to structuring a historical account around central figures such as emperors or leading politicians. Xiphilinus' task of reducing Dio's immense history into biographical sections was aided by the fact that such a structure was already present in Dio's work.²⁰ However, such a focus was consistent with Xiphilinus' aim to select material which was relevant to the eleventh-century Byzantine *πολίτευμα*: a political system which was, at least in the minds of the political elite, centred around the dominant figure of the emperor.²¹

Content: omissions, retentions, and additions

That Xiphilinus followed Dio's original wording closely has been regarded as perhaps the main saving grace of his work from the perspective of the Roman historian.²² Xiphilinus' method was by no means unique among historians in the eleventh century. John Skylitzes, for example, copied the history of Theophanes Continuatus for the reign of Romanus I in a man-

¹⁹ R. Scott, "The Classical Tradition in Byzantine Historiography," in M. Mullett and R. Scott, *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition* (Birmingham 1981) 61–74, at 69–72; Markopoulos, *BZ* 102 (2009) 697–715.

²⁰ For Dio's structure see C. Pelling, "Biographical History? Cassius Dio on the Early Principate," in M. J. Edwards and S. Swain (eds.), *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1997) 117–144. Cf. C. Questa, "Tecnica biografica e tecnica annalistica nei ll. LXII–LXIII di Cassio Dione," *StudUrb(B)* 31 (1957) 37–53; B. Simons, *Cassius Dio und die Römische Republik* (Berlin 2009), esp. ch. 5.

²¹ Note Psellus' comment (*Hist.Synt.* 15) on his decision to omit the history of the Republic between the the consulship of A. Sempronius and M. Minucius in 497 B.C. and that of Julius Caesar in 59.

²² Millar, *Study* 2.

ner similar to the way in which Xiphilinus copied Dio. Yet, as has been demonstrated by Holmes, this did not prevent Skylitzes shaping the text to fit his own authorial agenda by means of omissions and additions.²³ Brunt calculated that Xiphilinus omitted over three-quarters of Dio's text for the imperial period, and an even greater proportion of his republican narrative.²⁴ As an extreme illustration, the portion of the *Epitome* devoted to Pompey, which corresponds to the contents of Books 37–42.3 of Dio, represents a reduction from approximately 69,300 words to around 5050 words.²⁵ How Xiphilinus made these editorial decisions can be approached in different ways. Brunt considered the *Epitome* from the perspective of a possible geographical bias, and he determined that Xiphilinus showed a predilection for matters pertaining to the eastern lands of the empire.²⁶ When we consider the length of Xiphilinus' biographical sections, it is clear that some personalities interested him more than others, not necessarily in proportion with the scale of their treatment in Dio, and this seems to have played a role in Xiphilinus' selection of material.

His selection and omission of Dio's speeches is also instructive for determining his authorial agenda.²⁷ On the one hand, Xiphilinus shows little interest in the speeches which Dio inserted into his republican narrative. Given the content and length of these (for example, the speeches debating Pompey's command against the pirates in 67 B.C., Cicero and Philiscus on exile, Caesar to the mutinous troops at Placentia, Cicero's invective against Antony, Calenus' speech against Cicero), this is not necessarily surprising. On the other hand, Xiphilinus

²³ C. Holmes, "The Rhetorical Structures of John Skylitzes' *Synopsis Historion*," in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot 2003) 187–199, at 188–194.

²⁴ Brunt, *CQ* 30 (1980) 489.

²⁵ Alternatively, Xiphilinus' section on Pompey occupies close to ten full pages, whereas the same material takes up 231 pages in Boissevain's edition.

²⁶ Brunt, *CQ* 30 (1980) 489–490.

²⁷ Brunt, *CQ* 30 (1980) 489–490.

changes tack slightly for the imperial period. Here some of Dio's speeches are retained. But consider first the omissions. The great set-piece debate in Book 52 between Agrippa and Maecenas, which appraised the merits of democratic and monarchic government, and was so important to Dio's *History*, is reduced to a passing comment by Xiphilinus. Likewise, neither Augustus' speeches to the *equites* in Book 56 concerning the marriage legislation, nor Tiberius' eulogy of Augustus later in the same book, found a place in the *Epitome*.²⁸

The surviving examples of eleventh-century historiography indicate that there was not much of a taste for the sort of long embedded speeches that Dio included in his *History*, and so Xiphilinus' decision to omit many may have been a response to this fashion. Moreover, given that the republican sections of the *Epitome* are some of the most heavily abridged, Dio's speeches were obvious targets for omission, as they could have been easily removed without interrupting the essential flow of the narrative. Yet this can only be part of the answer, for Xiphilinus preserves several speeches, many of which are quite lengthy: Marcus Aurelius' speech to the troops before the war against Avidius Cassius; the speeches of Boudica and Suetonius Paulinus; Hadrian's on imperial succession; Vindex's speech on the eve of his revolt; Otho's before the battle of Cremona; the exchange between Octavian and Cleopatra; and the Livia-Augustus dialogue.²⁹

These speeches deal mainly with imperial themes, in particular the behaviour of an emperor.³⁰ As such, they were of as

²⁸ For a full list of the speeches in Dio's *History* see E. Schwartz, "Cassius Dio Cocceianus (40)," *RE* 3 (1899) 1684–1722, at 1718–1719, with Millar's correction (*Study* 78 n.1). For a general overview of Dio's speeches, with a particular focus on his republican speeches, see Millar, "Some Speeches in Cassius Dio," *MusHelv* 18 (1962) 11–22.

²⁹ Brunt, *CQ* 30 (1980) 489, omits the speeches of Otho and Hadrian from his list of speeches preserved by Xiphilinus.

³⁰ Cf. Millar, *Study* 78–81, on speeches in the imperial books of Dio's *History*.

much relevance to the eleventh century as they were to the third. Two are about civil war. The speech of Otho outlines the importance of avoiding civil war,³¹ and the harangue of Marcus Aurelius to his troops before setting off to war against Avidius Cassius is not only about the evils of civil war, but also about the importance of the victor showing clemency towards the defeated,³² a theme dealt with in the Livia-Augustus dialogue as well.³³ The speeches of Boudica and Paulinus are more complicated,³⁴ functioning, on the one hand, as a means of characterizing Nero, and, on the other, as a discussion of the nature of martial virtue and whether battles were decided by experience, weight of numbers, or enthusiasm.³⁵ Of these speeches, Hadrian's on imperial succession and the advantages of an emperor who was elected or adopted (based on his capacity to rule) rather than one born to the purple was a topic of

³¹ Xiph. 192.6–30 [= Dio 63(64).13.1–14.3].

³² Xiph. 263.1–264.21 [= Dio 72(71).24.1–26.4].

³³ The dialogue is one of the better studied of Dio's speeches: M. Adler, "Die Verschwörung des Cn. Cornelius Cinna bei Seneca und Cassius Dio," *ÖstGym.* 60 (1909) 193–208; M. A. Giua, "Clemenza del sovrano e monarchia illuminata in Cassio Dione 55, 14–22," *Athenaeum* 59 (1981) 317–337, at 317–323; E. Adler, "Cassius Dio's Livia and the Conspiracy of Cinna Magnus," *GRBS* 51 (2011) 133–154. The theme of imperial clemency is present in that part of the exchange between Octavian and Cleopatra preserved by Xiphilinus (77.19–78.10 [= Dio 51.12.2–5]). No doubt Xiphilinus recognised this as a topic directly applicable to his political situation, and discussions of clemency are found in other authors of the period: e.g. Attaleiates on Botaneiates' *φιλανθρωπία* (36.12–13, pp.313–315 B.), and on the limitations of *φιλανθρωπία* in some situations, with reference to Leo Tornicius (6.7, pp.26–27 B.); Theophylact *Instit.Reg.* I 2.26 (PG 126.284).

³⁴ Brunt, *CQ* 30 (1980) 491, on Candice and Boudica commanding armies: "no doubt our monk found it piquant that a woman should be in command." Such a view does not explain Xiphilinus' inclusion of Paulinus' speech. For a discussion of Boudica's speech in Dio see now E. Adler, "Boudica's Speeches in Tacitus and Dio," *CW* 101 (2008) 173–195, at 184–195.

³⁵ Characterisation of Nero: Xiph. 162.1–19 [= Dio 62.6.2–5]. Martial valour: 161.3–13 [= 62.5.2–3], 163.21–26 [= 62.9.2], 163.27–31 [= 62.10.1], 164.12–20 [= 62.11.3].

particular significance in the mid-eleventh century, when the principle of imperial adoption was pursued so as to break the pattern of usurpation and dynastic failure.³⁶ Indeed, Psellus tells us that it was with an appeal to the ancient Roman practice of imperial adoption that he helped mediate the adoption of Isaac Comnenus by Michael VI,³⁷ and he portrays Constantine X's decision to appoint Michael as Caesar as based on Michael's apparent aptitude rather than the fact that he was his eldest son (*Chron.* 7A.21).

Other less obvious retentions are indicative of Xiphilinus' authorial style. It is a curious feature of his *Epitome* that he chose to retain the first-person statements from his source text where Dio described his career, religious experiences, and sundry personal observations. As has already been seen, these retentions are not at the expense of Xiphilinus' own authorial commentary—Xiphilinus demonstrates a willingness to interject throughout the text. The retention of these comments cannot be attributed to editorial laziness on his part. That authors should include such personal statements about their own careers or experiences was not unusual in eleventh-century historiography. Psellus' *Chronographia* and Attaleiates' *History* are highly personalised, and first-person statements are frequent.³⁸ Perhaps it was this trend that led to Xiphilinus' retention of Dio's statements as well as the inclusion of his own. Such state-

³⁶ Xiph. 253.28–254.12 [= Dio 69.20.2–5]. For imperial adoption in the eleventh-century context see Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates* 225–226; L. Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge 2012) 104–111, esp. 108.

³⁷ Psellus *Chron.* 7.29. Isaac Comnenus would go on to elect Constantine Doukas as his successor (Attaleiates 12.15, p.69 B.; Psellus *Chron.* 7A.8–10).

³⁸ For this trend see R. Macrides, "The Historian in the History," in C. N. Constantinides et al. (eds.), *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ: Studies in Honour of Robert Browning* (Venice 1996) 205–224. Cf. R. J. H. Jenkins, "The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Literature," *DOP* 17 (1963) 39–52, at 51; Jenkins sees this as the influence of Polybius on Byzantine historiography, a point developed by Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates* 65–69, 106–107.

ments added an air of authority and vividness to a historical text, particularly when made by an individual of the political elite who participated in or witnessed the events described.

Yet authority could be achieved in various ways, and the display of erudition was a key feature of the historian's toolkit. Dio, like the other sophisticated authors of the second and third centuries, saw the literary value in adorning his work with pithy quotations from Homer or the Athenian dramatists. In the surviving portions of Dio's *History* there are twenty-four direct poetic quotations.³⁹ Of these, twenty-three are replicated or preserved by Xiphilinus. When we consider the intellectual climate of the eleventh century, where the conspicuous display of classical erudition was in vogue, Xiphilinus' decision to retain these quotations is unsurprising. Nevertheless, it should make us wonder what sort of epitome he was trying to write. Indeed, at one stage, during his description of the political murders under Caracalla, it seems as though he has added a Homeric quotation (or perhaps two) of his own (329.9–15 [= Dio 78.(77).6.1]):

πάντας δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω, ὅσους τῶν ἐπιφανῶν οὐδεμιᾶ δίκη ἀπέκτεινεν. ὁ μὲν γὰρ Δίων, ἅτε γνωριμωτάτων κατ' ἐκείνους τοὺς καιροὺς τῶν πεφονευμένων ὄντων, καὶ ἐξ ὀνόματος αὐτῶν ποιεῖται κατάλογον· ἐμοὶ δ' εἰπεῖν ἐξαρκεῖ ὅτι πάντας ὁμοίως οὐς ἤθελε κατεχειρίζετο, ὅστ' αἴτιος ὅστε καὶ οὐκί, καὶ ὅτι τὴν Ῥώμην ἠκρωτηρίασεν, ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν στέρησας αὐτήν.

“All could I never recite or the names number over completely” (*Il.* 2.488) of the distinguished men that he killed without any justification. Dio, because the slain were very well known in those days, gives a list of their names; but for me it suffices to say that he made away with all the men he wished without distinction, “both guilty and guiltless alike” (*Il.* 15.137), and that he mutilated Rome, by depriving it of its good men.

³⁹ Eight are from the *Iliad*, four from Euripides, one from Sophocles, one from Menander, one from Vergil's *Aeneid* (rendered into Greek), and nine from (so far) unidentified tragic or comedic authors.

Boissevain (III 379) judged that this passage (including both Homeric tags) was predominately as Dio wrote it, with Xiphilinus' interjection confined to explaining why he omitted the list of murdered individuals. Such a conclusion is hardly inevitable. The natural reading of the passage would suggest that the second of the quotations is presented in Xiphilinus' own authorial voice *responding* to Dio's initial Homeric quotation. It would not have been beyond Xiphilinus' capabilities to add an appropriate Homeric tag when called for, particularly one as undemanding as ὅστ' αἴτιος ὅστε καὶ οὐκί, which appears elsewhere in the works of Byzantine authors of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁴⁰

Indeed, Xiphilinus tends to add material to Dio's text for little reason beyond displaying his own erudition and thus establishing his own authority as a writer. A largely irrelevant reference to Polybius falls into this category. At the point of his narrative dealing with the defeat of the 'liberators' at Philippi, Xiphilinus, in place of Dio's catalogue of signs and portents, expatiates on why Polybius was superior to Dio as a historian in this respect as Polybius eschewed such lists of marvels.⁴¹ There is an air of secular modernity to Xiphilinus' sentiments,⁴² but his objections are presented on historiographical rather than religious grounds. Perhaps he had in mind Polybius' comments on Timaeus, who is criticised for including sim-

⁴⁰ Nicetas Choniates *Or.* 9 (97.16 van Dielen); Theophylact *Epist.* 61 (351.13–14 Gautier). Xiphilinus would have gained a strong familiarity with Homer as a part of his basic education. Cf. R. Browning, "Homer in Byzantium," *Viator* 8 (1975) 15–33, and "The Byzantines and Homer," in R. Lamberton and J. J. Keaney (eds.), *Homer's Ancient Readers. The Hermeneutics of Greek Epic's Earliest Exegetes* (Princeton 1992) 134–148.

⁴¹ Xiph. 51.6–20. Cf. Dio 47.40–41.

⁴² Cf. M. Schmidt "Anekdotisches in Cassius Dios Zeitgeschichte," *MusHelv* 57 (2000) 20–35, at 35, for a similar criticism of Dio's work. For the role of portents in Dio's work, see Schmidt, and J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford 1979) 227–229.

ilar materials in his history.⁴³ Yet Xiphilinus' objections appear largely superficial and do not represent a statement of authorial policy. In fact Xiphilinus shows particular relish in repeating many of Dio's descriptions of portentous events.⁴⁴

The addition of material to correct Dio's narrative is a further minor, yet notable feature of Xiphilinus' work. One of the more interesting examples occurs early in the *Epitome* when Xiphilinus (31.1–11) attempts to amend Dio's narrative concerning the conspiracy against Julius Caesar by Brutus and Cassius. The material at this point of the *Epitome* corresponds to the opening of Book 44 of Dio, which offers a quasi-philosophical discussion on human nature and the identification of monarchy rather than democracy as the political system best suited to moderate and harmonious rulership, and to sustained (military) success (44.1–2). Towards the end of these comments, Dio criticises Brutus and Cassius for not having reflected on these matters, and maintains that by killing Caesar they became the cause of countless ills both to themselves and to all the rest of mankind (44.2.5). In keeping with his general lack of interest in constitutional matters, Xiphilinus omits almost the entirety of Dio's commentary on the advantages of monarchy, and in its place challenges (what he read to be) Dio's claim that Brutus was the cause of the political turmoil. What Xiphilinus does retain of Dio's comments on the advantages of monarchy is couched so as to create a clear distinction between Dio's comments and his own.⁴⁵ What interested Xiphilinus more was what the assassination of Caesar revealed about Brutus' char-

⁴³ Polyb. 12.24.4–5.

⁴⁴ E.g. 199.2–6 [= Dio 64(65).15.1]; 281.27–282.9 [= 73(72).24]; 291.14–19 [= 74(73).14.4].

⁴⁵ Xiph. 31.12–21: ὅμως ὁ συγγραφεὺς τὴν μοναρχίαν τῆς δημοκρατίας ὑπερτιθεὶς τοιούτοις κέρηται πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν λογισμοῖς. πόλιν γὰρ φησι τηλικαύτην τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τοῦ τε καλλίστου τοῦ τε πλείστου τῆς ἐφανοῦς οἰκουμένης ἄρχουσαν. In this and the following example, Dio's opinions are made clear by being introduced with ὁ συγγραφεὺς followed by a verb of speaking.

acter. Dissatisfied with Dio's account, Xiphilinus calls upon the authority of Plutarch as an arbiter of the truth (31.1–11):

βουλευομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ, καὶ παρασκευαζομένου στρατεύειν ἐπὶ τοὺς Πάρθους, οἱ περὶ τὸν Βροῦτον τὸν Μάρκον καὶ τὸν Κάσσιον τὸν Γάιον ἐπεβούλευσαν αὐτῷ καὶ ἀπέκτειναν, ὡς μὲν ὁ συγγραφεὺς λέγει, δι' ἀλιτηριώδη τινὰ οἴστρον ... ὡς δὲ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἔχει καὶ ὁ Πλούταρχος ἐν τοῖς Παραλλήλοις διδάσκει, διὰ φρονήματος ἀξίωμα φιλελεύθερον καὶ προαιρέσεως εὐγένειαν ἥκιστα ἐθελόδουλον.

When he (Caesar) had arrived at this decision, and was preparing to wage war against the Parthians, the men associated with Marcus Brutus and Gaius Cassius plotted against him and murdered him. Whereas *the historian says* that that this was on account of some abominable madness ... the truth maintains, as in fact Plutarch in the *Parallel Lives* teaches, that it was on account of the freedom-loving sense of self-respect in his spirit and the nobility [he showed in] the choices he made, [a feature which was] not in the least given to servility.

The transformation of the text at this point is profound. For all its apparent moralizing, Dio's account represents an attempt to analyse the collapse of the Republic in terms that were not dependent on individual personalities. This analysis fed into his broader discussion of political systems. Xiphilinus, by largely eschewing this material, shows his interest not in reproducing history in the sense that Dio saw it, but in providing a character assessment of the protagonists, based (apparently) on his reading of Plutarch's *Brutus*.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Plut. *Brut.* 6.8–9, 8.1. Brunt, *CQ* 30 (1980) 489, notes that Xiphilinus demonstrates a familiarity with Plutarch's *Marcellus* as well, e.g. Plut. *Marc.* 30.6 and Xiph. 90.5–6, suggesting that Xiphilinus actually read at least some of Plutarch's *Lives*. Given Plutarch's enduring significance during the middle Byzantine period as a philosopher and historiographical model, it is not surprising that Xiphilinus should be familiar with his works. For a summary account of the reception of Plutarch in Byzantium see M. Pade, *The Reception of Plutarch's Lives in Fifteenth-Century Italy I* (Copenhagen 2007) 55–59. For Plutarch's influence on historiography see R. J. H. Jenkins, "Constantine VII's Portrait of Michael III," *BAB* 34 (1948) 71–77; A. Kaldellis, "The

Method

The extent to which Xiphilinus' *Epitome* was constructed according to a biographical programme can be best judged by considering his treatment of Dio's late republican narrative. The surviving books of Dio's late republican history are complex and represented a serious attempt to consider the breakdown of the republican constitution. Dio maintains an interest in characterisation (as he does in the imperial books), but unlike in the imperial books he is less concerned with focussing on single individuals, and much of the force of his historical analysis is born from the fact that the political turbulence of the late Republic was brought about by multiple individuals competing against one another for prominence in the state. Xiphilinus' task was a daunting one. The opening section of the *Epitome*, ostensibly devoted to Pompey,⁴⁷ provides an appropriate test case for his method of composition, not least because Dio's narrative of this period has been preserved more-or-less complete.

Xiphilinus' close fidelity to Dio's wording suggests that he worked with a copy of Dio's text before him as he wrote.⁴⁸ He must have read through Dio's *History*, perhaps noting the passages to be excerpted, before returning to copy them out. This allowed him to change Dio's sequence of presentation where it suited the requirements of his narrative.⁴⁹ Occasionally he de-

Byzantine Role in the Making of the Corpus of Classical Greek Historiography," *JHS* 132 (2012) 76–77.

⁴⁷ Unlike the other sections of the *Epitome*, which are headed by the name of the individual ruler, the opening section is not. However, from the title of the work (Xiph. 1.3–5) it would seem that the first section was devoted to Pompey (ἀπὸ Πομπηίου Μάγνου).

⁴⁸ Cf. Xiph. 256.8–10 [= Dio 70.1.1], discussed below. The suggestion that Xiphilinus had access to Dio only via an intermediary epitome has been rightly rejected by Millar, *Study* 2 n.4. That Xiphilinus may have had access to (and used) the *Excerpta Constantiniana* is discussed briefly by Canfora, *Klio* 60 (1978) 406.

⁴⁹ The most obvious example of this occurs at the start of the *Epitome*, where Xiphilinus transposes a section of text concerning Pompey and Metellus Creticus (1.11–21 [= Dio 36.17^a]). One suspects that this passage

viates from Dio's orthography,⁵⁰ and words not found in Dio are introduced.⁵¹ Other changes to Dio's text defy ready explanation. In his narrative of the third Mithridatic War, Dio identified the Parthian king correctly as Arsaces (36.1.1). When he came to the same section, Xiphilinus, perhaps prompted by some corruption in his copy of Dio, names the king Pacorus.⁵² Dio does indeed mention Pacorus in his *History*, though not until Book 40 when describing Crassus' ill-fated Parthian campaign (40.28.3), but it is unclear from where Xiphilinus got the name.

At other times Xiphilinus introduces changes to Dio's wording in order to emphasise a particular point. An example of this may be seen in Xiphilinus' account of Pompey's return to Italy after his eastern command in 63 B.C. Both authors praise Pompey's act of disbanding his soldiers upon reaching Brundisium, but the manner of Xiphilinus' paraphrase of Dio is instructive. Consider Dio (37.20.3–6):

ὁ δὲ δὴ μάλιστα αὐτοῦ τε τοῦ Πομπηίου ἔργον ἐγένετο καὶ θαυμάσαι διὰ πάντων ἄξιόν ἐστι, τοῦτο νῦν ἤδη φράσω. πλείστην μὲν γὰρ ἰσχὺν καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ ἠπείρῳ ἔχων, πλείστα δὲ χρήματα ἐκ τῶν αἰχμαλώτων πεπορισμένος, δυνάσταις τε καὶ βασιλεῦσι συχνοῖς ὀκλειωμένος, τοὺς τε δήμους ὧν ἦρξε πάντας ὡς εἰπεῖν δι' εὐνοίας εὐεργεσίας κεκτημένος, δυνηθεὶς τ' ἂν δι' αὐτῶν τήν τε Ἰταλίαν κατασχεῖν καὶ τὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων κράτος πᾶν περιποιήσασθαι, τῶν μὲν πλείστων ἐθέλοντι ἂν αὐτὸν δεξαμένων, εἰ δὲ καὶ ἀντέστησάν τινες, ἀλλ' ὑπ'

was included for no other reason than to introduce Pompey into the narrative earlier than would have been otherwise the case had he simply followed his usual method of adhering to Dio's sequence of presentation.

⁵⁰ E.g. Ὡστια in Dio (36.22.2) becomes Ὅστια in Xiphilinus (3.16), and Σεουῆρος is occasionally, but not always, rendered Σεβῆρος according to the later Greek orthography (e.g. Dio 39.50.4; Xiph. 13.26). However, these changes may have occurred in the copying process of the *Epitome*.

⁵¹ Such as the adjective πειρατικός (Xiph. 3.5–6).

⁵² Xiph. 2.19. Cf. Νώλης in Dio (57.2.1) changed to Ῥώμης in Xiphilinus (126.1).

ἀσθeneίας γε πάντως ἂν ὁμολογησάντων, οὐκ ἠβουλήθη τοῦτο ποιῆσαι, ἀλλ' εὐθύς, ἐπειδὴ τάχιστα ἐς [τε] τὸ Βρεντέσιον ἐπεραιώθη, τὰς δυνάμεις πάσας αὐτεπάγγελτος, μήτε τῆς βουλῆς μήτε τοῦ δήμου ψηφισαμένου τι περὶ αὐτῶν, ἀφῆκεν.

But the act for which credit particularly attaches to Pompey himself—a deed forever worthy of admiration—I will now relate. He had enormous power both on sea and land; he had supplied himself with vast wealth from the captives; he had made numerous potentates and kings his friends; and he had kept practically all the communities which he ruled well disposed through benefits conferred; and although by these means he might have occupied Italy and gained for himself the whole Roman power, since the majority would have accepted voluntarily, and if any had resisted, they would certainly have capitulated through weakness, yet he did not choose to do this. Instead, as soon as he had crossed to Brundisium, he dismissed all his forces on his own initiative, without waiting for any vote by the senate or the people.

By contrast, Xiphilinus writes (9.29–10.2):

τὸ δὲ μέγιστον καὶ κάλλιστον πάντων, ὅτι δυνηθεὶς ἂν ῥαδίως τὴν τε Ἰταλίαν κατασχεῖν καὶ μοναρχῆσαι τῆς Ῥώμης δι' ὑπερβολὴν ἰσχύος, οὐκ ἠβουλήθη, ἀλλ' εὐθύς ἐπειδὴ τάχιστα ἐς τὸ Βρεντήσιον ἐπεραιώθη, τὰς δυνάμεις πάσας αὐτεπάγγελτος, μήτε τοῦ δήμου μήτε τῆς βουλῆς ψηφισαμένης τι περὶ αὐτῶν, ἀφῆκεν.

But the greatest and most noble act of all was that although he could have easily subdued Italy and made himself king of Rome on account of his surpassing might, he decided not to do so: but as soon as he had crossed to Brundisium he dismissed all his forces by his own initiative, without waiting for a decree of the people or the senate.

Xiphilinus' statement is clearly derived from Dio, but he takes it an extra step with his assertion that Pompey had the capacity to make himself monarch over the Romans—an interpretation of Dio's statement that Pompey could have "gained power over the Romans." His thought is simplistically anachronistic, perhaps deliberately so. Dio has Pompey look back to the careers of Marius and Sulla as negative examples of generals who did

not relinquish their power.⁵³ Conversely, Xiphilinus appears to look *forward* to the establishment of the principate and the reigns of emperors by having Pompey not wish to assume the kingship. Pompey is thus placed in the historical continuum not of republican history, but of imperial history.⁵⁴

With regard to Xiphilinus' method of selection, some general observations may be noted. He shows little interest in replicating Dio's statements concerning human nature (φύσις) and its role in historical causation.⁵⁵ Similarly, Dio's statements about character motivation are omitted as well. When Xiphilinus does show an interest in motivation, it is presented in broad terms. In one particularly fascinating passage, when explaining the cause of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Xiphilinus, independently of Dio, adopts a Thucydidean (one might say almost Dionian) turn of phrase (15.27–31):

μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα πόλεμοι κατέλαβον ἐμφύλιοι μέγιστοι τοὺς Ῥωμαίους, Πομπηίου καὶ Καίσαρος συμπεσόντων ἀλλήλοις. καὶ προφάσεις μὲν λέγονται πολλαὶ τοῦ πολέμου· ἡ δὲ ἀληθεστάτη αἰτία ἡ φιλοπρωτία ἦν καὶ ἡ φιλαρχία.

After these things [the Parthian War], great civil wars gripped the Romans, when Pompey and Caesar fought each other. Many pretexts for the war are spoken of, but the truest cause was love of being the first citizen (φιλοπρωτία) and love of political power (φιλαρχία).

Were it not for the fact that we possess Dio's text at this point, it would be difficult to tell whether the judgement was that of

⁵³ Dio 37.20.6. The severity of Marius and Sulla was proverbial for Dio, e.g. 43.15.3–4, 77(76).8.1.

⁵⁴ Stories of generals who had the potential to seize the imperial purple, but declined, seem to have appealed to Xiphilinus, to judge from his retention of the stories of Germanicus during the reign of Tiberius (127.17–23 [= Dio 57.6.2]) and the Neronian general Verginius Rufus (183.27–184.8 [= 63.26]).

⁵⁵ E.g. Dio's well-known statement concerning piracy always being a threat "so long as human nature remains the same" (36.20.1) is omitted, along with most of Dio's discussion of the pirate war.

Xiphilinus or of Dio, save for the suspicions raised by the two abstract nouns φιλοπρωτία and φιλαρχία, neither of which is found in Dio but both are in Plutarch.⁵⁶ What is, however, most significant about this passage is that it shows Xiphilinus actually *thinking* about the material he is writing. He was hardly the first writer to conceive of the civil wars of the late Republic in Thucydidean terms.⁵⁷ Yet his thinking is as decidedly un-Thucydidean as it is un-Dionian. Xiphilinus is able to detect a narrow pattern of historical causation that is based on the generalisations of Caesar and Pompey as leaders driven by their 'love of coming first' and 'lust for power'. If there is a model for this mode of thinking it is closer to Plutarch than to Thucydides or Dio.⁵⁸ It was Plutarch, after all, who perceived the outbreak of hostilities in terms of 'greed' (πλεονεξία) and 'love of strife' (φιλονεικία).⁵⁹

This narrow biographical focus (one is tempted to say *ethical* focus) is accentuated by another striking feature of his narrative, namely how *few* individuals are actually mentioned. Understandably, material relating to Pompey dominates the narrative. Many important historical individuals are omitted without a trace. For example, there is no mention of Gabinius in Xiphilinus' discussion of the events leading to Pompey's command against the pirates in 67, just as there is no mention of Manilius in relation to Pompey's eastern command in 66. Others who are mentioned are included either because of their relationship to Pompey, or because of their association with a

⁵⁶ While φιλοπρωτία is not found in Plutarch, the adjective φιλόπρωτος is.

⁵⁷ For discussion of the function of Thucydidean echoes in Dio, Appian, Plutarch, and Dionysius see C. Pelling, "'Learning from that violent school-master', Thucydidean Intertextuality and Some Greek Views of Roman Civil War," in B. W. Breed et al., *Citizens of Discord. Rome and its Civil Wars* (Oxford 2010) 105–118.

⁵⁸ Plutarch too characterises (not without reason) Caesar and Pompey as possessing φιλαρχία (*Pomp.* 53.5).

⁵⁹ Plut. *Pomp.* 70.1. For Plutarch's interest in these motivating passions see T. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford 1999) 83–84.

particularly memorable event. Hence, one senses that the tribune Roscius owed his inclusion in the *Epitome* not so much to his historical importance but to his connection with an unfortunate crowd, whose sudden demise was caused by the sound of the assembly's vociferous opposition to the tribune's actions.⁶⁰ While it is true that Xiphilinus displays a tendency to favour the ostensibly trivial, he demonstrates a tendency to 'track' the careers and characters of certain individuals.⁶¹ Here he also shows a preference for Plutarchan heroes. Indeed, the Romans who receive anything close to characterisation by Xiphilinus in the opening 'Pompeian' section of the *Epitome* are all the subjects of one of Plutarch's biographies.⁶²

Where Xiphilinus retains non-biographical material it appears to have been for its antiquarian interest. One of the longest continuous passages of Dio that Xiphilinus excerpts in detail concerns the feud between the Jewish leaders Aristobulus and Hyrcanus. It has been assumed that Xiphilinus' retention of material relating to the Jews reflects his (putative) Christian agenda.⁶³ If this were the case, then it is strange that he should refrain from adding his own authorial commentary at this point in the narrative.⁶⁴ Indeed, polemic of any nature is conspicuous by its absence. Moreover, what Xiphilinus seems most inter-

⁶⁰ Xiph. 3.26–4.2 [= Dio 36.30.3]. Catulus too falls into this category of owing his inclusion to his role in a particularly memorable anecdote (4.2–9 [=36.36^a]), which would have been familiar to Xiphilinus from Plutarch's *Pompey* (25.10).

⁶¹ Here I have adopted the terminology used by Chaplin for the technique of the author the *Periochae* of Livy: J. D. Chaplin, "The Livian *Periochae* and the Last Republican Writer," in *Condensing Texts* 451–467, at 460 ff.

⁶² E.g. Lucullus: Xiph. 2.24–3.4 [= Dio 36.16.1–3 (compressed)]; Cicero: 4.25–5.1 [= 36.1–4 (compressed)]; Caesar: 4.25–6, 10.7–11 [= 37.22.1]; Cato the Younger: 10.11–16 [= 37.22.2–3].

⁶³ E.g. Millar, *Study* 2, 68 (with reference to Xiphilinus' retention of Dio's account of the Bar Kochba revolt).

⁶⁴ Brunt, *CQ* 30 (1980) 489, comments with some surprise that Xiphilinus should retain Dio's "day of Cronus" to denote the Jewish Sabbath.

ested in copying is Dio's description of the customs of the Jews,⁶⁵ and Dio's lengthy digression on the naming of days of the week according to the movements of the planets.⁶⁶ Throughout this passage Xiphilinus retains Dio's first-person narration, and by doing so assumes Dio's role as the learned narrator (e.g. 7.30, 8.25).

Xiphilinus was little interested in narratives of wars and battles.⁶⁷ Hence, most of Dio's description of Lucullus' war against Mithridates is glossed over with the exception of the memorable fact that Mithridates lost his kingly regalia while fleeing a battle.⁶⁸ Similarly, the details of Caesar's campaigns against the Lusitanians during his governorship are omitted, although the portent of the cloven-hoofed horse is retained.⁶⁹ Where he does include a battle narrative, it is often because it contains some novelty value, thus Pompey's night battle against Mithridates.⁷⁰ The aftermaths of battles or campaigns were of more interest to Xiphilinus. Hence he describes Pompey's merciful treatment of the pirates after his Mediterranean command,⁷¹ and the respect shown by Pompey towards Mithridates' corpse after his murder.⁷²

Programme

Xiphilinus' treatment of Pompey reveals bias towards including material of a biographical nature. In so far as events or actions are recorded, they are included generally only as illustrations of the particular character of the individual performing them. Yet despite the manifold changes that Xiphilinus made to Dio's narrative, in the case of his Pompey

⁶⁵ Xiph. 7.30–8.16 [= Dio 37.17].

⁶⁶ Xiph. 8.16–9.25. [= Dio 37.18–19].

⁶⁷ As noted by Brunt, *CQ* 30 (1980) 491.

⁶⁸ Xiph. 2.11–13 [= Dio 36.1^b.3]; Dio's account of the war: 36.1–17.3.

⁶⁹ Xiph. 10.25–31 [= Dio 37.54.2–3].

⁷⁰ Xiph. 5.1–20 [= Dio 36.49].

⁷¹ Xiph. 4.14–23 [paraphrasing Dio 36.37.4–6].

⁷² Xiph. 7.5–7 [= Dio 37.14.1].

narrative he appears ultimately constrained by the text in front of him. In terms of method of composition, Xiphilinus' accounts of the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius represent something different. He tells us that the "books" that covered the reign of Pius and the first part of the reign of Marcus were not to be found in his copies of Dio.⁷³ It is likely that this refers to loss of multiple quires or folios from the codex of Dio from which he was working rather than individual volumes.⁷⁴

The brief account of the reign of Antoninus Pius is a patchwork of sources. Some of the material derived, it seems, from the last phase of Dio's treatment of Hadrian,⁷⁵ yet other items are introduced from external sources. Tantalizingly, Xiphilinus names two sources for his information, the Church historian Eusebius and Quadratus.⁷⁶ How he marshals this material is suggestive of his method. His account is composed of the following: two (character-revealing) apophthegms which derived from the remnants of Dio's account;⁷⁷ a statement that Antoninus surpassed Hadrian with respect to his praiseworthy attitude towards the Christians, followed by an abridged version of a letter Eusebius ascribed to Hadrian concerning the treatment of Christians;⁷⁸ a comment on Antoninus' acute mental faculties, on account of which Xiphilinus says he was known as

⁷³ Pius: 256.8–10, βιβλίον [= Dio 70.1.1]; Marcus: 256.29–257.3 [= 70.2.2].

⁷⁴ Schmidt, *Chiron* 19 (1989) 55–59.

⁷⁵ Schmidt, *Chiron* 19 (1989) 58–59.

⁷⁶ Certainly this is a reference to Dio's coeval, the historian Asinius Quadratus (*FGrHist* 97). He was the author of a *Parthica* and a history of Rome, which covered a similar time-span as Dio's *History*, although less than a quarter of the length.

⁷⁷ Dio 70.1.2–2.1.

⁷⁸ Xiph. 257.3–9 [= Dio 70.3.1–2]; cf. Eus. *HE* 4.9. Xiphilinus summarizes the letter accurately, even including the emperor's oath to Heracles to punish those who persecuted the Christians.

the “cumin-splitter”;⁷⁹ and a statement on the (peaceful) manner of his death.⁸⁰ This biographical material is supplemented by a brief account of an earthquake in Bithynia, which destroyed an ancient temple in Cyzicus.⁸¹

It is clear that Xiphilinus was confronted with a dearth of material concerning the reign of Antoninus. Fuller accounts of his reign had existed up until the mid-tenth century, as the fragments of John of Antioch and Malalas preserved in the *Excerpta Constantiniana* indicate, but there is no conclusive evidence from Xiphilinus' narrative that he consulted either of these authors. Unlike his immediate historiographical successors, Cedrenus and Zonaras, he does not resort to writing ecclesiastical history in the absence of evidence from secular historiography. Rather, the Christian material Xiphilinus does include appears to be for the purpose of illustrating Antoninus' character. As such, Xiphilinus' account is similar to the brief biographical sketch of Antoninus Pius in Psellus' *Historia Symtomos* (31) in so far as its focus is on the emperor's character. However, brief though it is, the level of detail of Xiphilinus' account makes it unique among extant eleventh- and twelfth-century accounts of the reign. Indeed, unlike his contemporary Psellus, Xiphilinus constructs his account with specific examples, rather than unspecific ethical generalisations. Yet Xiphilinus' interests are revealed to be not purely biographical.

⁷⁹ Xiph. 257.10–13 [= Dio 70.3.3]. Cf. Julian. *Caes.* 312a.

⁸⁰ Xiph. 257.13–15 [= Dio 70.3.3].

⁸¹ Xiph. 257.15–25 [=Dio 70.4.1]. Xiphilinus' description was also topical, as the (restored) temple had been only recently destroyed on 23 September 1063. This event received treatment by Attaleiates (15.1–3, pp.88–90 B.) and by Psellus in his treatise *Εἰς τὸν σεισμόν τὸν γενόμενον τῇ τρίτῃ τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου μηνός, τοῦ Προδρόμου* (J. Duffy, *Philosophica minora* I no. 30). Byzantine readers of Aelius Aristides would have been familiar with his effusive description of the temple in his panegyric delivered at Cyzicus (*Or.* 27.16–21 K.), which might account for Xiphilinus' exaggerated description of the temple's size. For discussion of Psellus' interest in the earthquake see Kaldellis, *Hellenism* 205–206; for Attaleiates' see Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates* 177–184.

His description of the Bithynian earthquake and its effects also reveals his interest in natural phenomena,⁸² something he shared with his contemporaries.⁸³ Such ‘scientific’ digressions served to shape the learned persona of the historian, and were a feature of the genre of historical writing from its Ionian origins. It is perhaps for these reasons that we see Xiphilinus opting to retain further examples of geographical and ethnographical material from Dio’s history.⁸⁴

There is a similar patchwork quality to Xiphilinus’ narrative of the early years of Marcus Aurelius’ reign, although there is a greater sense of unity of thought and focus. Structurally, Xiphilinus is conservative, establishing some salient features of Marcus’ character in the opening sections, before going on to summarise the highlights of the Parthian War in a chronological fashion. Xiphilinus’ character sketch is simple and effective. Marcus Aurelius, styled ὁ φιλόσοφος, is described in terms of his bodily frailty and devotion to letters, which is set in contrast to a brief sketch of Lucius Verus, who is portrayed as a younger man of good bodily condition. Inserted in the midst of this comparison are the names of two of Marcus’ teachers whom he consulted while he was emperor, as an illustration of Marcus’ devotion to learning—Sextus “the Boeotian philosopher” and Hermogenes the rhetorician. It is possible that Xiphilinus found these names elsewhere in Dio’s narrative, perhaps in amongst the list of Marcus’ teachers Dio supplied towards the

⁸² E.g. the eruption of Vesuvius: Xiph. 213.1–214.24 [= Dio 66.21.1–23.5]; the noxious fumes at Babylon and Hierapolis: 238.15–29 [= 68.27.1–3]).

⁸³ E.g. Attaleiates on earthquakes: Attaleiates 12.2, pp.88–89 B.; on lightning: 36.9, pp.310–311 B. Psellus on earthquakes: Περὶ σεισμῶν (Duffy, *Philosophica Minora* I no. 26]. For Psellus’ scientific interests in general see Kaldellis, *Hellenism* 202–209. Symeon Seth’s *Σύνοψις τῶν φυσικῶν* (*Overview of Natural Things*), a product of the mid-eleventh century, belongs to this apparent wave of interest in the natural world.

⁸⁴ E.g. the geography of Britain: Xiph. 13.10–27 [= Dio 39.50]; its people and customs: 321.12–322.18 [=77(76).11.1–12.5].

end of his account, and simply transposed the examples of Sextus and Hermogenes (but not the others) to the beginning of his account.⁸⁵ However, this is by no means certain. Stories of Marcus' interaction with various philosophers and sophists had been in circulation since the second century, and remained popular into the Byzantine period, as the biographical notices of Sextus and Hermogenes in the *Suda* suggest.

This image of the king as pupil was appealing, and Psellus seems to have construed his relationship with Constantine IX as analogous to that of Hermogenes with Marcus Aurelius.⁸⁶ Moreover, Hermogenes' textbook on rhetoric remained throughout the eleventh century a standard school text and focus of scholarly energy.⁸⁷ It is perhaps just as likely that Xiphilinus added these names from his general knowledge as it is that he took them from whatever source he was following at this point. What is significant is his decision to include these names. As was evident in his brief treatment of Antoninus Pius, he demonstrates a tendency to illustration rather than simple description. He does not stop at saying that Marcus was a philosopher and inclined towards scholarly activities, but uses Marcus' interaction with Hermogenes and Sextus to make his point. It seems that Xiphilinus is conscious of following a method of presentation adopted from Dio, who formulaically began his account of each reign with a character sketch of the emperor before resuming his annalistic account of the period.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Note that when Dio (72(71).35.1) came to list Marcus' teachers he does not mention Sextus or Hermogenes, but rather Cornelius Fronto, Claudius Herodes, Junius Rusticus, and Apollonius of Nicomedia—presumably Apollonius of Chalcedon (cf. Eutr. 8.12.1).

⁸⁶ Psellus *Chron.* 6.197; cf. M. Angold, "Imperial Renewal and Orthodox Reaction: Byzantium in the Eleventh Century," in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal* (Aldershot 1994) 231–246, at 235.

⁸⁷ R. Browning, "Enlightenment and Repression in Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *PastPres* 69 (1975) 3–23, at 7 and 9.

⁸⁸ Cf. Questa, *StudUrb(B)* 31 (1957) 37–53. For Xiphilinus' general pattern of composition see Ziegler, *RE* 9A (1967) 2133.

Xiphilinus follows these introductory comments with a condensed account of the Parthian War of A.D. 162–166. The fact that Lucius Verus fought against Vologaisus was not unknown to the Byzantine chronographic tradition,⁸⁹ but it seems clear that Xiphilinus' account was not based on this tradition. The coherence of his narrative of the war suggests that he followed a single source for these events (here designated *ignotus*). Xiphilinus' account of the war, while brief, is surprisingly detailed in so far as he names the locations of several of the major battles and the role played by Avidius Cassius in the success of Roman arms. He identifies the Roman commander defeated at Elegeia in Armenia correctly as Severianus,⁹⁰ identifies Lucius Verus' headquarters at Antioch, and knows about the capture of Seleuceia, the sack of Ctesiphon, and the beginning of the Antonine plague. His failure to mention any of the other successful Roman commanders during the war, most conspicuously Martius Verus, suggests either the poverty of his source material or further authorial selectivity. As we saw in his section on Pompey, Xiphilinus often chose to focus on or 'track' select individuals who, like Avidius Cassius, would go on to play an important role in later parts of his narrative. Xiphilinus shows no inclination for expanding his account with details of memorable deeds or apophthegms. With the exception of a glimpse of what must once have been a vivid depiction of Severianus' death, his account is bereft of anecdotal material.

Xiphilinus' summary of the Parthian War concludes with a brief notice of the death of Lucius Verus, poisoned before he could instigate a revolt against Marcus.⁹¹ Such a detail is un-

⁸⁹ Syncellus *Ecl. Chron.* 664 (p.430 Mosshammer).

⁹⁰ That is, M. Sedatius Severianus (*PIR*² S 306).

⁹¹ Xiph. 259.9–12. A. R. Birley, *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography*² (London 1987) 158, treats Xiphilinus' statement concerning Lucius Verus' death from poisoning as though it were derived from Dio. This position has recently been revised, A. R. Birley, "Cassius Dio and the *Historia Augusta*," in M. van Ackeren (ed.), *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius* (Malden 2012) 13–28, at 14–15.

expected, and it is perhaps an important indication of the tenor of Xiphilinus' positive treatment of Marcus Aurelius that he does not elaborate on this point and there is no indication of who administered the poison. Moreover, his comment about the death of Verus is discordant with the mainstream historiographical opinion on the matter; it was conventionally believed that Verus died from apoplexy.⁹² Indeed, we have to trace a path back to the fourth century to find another author who includes similar stories of Verus perishing through poison: Aurelius Victor and the author of the *Vita Marci* and *Vita Veri* knew of several variations on the same tale.⁹³ Hence, it is possible that Xiphilinus' *ignotus* stems from the same tradition as lies behind the versions known to the author of the *Historia Augusta* and to Aurelius Victor before him.⁹⁴ Whether Dio himself actually recorded this story is impossible to determine; although if he had, it is unlikely that it would have been to the exclusion of the conventional story that Verus died from apoplexy.

It is clear that Xiphilinus was constrained by his imperfect sources at this point, as the years between the end of the war

⁹² In fact the very definition of apoplexy was often illustrated by the example of Verus' death: e.g. Eutr. 10.3; [Aur. Vict.] *Epit.* 16.5; *SHA Marc.* 14.8; *SHA Ver.* 9.11; *Suda* s.v. ἀποπληξία.

⁹³ *SHA Marc.* 15.5–6; *SHA Ver.* 10.4–5, 11.2.

⁹⁴ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 16.5–7. The threads are too tenuous to draw firm conclusions as to the identity of Xiphilinus' *ignotus*, although Asinius Quadratus must be a prime candidate by virtue of the fact that he is cited by Xiphilinus (in relation to the death of Antoninus Pius), and by the author of the *Historia Augusta* for Verus' Parthian War, although whether the latter used Quadratus directly is disputed: cf. A. Cameron, *JRS* 61 (1971) 263; R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography: Studies in the Historia Augusta* (Oxford 1971) 58–59; T. D. Barnes, *The Sources of the Historia Augusta* (Brussels 1978) 108. *Prima facie* Quadratus' *Parthica*, or perhaps an epitome of this work, is a likely source for Xiphilinus' summary of events in the east. However, given the brevity of treatment given to this war, it is possible that another briefer work was consulted, perhaps Quadratus' *Millennium*, Dexippus' *Chronicle* (another work familiar to the author of the *Historia Augusta*), or perhaps even Malalas' *Chronicle* (the latter two we know survived to the mid-tenth century).

and Lucius' death are omitted, yet this gap does not seem to be of concern to the epitomator. Xiphilinus seems more interested in using his account of the Parthian War and the death of Lucius Verus to fulfil a specific moralizing agenda. Verus had traditionally been the target of moralizing commentary by historians and biographers for his allegedly luxurious behaviour, yet Xiphilinus' account is unique as he is not interested in Verus' private life. Consider how he presents this information (Xiph. 259.7–12 [= Dio 71.2.4–72(71).3.1²]):

καὶ ὁ μὲν Λούκιος τούτοις ἐπεκυδαίνετο καὶ μέγα ἐφρόνει, οὐ μὴν αὐτῷ καὶ τὰ τῆς ἄκρας εὐτυχίας ἐς ἀγαθόν τι ἀπέβη· λέγεται γὰρ μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ τῷ πενθερῷ Μάρκῳ ἐπιβεβουλευκῶς, πρὶν τι καὶ δρᾶσαι, φαρμάκῳ διαφθαρῆναι. τὸν μέντοι Κάσσιον ὁ Μᾶρκος τῆς Ἀσίας ἀπάσης ἐπιτροπεύειν ἐκέλευσεν.

Lucius gloried in these exploits and took great pride in them, yet his extreme good fortune did him no good; for he is said to have engaged in a plot against his father-in-law Marcus and have perished by poison before he could carry out any of his plans. Marcus, however, called upon Cassius to command the whole of Asia.

Verus, in Xiphilinus' eyes, becomes an example of the dangers of good fortune, which led him to plot against Marcus, only to fail on account of being poisoned before he could act. It could be argued that Xiphilinus (or the source he was following) had this payoff in mind from the beginning of the account where he contrasts Marcus' physical shortcomings with Verus' physical vigour. This interest in fortune, good or bad, is picked up again at the end of the account where Xiphilinus (following Dio this time) comments on Marcus' ability to cope with continual misfortune.⁹⁵ Xiphilinus' moralizing is not sophisticated, but it did not need to be. His sources imposed certain limitations on him and he can be seen to respond to these limitations by working his material to fit certain basic moral paradigms.

Unfortunately, Xiphilinus makes no clear line of demarca-

⁹⁵ Xiph. 268.12–15 [= Dio 72 (71).36.3].

tion between his use of *ignotus* and his return to Dio. However, it is likely that the report of Lucius Verus' death, or else his notice of Avidius Cassius' appointment as commander of Asia, marks the end of his reliance on *ignotus*.⁹⁶ The loss of Dio's narrative compelled Xiphilinus to go beyond Dio for his material for this first part of his account of Marcus' reign, but even when he could consult Dio, Xiphilinus' authorial hand is again in evidence. The inclusion of the Christian version of the rain miracle during the Marcomannic War is certainly the most conspicuous example of his tendency to add material as a means of correcting Dio's interpretation of events. As it appears in the *Epitome*, he gives a summary of Dio's version of the rain miracle with his own version, derived from Eusebius and the *Chronicle* of George the Monk.⁹⁷ Traditionally this passage has been interpreted as Xiphilinus adding a Christian veneer to Dio's non-Christian history. Yet it would be a mistake to attribute his comments to pious indignation. As noted by Brunt, Xiphilinus was relatively restrained when it came to adding Christian material to his *Epitome*.⁹⁸ Xiphilinus, unlike Zonaras, chose not to furnish his narrative with the usual Christian trappings of martyr acts and pontifical appointments, and even such a seminal moment in the Christian world-view as the nativity of Christ passes without notice.

As suggested already, Xiphilinus' tendency to make a point of amending or correcting Dio is a feature of his conscious display of his own erudition and authorial self-representation. Certainly this feature of his work is in evidence during his digression on the rain miracle. He begins by summarizing Dio's version, wherein an Egyptian priest in the entourage of Marcus Aurelius calls upon Hermes and other *daimones* to intercede on their behalf in battle against the Quadi. Yet before narrating

⁹⁶ Boissevain (III 246) makes the death of Lucius Verus the end of Xiphilinus' independent narrative.

⁹⁷ P. Kovács, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain Miracle and the Marcomannic War* (Leiden 2009) 31, 100–102.

⁹⁸ Brunt *CQ* 30 (1980) 489.

the battle, Xiphilinus interjects, speaking to the reader in his own voice, thus distancing himself from Dio. Yet the purpose of the digression is not entirely to correct Dio. In true Atticizing fashion, Xiphilinus makes a point of noting that the Roman word for a unit of soldiers (τάγμα) was a legion (λεγεών).⁹⁹ For the purposes of his transmission of what he claimed to be the correct version of events, such a notice is entirely irrelevant, even more so when we remember that he is writing in his own voice. But as a discreet signal of his erudition, it has a role in his *Epitome*. Just like Dio, who was also wont to render and define Latin technical terms in Greek as a mark of his authority, so too does Xiphilinus position himself in the text as an authority and mediator of Roman history.

There appears to be a further, unexpected reason why Xiphilinus included the story of the rain miracle. Certainly it was an important event in early Christian polemic and historiography, but its reappearance in a text that wears its Christian trappings lightly is less easy to comprehend. Ostensibly there is an element of polemic in Xiphilinus' digression, but this may be read as a broad swipe at Dio more than anything else.¹⁰⁰ What seems to have drawn Xiphilinus to include the digression was his sense that there were inconsistencies in Dio's presentation. On the one hand, he draws the reader's attention to the apparent inconsistency between Dio's attestation

⁹⁹ Thus we see Xiphilinus (261.1–2 [= Dio 72(71).9.3]) retaining similar comments presumably made by Dio, concerning derivation of the Latin honorific title *Germanicus* (Xiph. 259.29–30 [= Dio 72(71).3.5]), and why Epidamnus is called Dyrrachium in the Latin language (18.20–26 [= 41.49.2–3]).

¹⁰⁰ Xiph. 261.14–16 [= Dio 72(71).9.6]: ἀλλ' οἱ Ἕλληνας, ὅτι μὲν τὸ τάγμα κεραυνοβόλον λέγεται, ἴσασι καὶ αὐτοὶ μαρτυροῦσι, τὴν δὲ αἰτίαν τῆς προσηγορίας ἤκιστα λέγουσι, with Xiphilinus' pejorative use of *Hellene* to denote non-Christian or unbeliever. As noted by J. M. Hussey, *Ascetics and Humanists in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (London 1960) 8, in the eleventh century heresy trials were founded on accusations of *hellenismos*, which often covered the practice of magic, astrology, and spiritualism. For the various meanings of *Hellene* and its cognates see Kaldellis, *Hellenism* 184–187.

of the Thundering Legion earlier in his history, and on the other, that Marcus “is not reported to have enjoyed the company of magicians or sorcerers.”¹⁰¹ Xiphilinus’ arguments may be unconvincing,¹⁰² yet his digression on the rain miracle does conform to the pattern of his selection and insertion of material. Like his comment on Antoninus Pius’ disposition towards the Christians, so too his comments about Marcus characterise the emperor as demonstrating a sort of Christian-friendly piety. If this reading is valid, then we see the rain miracle in Xiphilinus as not so much a case of Christian polemic one thousand years too late, but rather as a vehicle for describing an emperor in terms that were recognisable for an eleventh-century audience, that is, as an appropriately pious monarch, an uncomplicated *exemplum* of imperial εὐσέβεια.

Xiphilinus’ comments on the rain miracle are a reminder of the debate in the eleventh century among certain intellectuals who sought to reconcile the paganism of many of the celebrated individuals of the past with their revived exemplary stature. Michael Attaleiates sought to justify his veneration of the Roman republican heroes by suggesting that their outstanding ethical qualities in some way compensated for the fact that they were not Christian.¹⁰³ Similarly, Michael Psellus in the *Historia Syntomos* can be regarded as representing the other extreme—whereby Marcus is transformed into a crypto-Christian.¹⁰⁴ In that work, Psellus, like Xiphilinus, uses the story of the rain miracle as an example of Marcus’ piety, since it is Marcus’s own prayers that bring about the miracle (32).

¹⁰¹ Xiph. 260.31–2 [= Dio 72(71).9.2].

¹⁰² Cf. I. Israelowich, “The Rain Miracle of Marcus Aurelius: (Re-)Construction of Consensus,” *G&R* 55 (2008) 83–102, at 89–90.

¹⁰³ Attaleiates 24.1. For discussion see A. Kaldellis, “A Byzantine Argument for the Equivalence of All Religions: Michael Attaleiates on Ancient and Modern Romans,” *IJCT* 14 (2007) 1–22, esp. 7–12.

¹⁰⁴ Just as Mauropous had treated Plutarch and Plato (*Epigr.* 43).

Conclusion

Given the importance of Xiphilinus' *Epitome* as the major source for the later books of Dio's *History* and, by extension, for the study of Roman imperial history from the Julio-Claudians to the Severans, a comprehensive study of Xiphilinus' *Epitome* remains a desideratum for Roman historians. This article has highlighted some of the features of the *Epitome* that are suggestive of Xiphilinus' authorial style, method, and programme, while presenting it as a work consonant with some of the historiographical trends of the middle Byzantine period. The degree to which there was a coherent unity to Xiphilinus' thought, and the relationship of this to Dio's, and the place of the *Epitome* within the framework of eleventh-century *Kaiserkritik* remain to be explored. Likewise, further study of Xiphilinus' 'republican lives' with other eleventh- and twelfth-century discussions of the Roman Republic might well yield interesting results. Yet no longer can we characterise Xiphilinus as presenting "an erratic selection of his [Dio's] material" or "a spasmodic and often barely intelligible narrative."¹⁰⁵

Xiphilinus changed Dio's *History* in ways that were at once subtle yet profound. Contrary to some expectations, he had little interest in 'Christianising' Dio's history: on the whole, the history of Christianity and Christian ideology had little influence on his presentation of history. Rather, the most significant changes rendered unto Dio's history were also the most subtle, namely, in those aspects of his programme which may be described as the most *classicising*—or, to put it another way, those that were the most like Dio's own programme. Biographical material dominates Xiphilinus' selection. The layers and details of Dio's historical narrative are stripped away to accentuate and simplify the biographical elements of Dio's history. Within this biographical material, Xiphilinus shared with Dio an interest in the mechanics of kingship, although this does not seem to have extended to Dio's broad interest in

¹⁰⁵ The words are those of Millar (*Study 2*).

different constitutions. Erudition too, whether in the form of learned digressions, quotations, or criticisms of earlier historians (including Dio), was fundamental to Xiphilinus' programme of composition. The result was a work that was distinct from Dio's, and which preserved neither the fabric nor the tone of Dio's *History*.

In his influential and provocative inaugural lecture (May 1974), Cyril Mango spoke of the "distorting mirror" of Byzantine literature.¹⁰⁶ According to Mango, it was the antiquarian conservatism of the Byzantines that prevented them from producing accurate depictions of their own historical reality. Yet for Xiphilinus at least, the past was a key part of his own sense of reality, and in Dio's *History* Xiphilinus saw a reflection not only of his own history, but also of the political situation of the eleventh century. Thus, if we are to speak of distorting mirrors, we are confronted with an unusual one in the case of the *Epitome*, for it is a mirror that, on the one hand, reflects an often distorted and compressed image of Dio's *History*, but, on the other, produces an image that is sharp in its delineation of the tastes and interests of its eleventh-century author.¹⁰⁷

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Wadham College
Oxford, U.K.
christopher.mallan@wadh.ox.ac.uk

¹⁰⁶ Cyril A. Mango, *Byzantine Literature as a Distorting Mirror* (Oxford 1975).

¹⁰⁷ I would like to thank Prof. Christopher Pelling, Dr. Caillan Davenport, Ms. Helen Tanner, Ms. Rebecca Smith, the anonymous reviewer for *GRBS*, and Prof. Kent Rigsby (in his capacity as editor for *GRBS*), for their invaluable comments and feedback on this article. Thanks also are due to Dr. Dimitris Krallis and Dr. Jonathan Shepard who provided candid and friendly guidance at earlier stages of its composition.