

## Speechmaking as Crisis Resolution in Cassius Dio's *Roman History*, Books I and II

Books I and II of Cassius Dio's *Roman History*, despite their fragmentary condition, show a deliberate use of direct discourse at points of crisis during early Roman history in the form of public speeches made by prominent figures, who ensure a smooth transition of governance. Cassius Dio's authorial voice opens his narrative and candidly states that the entire work is framed according to his authority and judgment. Dio openly admits to omitting certain matters from his writing, but his inclusion of having read everything (*πάντα*) conveys his learnedness to the audience (Barnes 1984). The direct address to the audience and the use of the first person are similar to the speechmaking characteristics of Dio's historical figures, such as Hersilia and Julius Proculus in Book I and Tanaquil and Lucretia in Book II (Madsen 2023; Millar 1961). The passages leading up to their speeches have not survived for the most part, but the composition clearly spotlights them through speechmaking: victims of sexual assault like Hersilia and Lucretia are transformed into leaders directing the course of Rome's continued survival, while Julius Proculus and Tanaquil become overseers during the interregnum who control the ascension of the next king. Overall, what emerges is a clear association between speechmaking and figures of authority during points of existential crisis in early Roman history.

This paper tackles Books I and II because they represent a self-contained section of Dio's substantial work in which the speedy narrative covers the entirety of the Kingdom period after summarizing Aeneas' arrival in Rome and the early days of Alba Longa in a perfunctory way. An additional example of direct discourse in these books is a conversation between Tarquinius Priscus and Attus Navius. Both men speak in an exchange which highlights their power: Tarquinius as King and Navius as the augur and sole person able to not only challenge but halt

the King's decisions. While neither figure makes an open, impassioned plea in the manner of the other speeches outlined in this paper, the same principles are observed in the conversation, namely that the dialogue emphasizes the authority of the figures and it occurs at a pivotal moment of crisis and succession issues in Rome.

While other writers like Livy, Ovid, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Plutarch discuss similar foundational events in early Roman history in straightforward fashion or are engaged with showcasing morality and emotion, Cassius Dio's account spotlights figures of authority through the use of direct discourse (Laird 2000; Pitcher 2018). The methodology of and the purpose behind the speeches remains largely unchanged across the transition between the two books and between male and female characters, though it should be noted that three out of the five speeches in the two books are given by women. Cassius Dio uses the style and content of speechmaking to foreground important figures who guide the transition of Rome's government after moments of uncertainty, instead of using rhetoric to promote more abstract ideals or morals as other writers do. Whether it is male or female characters, queens or the kidnapped, the observed technique is consistent: whenever a crisis point occurs, Dio's narrative utilizes speechmaking as a form of resolution that directs Rome's future.

#### Works Cited

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