

SCRIPTA CLASSICA ISRAELICA

YEARBOOK OF THE ISRAEL SOCIETY
FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES

VOLUME XL

2021

The appearance of this volume has been made possible by the support of

Bar-Ilan University
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
The Open University
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PUBLISHED BY
THE ISRAEL SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES
<http://www.israel-classics.org>

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Price \$50

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Printed in Israel by Magnes Press, Jerusalem

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
JAMES M. REDFIELD, <i>Briseis: The Woman as a Speaking Sign</i>	1
CARLO DELEE DONNE, <i>Tackling Conventions: Plato's Barbarians between Language and Ontology</i>	15
JOHATHAN J. PRICE, <i>The Originality of Appian of Alexandria</i>	31
BENJAMIN ISAAC, <i>Caesarea: Before and After the Corpus of Inscription (CIIP)</i>	49
ALEXANDER ANDRASON AND MÓNICA DURÁN MAÑAS, <i>The Syntax of Interjections: Evidence from New Testament Greek</i>	57
CAROLINE PETIT, <i>Greek Particles in Galen's Oeuvre: Some Case Studies</i>	95
ROEE DROR, <i>Renderings of Idiomatic Topographical Terms in the Septuagint</i>	125
WERNER ECK AND YOTAM TEPPER, <i>A Stamp with Latin Inscription from Sobata/Shivta in the Negev</i>	145
RIVKA GERSHT AND PETER GENDELMAN, <i>Marble Cuboid Weight Carved with Eros from Khirbet Ibtin</i>	151
RONIT PALISTRANT SHAICK, <i>The "Marsyas of the Forum" image on Roman city coins of the Southern Levant</i>	169
JOSEPH GEIGER, <i>GLAJJ: Two More Addenda</i>	203
BOOK REVIEWS	
Rainer Friedrich, <i>Postoral Homer: orality and literacy in the Homeric Epic</i> (by Margalit Finkelberg)	205
Gabriel Danzig, David Johnson and Donald Morrison (eds.), <i>Plato and Xenophon. Comparative Studies</i> (by Livio Rossetti)	207
Peter Riedlberger, <i>Prolegomena zu den spätantiken Konstitutionen. Nebst einer Analyse der erbrechtlichen und verwandten Sanktionen gegen Heterodoxe</i> (by Robert M. Frakes)	210
Attilio Mastrocinque, Joseph E. Sanzo, and Marianna Scapini (eds.), <i>Ancient Magic: Then and Now</i> (by Ortal-Paz Saar)	213
Oren Margolis, <i>The Politics of Culture in Quattrocento Europe. René of Anjou in Italy</i> (by Tamara Lobato Beneyto)	216
OBITUARIES: GIDEON FOERSTER (by Orit Peleg-Barkat)	219
DISSERTATIONS IN PROGRESS	225

The Originality of Appian of Alexandria

Jonathan J. Price

Abstract: Despite his long dismissal in Classical scholarship as an unoriginal historian, Appian of Alexandria wrote a panoramic history of the Roman Empire according to an original conception and methodology. His work is far more than its former classification as a hunting-ground for lost sources. Two aspects of originality and independent thought are examined here. First, his innovative organization of a huge amount of material according to ethnic divisions, as a method to explain Rome's historical achievement. Second, his choice of the murder of Tiberius Gracchus as the first incident in the Roman civil war, revealing his conception of the last century of the Roman Republic as a single prolonged, episodic event, a conception influenced by Thucydides' model of *stasis*.

Keywords: Appian of Alexandria, Roman Empire, Roman civil wars, Roman Republic, Tiberius Gracchus, Greek Historiography of Rome

Among readers of Classics and Ancient History, it has taken the second-century CE historian Appian of Alexandria well over a century to recover his reputation after the curt dismissal of him by Nissen, in 1863, as "third-rate".¹ German scholarship lined up behind that assessment, which was sealed for generations by the authoritative, condescending article by E. Schwartz in Pauly-Wissowa's *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*.² The enshrinement or entombment of a reputation in

¹ "... wir es hier mit einer Quelle dritten Ranges zu thun haben", note that this judgment was offered in a study of Livy: H. Nissen, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die Quellen der vierten und fünften Dekade des Livius*, Berlin 1863, 117; and on this cf. K. Welch, "Appian and the *Roman History*: A Reappraisal", in K. Welch, ed., *Appian's Roman History: Empire and Civil War*, Swansea 2015, 1-13 at p. 3. Welch's is the latest and best summary of the history of scholarship on Appian, and it has informed the introductory paragraphs of this article. G. Bucher has also written useful and perceptive summaries of Appian studies, including: "The Origins, Program and Composition of Appian's *Roman History*", *TAPA* 130, 2000, 411-58; and "Toward a Literary Evaluation of Appian's *Civil Wars*, Book 1", in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, Vol. 1, Malden, MA 2007, 454-60. Bucher observes that the German view was perpetuated by the influential work of E. Gabba, *Appiano e la storia delle guerre civili*, Florence 1956; and cf. the extensive demonstration of Gabba's method in his edition and commentary on Book I of Appian, BC: *Appiani Bellorum Civilium Liber Primus*, Florence 1958.

² *RE* II.1, 1895, 216-37. Note *inter alia* this typical statement: "Den Alexandriner, der gewürdigt war, in dem grossen Räderwerk des Weltreichs ein Glied wenn nicht zu sein, so doch zu scheinen, erfüllt, wie begreiflich, die Bewunderung der römischen Erfolge, und er will sie den Griechen nicht durch rhetorische Enkomien, sondern durch Vorführung der Thatsachen mitteilen. Das ist alles ganz schön und lobenswert, aber der alte Beamte vindiciert sich auch das Recht des Dilettanten, es mit dem Studium und der Schriftstellerei

the *Realencyclopädie* could be as hard as stone. English-language scholarship fell in line, too.³ Before that, Appian had not suffered such scorn, had even found favor among readers. Editions and translations proliferated in the sixteenth century; Shakespeare used him in *Antony and Cleopatra*.⁴ Admirers of his work today, still feeling the need to justify their appreciation, routinely quote Karl Marx's famous remark, in a letter to Engels in 1861:

In the evenings for recreation I have been reading Appian's Roman Civil Wars in the Greek original. Very valuable book. The fellow is Egyptian by origin. Schlosser says he has 'no soul', probably because he gets to the bottom of the material basis of things in these civil wars.⁵

The stern assessment by German philologists after Marx was followed by a sharp drop-off in his popularity among both general readers and, critically, among Classical philologists and historians. His books were still opened, but they were used rather than read. The relegation of Appian to the third rank of ancient authors benefitted a once-dominant discipline of Classical philology, namely *Quellenforschung*. An unthinking transcriber of lost sources offers much freer hunting ground than does an author who actually imposes original thought and design on his source material. That was the direction and purpose of Appian research for subsequent generations.

Times change. Shifts in cultural tastes and interests, which occur naturally, are accelerated by wars and revolutions. Doctoral students search for topics in less well-trodden fields. In the past three or four decades, Appian has benefitted from fresh, unprejudiced consideration of his literary and analytical abilities, in much the same way that other scorned historians, like Diodorus, Josephus and even Velleius Paterculus and Florus, have in recent generations won new appreciation as interesting, thinking, noteworthy historians enslaved to no previous (lost) superior writers or bound by their own stupidity.⁶ Recent scholarship on Appian of Alexandria has shown him to be an

weniger ernst zu nehmen als mit den Geschäften des Amtes. Was von ihm als Historiker zu halten ist, lässt sich nur entscheiden, wenn die Frage nach seinen Gewährsmännern mit leidlicher Sicherheit beantwortet ist, eine Frage, die dadurch, dass er für wichtige Epochen die Hauptquelle ist, wichtig zugleich und schwierig wird."

³ See the works cited by A. Gowing in the first chapter of his *The Triumviral Narratives of Appian and Cassius Dio*, Ann Arbor 1992, esp. 9 n.1.

⁴ Welch (n. 1), 2-3.

⁵ A. G. Bonnell, "A 'very valuable book': Karl Marx and Appian", in K. Welch (above, n. 1), 15-21; cf. also Gowing (above, n. 3), 9-10.

⁶ For Diodorus, see K. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century*, Princeton, 1990; I. Sulimani, *Diodorus' Mythistory and the Pagan Mission*, Leiden 2011; in an innovative collection of articles on Diodorus, the editors coin the term "New Quellenforschung": L. I. Hau, A. Meeus and B. Sheridan, eds., *Diodoros of Sicily: Historiographical Theory and Practice in the "Bibliothek"*, *Studia Hellenistica* 58, Leuven, 2018. For Velleius, Syme's complete dismissal has held sway, R. Syme, *Roman Papers* 3, Oxford 1984, 1090-1104, but see now the articles in E. Cowan, ed., *Velleius Paterculus: Making History*, Swansea 2010 and the appreciation of Velleius by A.J. Woodman in the new online edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, posted 2016:

<https://oxfordre.com/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-6719?rskey=5HQJIP&result=1>. Josephan scholarship has become an

original and serious historian, with considerable literary and rhetorical skill, and has consequently thrown off the pall cast by the high priests of Classical scholarship who focused on the mistakes, supposed faults in his style and obvious shortcomings in his method. Many or most of those faults are surely there, but they no longer define Appian the historian and author.

For a Classical scholar, this reassessment of Appian is still relatively new. It was only in 1988, for example, that the first monograph-length *literary analysis* of Appian's *oeuvre* appeared. In a favorable review, Christopher Pelling remarked, "There is a good book still to be written about Appian, one which will reveal him as a much more interesting and substantial figure in the history of historiography than he at present appears"; this is still true.⁷ The 1990s saw the first extended literary treatments of Appian in English, as well as the first doctoral dissertations in English and German seeking a capable and worthy writer.⁸ This has been followed to the present day with innovative studies of Appian's language and literary techniques, something that the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Teutonic masters of Classical philology would have deemed unthinkable.⁹ Finally, and perhaps most important, in 2015 Kathryn Welch organized and edited a volume of articles, of which the stated purpose was to "present a range of views on Appian's originality".¹⁰

In new research on Appian, the question of his "originality" has been posed in different ways. One is (inevitably) source-related.¹¹ Even Welch intended something more technical than will be proposed here. This article takes up two aspects of Appian's writing that have to do with originality in his conception of history. While perforce he based his history of the Roman Empire on written sources — not only (naturally) earlier narrative accounts in Greek and Latin, but also, it is clear, documentary sources as well¹²

industry unto itself, see the editors' introduction and wide variety of studies in H.H. Chapman and Z. Rodgers, *A Companion to Josephus*, Malden, MA 2016.

⁷ The book is B. Goldmann, *Einheitlichkeit und Eigenständigkeit der Historia Romana des Appian*, Hildesheim, Zurich and New York 1988. Pelling's review appeared in *CR* 39, 1989, 202-3.

⁸ Groundbreaking was Gowing's book mentioned above, n. 2. Dissertations are listed in Welch (above, n. 1), 5. This is not to neglect the several articles on Appian in *ANRW* 34. 1, Berlin 1993, 339-554, which were however largely shaped by old concerns of source-critique.

⁹ The following list is not intended to be comprehensive: E. Famerie, *Le Latin et le Grec d'Appien. Contribution à l'étude du lexique d'un historien grec de Rome*, Geneva 1998; G. Bucher, "Fictive elements in Appian's Pharsalus Narrative", *Phoenix* 59, 2005, 50-76; L. Pitcher, "War Stories: The Uses of the Plupast in Appian", in J. Grethlein and C. Krebs, eds, *Time and Narrative in Ancient Historiography: The 'Plupast' from Herodotus to Appian*, Cambridge 2012, 199-210; G.O. Hutchinson, "Appian the Artist: Rhythmic Prose and its Literary Implications", *CQ* 65, 2015, 788-806; and several literary studies of Appian's writing in Welch (above, n. 1).

¹⁰ Welch, as in n. 1 above, p. 9; the volume is based on a conference devoted solely to Appian. The present study is a continuation of an article by me that appeared in that volume, "Thucydidean Stasis and the Roman Empire in Appian's Interpretation of History", 45-63.

¹¹ E.g., Gowing (above, n. 3), 46-47 and 285-7.

¹² E.g., R. Westall, "The Sources for the *Civil Wars* of Appian of Alexandria", in Welch (above, n. 1), 125-65, discussing i.a. Appian's knowledge of inscriptions.

— the structure he gave to Roman History as a panoramic subject and his declared purpose in writing it, as well as his conception of the Roman civil war demonstrated in a five-book narrative, show a thinking historian who wanted not only to describe but to *explain* world-changing events, and to depart from conventional patterns of historiographical narrative.

1. Universal History

Appian wrote a kind universal history. That is, in writing about the Roman Empire in a comprehensive manner from Rome's conquests of Italy to the campaigns of his day, he wrote about the gradual, eventually total domination of the inhabitable world and its maintenance under the unified rule of the Roman Empire. He reflects the general Roman sentiment when he writes:

Possessing the best part of the earth and sea they have, on the whole, aimed to preserve their empire by the exercise of prudence, rather than to extend their sway indefinitely over poverty-stricken and profitless tribes of barbarians ... (Praef. 7.26)¹³

This idea of course pre-dates Appian by more than 300 years. Polybius was able to observe that Rome had conquered “nearly the entire inhabitable world”.¹⁴ As Appian himself says, most of the empire had been acquired under the Republic, by the exercise of Republican virtue; the empire was held and maintained by the monarchy, but the additions by the emperors were minor by comparison, and indeed the books on these parts — the Dacians and Arabs and a lost “Hekatontaetia” whose content is uncertain — were themselves additions to his original plan for the history. Moreover, even some of the parts acquired by earlier emperors in the “hundred years”, like Britain, were deemed not entirely profitable.¹⁵

¹³ Translations of Appian are based on Horace White's rendering in the Loeb Classical Library.

¹⁴ σχεδὸν ἅπαντα τὰ κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην Pol. 1.2; cf. F. Hartog, “Polybius and the First Universal History”, in P. Liddel and A. Fear, eds., *Historiae Mundi: Studies in Universal History*, London 2010, 30-40. The idea of Rome's possessing the entire inhabitable world can be found in imperial propaganda, beginning with Augustus, both in art (such as the statue of Augustus from Prima Porta, now in the Vatican Museums), and literature, e.g. (and only e.g.): *Gentibus est aliis tellus data limite certo: / Romanae spatium est urbis et orbis idem* (Ovid, *Fasti* 2.683-4).

¹⁵ Of Britain, he says that the Romans “have taken possession of the better and larger part, not caring for the remainder. Indeed, the part they do hold is not very profitable” (τὸ κράτιστον αὐτῆς ἔχουσιν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, οὐδὲν τῆς ἄλλης δεόμενοι: οὐ γὰρ εὐφορὸς αὐτοῖς ἐστὶν οὐδ' ἦν ἔχουσι) Praef. 2.5.18. Compare Strabo, 2.5.8 (115-6): “for governmental purposes there would be no advantage in knowing such countries and their inhabitants ... For although they could have held even Britain, the Romans scorned to do so, for there was nothing to fear from the Britons ... and there would be no advantage in taking and holding Britain. More revenue is derived from customs duties than their tribute would bring in ... if we deduct the expenses of the army from the tribute. And the islands around Britain would be even more unprofitable”; I am grateful to the editor of this journal, Benjamin Isaac, for drawing my attention to this passage. On the later additions Appian's plan for the History, see Bucher

Greek historians wrote self-declared universal histories from the fourth century BCE, starting with Ephorus, as Polybius tells us.¹⁶ This started before Alexander's conquests, so that there is no causative link between world conquest and the literary genre of universal history. Herodotus' first history in Greek was already an attempt to write about the entire world, not for its own sake but as a mode of explanation, as Jacoby perceived.¹⁷ A universal history can take one of two forms¹⁸: the first is a comprehensive history of all of mankind from earliest known origins to the historian's day; this form is practically impossible to accomplish, but it is what Ephorus claimed to have done, and apparently Nicolaus of Damascus, in his gigantic work of 144 books (the largest known), attempted it, as well (Jacoby, *FGH* 90, now *Brill's New Jacoby [BNJ]* 90). The second was a treatment of an event that encompassed the whole known world within a restricted time, such as Polybius' Roman history, which aimed to account for the rise of world empire within the astonishing brief period of 53 years (Pol. 1.1.5-6). Once Rome, having gained possession or control of the Western Mediterranean, conquered or otherwise imposed its dominant power on the East, Roman history became world history, a view which extended beyond historiography.¹⁹ This must be the turn that Diodorus' and Nicolaus' histories took, although at what point in each work, cannot be known from the surviving fragments.

The certain coherence of the Roman Empire, providing a convenient framework for the history of the *oikoumene*, as well as a traditional annalistic chronology provided by the conquerors themselves, did not relieve the universal historian of the technical challenges of relative chronology, synchronisms, coordinating different calendrical systems, and so forth. Diodorus used a geographical arrangement for the earliest periods for which there was no reliable chronology but started annalistic narration from the first Olympiad; he noted that his obligation to narrate simultaneous events in a coherent manner required him "to interrupt the narrative and to parcel out different times to simultaneous events contrary to nature" (20.43.7, trans. Geer in LCL). Appian avoided

2000 (above, n. 1) and now J. Osgood, "*Breviarium Totius Imperii: The Background of Appian's Roman History*", in Welch (above, n. 1), 23-44.

¹⁶ Pol. 5.33.2. Another universal historian, Diodorus (5.1.4) says that Ephorus wrote *kata genos*, but not enough of Ephorus' work survives in order to understand what that means; this is discussed below. On universal history, J. Marincola, "Universal History from Ephorus to Diodorus", in J. Marincola, ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, Oxford 2007, 171-9; M. Sommer, "Imperiale Macht und lokale Identität: Universalhistorische, Variationen zu einem regionalhistorischen Thema", in M. Blömer, M. Facella, E. Winter, eds. *Lokale Identität im Römischen Nahen Osten: Kontexte und Perspektiven. Oriens et Occidens* 18, Stuttgart 2009, 235-48; and the many articles in Liddel and Fear, above n. 14.

¹⁷ F. Jacoby, "Herodotos", *RE Suppl.* II, 1913, 205-520. Cf. J.M. Alonso-Núñez, *The Idea of Universal History in Greece: From Herodotus to the Age of Augustus*, Amsterdam 2002; P. Vannicelli, "Herodotus' Egypt and the Foundations of Universal History", in N. Luraghi, ed., *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus*, Oxford 2001, 211-40.

¹⁸ Marincola (above, n. 15).

¹⁹ E.g., Plutarch saw the Roman empire as complete, rational and eternal, as J. Dillon argues in "Plutarch and the End of History", in J. Mossman, ed., *Plutarch and his Intellectual World*, Swansea 1997, 246-50.

that problem by an original scheme that was neither strictly geographic, like Ephorus and the early books of Diodorus, nor chronological, but ethnographic, relating in separate books the different peoples conquered by the Romans. He announces at the beginning: “I am going to write the part relating to each *ethnos* separately, omitting what happened to the others in the meantime, and taking it up in its proper place” (Praef. 13.49). The account of each subdued *ethnos* is arranged chronologically, and the books are arranged in rough order of conquest, but Appian is fairly strict with his scheme, not making even obvious synchronistic connections. A coherent, continuous account of, say, the Punic Wars, is not on offer, as Appian himself admits. Thus he wrote, without synchrony, a series of local histories that combine into a universal history of the Polybian sort, spanning of course a much larger time than Polybius’ history; and Appian continued the story to the second century CE, so that (unlike Polybius) the astonishment he wished to convey was not only from the extent but also the duration and stability of the empire.

This scheme had not, so far as is known, been tried before, especially for a chronological swath of history so huge and so firmly located in the *spatium historicum* as the Roman empire. Too little is known about Ephorus’ history of Greece and the East, which is said to have been written *kata genos*, apparently according to large geographical regions like Persia and Macedonia, to appreciate Appian’s departures from that obvious predecessor. Significantly, and in apparent contrast to Ephorus, Appian focuses on *ethne*, the people in different regions, and his purpose is openly stated to be *explanatory* (about which more presently). As noted, Diodorus, who followed Ephorus, notably shifted from a geographical to an annalistic structure when he reached the eighth century BCE, when his material became more plentiful and more reliable. Thus John Rich’s designation of Appian’s ethnographic arrangement of his materials as “a radically innovative structure” seems to be correct.²⁰ Certainly it solved, in an artificial way, the problems of relating simultaneous multi-year campaigns across widely separated historical arenas, coordinating domestic and foreign arenas, and synchronizing unrelated actions by different cities and empires, but by the same token it would have frustrated the reader of history who expected the panoramic scope, chronological connections and explanatory devices found in conventional interpretative narratives.

Appian’s purpose was not to avoid difficulties but rather to devise a new mode of historical explanation, which many ancient historians understood as their highest purpose, since Herodotus declared, in his first sentence, that his purpose was to explain “the *reason why* [the Greeks and the Persians] fought each other”. The object of Appian’s explanation was, naturally, the Roman Empire itself, about which he remarks, “No empire down to the present time ever attained to such a size and duration” (Praef. 8.29): an unprecedented historical phenomenon required explanation. The historical uniqueness of the Roman Empire was a conventional claim found in the Greek historians of Rome, from Polybius on. But before explanation, proof of the premise was needed, and this was found in a manner common to historiography: a comparison of the

²⁰ J. W. Rich, “Appian, Cassius Dio and Seneca the Elder”, in M.Ch. Scappaticcio, ed., *Seneca the Elder and his Rediscovered Historiae ab initio bellorum civilium: New Perspectives on Early-Imperial Roman Historiography*, Berlin 2020, 329-53 at 329.

Roman Empire to all previous empires in history.²¹ This was an obvious form of proof — just as Thucydides had established the magnitude of the Peloponnesian War by comparison with all previous events from the dawn of history — and the standard method was to cite a cycle of four empires that rose and fell prior to Rome. This sort of comparison of Rome’s empire with previous empires is to be found already in Polybius, Diodorus and Dionysius, after them it was used widely in Greek and Latin historiography and other forms of literature.²² Thus that part of Appian’s exposition (Praef. 8.29-10.42) — in which he compares the Roman Empire to the empires in Greece, “Asia” (Assyria, Persia, Media), Macedonia and Egypt — followed well-worn channels, the original parts being his addition of his native Egypt to the cycle and his personal notes about the empires that expired before Rome’s rise, their different natures and the reasons for their eventual failure. Interestingly, Appian compares only the extent and duration of Rome’s empire to all previous empires in history; he does not compare their ethnic diversity (the Persian Empire would have provided a strong counter-example); but he was adhering to a *topos*.

It was in search of an explanation for *why* and *how* the Romans built and maintained its empire that Appian departed from his predecessors and devised his original plan of history. He states the explanatory power of his scheme clearly in his prefatory remarks to the entire work: he organized Roman history the way he did “... desiring to compare the Roman prowess with that of every other nation” and “desiring to learn the Romans’ relations to each, in order to understand the weakness of these nations or their power of endurance, as well as the bravery or good fortune of their conquerors or any other circumstance contributing to the result” (Praef. 12.48). Thus by isolating the individual campaigns of conquest against widely varying *ethne* and studying each separately, Appian hopes to show that the Romans — and apparently only the Romans, in the whole stretch of world history — possessed the variety of military, diplomatic and administrative skills, personal virtues and good fortune, to achieve what had never been achieved before, namely acquisition of an empire of unprecedented size and duration. Chronological coherence and connectedness were sacrificed for the higher purpose of explanation and understanding.

While in recent scholarship Appian’s ethnographic scheme has been re-evaluated, its full power is still, I believe, been under-appreciated. It has been suggested e.g. that Appian meant his representation of the empire to reflect his sense of the world’s consensual agreement to Rome’s rule, and furthermore to demonstrate the world’s perfection and completion under it.²³ Bucher has gone in a slightly different direction, offering that Appian’s scheme was intended to account not only for Rome’s rise, but also “the concomitant extension of the benefits of monarchy to the entire world”; this conforms with Bucher’s view of Appian as a firm monarchist.²⁴ Osgood has argued that Appian’s introductory survey of the Empire as well as the plan of his entire history was

²¹ For a full exposition of this, see J.J. Price, “The Future of Rome in Greek Historians”, in J. J. Price and K. Berthelot, eds., *The Future of Rome: Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Visions*, Cambridge 2020, 85-111.

²² See Price (previous note).

²³ See Osgood (above, n. 15) 27, quoting also the opinions of M. Hose and C. Ando.

²⁴ Bucher 2000 (above, n. 1), 429.

based on the *breviarium* of Augustus, and reflected Hadrian's view of the empire, an attempted "revival of Augustan ideals".²⁵ These observations may all be true to some degree, but they miss the explanatory force of Appian's arrangement.

Appian's purpose is illuminated by comparison with other historians who wrote panoramically about the Roman empire in an attempt to understand it. Polybius was the first. His explanation was complex, and it changed in the course of his writing, but it incorporated a view of the unique stability of Rome's constitution, the unprecedented efficiency and effectiveness of the Roman army as well as certain Roman virtues that, during campaigns of conquests, were constant.²⁶ Other Roman historians writing in Greek propounded their own explanations. For Dionysius of Halicarnassus, it was Rome's virtues which were in essence Greek, but more constantly exercised than the Greeks managed to do themselves, that explained Rome's unparalleled achievement.²⁷ For Josephus, whose teleological view of history was learned from the Bible, Rome's success was part of God's plan, and therefore was unassailable but also would not last forever. Diodorus may have offered his own explanation for Rome's success (in ancient terms), but that part of his history is lost.

When Appian writes that he has structured his history according to the different defeated *ethne*, in order "to learn the Romans' relations to each, to understand the weakness of these nations or their power of endurance, as well as the bravery or good fortune of their conquerors or any other circumstance contributing to the result", he implies what was plain to see, namely, that different subject peoples presented very different challenges to the conquerors.²⁸ The rough tribes of Spain and Gaul required different qualities — and a much longer time — to conquer than the military genius Hannibal, who was defeated in a briefer span but unlike the distant tribes presented an existential threat to Rome itself.²⁹ The books on Greece are more occupied with diplomacy than warfare (judging from the portions that have survived). The wars with ambitious kings with large organized armies like Antiochus (whose ambition is noted at the outset) and Mithridates, required still a different effort from that against the tribes or against the cultured cities Greece.³⁰

²⁵ Osgood (n. 15), 38.

²⁶ See Price (above, n. 20) and bibliography there.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Goldmann's pioneering work on Appian (see above, n. 7) traces the Roman qualities, mentioned in the Preface to the *Roman History*, throughout the different sections of the work, but does not get to the bottom of Appian's explanation by drawing attention to the *differences* among the qualities displayed in each conquest.

²⁹ Actually, in Spain, the Romans first dealt with Carthaginians and their organized army, then with tribes, more guerilla warfare, and constant revolts, *Iber.* 63.237, 71.249, 72.251, 73.253, 75.255. Appian wrote the book on the Hannibalic war to demonstrate and explain "what Hannibal the Carthaginian did to, and suffered from, the Romans during the sixteen years that he persisted in war against them, from his first march from Spain to Italy until he was recalled by the Carthaginians (their own city being in danger), and was then driven out by the Romans" (first sentence). Appian goes out of his way in the Preface to note that the wars against the Samnites lasted an unusually long 80 years (Praef. 14.56).

³⁰ Cf. *Syr.* 15/129, 131, 49.199; *Mith.* 118-19.469-73.

Thus the Romans' success is explained by the unique combination of qualities in the Roman people, including personal characteristics and the nature of its army and institutions, that allowed it to conquer and maintain a vast and diverse empire of peoples and places. Some virtues were constant:

Through prudence and good fortune (δι' εὐβουλίαν καὶ εὐτυχίαν) has the empire of the Romans attained to greatness and duration in gaining which they have excelled all others in bravery, patience, and hard labor (ἀρετῇ καὶ φερεπονία καὶ ταλαιπωρία πάντας ὑπερῆραν). They were never elated by success until they had firmly secured their power, nor were they ever cast down by misfortune. ... through the doubtful struggles and dangers of seven hundred years, they achieved their present greatness, having enjoyed the favors of fortune through wisdom (διὰ τὴν εὐβουλίαν). (Praef. 11.43-4)³¹

But Appian was a close observer. The Romans did not have a template for conquest. That at least was his interpretation of history, and he wrote a sprawling historical study to test the idea. As with the Greek historians of Rome who preceded him, Appian perceived that an unprecedented historical phenomenon requires an unprecedented form of history.

What Appian does not do, in contrast to his predecessors — Polybius being the most prominent example — is to explain his purpose to his readers in philosophical terms and defend it by detailed, self-aggrandizing comparison to all historiography before him. That seems not to have been his personal temperament or intellectual predilection. This same temperament may account for a notable absence: in the actual expositions of the conquests, Appian does not use his theory of Roman history systematically as a narrative guide, nor does he often draw attention to it or expatiate on the proofs of his theory and method in the individual narratives, as we would expect from a historian of a different disposition, like Polybius, who incessantly justifies his method and perceptions and polemicizes with other historians. Appian does not tidily demonstrate the proof of his idea in each ethnographic section, although he clearly demonstrates that different skills, diplomatic and military, were required to defeat Pyrrhus, the Carthaginians, the tribes of Spain and Gaul, Mithridates and Antiochus, the Greeks, etc. Yet this does not vitiate his original proposal or claim, that his form of historiography highlights the qualities of the most successful imperialists in history. The reader will see the proofs in the telling.

2. The Beginning of the Roman Civil War

Appian's five books on the civil wars, documenting a huge event or series of events that brought an end to the Republic and the transition into monarchy, have been the most intensely studied part of his *oeuvre*. The reason for this has as much to do with the continued, intense interest in the Roman civil war as a profound historical event, as with the fact that those books are the earliest surviving continuous narrative of the violent conflicts in which the Republic died and monarchy was reborn, and that they are based on earlier accounts that modern historians would dearly like to have. Thus those five books have been read not only for valuable information they uniquely contain, but also

³¹ Based on passages like this one, K. Brodersen, "Appian und sein Werk", in *ANRW* 34.1, 455-6, sees Appian's explanation of Rome's success as moral, expressed in these specific virtues.

as a hunting ground for earlier sources. Most notably, it has been assumed that the lost work of Asinius Pollio, greatly admired in antiquity, served as Appian's main source for the account from the year 60 BCE.,³² but the intense *Quellenforschung* on Appian's *BC* has yielded many candidates for lost works hiding beneath the surface of his pages.

The recent reassessment of Appian's qualities as a historian and even as a stylist have been focused particularly on the *BC*. Critics have remarked that Appian's finest writing can be found there, such as his account of the proscriptions under the Second Triumvirate, or certain notable speeches which, in the manner of all ancient historians, Appian rhetorically shaped and reshaped to fit into and highlight the contours of his own narrative.³³

The civil war books also raise interesting questions when viewed as part of the whole literary work of which they are part. For one, they were included in the original scheme as conceived by Appian, but they break from the ethnographic organization that Appian innovated and defended: a continuous, chronological narrative of an event that spread across most of the vast expanse of the empire violates his explanatory scheme. Not only do the five books on civil war break from his conceptual structure, but they comprise more than a fifth of the entire history.

This is a puzzle to which I proposed a solution in a conference devoted solely to Appian.³⁴ In brief, I suggested that Appian was heavily influenced by Thucydides' model of *stasis* and viewed the Roman internal wars from Tiberius Gracchus to Actium as a single event with a root cause. According to Appian, based on his understanding of the complex event described by the word *stasis* as theorized by Thucydides, *stasis* was the one thing "by which alone great empires are destroyed" (Praef. 10.42). Rome's uniqueness in history lies in the fact that, while one faction won the civil war and the Republic was destroyed, the Empire itself — Rome's unprecedented historical achievement — emerged not only intact but stronger and more stable. The books on the civil wars thus not only document the perilous corruption of the very virtues by which the empire was acquired, but the reasons for the Roman Empire's emergence as more stable and lasting than in the period of conquests. He might even have been suggesting that the Republic possessed the virtues required to conquer the world and the monarchy the virtues to maintain it.

Be that as it may, a different conceptual question is addressed here: why did Appian start the narrative of the civil wars with the murder of Tiberius Gracchus? Writing a narrative about a war or series of wars as a coherent historical event imposes on any historian the obvious requirement of choosing the beginning and ending points. The end was manifest to all: Octavian's victory at Actium, which was Appian's conclusion before he chose, for other reasons, to move that event, in fact the narrative of the last four years, to the (lost) Egyptian books. The starting point was not a matter of consensus. The beginning of any event chosen by a narrative historian, even in ancient theory, is especially important for understanding that historian's conception of the nature

³² Gabba (above, n. 1) was an especially strong proponent of this idea; see also D. Magnino, "La 'Guerre Civile' di Appiano", in *ANRW* 34.1, 522-54.

³³ See esp. the works by Bucher, Welch and Gowing cited in notes 1 and 3 above, and the studies mentioned in note 9.

³⁴ Price (above, n. 10).

of the event. By “beginning” I mean *archē*, in the sense Polybius gave it, in his tripartite theory of causation, assigning to each significant event a cause (*aitia*), a pretext or immediate cause (*prophasis*) and a beginning (*archē*) (Polyb. 3.6-7). The murder of Gracchus was for Appian the *archē* of the civil wars, the first incidence, with one exception, of violence in civil disputes; he does not offer a theory about root causes (see below).

As a beginning or proximate cause, there were many choices. Pollio, as mentioned, began with the so-called First Triumvirate, which can be viewed as irreparable harm inflicted on the Roman constitution; or Pollio may have understood that year as the beginning of the conflict between Caesar and Pompey, the real “civil war” that eventually plunged Rome into chaos and tyranny (the value of his explanation is one reason why his work is so dearly missed). Another natural choice could be 87 BCE, the first time a Roman general turned a Roman army on Rome. Another “beginning” could be the year 50/49 BCE, marking the breakdown of negotiations and the outbreak of the massive military conflict between Caesar and Pompey and their respective factions. Appian chose the murder of Tiberius Gracchus, as the first bloodshed in a chain of events of increasing violence. He explains:

καὶ τοῦτο μόνον ἄν τις εὖροι τῶν πάλαι στάσεων ἔργον ἔνοπλον, καὶ τοῦθ' ὑπ' αὐτομόλου γενόμενον, ζήφος δὲ οὐδέν πο παρενεχθὲν ἐς ἐκκλησίαν οὐδὲ φόνον ἔμφυλον, πρὶν γε Τιβέριος Γράκχος δημαρχῶν καὶ νόμους ἐσφέρων πρῶτος ὄδε ἐν στάσει ἀπώλετο ...

This [Coriolanus' rebellion in the 5c BCE] is the only case of armed strife that can be found in the ancient seditions, and this was caused by an exile. The sword was never carried into the assembly, and there was no civil butchery until Tiberius Gracchus, while serving as tribune and bringing forward new laws, was the first to be destroyed in *stasis*...” (Praef. BC 2.4).

The traditional approach in modern scholarship to understanding this choice would be to set aside Appian's declaration of purpose as derivative and unoriginal and track down the source for the notion. Book I of the BC, which covers events from 133 through the 70s BCE, has in general proven to be a difficult case for the *Quellenforscher*, for Appian did not follow a single source in the book, but stitched together various sources, including historical narratives, speeches of the Gracchi, the memoirs of Sulla, etc.³⁵ Asinius Pollio obviously is not the source for Appian's starting point, since, to repeat, his historical account began in the year 60 BCE. There are, however, precedents for considering the murder of Gracchus as the first incident in Rome's violent civil contentions and breakdown of the Republic. We shall take this path so far as it will it enable assessment of Appian's independent thought in the matter. The question is, what was the precise connection, in each author's eyes, between the murder and the string of events that followed.

³⁵ See now Westall (above, n.12): “The use of a pan-Hellenic system of chronology in Book I betrays reliance upon a Greek source for that particular section of the work.” As J. Carter remarked, in introducing his excellent translation of the BC, “Book I has defied all attempts to saddle it with a single coherent source”, *Appian, The Civil Wars*, London etc. 1996, xxxi.

The closest parallel to Appian's concept and language is found in a writer often overlooked in Appian studies, because he is routinely reviled as a historian even more so than Appian has been, namely Velleius Paterculus (2.3.3-4).

Hoc initium in urbe Roma civilis sanguinis gladiatorumque impunitatis fuit. Inde ius vi obrutum potentiorque habitus prior, discordiaequae civium antea condicionibus sanari solitae ferro diiudicatae bellaque non causis inita, sed prout eorum merces fuit. Quod haut mirum est: non enim ibi consistent exempla, unde coeperunt, sed quamlibet in tenuem recepta tramitem latissime evagandi sibi viam faciunt, et ubi semel recto deerratum est, in praereps pervenitur, nec quisquam sibi putat turpe, quod alii fuit fructuosum.

This [Tiberius Gracchus' murder] was the beginning in Rome of civil bloodshed, and of the license of the sword. From this time on right was crushed by might, the most powerful now took precedence in the state, the disputes of the citizens which were once healed by amicable agreements were now settled by arms, and wars were now begun not for good cause but for what profit there was in them. Nor is this to be wondered at; for precedents do not stop where they begin, but, however narrow the path upon which they enter, they create for themselves a highway whereon they may wander with the utmost latitude; and when once the path of right is abandoned, men are hurried into wrong in headlong haste, nor does anyone think a course is base for himself which has proven profitable to others. (trans. Shipley in LCL)

Like Appian, Velleius not only identifies the murder of the elder Gracchus as the *initium in urbe Roma civilis sanguinis*, but he states in quite colorful language that from that time on, violence became the exclusive or main tool of resolving civil disputes. This is rather both more extreme and more simplistic than Appian's more nuanced idea of escalating violence, as we shall presently see. Notoriously, Velleius admits, often and clearly, that his purpose was a quick summary of history,³⁶ and the absence of any effort towards analysis is evident in the above passage. While Appian was not *copying* Velleius, he could (but did not necessarily) have gotten the idea of Gracchus' murder as a first event from him, or just as likely, Velleius could very well have been summarizing a different source that Appian knew; the idea might even have been common, but the commonness disappeared with the mass of lost sources. Two earlier historians of the civil wars, Timagenes of Alexandria and Cremutius Cordus, had their works suppressed by Augustus and Tiberius, respectively, because of what they wrote about Augustus and Julius Caesar, not about the distant roots of the civil conflict; their views about this are unknown, although Timagenes seems to have written a universal history from the time of the kings, and Cremutius Cordus probably started from Caesar's death. Posidonius wrote a historical work from the year 146 BCE, where Polybius stopped, to perhaps the 80s BCE; but almost nothing is known of the relevant books that could have covered Tiberius Gracchus and the aftermath.³⁷

Another author, Appian's contemporary Florus, seems to offer in his *Epitome bellorum omnium annorum DCC* the same idea about the beginning of the Roman civil wars. While Florus has usually been thought to have merely epitomized Livy, as his title suggests, thus the limited interest in him even today, further research, while not crediting

³⁶ E.g., 1.16.1, 2.29.2, 38.1, 41.1, 52.3, etc.

³⁷ For Timagenes and Posidonius, see the old and new editions of the fragments *FGH* and *BNJ* 88, 87, respectively; for Cremutius Cordus, *HRR* 2, 87.

him with original thought, has revealed other copied or summarized sources, most relevant here the Elder Seneca.³⁸ Florus begins his second book with the statement, *seditionum omnium causas tribunicia potestas excitavit*, and then after a strong condemnation of popular sharing of power and wealth, states: *primam certaminum facem Ti. Gracchus accendit* (2.1, 14). This does seem to mirror what Appian wrote, but the resemblance is superficial at best. Florus' concern is constitutional — for him the problem is the tribunate — and his writing is too rushed and superficial to engage in analysis of the dynamics of violence. Thus, as with Velleius, the mere suggestion of Gracchus' murder as a first event might have sparked Appian's idea, but it did not inform the thick analytical description that fills Appian's five books. Moreover, even this suggestion depends on the publication of Florus' epitome prior to Appian's history, which cannot be known.³⁹

One may surmise that Florus copied from Livy the idea that Gracchus' revolution was the first flame of contention, and Appian read Livy; but the darkness over the lost books of Livy is too thick to penetrate, and in what does survive, Livy clearly believes that the first causes of Rome's conflicts and collapse began with the influx of wealth and oriental culture decades before Gracchus' tribunate.⁴⁰

There is one last avenue to pursue: since the discovery of a fragment of the Younger Seneca's biography of his father, it has been believed that Florus used that as a source for his account in Book 2 of his Epitome.⁴¹ That fragment from the biography contains the following tantalizing statement by the son about the father:

quisquis legisset eius historias ab initio bellorum ciuilium, unde primum ueritas retro abiit, paene usque ad mortis suae diem, magno aestimasset scire, quibus natus esset parentibus ille qui res Romanas>

Whoever had read his Histories from the beginning of the civil wars, when truth first receded, almost up to the day of his death, would have thought it valuable to know from what parents came the man who [recorded] Roman affairs (trans. Rich)

When did truth first recede? Rossbach long ago suggested that that time was Tiberius Gracchus' tribunate, but it seems that Rossbach's view reflects no reasoning about the source itself but rather his personal view of Gracchus' actions.⁴² A most thorough study of the fragment, by John Rich, reaches the reasonable conclusion that the Elder Seneca started his history of the Roman civil wars with the conflict between Pompey and Caesar in 49: "[Seneca's] work had the traditional character of a Roman history limited to the recent past, was probably organized by the consular year, and so had nothing in common with the innovative structures of Appian and Florus."⁴³ Thus Florus was probably not

³⁸ L. Bessone, "Floro un retore storico e poeta", *ANRW* II 34.1, 1993 80–117.

³⁹ Putting one before the other involves circular reasoning.

⁴⁰ The *perioche* of Book 58, where Livy presented the death of Tiberius Gracchus, shows no trace of the idea. For his view of the cause of the decline, and see e.g. Liv. 39.6.

⁴¹ For a thorough and thoroughly sensible account of the palimpsest manuscript in the Vatican Library and its relation to both Florus and Appian, see J.R. Rich, above, n. 20.

⁴² On Rossbach's opinion, expressed in 1888, and the strong argument against it, see Rich, 3.

⁴³ Rich, 348ff. In the same volume in which Rich published his article, two more pieces, by Berti and by Mazzoli, view Seneca's history as a history of decline, from a Sallustian perspective; but neither is definitive or committal on Seneca's actual starting point.

the source for Appian's idea, and if Florus was quoting a different source that Appian could have seen, that source cannot be identified.

Finally, we should mention other literature written during the time of prolonged civil war, relating to Tiberius Gracchus' actions and death as divisive and harmful to the Republic.⁴⁴ Cicero, in *De Republica* 1.31, blames Ti. Gracchus for dividing "one people into two factions" (*divisit populum unum in duas partes*). As Wiseman points out, it is unclear whether Laelius, the speaker there, was referring to Gracchus' policy or his murder, but "his phraseology suggests a tacit admission that the death version was the one normally accepted, with Laelius (and of course Cicero himself) wanting to place responsibility on the victim by blaming his policies".⁴⁵ Thus in Cicero's time the idea was in the air, so to speak, that the internal conflicts they were living through began with Tiberius Gracchus. Another view of the time held that the younger and more radical reformer, Gaius Gracchus, was responsible for the division of the state: Varro clearly blamed Gaius for the creation of a "two-headed citizen body" (*bicipitem civitatem fecit*) through his court reforms.⁴⁶ This same idea shows up in the slightly later historian, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who wrote that "from the time that Gaius Gracchus, in the exercise of his tribunician power, destroyed the harmony of the constitution, they have never yet ceased from killing each other and driving each other out of the city, not refraining from any irreparable act in the pursuit of victory".⁴⁷ Clearly the concern of all three of these authors was not the violence as such but the constitutional problems caused by the tribunate.

Whether or not Appian was inspired by an earlier work, or even borrowed more substantially from one, it should be noticed that none of the possible sources cited above seems as interested in the dynamics of violence as does Appian, in his development of the narrative from his *arche* of Tiberius Gracchus' murder. For Tiberius was the first to be killed in the *stasis* (πρῶτος ὃδε ἐν στάσει ἀπόλετο), Appian says, and after that a constant escalation in violence led to the final massive confrontations between Roman armies. After that first murder,⁴⁸ "unseemly *hybris* almost always prevailed" (ὑβρις τε ἄκοσμος ἐπέιχεν αἰεὶ δι' ὀλίγου), the evil became greater (προϊόντος δ' ἐς μέγα τοῦ κακοῦ). The next stage was the rise of monarchical faction chiefs (στασίαρχοι μοναρχικοί), political murders and attacks on Rome, with one of these faction chiefs, Sulla, "doctoring one evil with another" (κακῶ τὸ κακὸν ἰώμενος), establishing a new precedent by seizing sole tyrannical rule. After the periods of tyrannical rule by Sulla and then Caesar, the civil violence broke out with greater force than before: "the civil clashes broke out again worse than before and increased enormously" after Caesar's

⁴⁴ For a discussion of all the following texts, see T.P. Wiseman, "The Two-Headed State: How Romans Explained Civil War", in B.W. Breed, C. Damon and A. Rossi, eds., *Citizens of Discord: Rome and its Civil Wars*, Oxford 2010, 25-44.

⁴⁵ Wiseman, 28.

⁴⁶ Wiseman, 26.

⁴⁷ ἐξ οὗ δὲ Γάιος Γράκχος ἐπὶ τῆς δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας γενόμενος διέφθειρε τὴν τοῦ πολιτεύματος ἁρμονίαν, οὐκέτι πέπαινανται σφάττοντες [p. 170] ἀλλήλους καὶ φυγάδας ἐλαύνοντες ἐκ τῆς πόλεως καὶ οὐδενὸς τῶν ἀνηκέστων ἀπεχόμενοι παρὰ τὸ νικᾶν. ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τούτων ἕτερος ἔσται τοῖς λόγοις καιρὸς ἐπιτηδειότερος. Dion.Hal., AR 2.11.3, Wiseman, 27.

⁴⁸ The following citations are taken in order from the Preface to the BC.

murder (αἱ δὲ στάσεις ἐπὶ τῷδε μάλιστα αὔθις ἐπανελθοῦσαί τε καὶ αὐξηθεῖσαι δυνατώτατα ἐς μέγα προήλθον). Finally, says Appian, he composed the history of the Roman civil war for the benefit of “those who wish to know the measureless ambition of men, their dreadful lust of power, their unwearying perseverance, and the countless forms of evil” (τοῖς ἐθέλουσιν ἰδεῖν φιλοτιμίαν ἀνδρῶν ἄμετρον καὶ φιλαρχίαν δεινὴν καρτερίαν τε ἄτρυτον καὶ κακῶν ἰδέας μυρίων).

These markers of the developmental stages of an event, all found in his Preface to the *BC*, are repeated throughout his narrative. It is perhaps not necessary to record them all here; a typical example is Appian’s note that, with Sulla’s rise to power,

αἱ στάσεις ἐξ ἔριδος καὶ φιλονικίας ἐπὶ φόνους καὶ ἐκ φόνων ἐς πολέμους ἐντελεῖς προέκοπτον, καὶ στρατὸς πολιτῶν ὅδε πρῶτος ἐς τὴν πατρίδα ὡς πολεμίαν ἐσέβαλεν.

the seditions proceeded from strife and contention to murder, and from murder to open war, and now the first army of her own citizens had invaded Rome as a hostile country. From this time the civil dissensions were decided only by the arbitrament of arms. (1.60.269)

Moreover, Appian included in his history not just the great conflicts between generals, but anything he saw as ἔργον ἐμφύλιον (e.g., *BC* 1.27.121, 33.150), including the so-called Social War, or war with the Italian allies, “on the grounds that it arose from the *stasis* in Rome and gave rise to worse *stasis* in which leaders resorted to armies (*BC* 1.34.150–1). Thus not all stages in the escalating violence involved clashes between Roman armies led by ambitious and unscrupulous generals. The outbreaks and episodic nature of the civil war are described like the course of a disease, an apt metaphor (*BC* 1.58, 2.23).

The comparison of the Roman *stasis* to a disease immediately triggers in the knowledgeable Greek reader the memory of Thucydides’ model of *stasis* in Book 3 of his *History*.⁴⁹ Indeed, already in his Preface to the civil war books, and then throughout his narrative, Appian makes clear his debt to Thucydides by pertinent quotation. Thucydides is quite explicit that the phenomenon of *stasis* in Greece during the Peloponnesian War was not a series of isolated incidents but a condition affecting all of Greece, increasing in severity with time. The first incident at Corcyra “seemed even more so because it was the first of that time (to reach such an extent), whereas later practically the whole Hellenic world was disturbed (by *stasis*)”; afterwards, as the disease of *stasis* spread throughout Hellas, the cities “that were afflicted later, the mindset of the combatants, influenced by knowledge of the previous instances, was revolutionized to much further excesses, both in the ingenuity of their attacks and in the enormity of their acts of revenge” (Thuc. 3.82.1-2).

Just in the Preface, Appian says of the series of warring faction chiefs that brought down the Republic,

⁴⁹ J. J. Price, *Thucydides and Internal Conflict*, Cambridge 2001. In what follows, I shall argue that Appian was influenced more profoundly by Thucydides than C. Pelling thought, “Learning from that Violent Schoolmaster’: Thucydidean Intertextuality and Some Greek Views on Roman Civil War”, in B.W. Breed, C. Damon and A. Rossi, eds., *Citizens of Discord: Rome and its Civil Wars*, Oxford 2010, 105-18.

Whichever of them first got possession of the city, the others made war nominally against their adversaries, but actually against their country. They assailed it like a foreign enemy. Ruthless and indiscriminate massacres were perpetrated against those who got in the way. Men were proscribed, others banished, property was confiscated, and some were even subjected to excruciating tortures. (BC 1.2.7-8)

This clearly recalls Thucydides' statement:

The cause of this entire condition was the hunger for power inspired by greed and personal ambition, and from these resulted the zeal for victory once they were engaged in the conflict. For the faction leaders in the various cities used specious names on each side – professions of 'political equality for all under the law' and 'wise and temperate government by the best' – and while paying lip service to the public interest in fact made it their prize, and using every available means in their competition to get the better of each other they ventured to perpetrate the worst atrocities and went to even further extremes in executing revenge: they did not restrain themselves at the boundary of justice or the city's true interests, but limited their actions only by what their own immediate gratification required, and they were ready to satisfy their lust to dominate by seizing power either through an unjust vote of condemnation or through brute force. (3.82.8)

The key ideas in Thucydides' *stasis* model, that policy was a veil for violence, that the factions worked against the city's true interests, and that the violence, once started, became increasingly severe, like a spreading and worsening disease, are not only *quoted* by Appian in his work on civil war, but used as guiding concepts in his presentation and interpretation of the event. This continues throughout the narrative.⁵⁰

Thus there is not in Appian's account a succession of civil wars — as even modern historians argue there were⁵¹ — but one episodic event that ended with the destruction of the Republic. Between Tiberius Gracchus' murder and Octavian's victory at Actium, Appian discerned a continuous event which was more than the sum of conflicts between powerful and ambitious Roman generals. Each episode, each factional conflict, brought greater violence, more dreadful violations of social and political norms, which became a precedent, i.e. a baseline, for the next violent episode.

Thus the Roman civil war was for Appian defined as an underlying condition whose most profound aspect manifested not in a constitutional or military crisis, but in atrocious, human behaviors, virtues distorted into vices. Just as Thucydides' symptomology of *stasis* contains a series of transmuted human values and capacities, beginning with language, so Appian's account of the Roman *stasis* is written for "those who wish to know the measureless ambition (*philotimia*) of men, their dreadful lust of power, their unwearying perseverance, and the countless forms of evil."⁵² This is another echo of Thucydides, who says that "The cause (*aition*) of this entire condition

⁵⁰ For example, App. BC 4.5.16-17 and 4.14.53, compared with Thuc. 3.81.4-5; full analysis in Price (above, n. 10).

⁵¹ The most extreme example being E. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, Berkeley 1974.

⁵² Cf. Bucher 2007 (above, n. 1), interpreting the *BC* as a series of *staseis*, representing "an increase in brazen shamelessness in Roman society and a progressive failure of the restraint of law, custom and religion"; also Bucher 2000 (above, n. 1), 434-6,

was the hunger for power inspired by greed and personal ambition (*philotimia*), and from these resulted the zeal for victory once they were engaged in the conflict" (3.82.8). While Appian includes some poignant observations about the breakdown of the Roman constitution in his account of the Roman civil war, his main focus, as he announced in his introduction to the *BC*, is on men's increasingly violent factional behavior and deteriorating moral standards.

It appears that the inspiration for Appian's choosing an incident of violence as the *archē* of the Roman civil war, as the first in a spiraling series violent acts, was inspired by Thucydides more than by Velleius, Florus, or any common source. And this is a historical idea far deeper and more complex than merely identifying a "material basis" for the civil war, which attracted Marx's attention long ago. Appian conceived of the Roman *stasis* as a continuous, organic, developing event that came to an end only when the body in which it raged had completely expired.