

Reading Response #1

The difference between Appian and Dio's accounts of the proscriptions can be seen almost immediately, as Dio starts his retelling with a dramatic explanation of bad omens, "For in the case of Lepidus a serpent that coiled about a centurion's sword and a wolf that entered his camp and his tent while he was eating dinner and knocked over the table foretold at once his future power and the trouble that was to follow it;" (Dio.47.1.2). On the other hand, Appian starts off much more detail-oriented and explains how Julius Caesar's main murderers, Cassius and Brutus, took hold of the eastern empire down to how many legions they had: "Cassius and Marcus Brutus, who were the principal leaders in the conspiracy against Caesar, and who controlled the territory from Syria to Macedonia, and had large forces of cavalry and sailors, and more than twenty legions of infantry, together with ships and money." (Appian.4.1.1).

When reading about the proscriptions, I definitely got a more oppressive feel from Appian's writing. Appian would often tell individual stories of those proscribed and how they desperately tried to escape, usually ending in their deaths. For example Aemilius who didn't even know he was proscribed got suddenly identified and killed: "Aemilius, not knowing that he was proscribed and seeing another man pursued, asked the pursuing centurion who the proscribed man was. The centurion, recognizing Aemilius, replied, "You and he," and killed them both." (Appian.4.27.1). In contrast, Dio describes how many of the proscribed were able to escape to the eastern empire: "...and while very many of those who were not proscribed also lost their lives, because they either were hated or had money, yet very many whose names were posted not only survived but were also restored from exile, and some of them were even elected to office. They were finding refuge with Brutus, with Cassius, and with Sextus," (Dio.47.12.1). This made Dio's writing of the proscriptions much more broad and less bloody, as he prefaces it by explaining how many survived and actually thrived after managing to escape the Second Triumvirate.

I believe that Appian's non-roman heritage may lead him to be more unbiased about Roman history, as he appeared to focus more on exact numbers and detailed retelling of events. In contrast, Dio's writing came across as more focused on motivation and the minds of the triumvirate as well as Cassius and Brutus. I wonder if Dio serving under several Emperors led him to focus more on the larger players, instead of focusing on every little story and detail like Appian did. I would say that Appian's writing came across as more reliable, but I also wonder how many of those details he wrote about came from actual records from his time.