L. JUNIUS BRUTUS, A MODEL AND PREDECESSOR
FOR THE EMPEROR AUGUSTUS.
SOME REMARKS ON DIONYSIUS
OF HALICARNASSUS 4. 71–75*

Summary: Contrarily to most traditional accounts on the foundation of the Republic, Dionysius describes
the passage from the Tarquins’ monarchy to the Republic as a lawful constitutional reform, in which
L. Junius Brutus played a pivotal role. In my paper I analyze the speech that Brutus delivers to the Roman
patricians to endorse the establishment of a new government in Rome. The new constitution, although
remaining essentially monarchical, will keep its autocratic nature concealed from the people. Throughout
this paper, I show how Dionysius in his presentation of Brutus picked up elements both related to the sena-
torial propaganda against M. Junius Brutus – Caesar’s murderer, who claimed descent from L. Brutus and
the tyrannicide Ahala – and, at the same time, the character of Augustus’s newly-founded government.
This account may thus be regarded as Dionysius’ own elaboration of Augustus’s constitutional reform.

Key words: historiography, tyranny, monarchy, patricians, legitimacy, constitution, propaganda, restora-
tion, lineage, pietas

Toward the end of the first century BC, Dionysius of Halicarnassus composed a history
of Rome from its legendary origins down to the First Punic War. Information about
Dionysius’ life is scanty: as he himself writes in the preface of his work, he arrived at
Rome around 30 BC, at the end of the civil wars, and lived there for over twenty years.¹
Textual evidence suggests that Dionysius frequented the aristocratic circles of the city,
perhaps as a private teacher, and was an aristocrat himself back home.² However, in

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of Alberta, for his patient help with my English and other suggestions on the content.
² D. H. 1. 6. 5, 1. 7. 3; cf. BOWERSOCK, G. W.: Augustus and the Greek World. Oxford 1965, 130;
BOWERSOCK, G. W.: Historical problems in late Republican and Augustan classicism. In Le Classicisme
à Rome: aux 1er siècles avant et après J.-C.: neuf exposés suivis de discussions / par Thomas Gelzer
his *Roman Antiquities*, Dionysius seldom refers to his own times, and while it has been possible to trace his literary inclinations – especially through his rhetorical treatises – his political thought remains largely conjectural.²

The declared purpose of Dionysius’ history was to instruct his Greek readers about the distant past of the Romans in order to explain the reasons for the Romans’ success by showing their persistent moral superiority, and ultimately to help his readers to hail their conquerors (D. H. 1. 5. 2–4, 1. 89. 1–2, 1. 90. 1). In his narrative, Dionysius often claims to follow accurately the accounts of his sources, which are mainly (but not exclusively) Roman annalistic writers.⁴ However, far from being a mere collage of his sources’ opinions, the interpretation that Dionysius provides for many episodes is clearly his own, and could plausibly depend on his own understanding of contemporary issues that he experienced firsthand during his long stay at Rome and his assimilation of these into his own conception of the Romans. Following this idea, I will discuss the account that Dionysius provides for the foundation of the Republic, examining in particular the figure of L. Junius Brutus and the speech he delivers to the Roman patricians before the deposition of King L. Tarquinius Superbus. Dionysius’ portrayal of L. Brutus reflects, on the one hand, the senatorial tradition about his ideology and lineage, and, on the other, Augustus’ contemporary self-representation as the restorer of Republican values.

The background of Brutus’s speech – and, at the same time, the pretext for the expulsion of the Tarquins – was the violation of Lucretia. According to the ancient literary tradition, this noble and virtuous woman was married to L. Tarquinius Collatinus, a relative of the king. Lucretia’s moral uprightness arouses the perverse desire of Sextus Tarquinius, the youngest of the king’s sons, who rapes her and so causes her to commit suicide. As a result of this tragic episode, those of the patricians closest to Collatinus resolve to expel the whole family of the Tarquins, in order to bring an end...
to their intolerable outrages. Dionysius relates that during this gathering of Roman nobles around the corpse of Lucretia a vivid debate takes place about the institutional future of the city (D. H. 4.71–75). This discussion is prompted and led by L. Junius Brutus, a descendant of one of Aeneas’s companions on his father’s side, and of the old king L. Tarquinius Priscus on his mother’s. Down to that time, Brutus had feigned stupidity in order to appear harmless to the king and thereby escape his savagery. On the present occasion, however, Brutus reveals his true, clever nature and proposes to implement a detailed plan to take action against the Tarquins.

It will be useful for the aim of this study to focus on the main points of Brutus’s speech. At its outset (D. H. 4.71), Brutus presents as his chief concern at such a crucial moment that of finding a legal way to banish Tarquin and his family. First, he suggests calling the people to assembly and publicly denouncing Sextus Tarquinius’ crime; next, after they have obtained in this way the people’s sympathy, the patricians will give them the opportunity of voting for the exile of the Tarquins. In order to carry out these operations lawfully, Brutus wants to make sure that someone who has legitimate power to do so, namely a magistrate, should assemble the people, so he takes up this task himself, in his capacity as commander of the celeres – the body of knights created by Romulus for the personal defence of the king.

Let us consider the following excerpt from this section:

ἔπειτα κομίσαντες τὸ σῶμα τῆς γυναικὸς ὡς ἔστιν αἵματι πεφυρμένον εἰς τὴν ἁγορὰν καὶ προθέντες ἐν φανερῷ συγκαλῶμεν τὸν δῆμον εἰς ἐκκλησίαν. ὅταν δὲ συνέλθῃ καὶ πλήθουσαν ἴδωμεν τὴν ἁγοράν, προελθὼν Λουκρήτιος τε καὶ Κολλατῖνος ἀποδύρασθωσαν τὰς ἑαυτῶν τύχας ἅπαντα τὰ γενόμενα φράσαντες. ἔπειτα τῶν ἂλλων ἐκαστοῦς παριὼν κατηγορεῖτω τῆς τυραννίδος καὶ τοὺς πολίτας ἐπὶ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν παρακαλείτω. ἔσται δὲ πάσι Ρωμαίοις κατ’ εὐχήν, ἐὰν ἴδοσιν ἡμᾶς τοὺς πατρικίους ἀρχοντας

5 The series of the events from the rape of Lucretia down to the shutting out of the royal family from the urbs is related, in particular, by D. H. 4.64–85; Dio 2.13–19; Diod. 10.20–22; Liv. 1.57–60; Ovid. Fast. 2.685–852; Plat. Publ. 1.3–4; Serv. ad Aen. 6.818, 8.646.

6 The ancient sources agree that L. Brutus was the only surviving child of an ancient family related to the royal house of the Tarquinii. As mentioned above, his mother Tarquinia was the daughter of King Tarquinius Priscus. When Tarquin the Proud had usurped the throne from Servius Tullius, he put to death several members of his own family, including Tarquinia’s husband and sons, in order to prevent later claims to the royal power from unwanted heirs. Brutus managed to save his life by means of his supposed mental limitation (D. H. 3.46.3–5, 4.68, 4.76.3–4; Liv. 1.56.7–8; Val. Max. 7.3.2; cf. MASTROCINQUE, A.: Lucio Giunio Bruto. Ricerche di storia, religione e diritto sulle origini della repubblica romana. Trento1988, 17–20; WISEMAN, T. P.: Unwritten Rome. Exeter 2008, 293–309). F. MORA (Il pensiero storico-religioso antico. Autori Greci e Roma. I: Dionigi d’Alicarnasso. Roma 1995, 298–303) has pointed out the inconsistency of Dionysius’ account in his attempt at harmonizing the chronology of the last three kings. Dionysius, indeed, disagrees with the tradition of Tarquin being son of Tarquinius Priscus because of the evident chronological discrepancy, and argues that Tarquin was instead his grandson, born from one of his daughters. However, if Tarquinius Priscus had two daughters who were both married (D. H. 4.7.4), one being the wife of Servius Tullius and the other the mother of Tarquin, who was Brutus’s mother?

7 About the institution of this body see D. H. 2.13; Liv. 1.15.8; cf. MASTROCINQUE (n. 6) 25 n. 2, 113–116.
Dionysius confers on this preliminary phase of the establishment of the Republic a distinct aura of legitimacy, an element that is notably absent from the other literary sources. Livy, for instance, describes a furious and passionate revolt: Brutus arrives at Rome at the head of armed men, whom he himself has set in motion, and with his
words provokes turmoil in every quarter of the city. Similarly, Plutarch, in the *Life of Publicola*, relates that when the people’s hatred against Tarquin had exploded because of Lucretia’s death, Brutus espoused their revolutionary cause and played a chief role in the expulsion of the king. In Dionysius, arms evidently are not an option. It is worth noting, moreover, that his Brutus highlights the role of the patricians, including himself in their number, as leaders of the Romans in their race to freedom (ἡμᾶς τοὺς πατρικίους ἄρχοντας τῆς ἐλευθερίας, 4. 71. 3). The people come out as a malleable entity in the patricians’ hands: they are reminded of their sufferings, urged to action, and then are ready to follow the example of the best men, who are set before their eyes as guides.

In the following part of Brutus’s speech (D. H. 4. 72–74), the young man urges his associates to define the form of government that is to succeed the old one. Therefore, each one of them expresses his view about what constitution seems best suited to Rome. Some are for the establishment of a democracy, others in favour of an oligarchy, but the winning opinion is the one advocated by Brutus, who advises those present – addressed as ἀγαθοὶ καὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν (4. 73. 1) – against changing the existing constitution right away. Reforming the state in such a short time would be difficult and risky, Brutus says; in addition, the constitution previously established by Romulus and Numa is already the most desirable for the Romans. Thus, for the time being Brutus considers it preferable to maintain a monarchical government, but at the same time to eliminate from it its inherent evils. There follows a description of the changes that, in Brutus’s view, need to be brought about to improve the old Roman constitution (4. 73. 2 – 74. 4): they will first have to modify the titles of monarchy and king, which during Tarquin’s reign had become hateful to the people, and...
replace them with new names agreeable to the people’s ears. Secondly, the royal power shall be henceforth shared by two men, in order to ensure their restraining influence on one another – just as happens in the case of Sparta’s shared kingship. Third, since the insignia of royal power (the sceptre, the golden crown, and the embroidered robes) have become grievous sights to the citizens after Tarquin’s despotic display of them, they must be removed from men’s eyes. With the exception of special celebrations, the rulers will ordinarily exhibit only the ivory chair, the toga edged in purple, and the twelve lictors with the *fasces*. Finally, Brutus recommends limiting to one year the term of supreme office (an Athenian custom), which down to Tarquin had been life-long. Through these improvements, the chances for monarchy to degenerate into tyranny should become void. Then Brutus, with the same measures noted before, describes an elaborate procedure to lawfully elect the new magistrates, and, in the conclusion of his discourse, exhorts the future magistrates to always consult with the Senate in every matter, as the kings had also been accustomed to doing (4. 75).

The Greek inspiration of this long section is hardly disputable, its most obvious antecedents being the Herodotean debate among the seven Persians about the form of government to establish after the slain of the Magi (Her. 3. 80–82), and Polybius’ discussion about the composite nature of the Roman constitution (Pol. 6. 3–9). In addition, Brutus mentions Sparta and Athens as eminent examples from which the Romans ought to draw useful elements for their institutional reform (D. H. 4. 73. 4, 74. 2); and perhaps also the Greek ancestry of Brutus could have represented an appealing detail for Dionysius in selecting him as absolute protagonist of this narrative. Nonetheless, an attentive reading of this passage could plausibly point as well to a contemporary inspiration for several of the features described by Dionysius. To begin with, I previously mentioned how, contrary to what happens in other traditional accounts, Brutus does not foment an armed rebellion against the tyrant, but instead devises a legal way to expel him – with much emphasis on this point. The idea for this variation of the story could have come to Dionysius through a motif of the Augustan propaganda. In his *Res Gestae* Augustus shows off his sense of justice by vaunting about having exiled the killers of his father through a fair trial and overcome them twice when they waged war on the Republic: *qui parentem meum interfecerunt, eos in exilium expuli iudiciis legitimis ultus eorum facinus. Et postea bellum inferentis rei publicae vici bis acie* (RG 2. 10–11). The allusion contained in this passage and

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14 An interesting echo of this sort of constitutional debate is later found in Cassius Dio’s history. Dio relates a fictitious conversation between Octavian, Agrippa and Maecenas: these two give their advice to young Caesar about the form of government he ought to establish for the Romans after defeating Anthony (Dio 52. 2–40).

15 L. Tarquinius Collatinus had remote Greek origins as well, being the son of Egerius (the brother of Tarquinius Priscus, see n. 12 above). The literary tradition, though, has him unanimously banished because of his family name, which bears the memory of the tyranny.

16 For a detailed comment on this passage, see RAMAGE, E. S.: *The Nature and Purpose of Augustus’ “Res gestae”*. Stuttgart 1987, 32–34, and 86–91 about the *iustitia* of Augustus.
confirmed by ancient sources\textsuperscript{17} is to the \textit{lex Pedia} of 43 BC. In accordance with this provision, the assassins of Caesar had to undergo an expedited trial and, in case of proven culpability, be exiled. Even though the actual author of the law was Q. Pedius (Augustus’ cousin and colleague in the consulship), the law is set forth here as an exclusive initiative of Augustus, who in fact expresses himself in the first person singular. The analogy with Brutus’s story is compelling: both Augustus and Brutus manage to have their “tyrants” sent to exile through a lawful procedure, and in both cases, the final resort to war appears as a defensive action.\textsuperscript{18} That the Caesarcides were represented as tyrants by the official propaganda could be easily inferred from Augustus’ own statement: \textit{annos unde viginti natus exercitum privato consilio et privata impensa comparavi, per quem rem publicam dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi} (\textit{RG} 1. 1–3).\textsuperscript{19}

Next, it is remarkable that Dionysius describes the institution of the Republic not as the foundation of a new order, but as the restoration of the previous one after a period of tyranny:

\begin{quote}
ἐγὼ δ᾽ (…) κανὶν μὲν οὐδὲμίαν οἴομαι δεῖν ἡμᾶς καθίστασθαι πολιτείαν κατὰ τὸ παρόν. (…) ἐξέσται θ᾽ ἡμῖν ὕστερον, ὅταν ἀπαλαγώμεν τῆς τυραννίδος μετὰ πλείονος ἔξοδος καὶ κατὰ σχολὴν βουλευομένην τὴν κρείττονα πολιτείαν ἀντί τῆς χείρονος ἐλέσθαι, εἰ δὴ τὰ ἄρα ἐστὶν κρείττονα, ἢ ὅτι ὑμῖν οὕτω καὶ Πομπίλιος καὶ Ρομύλος καὶ ἀκόλουθοι τοῖς μετ᾽ ἐκείνου βασιλεῖς τιμωρηθήσουσιν παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν, ἐξ ὃς μεγάλη καὶ εὐδαίμον καὶ πολλῶν ἄρχουσα ἀνθρώπων ἡ πόλις ἡμῶν διετέλεσεν (D. H. 4. 73. 1).
\end{quote}

I am of the opinion that no new constitution should be established for the present. (…) It will be possible for us later, when we have got rid of the tyranny, with greater liberty and at leisure to choose if we want a better constitution instead of a worse one, if after all there is any better one than that, which Romulus, Numa, and all the kings after them have established and handed down to us, from which our state has continued to prosper and to rule over many persons.

\textsuperscript{17} Cf. Suet. \textit{Aug.} 10. 1: \textit{nihil convenientius ducens quam necem avunculi vindicare tuerique acta, confestim ut Apollonia rediit, Brutum Cassiumque et vi necopinantis et, quia provisum periculum subter fugerant, legibus adgredi reosque caedis absentis deferre statuit}; Vell. 2. 69. 5: \textit{at lege Pedia, quam consule Pedius collega Caesarius tulerat, omnibus, qui Caesarem patrem interfecerant, aqua ignique interdicturn erat}; App. \textit{BC} 3. 95: \textit{νόμῳ δ᾽ ἑτέρῳ ἀπέλυε μὴ εἶναι πολέμιον Δολοβέλλαν, καὶ εἶναι φόνου δίκας ἐπὶ Καίσαρι.}

\textsuperscript{18} Cf. D. H. 5. 14. 1: the consuls Brutus and Valerius resolve to wage war against Tarquin and his allies only after they hear that these are raising armies and preparing to attack Rome (as also Livy confirms at 2. 6).

\textsuperscript{19} As \textsc{Ramage} (n. 16) 31 notes in his commentary to the \textit{Res Gestae}, by using the word \textit{libertas} in this passage Augustus puts himself and his deed in a direct line with the Republican tradition; in other words, he removes the role of saviour of the Republic from the assassins of Caesar and arrogates it for himself. The title of \textit{libertatis vindex} appears on a famous coin (\textit{a cistophorus}) from 28 BC, which bears the legend \textit{LIBERTATIS P. R. VINDEX} on obverse, and \textit{PAX} on reverse (\textit{RIC I [2nd edition] Augustus 476}).

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In this way, Brutus persuades the other nobles to preserve the government established by Tarquin’s predecessors. The idea of restoration of the constitutional form instituted by the forefathers that enhanced the greatness of the Romans was probably the most prominent theme of Augustus’ propaganda. In the above-mentioned citation from the Res Gestae, Augustus depicts himself overtly as the restorer of the Republican liberty – and his entire policy was consistently oriented towards the revival of the old republican traditions.20 Dionysius’ assessment of Brutus as champion of the monarchy contrasts only superficially with the view of Augustus supported by his propaganda, that is, with Augustus’ persistent denial of any monarchical connotations to his rule. For it is evident from its text that in Dionysius’ account the emphasis lies not as much on the type of government to be enacted as on the traditional and established nature of the government. Besides, Dionysius – in accordance with a widespread conception21 – seems to make no substantial difference in terms of power between kings and consuls, as it emerges particularly from Brutus’s successive discourse to the Roman people:

ἡμῖν σκοπουμένοις, τίς ἀρχὴ γενήσεται τῶν κοινῶν κυρία, βασιλείαν μὲν οὐκέτι καταστήσασθαι δοκεῖ, ἄρχοντας δὲ δύο καθ’ ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτ ὸν ἀποδεικνύναι βασιλικὴν ἕξοντας ἐξουσίαν, οὓς ἂν ὑμεῖς ἐν ἀρχαιρ εσίαις ἀποδείξητε ψῆφον ἐπιφέροντες κατὰ λόχους (D. H. 4. 84. 4).

When we consider what magistracy will have power over the common affairs, it seems best to us not to establish the kingship again, but to elect two magistrates every year holding the royal power, whomever you shall appoint during the elections casting your vote by centuries.22


21 Cf., e.g., Pol. 6. 12. 9, who considering the role of the consuls observes: ὡστ᾽ εἰκότως εἰπεῖν ἄν, ὅτε τις εἰς ταύτην ἀποβλέπει τὴν μερίδα, διότι μοναρχικὸν ἁπλῶς καὶ βασιλικὸν ἐστι τὸ πολίτευμα; Liv. 2. 1. 7: *libertatis autem originem inde magis quia annum imperium consulare factum est quam quod de-minutum quicquam sit ex regia potestate numeres*; cf. also the considerations about Caesar’s power in Appian’s account, when the historian reports the motivation for Caesar’s murder. The conspirers feared that if Caesar had conquered the Parthians he would have become a king in every respect, but this – Appian says – was only an excuse, the only difference being the name of Caesar’s office: ἔργῳ δὲ καὶ τοῦ δικτα-τορος ὄντος ἄρχων ἀρχηγὸς βασιλεὺς (BC 2. 111). Cf. MASTROCINQUE (n. 6) 179–83 for a discussion about the main positions taken by modern historians on the origin of the consulship.

22 As J.-H. SAUTEL (L’autorité dans la Rome royale selon Denys d’Halicarnasse. Aperçus sémantiques. Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire 77.1 [1999] 77–104, here 84–85) observes commenting on this passage “Les termes employés, *ἀρχή* et *ἐξουσία*, qualifient donc le pouvoir souverain à Rome, que ce soit sous la forme de la royauté ou celle de l’*imperium* consulaire auquel elle donne naissance… le pouvoir royal est fondamentalement le même que celui des consuls, parce que l’*imperium* ne change pas de nature”.

Again, in Brutus’s speech the consular power because of its distribution between two men is openly compared to the shared kingship of Sparta. Next, elsewhere – in relating the story of the Decemvirate – Dionysus says that the Decemvirs “held power over every affair of the city, the same power that both the consuls and, before them, the kings used to have.” Lastly, Dionysius’ cultural background and provenience from the Hellenized East, where foreign domination and monarchy had been the norm since at least the sixth century BC, should not be undermined, as they may have significantly shaped his views on political power. Dionysius was certainly not the only contemporary to consider Augustus a monarch, as the case of Nicolaus of Damascus’ enthusiastic biography of the princeps attests. Then the later writers regularly refer to Augustus’ Principate as a monarchy. A classic example of this is presented by Cassius Dio, who writing almost three centuries after Dionysius, offers a lucid description of the substantial changes that the Roman state underwent with the rise of Augustus:

Thus, all the power of both the people and the Senate passed into the hands of Augustus, and from that time on there was established, strictly speaking, a monarchy: for monarchy, even if at length mostly two or three people at the same time held the power, it would be named most truly. The Romans so hated the very name of monarchy that they called their emperors neither dictators nor kings nor any other thing of such kind; but with the supreme power of government laying upon them, it is not possible that they are not kings.

23 D. H. 10. 55. 4: τούτοις δ’ ἄρχον εἰς ἐναποιτῶν ὁμήρων, ἐξουσίαν ἐχοντας ὑπὸ ἐκατὸν τῶν κατὰ τὴν πόλιν ἡμέρας ἐξοφύλασσαν ἡμέρας, καὶ ἔτι πρότερον τούς ἡμέρας ταῖς τις δυναστείαις, πέντε τε καὶ ἑκατόντας ἐτεῖς, καὶ ἐπράξαν οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ ἐπαθοῦν: ὑμεῖς δὲ τούτους μοναρχεῖσθαι αὐτὸς ἀκριβῶς ἔρχετε ἀκριβῶς ἐπιτρέψατε (cf. also Tac. Ann. 1. 2, 1. 9). The terms monarch/monarchy actually appear to have a rather neutral meaning, whereas the terms βασιλεύς/βασιλεία, rex/regnum in Latin, generally have a negative connotation for the Romans (cf., e.g., Cic. Att. 8. 11. 2, Cat. 1. 12. 30, Off. 3. 83–84, Rep. 2. 49, 52; D. H. 4. 73. 3, 5. 19. 1; Liv. 2. 1. 9; Plut. Publ. 1. 4; Sall. Jug. 31. 7).
Another point deserving attention in Brutus’s speech concerns the use of the royal insignia. As previously mentioned, when Brutus advises the nobles to preserve the monarchy, he recommends some improvements in order to remove any tyrannical aspects from it. Among these improvements, Brutus warns against assuming the title of king and exhibiting the signs of royal power. We could recognize in this passage a subtle reference to C. Julius Caesar and the public attitude he assumed in his last years of life. It is well known that the Senate granted Caesar, in the period immediately preceding his murder, a large number of honours; of these, Cassius Dio provides a particularly detailed account:

1) τὰ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτα φέρεσθαι τε αὐτὸν ἀεὶ καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ πόλει τὴν στολὴν τὴν ἐπινίκιον ἐνδεδυκότα, καὶ καθέξωσθαι ἐπὶ τοῦ ἄρχικοῦ δίφρου πανταχῇ πλὴν ἐν ταῖς πανηγύρεσιν, ἑυμηρίσαντο (44. 4. 2).
2) ὡς δὲ καὶ τούτοις ἔχασε, δίφρος τέ οἱ ἐπίχρυσος, καὶ στολὴ ἡ ποτε οἱ βασιλῆς ἐκέχρηντο, φρουρά τε ἐκ τῶν ἱππεῶν καὶ ἐκ τῶν βουλευτῶν ἐδόθη (44. 6. 1).
3) καὶ ἐπειδὴ καὶ τούτοις ἡρέσκετο, οὕτω δὴ ἔς τε τὰ théatra τὸν τὸ δίφρον αὐτοῦ τὸν ἐπίχρυσον καὶ τὸν στέφανον τὸν διάλιθον καὶ διάχρυσον, ἐξ ἵσου τῶν θεῶν, ἐςκομίζοντο καὶ ταῖς ἱπποδρομίαις ὀχὸν ἐποιήθη (44. 6. 3).
4) ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐν τῇ τῶν Λυκαίων γυμνοπαιδίᾳ ἔς τε τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐσῆλε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος τῇ βασιλικῇ κεκοσμημένος καὶ τῷ διαχρύσῳ λαμπρυνόμενος ἐς τὸν δίφρον τὸν κεχρυσωμένον ἐκαθίζετο, καὶ αὐτὸν ὁ Ἀντώνιος βασιλέα τε μετὰ τῶν συνερέων προσηγόρευον, καὶ πολὺ τοῦτο τοῦνομα καὶ κατὰ σφᾶς διεθρύλουν (44. 9. 1).
5) ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τὸν Δολίτην γνωστὰ καὶ ἐς τὴν ἄγοραν ἐσῆλθε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος τῇ βασιλικῇ κεκοσμημένος καὶ τῷ διαχρύσῳ λαμπρυνόμενος τὸν δίφρον τὸν κεχρυσωμένον ἐκαθίζετο, καὶ αὐτὸν ὁ Αντώνιος βασιλέα τε μετὰ τῶν συνερέων προσηγόρευον, καὶ πολὺ τοῦτο τοῦνομα καὶ κατὰ σφᾶς διεθρύλουν (44. 11. 2).

1) First then they voted that he would always be carried even in the city itself wearing the triumphal robe, and would sit in his official chair everywhere except at the games.
2) Since he was pleased by these things, a gilded chair was given to him, and a robe that once the kings had used, and a guard of men from the knights and senators.
3) And since he was pleased by these things, too, therefore they voted that his chair, the gilded one, and his crown set with precious stones and gold, equally as those of the gods, would be carried in the theatres and his chariot would be led in at the horse-races.
4) And so being himself in this position those who were plotting acted no longer with hesitation, but in order that he would become hateful even to his very great friend, they made false accusation against him and finally addressed him as king, and they advertised much this name even among themselves.
5) For after he entered the forum at the Lupercalia and was sitting on his gilded chair upon the tribunal being adorned with the royal dress and shining in his golden crown, and Anthony with his fellow-priests addressed him as king and wreathed him with a royal diadem, saying that… (etc.).

So, among countless other privileges, Dio says that 1) the senators voted for Caesar the right to wear the triumphal dress any time he rode around in the city; 2) they assigned to him a bodyguard of aristocrats and permitted him to dress with an attire once worn by the kings; 3) also, they voted that Caesar’s golden throne and golden crown should be carried in the theatres. 4) Eventually, some senators started to salute Caesar as king – a title that seemed more and more congenial to him; 5) when Antony offered him the royal diadem at the Lupercalia, Caesar was said to be sitting on his golden throne, adorned with the royal apparel and his golden crown. The last report is partly confirmed by Plutarch (Ant. 12. 1), Appian (BC 2. 110), and Suetonius, who adds that Caesar would publicly exhibit his contempt toward members of the Senate (Caes. 78. 1, 79. 1).

The theme of Caesar receiving unheard of honours, accepting most of them, and displaying an autocratic attitude toward the other magistrates could certainly constitute an appropriate counterpart to the sober moderation shown, on the contrary, by Caesar’s heir. Indeed a salient aspect of Augustus’ public image – repeatedly attested in the Res Gestae and confirmed by ancient accounts – was precisely his systematic refusal of all the honours or powers he deemed contrary to the Roman ancestral customs. Then, it seems reasonable that in Dionysius’ account the insistence of Brutus on removing the most extravagant among the signs of power, along with his final appeal to the future rulers to always consult with the Senate, reflects the cautiousness with which Augustus avoided in public the excesses formerly exhibited by his father.

There could be a potential objection to associating L. Brutus with Augustus: the figure of L. Junius Brutus had been strongly connected, as ancestor and inspirer, with that of M. Junius Brutus, the assassin of Caesar. According to their genealogy, the Junii, a gens of plebeian origin, could supposedly count L. Brutus as ancestor in agnatic lineage,
Fig. 1. Denarius, 54 BC. Crawford 433/2

Fig. 2. Denarius, 54 BC. Crawford 433/1

Fig. 3. Aureus, 43–42 BC. Crawford 506/1
as we learn mostly from Cicero and Plutarch. M. Brutus’s mother Servilia was herself descended from another traditional hero and famous tyrannicide, C. Servilius Ahala. The propaganda deriving from M. Brutus’s lineage and its ideological meaning in the struggle against Caesar’s tyranny are well attested in three coin emissions minted by M. Brutus himself. One series reproduces the heads of L. Brutus and Servilius Ahala (Fig. 1); another shows the head of Libertas on the obverse, and L. Brutus between two lictors on the reverse (Fig. 2); the third one bears the head of M. Brutus and, on the other side, that of L. Brutus, with an oak-three border impressed around the two faces (Fig. 3).

Both Cassius Dio and Plutarch relate that at the time of Caesar’s assassination the propaganda hostile to M. Brutus wished to deny his descent from L. Brutus, claiming that the latter had put his sons to death, thus leaving behind no offspring. In particular, we gather from Plutarch (Brut. 1. 6) that Brutus’s enemies insisted upon the plebeian origin of M. Brutus’s gens, which was incompatible with the alleged patrician lineage of L. Brutus. Dionysius keenly embraces this tradition adverse to M. Brutus, as emerges from the following passage:

(…) γενεὰν οὔτε ἄρρενα καταλιπὼν οὔτε θήλειαν, ὡς οἱ τὰ Ῥωμαίων σαφεῖστατα ἐξητακότες γράφουσι, τεκμήρια πολλὰ μὲν καὶ ἄλλα τούτου φήροντες, ύπέρ ἄπαντα δ′ ὁ δοσιαντιλεκτόν ἐστιν, ὅτι τοῦ πατρικίου γένους ἔκεινος ἦν, οἱ δ´ ἀπ´ ἐκεῖνης ἀπότομος λέγοντες εἶναι τῆς οἰκίας Ἰούνιοί τε καὶ Βροῦτοι πάντες ἦσαν πλήβειοι καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς μετῄεσαν, ἂς τοῖς δημοτικοῖς μετέναι νόμος, ἄγορανομίας τε καὶ δημαρχίας, ὑπατείαν δ᾽ οὐδείς, ἢς τοῖς πατρικίοις μετῆν. όψε δε ποτε καὶ ταύτης ἔτυχον τῆς ἀρχῆς, ὅτε συνενεχήθη καὶ τοῖς δημοτικοῖς ἀυτὴν λαβεῖν. ἅλλ.` ύπερ μὲν τούτον οίς μέλει τε καὶ διαφερετίς σουρζικάτος ὑπίσκεπτον (D. H. 5. 18. 1–2).

He [L. Brutus] left behind no descent, neither male or female, as those who have investigated the Romans’ affairs most accurately write, producing many other evidence for this and in particular, something that is above all hard to contradict, that he was of patrician family. On the other hand those who affirm to descend from that race, both Junii and Bruti, were all


29 Dio 44. 12. 1–3; Plut. Brut. 1. 6–7; cf. App. BC 2. 113.

30 Posidonius, cited in Plut. Brut. 1. 7, advances a clumsy compromise for this matter: the present gens Junia would descend from a third son of L. Brutus, who was not put to death because still an infant at the time of the conspiracy, and so it would be ultimately patrician. About a plausible timing for the genesis of L. Brutus’s story (and that of the other co-protagonists in the foundation of the Republic), see WISEMAN (n. 6) 312–319.
plebeians and canvassed for those offices, which the law permitted to the
plebeians, the aedileship and the tribunate, but none of them canvassed
for the consulship, which was open to the patricians only. At length,
though, they obtained also this office, when it had been granted to the ple-
beians to hold it, too. But I leave it to those whose concern and interest is
to know the truth to look into these matters.

Dionysius appears indeed rather eager, if not anxious, to assert the authority of his
sources and present the plebeian origin of the contemporary Junii as unquestionable.
He supports his argument by remarking the absence of Junii from the *fasti consulares*
until at least the regular admission by law of the plebeians to the consulship (prob-
bly alluding here to the *leges Liciniae-Sextiae* of 367 BC).\(^31\) On the other hand, if
there is no reason to disbelieve the plebeian origin of M. Junius’ family, there is no
certain evidence for L. Brutus’s belonging to the patriciate, either; in fact, the latter
might be a plebeian as well. As Attilio Mastrocinque has pointed out in his volume
about the founder of the Roman Republic, in the ancient literary tradition the term
noble or aristocratic, which is commonly used by ancient writers to define L. Brutus’s
status, was by no means a synonym for patrician. Secondly, the plebeians seem to
have had actual access to the consulship in the first two decades of the Republic, even
though the late Republican tradition accepted as a dogma the patrician status of the
early consuls. Moreover, an alternative tradition, which is represented by Dionysius
and Plutarch,\(^32\) indicates L. Brutus as the first tribune of the plebs; regardless of its
plausibility, such a report casts doubt on Brutus’s patrician origin and suggests the
existence of a parallel tradition about an early connection of the Junii Bruti with both
tribunate and plebs. Thus, the idea of distinguishing L. Brutus from the rest of the
Junii in the fifth and early fourth centuries was an excellent weapon against M. Brutus
and, at the same time, a way to appreciate Brutus the Elder without mingling him
with the assassin of Caesar. This is confirmed by the diffusion in the late-republican
period of senatorial pamphlets hostile to M. Brutus.\(^33\)

In addition, besides cutting the line of descent between the two Bruti, Dionysius
discredits the tradition about Servilius Ahala, M. Brutus’s maternal ancestor. Ahala
was universally recognized as the slayer of Sp. Maelius, an agitator and aspiring
tyrant of the mid-fifth century BC.\(^34\) There were two main versions of Ahala’s story:

\(^{31}\) The first Junius to be listed in the *fasti* as consul is C. Junius Bubulus Brutus (cos. I 317 BC).
As Richardson has recently observed, Dionysius’ source here was conceivably an adherent of Julius Caesar,
someone well versed in legal and constitutional matters, Q. Aelius Tubero appearing the most probable
choice; cf. Richardson, J. H.: L. Junius Brutus the patrician and the political allegiance of Q. Aelius

\(^{32}\) D. H. 6. 89: Brutus, receiving the tribune’s power along with other four men, advises the plebs
to render the office of tribune of the people (δήμαρχος) sacred and inviolable by passing a law and ratifying
it by an oath; Plut. *Coriol*. 7. 1: L. Brutus and L. Sicinius Vellutus are elected first tribunes of the people
(in Liv. 2. 33. 1–3 the first two tribunes are C. Licinius and L. Albinus, to whom Sicinius is associated as
colleague); cf. Suid. s.v. δήμαρχος (Δ 421 Adler), which reports the same information. Dionysius names
L. Brutus also as aedile (ἀγορανόμος, 7. 14. 2). See MASTROCINQUE (n. 6) 95 n. 1–3.

\(^{33}\) MASTROCINQUE (n. 6) 95–101; cf. Richardson (n. 31) 155–156.

\(^{34}\) Cic. *Cat*. 1. 3; Liv. 4. 13–14; Plut. *Brut*. 1. 5.
in one, the socio-political crisis that Sp. Maelius causes through his disturbances calls for the appointment of a dictator, who in turn appoints Ahala as his *magister equitum*. In this capacity, Ahala personally summons Maelius to appear before the dictator, and, upon his refusal, Ahala kills him while he attempts to flee. According to the other version, which Dionysius attributes to the annalists L. Cincius Alimentus and L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi, the Senate resolves to carry out the death sentence for Maelius without trial and appoints Ahala as his executioner. 35 Dionysius dismisses this account as hardly credible, but provides no explanation to justify his statement (D. H. 12. 4. 2). Of the former version, on the other hand, he relates a unique variant, in which Sp. Maelius does not die by the hand of Ahala, but is butchered by the horsemen who were escorting the latter. The reason why Dionysius (or possibly his source) changed the story of Ahala and so lessened one of the Romans’ most glorious heroes may well be a different one, but the anti-tyrannical model that Ahala supplied for M. Brutus should at least be regarded as a conceivable explanation. Through such a device, in fact, Dionysius deprives M. Brutus’s crime against Caesar of the legitimacy infused to it by his two ancestors, which made Brutus’s deed appear as a moral duty toward the country. At the same time, Dionysius detaches L. Brutus from an inconvenient parentage: in this way, L. Brutus could be more opportune regarded as the precursor of Augustus’ action, not of his bitter enemy.

L. Brutus was said to have put his own sons to death; but if this act may have appeared cruel and unnatural to foreign readers (and thus an inappropriate counterpart for Augustus’ *pietas*), yet it was viewed with genuine admiration by the Romans and in general by the writers of Roman history. Dionysius, indeed, introduces this episode to his Greek readers by an apologetic statement, which makes clear that Brutus’s action must be judged in a Roman perspective and according to Roman moral values:

> τὰ δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα ἔργα θατέρου τῶν ὑπάτων Βρούτου μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστὰ λέγειν ἔχων, ἐφ᾽ οἷς μέγιστα φρονοῦσι Ρωμαῖοι, δέδοικα μὴ σκληρὰ καὶ ἄπιστα τοῖς Ἕλλησι δόξω λέγειν, ἐπειδὴ πεφύκασιν ἅπαντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων παθῶν τὰ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων λεγόμενα κρίνειν καὶ τὸ πιστὸν ἄπιστον ἐρῶ δ᾽ οὖν δῖνων ὁμοίως (D.H. 5.8.1).

As I have to relate the successive deeds of Brutus, one of the two consuls, enormous and stupefying, of which the Romans have the highest consideration, I fear that I will seem to tell bitter and incredible things to the Greeks, since all persons are inclined by nature to judge from their own

35 Cicero usually quotes the episode of Sp. Maelius in connection with the other famous cases of aspiring tyrants (cf., e.g., *Amic. 36, Cat. 1. 3, Rep. 2. 49*). According to R. Fiori (*Homo sacer: dinamica politico-costituzionale di una sanzione giuridico-religiosa* [Pubblicazioni dell’Istituto di Diritto Romano e dei Diritti dell’Oriente Mediterraneo / Università di Roma «La Sapienza», vol. 72]. Napoli 1996, 375–380, 393–396), both versions of Maelius’s death are plausible in Roman law, the first being perpetrated through the *imperium* of the dictator by his *magister equitum*, the second being executed *sine iudicio* and by a private citizen, as it was consented in the cases of *adfectatio regni*.
experiences the things said about others and make what is credible in-
credible by themselves; nevertheless I will relate them.

As the story goes, Brutus’s two sons by Vitellia were caught while supporting a con-
spiracy, which aimed to restore Tarquin’s rule over Rome (D. H. 5. 6 – 5. 8. 6; 
Liv. 2. 3. 6 – 2. 5. 8; Plut. Publ. 3. 3 – 6. 4). According to the oath that Brutus had 
made all the citizens swear, whoever attempted to reintroduce Tarquin into Rome or 
re-establish a monarchy would receive capital punishment (D. H. 5. 1. 3; Liv. 2. 1. 9; 
Plut. Publ. 2. 2; cf. App. BC 2. 119)\(^{36}\); the consul’s sons were not an exception to this 
rule. With the death sentence upon his sons, Brutus demonstrates his resolve to set 
loyalty to country before family ties. This quality led to the approbation not only of 
Dionysius, who attributes to him a quasi-stoic endurance of his sufferings,\(^{37}\) but previ-
ously also of Polybius, who alludes to this episode and implicitly counts Brutus’s in-
spiring principle among the factors for the Romans’ greatness.\(^{38}\) A proof that in the 
time of Augustus the feeling of admiration for Brutus’s deed was dominant may be 
provided by Virgil’s description of Brutus (\textit{Aen}. 6. 819–823):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Consulis imperium hic primus saevasque secures 
accipiet, natosque pater nova bella moventes 
ad poenam pulchra pro libertate vocabit. 
Infelix, utcumque ferent ea facta minores, 
vincet amor patriae laudumque immensa cupido.}\(^{39}\)
\end{quote}

This [Brutus] will be the first to receive the consul’s power and 
the fierce axes, and as a father will call his sons, who were stirring 
new wars, to punishment, for the sake of fair freedom. Unhappy, 
however posterity will hand down his deeds, love of his fatherland 
and immeasurable desire of praises will prevail.

Therefore, Brutus’s condemnation of his sons was not at all deemed a monstrosity, 
but, on the contrary, was held as the highest example of devotion towards the \textit{res pub-
lica} that the Roman tradition could count – and perhaps it represented the highest 
model of true \textit{pietas} that Augustus could look at.

\(^{36}\) See \textsc{Ogilvie} (n. 10) 226, 236.  
\(^{37}\) D. H. 5. 8. 6: ἤπερ ἄπαντα δὲ τὰ παράδοξα καὶ θαυμασία τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τὸ ἄτινες τῆς ὅπειρος καί 
ἄτεγκτον ἦν ὅς γε τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων δοὺς τὰ πάθη παρεχόμενο κλαιόντων μόνον ὅστ᾽ ἄνακλασά-
μενος σφίζῃ τὸν μόρον τῶν τέχνων οὔτ᾽ ἀπονείμενος ὑπὸ τῆς καθεξῆς τοῖς ὄψιν ἐξελέγεται οὔτ᾽ ἄλλο 
μαλακὸν οὔθεν ἐνδούς, ἀλλ᾽ ἀδάκρυς τε καὶ ἀστένακτος καὶ ἀτενὴς διαμένων ἤνεγκε τὴν συμ-
φοράν, οὔτως ἴσχυρός ἦν τὴν γνώμην καὶ βέβαιος τοὺς κρίνοντας διατηρεῖν καὶ τὸν ἐπιταραττόντων τοὺς 
λογισμοὺς παθῶν καρτερός. Cf. Liv. 2. 5. 5–8; Plut. Publ. 6. 3–4; see \textsc{Ogilvie} (n. 10) 241–247.  
\(^{38}\) Pol. 6. 54. 5: καὶ μήν ἐρχόμενος ἐναντίων τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀνθρώπων, περὶ πλείονοι ποιοῦμενοι τὸ 
τῆς πατρίδος συμφέρον τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ὁικεώτητος πρὸς τοὺς ἀναγκαστικο-
τοὺς.  
\(^{39}\) As \textsc{Mastrocinque} (n. 6) 116–117 observes, these verses appear still influenced by the circula-
tion of pamphlets against M. Brutus and the propaganda hostile to Caesar’s assassins – not without inter-
pretative ambiguities. Cf. the recent commentary by N. \textsc{Horsfall} (\textit{Virgil, Aeneid 6: A Commentary}. 
Berlin 2013, 558–561), which offers also up-to-date bibliographical references.

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To summarize, this paper has shown that Dionysius’ account about the overthrow of the Roman monarchy contains considerable innovative elements in comparison with that of the other extant sources. In particular, from L. Brutus’s speech to the Roman nobility there emerges a solid cultural Greek background for Dionysius, accompanied by a rather complex interpretation of those events and of Brutus’s character in the light of the late-republican senatorial ideology and, possibly, of Augustus’ own deeds and self-portrayal. The official propaganda was certainly inclined to promote the association between Augustus and the various traditional fathers of the country, as Aeneas, Romulus, and Camillus; however, the association with the founder of the Republic presented more difficulties because of the presumed descent of M. Brutus, the assassin of Caesar, with L. Brutus. Nevertheless, Dionysius, by embracing a motif of senatorial propaganda that denied such a family tie and promoted L. Brutus’s patrician origin, overcomes the impasse, detaches L. Brutus from inconvenient (plebeian) descendants, and ultimately depicts him as a fitting predecessor for Augustus’ expulsion of the Caesaricides (connoted as tyrants) and his restoration of the established constitutional order. This view may have come to Dionysius from the ideology expressed by his sources (in this case, of senatorial origin and conceivably supporters of Caesar and/or Augustus), but also implies a personal assimilation and elaboration of Roman traditional concepts as well as contemporary politics – perhaps pointing to Dionysius’ adherence to the Augustan ideals; surely strengthening his image as an aristocrat of pro-senatorial feeling.

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