

The purpose of this paper is to integrate and advance readings of Cornelius Nepos that emphasize his work as a source for a valuable perspective on contemporary events: the apparently quietist biographer is indeed quite capable of demonstrating and endorsing a view of how to be a good Roman in revolutionary times. Dionisotti (1988) has shown how, in the lives of the non-Roman generals, Nepos foregrounds the value of republican liberty and public duty against tyranny and individualism, while Millar (1988) has suggested that Nepos' life of Atticus defends the valuing of private over public *officia*, thereby anticipating the imminent reality of the Augustan aristocracy, and Osgood (2006, 221-225) has stressed the value of the life of Atticus as a triumviral text closely contemporary to many of the narrative events it describes. This paper seeks to work within Osgood's triumviral context, but to rewrite the opposition between Dionisotti's traditionally republican Nepos and Millar's proto-Augustan Nepos by positing *throughout* the extant corpus a biographical interest in the conflict of public and private duty.

First, one should take into account Nepos' complete extant corpus wherever possible, and not make claims about Nepos' perspective based only on the lives of the generals (Dionisotti) or on the Atticus (Millar, Osgood). For example, Nepos further confirms his preference for institutional over individual authority in his extant abridged life of Cato the Elder when he explains how Scipio could not force Cato's return from Spain because the republic was then administered by *ius* rather than *potentia* (2.2; with Horsfall 1989, 52). Hence Dionisotti's thesis on the Nepotian values of liberty and duty to the *civitas* can and should be broadened to the lives of the historians. Yet she herself effectively excludes the life of Atticus (1988, 45), even though he is openly described as a good citizen (13.1) who was always judged to be among the optimates (6.1) and whose *elegantia vitae* was the reason Octavian betrothed Atticus' granddaughter to Tiberius (19.5). Thus even though Atticus did not serve his state in the conventional ways (6), Nepos clearly thinks Atticus should be judged of importance in the public sphere.

Second, Nepos' method and purpose as a biographer is to teach his readers through examples of his subject's character as well as his deeds, and private actions can be as instructive as public ones when assessing character (note *Att.* 19.1: *rerum exemplis lectores docebimus*; McCarty 1974, Titchener 2003). Just as Nepos judges Atticus to be a good citizen despite never having held public office (6.2), so the importance of private actions for the proper judgment of a public figure is demonstrated repeatedly in the lives of the generals (*Milt.* 8, *Cim.* 4, *Alcib.* 1, *Epam.* 1, *Eum.* 3, 6, *Phoc.* 1, 2, *Hann.* 9). Plutarch endorses the same approach as the distinguishing feature of biography relative to history (*Alex.* 1; with Duff 1999).

Third, and resulting from the first two, reading the whole of Nepos' extant biographical corpus with a focus on examining the perspective on contemporary events offered within it reveals a politically involved author consistently interested in the interaction of public and private duty in challenging times. Hence to focus exclusively on the republican values endorsed in the lives of generals, or exclusively on the fulfillment of the duties of friendship without partisanship in the life of Atticus (Lindsay 1998, Stem 2005), is to privilege unduly only one side of the conflict between public and private duty. In outliving the triumviral years, Nepos was fully aware that the decisions made for survival and success in those years were personally specific and yet revealing of both one's character and one's patriotism (Osgood 2006, 73). For Nepos, then, to write (and perhaps to invent; Geiger 1985, Tuplin 2000) political biography at the fall of the Roman Republic was to understand that lives are to be judged for how well they meet the challenges involved in negotiating the demands of public and private duty.