



## [Justin, Epitome of the Philippic Histories of Pompeius Trogus XXXVIII.3.10-7.10](#)

Mithridates's speech against Rome

**Name of the author:** Justin

**Date:** 2nd CE to 4th CE

**Place:** Rome

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**Category:** Roman

**Literary genre:** History

**Title of work:** Epitome of the Philippic Histories of Pompeius Trogus

**Reference:**

XXXVIII.3.10-7.10

### **Commentary:**

This text is an excerpt from an *Epitome* – which has to be understood as a kind of “anthology” rather than a simple “abridgement” (Yardley and Heckel, *Justin. Epitome*, p. 15) – of a book originally written by Trogus Pompeius, *The book of the Philippic Histories, of the origins of the whole world and of the outline of earth*, known as the *Philippic Histories*. The author, Trogus Pompeius, was a Roman citizen belonging to the people of the Vocontii in Gallia Narbonensis. Roman citizenship had been granted to his family, more precisely to his grandfather, by Pompey, as he fought for Rome during the war against Sertorius in 76-72 BCE. We also know that Trogus's uncle served as cavalry squadron-leader under Pompey in the war against Mithridates in 66-62 BCE, and that his father served under Julius Caesar (on his family see *Epitome* XLIII.5.11). Even if Trogus's family had been deeply invested in the service of Rome's *imperatores*, Trogus Pompeius, who lived under Augustus and probably also Tiberius – he may have died around 20 CE –, chose to devote himself to the composition of geographical, ethnographical and historical works.

Among these, the most famous is the *Philippic Histories*, of which the goal was to tell the main events or actions of every king, nation and people in the world, especially for those who experienced some kind of universal control. Nevertheless, Trogus's original text has been lost. We only know it through *prologi*, or abstracts, of each of its 44 books, and through an anthology, called *Epitome*, later made by a man who may have been a teacher of rhetoric, Marcus Junianus Justinus. The dating of his *Epitome* is debated. Even if a large majority of scholars think that it may have been written during the second or at the beginning of the third century CE (Yardley and Heckel, *Justin. Epitome*, p. 8-13), Ronald Syme suggested the fourth century (Syme, “The date”). Justin's goal was not to give a representative summary of Trogus's work, as he suppressed most of the geographical or ethnological developments, and kept some of the historical examples. The aim of Justin's *Epitome* was to serve as a kind of “aide-mémoire” for the teachers, in order to teach non-Roman history to people who did not know Greek (see Yardley and Heckel, *Justin. Epitome*, p. 9). The interventions of Justin in the original text of Trogus – which could have been successive collections or full rewritings – make it difficult to see what the original words and intentions of Trogus were.

With this history of the succession of the universal empires, Trogus wrote the first “universal history” aimed at the Latin speakers, as until this time this kind of history had been written in Greek only – the *Histories* of Polybius, the *Library of History* of Diodorus Siculus, the *Universal History* of Nicolaus of Damascus and Timagenes of Alexandria's *On Kings* (Inglebert, *Le Monde*, p. 243). Concerning the dating of Trogus's composition, it may have been composed between 10 BCE and 9 CE (see Alonso-Núñez, “Trogue-Pompée,” p. 73-74), implying that “Trogus's work would thus be roughly contemporary with Livy” (Yardley and Heckel, *Justin. Epitome*, p. 5-6). The *Historiae Philippicae* was a universal history dealing with all the peoples on earth. Contrary to Livy's work, which dealt with Roman history only, Trogus seems to have remained focused on non-Roman peoples and history, even if one of the final goals of his work was to highlight the new universal hegemony of Rome under Augustus. However, even when he recalls the history of the Roman expansion, he does it from the point of view of the submitted peoples (Lerouge-Cohen, “Les livres,” p. 364). As Hervé Inglebert rightly states, the *Historiae Philippicae* was an history in the antique sense of the term, namely it was a continuous narrative focused on military and political themes with some geographical and ethnographic developments (Inglebert, *Le Monde*, p. 243). One of the most debated issues is probably that of the sources used by Trogus. The idea that the *Historiae Philippicae* was mainly a Latin adaptation of the Greek and anti-Roman work *On Kings* by Timagenes of Alexandria has been



suggested, but it is now largely accepted that Trogus used a great variety of books written by Greek authors (see Yardley and Heckel, *Justin. Epitome*, p. 30-34).

The *Historiae Philippicae* was thus a universal history of the *oikoumenè* starting with the Assyrian king Ninus and ending with the submission of the Cantabri to Augustus in 19 BCE. Books 1-6 deal with the history of the ancient Near East and Greece. Then Macedonia is dealt with in books 7-12, and the Hellenistic kingdoms before their complete submission to Rome in books 13-40. Books 41-42 deal with Parthian history up to 20 BCE, and books 43-44 with monarchical Rome and then with Gallic and Spanish history up to Augustus's Spanish wars. The text presented here is an invented speech that Trogus/Justin assigned to the king of Pontus (a coastal region on the southern shore of the Black Sea), Mithridates VI Eupator, that he would have pronounced in 88 BCE, that is at the beginning of the first Mithridatic War. Between 114 and 89 BCE, Mithridates annexed Armenia Minor, Colchis and all the Crimean region, and concluded some alliances with kings of states located just beyond the Roman province of Asia. From 89 BCE, he became even more dangerous for Rome in that he progressively occupied most of Asia Minor, and also Macedonia and continental Greece, and drove out or killed many Roman inhabitants of these regions (on the historical context, see Hind, "Mithridates," p. 129-164). At Rome, the Social War and then the civil war between Caius Marius and Lucius Cornelius Sulla meant that it took time to send Roman armies. At the beginning of 87 BCE Sulla went abroad to Greece. Concerning the dating of this speech of Mithridates inserted by Trogus in his narrative, it occurred after Mithridates's victories against M. Aquilius in Bithynia and against Mallius Maltinus in Cappadocia in 89 BCE (victories mentioned in XXXVIII.4.4), but before the confrontation with the Romans, making the dating of 88 BCE probable (on the dating see Adler, "Who's," p. 397). The main goal of Mithridates's speech is to convince his troops that a confrontation with Rome was necessary. Even if it is fictional, this oration is interesting because it gathers most of the themes of anti-Roman propaganda, themes which can be found also, with less detail, in some other indirect speeches – also invented by Trogus – of enemies of Rome's imperialism: namely, the speeches of the Aetolians (XXVIII.2.1-13), the speech of Demetrius the king of Illyria to Philip V of Macedonia (XXIX.2.2-6), and the speech of Hannibal before Antiochus III (XXXI.5.2-9) (Alonso-Núñez, "An Augustan," p. 68). This text appears thus as an important source to understand how Rome was perceived and denigrated by its enemies.

The fact that Trogus inserted these anti-Roman speeches and made an effort to give voice to Rome's enemies should not be interpreted as proof that he was anti-Roman or that he wanted to make the *Philippic Histories* an anti-Roman work (see the bibliography in Adler, "Who's," p. 385, n. 11). On the contrary, to imagine speeches of enemies of Rome was first an exercise to prove his literary talent (Jal, "À propos," p. 204, n. 45), and it may have fitted very well with the perspective of the *Philippic Histories*, of which the aim was to present the story of the succession of the universal empires mostly from the points of view of non-Roman peoples. One last element that is important to remember is that Trogus's uncle served as cavalry squadron-leader under Pompey in the war against Mithridates in 66-62 BCE, meaning thus that Trogus may have composed this speech by using some accurate and personal details about Rome's policy in these Eastern regions (Alonso-Núñez, "Trogue-Pompée," p. 83). Concerning the sources used by Trogus, some scholars consider that Trogus used some pro-Pontic sources – such as the writings of Metrodorus of Scepsis (Alonso-Núñez, "Trogue-Pompée," p. 78). However, the similarities with another letter of Mithridates VI (addressed to the Parthian king) composed by Sallust led many to conclude that Trogus may have invented this speech while remembering some elements of the Sallustean text (see Sallust, *Histories* VI (CUF) = IV.60 (new Loeb edition) = *Letter of Mithridates*; the references given in the commentary are that of the new Loeb edition; Adler, "Who's," p. 402-403). We will thus study this speech in order to highlight the main themes of the anti-Roman propaganda here used by Mithridates.

**First, to denigrate Rome and to encourage his men to engage in a war against Rome, Mithridates insists upon the non-invincibility of the Romans. To illustrate this point, he lists their most famous defeats.** He starts by referring to historical examples from Rome's remote past, examples which can seem quite "bookish" and disconnected from the reality of Mithridates's army (on the weakness of the anti-Roman argumentation in the speech of Trogus's Mithridates compared to that of Sallust's Mithridates, see Adler, "Who's," p. 402). First, the king of Pontus quotes the three victories of the king of Epirus Pyrrhus – Heraclea in 280 BCE, Asculum in 279 BCE and Benevento in 275 BCE –, although the Roman defeat at Heraclea in July 280 BCE was the most certain. Next, he mentions the victories of Hannibal in Italy during the Second Punic War, victories which are also briefly recalled in the Aetolians' speech (XXVIII.2.1). He continues his enumeration with the Gauls, who are often presented in the *Epitome* as having had an importance in Rome's history, a fact which can be easily explained by the Gallic origin of Trogus himself. More specifically, the author insists upon the fact that because of their bravery, they represented for a long time a real threat for Rome. Thus, Mithridates recalls the sack of Rome by Brennus in 390 BCE and asserts that "the power of the Gauls" "had always so much alarmed the Romans" (XXXVIII.4.7-9), an idea which also appears in the speeches of the Aetolians (XXVIII.2.1) and of Hannibal to Antiochus III



(XXXI.5.9) (Alonso-Núñez, "An Augustan," p. 69; Alonso-Núñez, "Trogue-Pompée," p. 78). However, these Roman defeats are very ancient events, and are disconnected from the Eastern context. This listing of remote and mythical defeats of Rome may thus show that Mithridates's speech was composed according to a Roman point of view and not according to pro-Pontic sources (Adler, *Valorizing*, p. 42-44). Next, Trogus's Mithridates refers to the invasions of the Cimbri and of various Germanic peoples "in Italy" (XXXVIII.4.15), invasions which have to be identified with the victories of the Cimbri and Teutons in Transalpine Gaul between 109 and 105 BCE, and with the short invasion of the Cimbri in Cisalpine Gaul in 102 BCE. By presenting these Germanic invasions as contemporaneous (*simul*) to the Social War, Trogus/Justin made an erroneous historical simplification. In addition, as Eric Adler rightly remarks, this historical allusion was a weak argument, as around a decade before the start of the war against Mithridates Caius Marius defeated the Teutons and the Cimbri in 102 and 101 BCE (Adler, "Who's," p. 399). Even if the choice of these examples can appear quite clumsy, we can imagine that what may have mattered from the point of view of Trogus's Mithridates was to prove that the Roman armies had already been defeated various times.

In addition, Mithridates highlights Rome's difficulties in Italy itself. For instance, he asserts that the conquest of Italy had been a very difficult process (XXXVIII.4.11-12), and he may thus implicitly refer to another "bookish reference," the Roman defeat at the Caudine Forks in 321 BCE during the Second Samnite War (Adler, *Valorizing*, p. 44). Mithridates even says that Rome's control over Italy is still incomplete in his days, as between 91 and 89 BCE, many Italian allies revolted against Rome to obtain the rights of full Roman citizenship (for a reference to the Social War, see XXXVIII.4.13). Mithridates adds that in his days, Roman power was not only challenged by this conflict with his Italian neighbours and allies, but also by the "civil war" opposing Marius and Sulla (XXXVIII.4.14). Through this enumeration of external and internal past and present tricky conflicts that Rome had or will have to face, Mithridates develops an important theme of anti-Roman propaganda: the challenging of Rome's invincibility. Behind Mithridates's enumeration of Rome's numerous enemies and conflicts is the desire to prove that the aggressive expansionist policy led by Rome, and which led to the settlement of its territorial dominion, could have also weakened its power, as Rome had to face numerous enemies. In addition, his remark about the fact that Rome was not respected by the Italians themselves is a criticism all the more severe, as the idea that conquests of close territories is a vital step in the settlement process of any empire is a leitmotiv in Trogus's work (see Lerouge-Cohen, "Les livres," p. 369). Mithridates's message is thus simple: if Rome was and is still not able to be respected by its neighbours and cannot deal with its civil conflict because of the military resources it has to spend in foreign territories (XXXVIII.4.16), this is the right time to wage war against it (this argument appears also in Sallust's *Letter of Mithridates*, see Sallust, *Histories* IV.60.20-23).

**The second element of Trogus's Mithridates's denigration of the Romans is his critique of their lust for incessant conquests and their innate violence.** Such a criticism does not appear in the first part of his speech, dedicated to challenging Rome's invincibility. Actually, Mithridates remarks that in two instances (the attacks of Hannibal and the Gauls of Brennus) the city of Rome had not been taken by the barbarian assailants not because of the *virtus* of the Romans, but because of an inner conflict among the assailants or a financial settlement (XXXVIII.4.6-8).

Afterwards, when Mithridates speaks about the conflicts between Rome and the Eastern kingdoms, he explains Rome's successes by its perfidy, its spirit of conquest and its capacity to use violence. Concerning Rome's perfidy, after having tried to show that Rome was not unbeatable, Mithridates enumerates in a random order various examples of Eastern territories – amongst which is that of Mithridates – that Rome has surreptitiously taken or controlled, sometimes through the action of another puppet monarch (XXXVIII.5). Mithridates's narrative of the diplomatic and territorial evolutions in Phrygia, Paphlagonia and Cappadocia before the first Mithridatic War is of course biased (Adler, *Valorizing*, p. 44-47), but the important point in his argumentation is that he wants to present Rome as incapable of respecting its commitments towards the kings with whom it has concluded an agreement. Yet, it is important to remind that perfidy is the clear opposite of *fides* which was a central value for the Romans. The idea that the Romans are incapable of respecting its commitments is also developed in Sallust's *Letter of Mithridates* (see Sallust, *Histories* IV.60.5-9) but also in *The War with Jugurtha*, especially when Sallust's criticizes the Senate's decision to not give support to Rome's *socius et amicus*, ally and friend, Adherbal against his unjust brother Jugurtha (see Griffin, "Lure plectimur," p. 97).

Second, Trogus's Mithridates explains Rome's empire and successes with the fact that concerning foreign affairs, Romans always led aggressive and harsh policies. Thus, he describes that he would have been forced by Rome to abandon Phrygia Major and Paphlagonia (XXXVIII.5.5). Second, after having pretended that he has been compelled by Rome to dismiss his son from Cappadocia, a territory "which he had gained, as a conqueror, by the common law of nations" (*quam iure gentium victor occupaverat*), he notes: "Yet his right of victory had been forced from him by those who had nothing themselves but what they had got in war" (*Raptum tamen sibi esse victoriae ius ab illis quorum nihil est nisi bello quaesitum*, XXXVIII.5.7). Trogus's Mithridates implicitly presents himself as the ruler who would have always led his foreign operations while respecting legal conventions. On the contrary, the



Romans are presented as disrespectful of the law. To sum up, Trogus's Mithridates represents Rome's foreign policy as totally opposed to the legal and religious framework of "the just war" (*iustum bellum*), a Roman notion which aimed to justify the legitimacy of the Romans to wage war. The norms of the *iustum bellum* were numerous. First, before the war declaration, the decision to wage war had to be discussed by the Senate and to be ratified by the People. Second, the legitimacy of the war had to be justified by the fact that wrong had been done to Rome or to its allies, making reparation necessary. This condition would thus theoretically exclude an aggressive and expansionist policy. Third, the war had to be declared to the enemy according to a complex ritual associating the person owing the *imperium* with the enemy (on this see Tarpin, "La guerre," p. 227; Nicolet, *Rome et la conquête*, p. 890-891). Thus, by presenting the Roman lust for conquests as the only fundamental aspect of their greatness, and by insisting upon the fact that the Romans would have stripped him from all the territories he legally owned, Trogus's Mithridates turns against the Romans their own argument of the just war to present them as immoral conquerors. A similar idea is more explicitly expressed in Sallust's *Letter of Mithridates* when the king of Pontus writes that Romans are "men who are prevented by nothing human or divine from plundering and destroying allies and friends" (*quibus non humana ulla neque divina obstant quin socios amicos*; Sallust, *Histories* IV.60.17). He then adds: "The Romans have weapons against all men, (...); it is by their audacity, deceit, and also by sowing wars from wars that they have grown mighty" (Sallust, *Histories* IV.60.20). Such a depiction is totally the opposite of how the Romans are represented in 1 Maccabees 8.1-16, as all their military conquests are said to be reactions to an aggression or to a opposition.

With Trogus's or Sallust's Mithridates, it is obvious that the theme of Roman lust for endless expansionism is also closely linked to the violence that they used to achieve their conquests. In Sallust's speech this theme is better highlighted than in Trogus's/Justin's text, as the author refers various times to the plunder, the thefts and the murders committed by the Romans. In Trogus's/Justin's speech, Mithridates explicitly deals with the violence of the Romans by referring to the origins of Rome: "... and as their founders, according to their report, were suckled by the teats of a she-wolf, so their whole population have souls of wolves, being insatiable of blood, but also greedy and hungry for power and riches" (*atque ut ipsi ferunt conditores suos lupae uberibus altos, sic omnem illum populum luporum animos inexplebiles sanguinis, atque imperii divitiarumque avidos ac ieunos habere*). We will come back later to the assimilation of the Romans with wolves and greed, but with such a sentence Trogus's Mithridates may have wanted to present Rome's beginnings as having predisposed the Romans to being a violent people. A quite identical reference appears in the anti-Roman speech of the Aetolians (XXVIII.2.8-10; Adler, "Who's," p. 52-53). As Cristina Mazzoni has rightly shown, the she-wolf's milk has always been associated in literary tradition with an ambiguous message, as it enabled the foundation of Rome and was thus associated with Rome's greatness, but it was also understood in relation to some kind of savagery and harshness which predisposed Romulus to be fierce and violent. In some passages of his *Elegies*, Propertius develops this idea (Propertius, *Elegies* II.6.19-20; IV.1A.37-38; IV.4.53-54; Mazzoni, *She-Wolf*, p. 99). Trogus reuses this negative tradition of the she-wolf in this speech of Mithridates to stress the savagery of Rome's first kings and the cruelty of the Romans in general (Mazzoni, *She-Wolf*, p. 99-100). Nevertheless, the fact that a kingly Eastern enemy of Rome would have referred to Rome's foundation to explain the violence of their imperialistic policy in the Eastern regions is strange. As Eric Adler has rightly suggested, Trogus may have chosen to make Mithridates speak about the violence of Rome's mythical origins rather than to enumerate concrete and recent examples of abusive use of violence by the Romans in the Eastern territories, because it may have been too critical towards Rome (Adler, "Who's," p. 53-54). Many anti-Roman arguments used by Trogus's Mithridates are thus clearly focused on Roman and Italian realities, but they remain interesting elements, as they give information as to what a Roman author, from a provincial origin, and a Roman audience considered to be suitable anti-Roman rhetoric.

Finally, the association of the idea that Rome could dismiss all the kings and rulers it wanted with the idea that it could also submit every people by using harsh violence is not specific to anti-Roman sources. In 1 Maccabees 8.1-30, written around 134 BCE, the author narrates the conclusion of the treaty between Judah the Maccabee and the Romans, and the chapter is replete with admiration for the latter's military strength. In this framework, the Judean author enumerates many wars that the Romans finally won – an enumeration which is reminiscent of Trogus's Mithridates's enumeration, even if the final perspective is totally different – and he insists upon the fact that the Romans are and will be particularly cruel and harsh with the peoples and kings who resist. His statement is clear: "Those whom they want to help and to be kings, those reign; and those whom they want (to remove), they displace; and they have been greatly exalted" (1 Maccabees 8.13). Such capacity of the Romans to be feared and to control every king on earth clearly echoes the words of Trogus's Mithridates in his speech even if, because of the opposite aim of the two narratives, Roman omnipotence is presented by the author of 1 Maccabees as the consequence of Rome's strategy and strength only, whereas for Mithridates it is the result of Rome's blind violence and perfidy.



**The third characteristic which Trogus's Mithridates highlights in order to denigrate the Romans is their greed.** As Eric Adler writes, in all of the foreigners' speeches against Rome of Trogus/Justin, greed is presented "as a key force in Roman foreign policy" (Adler, *Valorizing*, p. 56). First, it is interesting to see that Trogus's Mithridates assimilates the Romans to "robbers" (*latronem*, XXXVIII.4.2). Such a comparison appears also in the speech of Sallust's Mithridates, where Romans are said to be "robbers of nation" (*latrones gentium*, Sallust, *Histories* IV.60.22-23). Later, in Tacitus's invented anti-Roman speech of the chief of the Caledonians, Calgacus, the orator compares the Romans to *raptore orbis*, "robbers of the world" ([Tacitus, Agricola XXX](#)). Moreover, by presenting, through the voice of Mithridates, Romans as *latrones*, robbers and brigands, Trogus/Justin and Sallust were using a noun which was frequently used by the Romans to qualify the people who did not wage a *iustum bellum* against them. Contrary to the *hostis* (enemy), the *latro* was generally a brigand, a pirate or a guerrilla who did not come to war against the Roman state in accordance with the Roman official and legal procedures (Cadiou, *Hibera*, p. 183-184). Thus, by using this term for the Romans, Mithridates reverses the roles; the Romans become the savages acting contrary to their own rules.

In the speech of Sallust's Mithridates, the author emphasises several times the fact that the Romans act as plunderers of foreign peoples and kings: "Indeed I know that you (i.e. the Parthian king) have many men, arms and a lot of gold; and it is for that very reason that you are being targeted by us with a view to an alliance, by the Romans with a view to spoils (*ad praedam*)" (Sallust, *Histories* IV.60.16); "That from the beginning they have possessed nothing except what they have stolen: their homes, wives, lands, and dominion (*imperium*)?" (Sallust, *Histories* IV.60.17); "The Romans have weapons against all men, the sharpest against those whose defeat yields the greatest spoils (*spolia maxuma*)..." (Sallust, *Histories* IV.60.20). Trogus's Mithridates expresses very similar ideas, even if he deals once with a slightly different theme, namely the negative consequences of the greedy Roman administrators acting in a region already conquered by Rome, the province of Asia: "... while Asia so eagerly expected him (i.e. Mithridates), that it even invited him in words, so much had the rapacity of the proconsuls (*rapacitas proconsulum*), the levies of the publicans (*sectio publicanorum*), and the disgraceful mode of conducting law-suits (*calumniae litium*), possessed the people with a hatred of the Romans (*odium Romanorum*)" (XXXVIII.7.8). Such an assessment about the violence of Roman administrative practices has a different echo in a posterior source, the speech of Agrippa II in the *Jewish War* of Josephus. In this speech, Agrippa tries to dissuade the Jews from waging war against Rome. He starts his oration by attacking persons who have some "eloquent flight" regarding the violence of the procurators in panegyrics on liberty. Then, he defends the idea that the grievances of the Jews against the Roman procurators did not deserve a war with Rome, and, if a procurator is not good, he advises them to tolerate him and to wait for the next one (**Josephus, Jewish War II.348-354**). In his speech, Josephus's Agrippa, as Trogus's Mithridates, admits the harshness of Rome's administration in the Eastern provinces. However, he defends a totally different attitude towards such harshness, as for him the Jews should accept such oppressive control. To defend his point of view, Agrippa enumerates afterwards various Roman victories in all parts of the world – an enumeration which echoes 1 Maccabees 8.1-11 and which is the clear antithesis of Mithridates's point – to show the Jews that if they resist, the Romans will destroy them, and even the survivors will be treated with violence. He thus asserts: "... since all the peoples of the earth either have, or dread the thought of having, the Romans for their masters (????????)" (**Josephus, Jewish War II.397-398**). Through such a sentence, Agrippa seems to use an anti-Roman motif quite similar to that of Mithridates, as the submission to Rome of foreign peoples is presented as the harshest servitude. However, Agrippa's perspective is totally different. First, if he criticizes some individual cases of dishonest Roman procurators, he does not condemn the Romans in general. On the contrary, he is against any generalized criticism towards them or towards the emperor. Second, the reaction which is advocated by Agrippa is totally different from that of Mithridates, as he advises the Jews to submit themselves to Rome.

In Trogus's as in Sallust's speeches of Mithridates, we find the same idea, namely that greed is the root cause of Rome's misconduct in foreign policy, more precisely of its lust for expansionism and its perfidy. Actually, when Sallust's Mithridates says: "In fact, the Romans have one inveterate motive for making war upon all peoples, nations, and kings: namely, a insatiable desire for dominion and for riches (*cupido profunda imperi et divitiarum*)" (Sallust, *Histories* IV.60.5), it may have been a source of inspiration for Trogus when he composed Mithridates's famous sentence in which he compares Romans to wolves: "... and as their founders, according to their report, were suckled by the teats of a she-wolf, so their whole population have souls of wolves, being insatiable of blood, but also greedy and hungry for power and riches (*atque imperii divitiarumque avidos ac ieiunos habere*)" (XXXVIII.6.8; Adler, "Who's," p. 400, n. 80). In this sentence, greed and violence are thus presented by Trogus's Mithridates as the two negative elements driving Rome's foreign policy. Interestingly enough, in 1 Maccabees 8:1-11, one finds an echo of this perception of Rome, namely in verse 3, in which the author states that the Romans made special efforts to control Spain because of the mines of silver and gold that were known to be located there. In the context of 1 Maccabees 8:1-11 this remark is not hostile, but it is still telling in view of the





criticism of Roman greed found in Mithridates's speeches in Sallust and Trogus.

In addition, as we have previously noticed, the comparison of the Romans with wolves refers to the idea of their inner violence, but the wolf is also symbolically linked to the idea of greed and rapacity. Such an association can be found, for instance, at the very beginning of chapter 3 of the book of Zephaniah – a chapter in which Zephaniah deals with the coming of the Messiah –, when the prophet criticises Jerusalem and places it among the nations which should be judged: “The officials within it are roaring lions; its judges are evening wolves that leave nothing until the morning” (Book of Zephaniah 3:3, NRSV). It is obvious that through this comparison of the Jewish rulers with wolves, this animal symbolizes, as in Trogus's speech, both cruelty and greed (Hojoon Ryou, *Zephaniah's*, p. 262 and the bibliographical references in n. 269). In addition to the fact that this animal was usually symbolically associated with these two negative characteristics, Trogus's Mithridates may have found this image all the more relevant in that the Romans were historically linked with the she-wolf.

**The fourth and last characteristic which Trogus's Mithridates highlights to denigrate the Romans is their hatred for the kings.** He presents Rome's anti-monarchism as being motivated by a fear that Rome had always had towards any king becoming too powerful: “That it was not the offences of kings, but their power and majesty, for which they attacked them; and that they had not acted thus against himself alone, but against all other princes at all times” (*Quippe non delicta regum illos, sed vires ac maiestatem insequi, neque in uno se, sed in aliis quoque omnibus hac semper arte grassatos*, XXXVIII.6.1). This Roman aversion to monarchies is also briefly mentioned in the speech of Demetrios to Philip V and is presented as the main cause of the confrontation between Demetrios and the Romans. Such an idea is also present in Sallust's *Letter of Mithridates*, when the king of Pontus warns the Parthian king that the Romans are “men who are prevented by nothing human or divine from (...) considering as their enemies all powers not at their mercy and especially monarchies (*regna*)” (Sallust, *Histories* IV.60.17). According to Eric Adler, the argument of Roman anti-monarchism makes better sense in the warning that Sallust's Mithridates addressed to Parthian king Phraates against a possible future attack of Rome than in the admonition of Trogus's Mithridates to his soldiers. In addition, the arguments given by Trogus's Mithridates to attest Roman anti-monarchism seem quite confused (see XXXVIII.6.2-8), and most of them distort the historical reality and even contradict the narrative of the events as they appear in the previous books of Justin's *Epitome* (for instance the Romans would not have been conveyed in Asia by Eumenes's fleet; see Adler, “Who's,” p. 47-48). Through such a presentation, Trogus might have wanted to show how in his anti-Roman speech Mithridates presented excessive and distorting arguments.

The explanation that Trogus's Mithridates gives for the origin of Rome's anti-monarchism is also interesting: “That they had made it a law to themselves to hate all kings, because they themselves had had such kings at whose names they might well blush, being either shepherds of the Aborigines, or soothsayers of the Sabines, or exiles from the Corinthians, or servants and slaves of the Tuscans, or, what was the most honourable name amongst them, the *proud...*” (XXXVIII.6.8). Following the reasoning of Trogus's Mithridates, it was because of the bad and dishonourable kings that they had in a very remote past that the Romans hated all kings (for a very good interpretation of the expression “shepherds of the Aborigines” as referring to Romulus, see Briquel, “La formation du corps,” p. 217-221). Such an explanation is of course purely rhetorical. By presenting the Roman kings as foreigners of modest extraction, Trogus's Mithridates could boost his prestigious pedigree and also the fact that his actions and his authority were legitimized by heredity. First, concerning his pedigree, Mithridates claims to descend from Alexander the Great and even from Darius (XXXVIII.7.1), mythical kinships which are here displayed to create a real contrast with “the muddy flow of strangers” (*illa conluvie convenarum*) who are here closely associated with the origins of Rome. Second, Mithridates insists upon the homogenous character of the territory and of the peoples, *gentes*, living under his rule: “That none of the people under his command had ever endured a foreign yoke, or obeyed any rulers but their own native princes...” (XXXVIII.7.2). Even if such an assertion is wrong (see Adler, *Valorizing*, p. 49), the important idea stemming from Mithridates's rhetoric is the contrast between the prestigious, homogenous and pure nature of his regal power and the exogenous and/or dishonouring origins of the first peoples who were integrated in the *populus romanus* (the low social status of the peoples who found refuge in Romulus's *Asylum* is emphasized in Livy, *History of Rome* I.8; Plutarch, *Life of Romulus* IX, 3; but relativized in Denys of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities* I.4.2; I.89.1; II.15.3-4; on the fact that the expression *illa conluvie convenarum* refers to this event, see Briquel, “La formation du corps,” p. 217), but also of the first kings of Rome. It is interesting to note that Mithridates's opinion about the nature of regal power is thus the antithesis of a Roman speech highlighting the capacity of integration of foreigner elements of the Romans, that could be for integrating foreigners into the *populus romanus* (which is the major point highlighted by a later author, Florus, when he deals with the episode of the Romulean *Asylum*, see [Florus, Epitome Taken from Titus Livius I.1.8-10](#)), or for promoting strangers kings of Rome. The best example of such a speech is certainly the speech of Claude, as it has been preserved on the [Lyon tablet](#), especially when, to convince the senators hostile to the integration of provincial



citizens into the Roman Senate, the emperor recalls: "Once upon a time Rome was ruled by kings, but it was not their fate to hand it on to successors of their own line. Strangers, some of them even foreigners, took their place..." (col. 1, l. 8-9). Mithridates's conception of regal power and of its hereditary transmission appears thus as the opposite of this Roman point of view considering that Rome was built and evolved thanks to assimilations of foreign elements.

Finally, Trogus's Mithridates insists upon the fact that Rome's actions against the kings is also a perfidious and sacrilegious attack against an essential principle of regal power, heredity : "When they (i.e. the Romans) required him (i.e. Mithridates) to quit Paphlagonia, too, was not that a renewal of hostility, a possession which had fallen to his father, not by conquest or force of arms, but by adoption in a will, and as an inheritance on the death of its own sovereigns?" (XXXVIII.5.4). A similar opinion appears in the speech that Polybius assigns to Antiochos III in 196 BCE, when the later speaks to the Romans commissioners who came to ask him to restore to Ptolemy all the cities of his kingdom that he has recently taken but also to evacuate the places which belonged to Philip (in the Chersonese and in Thracia) as the Romans had recently defeated the Macedonian king (Polybius, *Histories* XVIII.51). To justify his taking of control of these regions, Antiochos III recalls that the Chersonese and the cities of Thracia had been originally acquired by "right of conquest", one century before, by his ancestor Seleucos I. The fact that hereditary transmission is thus presented by Antiochos III as the main justification of his legitimacy to recover these lost territories, is an opinion which clearly recalls that of Mithridates. Such a depiction of the Romans as being incapable of respecting hereditary rules fits in with Mithridates's depiction of the Romans as being a perfidious people. They are not only said to be disrespectful of the official treaties and of the rules of the *bellum iustum*, but they are also presented as disrespectful of the conventions of the independent regal states themselves. Thus, Trogus's Mithridates presents Rome's power as being based on conquests and violence only, whereas the long-term establishment of his family in the Eastern regions enabled Mithridates to become the natural ruler in his kingdom but also in other neighbouring regions such as Paphlagonia. Such presentation of the expansion of Mithridates's territory is of course biased. However, the depiction of the Romans as acting against the hereditary principles which enabled some Eastern regal states to expand themselves is clearly another argument in his diatribe against Rome's anti-monarchism. Such an argument can be compared with 1 Maccabees 8.14-16, even if the perspective of this work is totally different from Mithridates's speech as it expresses admiration for the Romans. In this part of the first book of the Maccabees, the author highlights the fact that the Romans do not have a king but a Senate, and that "they entrust their government to one man every year, to govern all over their country..." Behind this positive presentation of the Roman institutions, the author of 1 Maccabees highlights two elements: first the Romans have no king, and second their consuls – which are effectively their rulers – change every year. By recalling the rapid turnover of Rome's rulers, the idea that the Roman state was not governed by a succession of kings of the same lineage is also implicit.

To sum up, through this invented speech of Mithridates, Trogus may have wanted to gather some of the main anti-Roman arguments which could, on the one hand, fits in with his narrative of the confrontation between the king of Pontus and Rome, and, on the other hand, be suitable for a Roman audience. Thus, through a succession of numerous examples, Trogus's Mithridates first reconsiders the invincibility of the Romans and then criticizes Rome's greed and anti-monarchism, which are presented as the main driving forces of its lust for conquests and its antagonism toward the Eastern kingdoms.

Keywords in the original language:

- [Asia](#)
- [avidus](#)
- [bellum](#)
- [bellum civile](#)
- [Bithynia](#)
- [calumnia](#)
- [Cappadocia](#)
- [Cimbri](#)
- [Cyrus](#)
- [Darius](#)
- [divitiae](#)
- [domesticus rex](#)



- [externus](#)
- [Galli](#)
- [gens](#)
- [Germania](#)
- [Hannibal](#)
- [hereditarius](#)
- [hostis](#)
- [ieiunus](#)
- [imperium](#)
- [Italia](#)
- [ius gentium](#)
- [ius victoriae](#)
- [latro](#)
- [libertas](#)
- [lis](#)
- [lupa](#)
- [lupus](#)
- [maiestas](#)
- [nobilitas](#)
- [obsequium](#)
- [odium](#)
- [odium Romanorum](#)
- [oratio](#)
- [Paphlagonia](#)
- [pater](#)
- [paternus](#)
- [pax](#)
- [Phrygia](#)
- [populus](#)
- [proconsul](#)
- [publicani](#)
- [Pyrrhus](#)
- [rapacitas](#)
- [rex](#)
- [Roma](#)
- [Romani](#)
- [Romanorum exercitus](#)
- [sanguis](#)
- [sectio](#)
- [testamentum](#)
- [transalpina Gallia](#)
- [vis](#)

Thematic keywords in English:

- [anti-monarchism](#)
- [conquered nations](#)
- [criticism of Rome](#)
- [enemy](#)
- [expansion](#)
- [heredity](#)
- [inheritance](#)
- [just war](#)
- [kinship](#)
- [legacy](#)
- [Mithridates](#)
- [Roman aggressiveness](#)
- [Roman citizenship](#)





- [Roman defeat](#)
- [Roman empire](#)
- [Roman greed](#)
- [Roman hegemony](#)
- [Roman treachery](#)
- [Roman violence](#)
- [Romulus](#)
- [she-wolf](#)
- [Social War](#)
- [virtue](#)

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