

Speaking Up for Rome:
How Rome's Talkative Matrons Serve the City and Save the Day.

[You can find a link to the abstract here, in Panel 17A](#)

Hersilia

1. Livy 1.10.3-4: The Defeat of the Caeninenses

Ne Crustumini quidem atque Antemnates pro ardore iraque Caeninensium satis se impigre movent; ita per se ipsum nomen Caeninum in agrum Romanum impetum facit. Sed effuse vastantibus fit obvius cum exercitu Romulus levique certamine docet vanam sine viribus iram esse. Exercitum fundit fugatque, fusum persequitur: **regem in proelio obtruncat et spoliat: duce hostium occiso urbem primo impetu capit.**

Not even the Crustumini and the Antemnates stir themselves energetically enough for the passion and anger of the Caeninenses; thus Caeninum itself, by itself, makes an attack into Roman land. But when their army was spread out for pillaging, Romulus intercepts it and teaches it with an easy contest that anger without strength is empty. The army scatters and runs away, he peruses the stragglers: he kills the king in battle and strips his body: **with the leader of the enemy killed, he [Romulus] captures the city in the first attack.**

2. Livy 1.11.1-2: The Defeat of the Antemnates; Hersilia's intervention

Dum ea ibi Romani gerunt, Antemnatium exercitus per occasionem ac solitudinem hostiliter in fines Romanos incursionem facit. Raptim et ad hos Romana legio ducta palatos in agris oppressit. Fusi igitur primo impetu et clamore hostes, oppidum captum. Duplicique victoria ovantem Romulum Hersilia coniunx precibus raptarum fatigata **orat** ut parentibus earum det veniam et in civitatem accipiat: **ita rem coalescere concordia posse. Facile impetratum.**

While the Romans are carrying out these things there, the army of the Antemnates, through opportunity and the desertion [of the border] made an incursion hostilely into the Roman borders. The Roman legion, lead swiftly against them, crushed the men dispersed in the fields. Therefore, the enemy was routed in the first attach and clamor; the city captured. His wife Hersilia, wearied by the prayers of the snatched-up girls, **begs** Romulus celebrating the double victory that he give mercy to the parents of the girls and accept them into the citizen body; **thus the state is able to grow strong through a union. The matter is easily accomplished.**

The Sabines

3. Livy 1.12.10: Rome Is Winning the Sabine War

Romani Sabinique in media conualle duorum montium redintegrant proelium; sed **res Romana erat superior**.

The Romans and the Sabines rejoined the battle in a valley in the middle of two mountains; but **the Roman side had the upper hand**.

4. Livy 1.13.1-5: The Sabine Intervention

Tum Sabinae mulieres, quarum ex iniuria bellum ortum erat, crinibus passis scissaque veste, victo malis muliebri pavore, ausae se inter tela volantia inferre, ex transverso impetu facto dirimere infestas acies, dirimere iras, hinc patres, hinc viros **orantes**, ne sanguine se nefando soceri generique respergerent, ne parricidio macularent partus suos, nepotum illi, hi liberum progeniem. "Si adfinitatis inter vos, si conubii piget, in nos vertite iras; **nos** causa belli, **nos** volnerum ac caedium viris ac parentibus **sumus**; **melius peribimus quam sine alteris vestrum viduae aut orbae vivemus**." movet res cum multitudinem tum duces; silentium et repentina fit quies; inde ad foedus faciendum duces prodeunt. Nec pacem modo sed civitatem unam ex duabus faciunt. Regnum consociant: imperium omne conferunt Romam. Ita geminata urbe ut Sabinis tamen aliquid daretur Quirites a Curibus appellati. Monumentum eius pugnae ubi primum ex profunda emersus palude equus Curtium in vado statuit, Curtium lacum appellarunt.

Then the Sabine women, out of whose injury the war had arisen, with hair wild, clothing torn, and womanly fear overcome by evils, dared to carry themselves amongst the flying weapons, to divide the hostile battle lines with a charge made from the sidelines, to divide anger, begging here their fathers, here their husbands, that they not besmirch themselves with the unspeakable blood of father-in-law or son-in-law, that they not stain their own offspring with parricide, those their grandchildren, these their children. "If the marriage tie between you, if our marital alliance disgusts you, turn you anger against us; we are the cause of this war, we are the cause of wounds and slaughter for our husbands and parents; [it is] better that we will die than live without either of you as widows or orphans." The thing moved both the multitude and the leaders; silence and a hasty peace fell. From there the leaders move forward for the purpose of making a treaty. They make not only peace but also one city from two. They consolidated the kingdom: and they conferred all power on Rome. With the city thus doubled, they were called Quirites from the name Cures, so that some concession was given to the Sabines. A monument of this battle stood in the empty field where Curtius's horse had first emerged out of the deep swamp, they called it the Lacus Curtius.

5. Livy 1.13.6-7: The Curiae Are Named After the Sabine Women

Ex bello tam tristi laeta repente pax cariores Sabinas viris ac parentibus et ante omnes Romulo ipsi fecit. **Itaque cum populum in curias triginta divideret, nomina earum curiis imposuit.** Id non traditur, cum haud dubie aliquanto numerus maior hoc mulierum fuerit, aetate an dignitatibus suis virorumue an sorte lectae sint, quae nomina curiis darent. Eodem tempore et centuriae tres equitum conscriptae sunt.

Immediately a happy peace from so sad a war made the Sabine women dearer to their husbands and their parents and to Romulus himself before everyone else. **Therefore, when he divided the population into 30 curiae, he imposed the names of the women on the curiae.** It is not handed down, since there is hardly any doubt that the number of women was greater than this, whether they were chosen by age, or by their own worthiness or that of their husbands, or by a lot, which gave their names to the curiae.

Lucretia

6. Livy 1.58.2-5: Lucretia is attacked by Sextus Tarquinius

stricto gladio ad dormientem Lucretiam venit sinistraque manu mulieris pectore oppresso **"Tace, Lucretia" inquit; "Sex. Tarquinius sum; ferrum in manu est; moriere, si emiseris vocem."** Cum pavida ex somno mulier nullam opem, prope mortem imminentem videret, **tum Tarquinius fateri amorem, orare, miscere precibus minas,** versare in omnes partes muliebrem animum. Ubi obstinatum videbat et ne mortis quidem metu inclinari, addit ad metum dedecus: cum mortua iugulatum servum nudum positurum ait, ut in sordido adulterio necata dicatur. Quo terrore cum vicisset obstinatum pudicitiam velut vi victrix libido, profectusque inde Tarquinius ferox expugnato decore muliebri esset...

With sword drawn, he [Sextus Tarquinius] came to the sleeping Lucretia and with the breast of the woman pressed down with his left hand he said **"Silence, Lucretia, I am Sextus Tarquinius; a sword is in my hand; you will die if you let out a cry."** Pill from sleep so no help, beyond eminent death, **then Tarquinius spoke about love, he begged, he mixed threats with prayers,** he churned up every corner of her womanly mind. When he was seeing her stubborn, and not inclined to a fear of death, he added dishonor to fear: he said that a slave with his throat cut would be placed with her dead body, so that it would be said that she had been killed in sordid adultery. By which terror, when his conquering lust had overcome her stubborn *pudicitia* as if by force, and beast-like Tarquinius had set out from there after he had overthrown her womanly propriety...

7. Livy 1.58.5-12: Lucretia Reports Her Assault

Lucretia maesta tanto malo nuntium Romam eundem ad patrem Ardeamque ad virum mittit, ut cum singulis fidelibus amicis veniant; ita facto maturatoque opus esse; rem atrocem incidisse. Sp. Lucretius cum P. Valerio Volesi filio, Collatinus cum L. Iunio Bruto venit, cum quo forte Romam rediens ab nuntio uxoris erat conventus. Lucretiam sedentem maestam in cubiculo inveniunt. Adventu suorum lacrimae obortae, quaerentique viro **"Satin salve?"** "Minime" inquit; "quid enim salvi est mulieri amissa pudicitia? Vestigia viri alieni, Collatine, in lecto sunt tuo; ceterum corpus est tantum violatum, animus insons; **mors testis erit.** Sed date dexteras fidemque haud impune adultero fore. **Sex. est Tarquinius qui hostis pro hospite priore nocte vi armatus mihi sibique, si vos viri estis, pestiferum hinc abstulit gaudium."** **Dant ordine omnes fidem;** consolantur aegram animi avertendo noxam ab coacta in auctorem delicti: mentem peccare, non corpus, et unde consilium afuerit culpam abesse. "Vos" inquit "videritis quid illi debeatur: ego me etsi peccato absolvo, supplicio non libero; nec ulla deinde impudica Lucretiae exemplo vivet." Cultrum, quem sub veste abditum habebat, eum in corde defigit, prolapsaque in volnus moribunda cecidit. Conclamat vir paterque.

Lucretia, sad from so great and evil, send the same message to her father in Rome and to her husband at Ardea, that they should come with a single faithful friend; indeed, there was a need for action and for accomplishing a task; to cut open a black thing. Spurius Lucretius came with Publius Valerius, son of Volesus, and Collatinus with Lucius Iunius Brutus, with whom by chance he was returning to Rome when he met with his wife's messenger. They find sad Lucretia sitting in an inner room. Tears rose up at her menfolk's arrival, and to her husband asking **"Are you well enough?"** She said "Not at all; what 'well' is there for a woman with her *pudicitia* lost?" The traces of a strange man, Collatinus, are in your bed; although my body is so greatly violated, my mind is innocent; death will be my witness. But give your right hands and a pledge that there will hardly be impunity for the sex criminal. **It is Sextus Tarquinius, an enemy that was a guest before, who, armed with force, took away from here a pleasure that is a plague to me and to himself, if you all are men."** They all give their pledge in order; they console the woman sick in her soul by turning the fault from the forced woman to the author of the crime: the mind transgresses, not the body, the guilt is wherever the plan was. "You," she said, "will see to what is owed to him; even if I absolve myself from transgressing, I do not free myself from punishment; nor will any shameless woman live after this on account of the example of Lucretia." A knife, which she was holding hidden under her clothing, she thrust in her heart, and collapsing forward onto her wound, dying, she fell. Her husband and father cry out.

8. Livy 1.59.1-4: Brutus, the witnesses swear to overthrow the Tarquins.

Brutus illis luctu occupatis cultrum ex vulnere Lucretiae extractum, manantem cruore prae se tenens, "Per hunc" inquit "castissimum ante regiam iniuriam sanguinem iuro, vosque, di, testes facio me L. Tarquinius Superbum cum scelerata coniuge et omni liberorum stirpe ferro igni quacumque dehinc vi possim exacturum, nec illos nec alium quemquam regnare Romae passurum." Cultrum deinde Collatino tradit, inde Lucretio ac Valerio, stupentibus miraculo rei, unde novum in Bruti pectore ingenium. Ut praeceptum erat iurant; totique ab luctu versi in iram, Brutum iam inde ad expugnandum regnum vocantem sequuntur ducem.

While those men were occupied with grief, Brutus holding before him the knife extracted from Lucretia's wound, stained with blood, said "I swear by this blood, most chased before the royal injury, and you, gods, I make my witnesses, that hereafter I will drive out Lucius Tarquinius Superbus with his wicked wife and all stock of his children by iron, fire, and whatever force I can, neither will I suffer them, nor any other, whosoever he is, to rule Rome." Then he hands the knife to Collatinus, and from there to Lucretius and Valerius, all dumbstruck at the miraculous thing, the new quality in Brutus's heart. They swear that they will follow his lead and all turn from grief to anger, and now already they follow their leader Brutus calling that the king must be overthrown.

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