

Political Revolutions and the Mistreatment of Women: Tacitus on Livia and Augustus  
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Although the *Annales* ostensibly begin *ab excessu Divi Augusti*, Tacitus' concise introduction covers the sweep of Roman history from the monarchy to the ascension of Tiberius. In charting this chronology, Tacitus carefully and subtly represents the transition from Republic to Principate as a transition from *libertas* to *servitus*. Tacitus' portrayal of Livia, the wife of Augustus, is a key aspect of this representation. Tacitus' negative depiction of Livia has been ably explored by scholars such as Barrett (*Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome*, 2002) and Flory ("*Abducta Neroni uxor*" *TAPA* 118 [1988] 343-59). In this paper, I will focus on an aspect of Livia's portrayal in Tacitus omitted by these studies, namely, how Tacitus uses Augustus's abduction of Livia to signify the shift from freedom to autocracy just as earlier abductions and offenses against women marked revolutions in the constitutions of Rome and Athens.

While most accounts suggest that Livia and her husband, Tiberius Claudius Nero, were willing parties to their divorce and Livia's remarriage to Augustus (Vell. 2.79.2; Suet. *Aug.* 62.2, *Tib.* 4.3; Dio 48.44), in Tacitus's account Augustus appears to have taken Livia away from her previous husband forcefully (*abducta Neroni uxor A.* 1.10.5). According to Tacitus, the abduction of Livia had grave consequences for the Roman state (*Livia gravis in rem publicam mater, gravis domui Caesarum noverca A.* 1.10.5), as Livia asserted her *potentia* in political affairs (*anum . . . natura potentiae anxiam A.* 4.12.4).

Tacitus' account of Livia's abduction contrasts with the rape of Lucretia and the offense against the sister of Harmodius by Hipparchos, which were both viewed as excesses of tyrannical power and resulted in the offender being expelled or murdered and in a more democratic constitution for the state. The abduction of Livia, however, led to a more authoritarian constitution and more closely mirrors the rape of the Sabine women by Romulus, to whom Augustus was compared as a second founder of Rome, and the establishment of monarchy at Rome. Tacitus seems to be suggesting that the Romans' passive acceptance of Augustus' rape of Livia inaugurated a new autocracy at Rome, thanks in part to Livia's own assertive and manipulative personality.