Illustrating Villainy: Tullia and her Father's Corpse at Livy 1.48

Women play a central role in the fall of Rome's monarchy. Several chapters before Livy introduces the narrative of Lucretia, he presents his readers with Servius Tullius' younger daughter Tullia (Liv. 1.46–48). Tullia is instrumental in facilitating Tarquin the Proud's rise to power: after she falls in love with Tarquin, she inspires him to murder his wife (her sister), kills her husband, marries Tarquin, and goads him to seize the throne for himself so that she can become queen. To make matters even worse, on her way to congratulate her husband on his successful coup, she runs over her father's corpse with her chariot. Livy's vivid portrait of a woman whose lust for power foreshadows the moral bankruptcy of Tarquin's reign has received rich scholarly attention (e.g., Claassen 1998; Stevenson 2011; Hallett and Hersch 2020). To varying degrees, all these discussions point to the complex psychological motivation that Livy imparts to Tullia. Depending on which part of the episode one reads, she is a cold, calculating villain who just wants power, a jealous and petty girl, entirely oblivious to what is unfolding around her or driven mad by her crimes against her family.

In this talk, I explore readers' reactions to Tullia's motivation through a particularly rich, but so far largely unconsidered, lens: illustrations of the moment when Tullia desecrates her father's corpse. The scene is a favorite both with those designing visual accompaniments to Livy's text or summaries of it and those crafting stand-alone paintings and drawings. Several dozen images of the scene survive with radically different compositional choices reflecting a diversity of responses to Livy's narrative. Whereas the author leaves his readers with a variety of explanations for this horrific act, artists must choose what kind of Tullia they want to depict running over her father's corpse.

I start with an overview of Livy's Tullia episode and a discussion of its literary and historical echoes: Euripidean tragedy and Cicero's *Catilinarians* both heavily influence the portrait of Tullia (see Ogilvie 1965 *ad loc.*). I then offer a close reading of the corpse scene to highlight the different possible interpretations of it. For the rest of the paper, I turn to two illustrations of the scene from vernacular summary editions of Livy from different periods. The first comes from Zacharias Müntzer's summary of the rise of the Roman Republic published in German in 1568. It offers a large ink drawing of Tullia in an elaborate three-horse chariot briefly glancing down at her father's corpse, which is being crushed under the wheels. This is an example of Tullia being unconcerned about her actions and their consequences. The second image comes from Alfred John Church's *Stories from Livy* (England, 1883), which puts Tullia in an ancient war chariot and makes her the confident commander pointing the way forward over her father's corpse. To conclude, I briefly return to Livy's text to highlight an important difference between the historian and the illustrations: although Livy sees Tullia as being driven mad by the furies, the artists depict her as either a strident leader or uncaring. In creating the visual image of a figure who illustrates the depravity of Roman monarchy, they present Tullia as being in full control of her actions and willing to keep committing evil acts.

Bibliography

Claassen, J.-M. 1998. "The Familiar Other: The Pivotal Role of Women in Livy's Narrative of the Political Development of Early Rome." *Acta Classica* 41: 71–103.

Hallett, J. and K. K. Hersch. 2020. "Tanaquil and Tullia in Livy as Roman Caricatures of Greek Mythic and Historic Hellenistic Queens," in *The Routledge Companion to Women and*

Monarchy in the Ancient Mediterranean World, edited by E. D. Carney and S. Müller, 491–503. London.

Ogilvie, R. M. 1965. *A Commentary on Livy Books 1–5*. Oxford.

Stevenson, T. 2011. “Women of Early Rome as ‘Exempla’ in Livy, ‘Ab Urbe Condita’, Book 1.” *CW* 104: 175–189.