Transalpine *transgressiones*: The Topography of a Livian Digression (5.33.2-35.3)

Digressions seldom are marginal narratives. A case in point is Livy's account of the Gallic migrations into Italy, which scholars have rightly interpreted as bridging the climactic sacks of Veii and Rome (Burck 1964, 123; Ogilvie 1965, 700; Luce 1971, 282-83). More striking still, I contend, is the manner in which the digression creates a geographical-textual link that has been noted elsewhere in Livy (Kraus 1994; Jaeger 1997). Using Alpine place names as cartographic markers, the digression creates a *topos* of transalpine crossings to highlight the crises that will resulted when that geographical boundary is subsequently traversed: the Gallic sack of Rome, the Hannibalic War, and the Caesarian Civil War. The featured landmarks in turn provide a roadmap to a number of critical issues in Livy's subsequent history.

By associating the Etruscan city of Clusium with transalpine migrations by the Gauls, the excursus forges a tie with the ensuing sack of Rome. To explain the Gauls' presence in Etruria, Livy states that Arruns of Clusium led them over the Alps (5.33.2-4). Following the digression, Clusium serves as the location for the killing of their ambassadors, which incites them to march on Latium (Luce 1971, 282-84). In this respect, the Tuscan city's geographical position becomes the narrational waypoint for Rome's initial conflict with the Gauls. The digression even pairs the siege of Clusium with the subsequent capture of Rome (*Clusium oppugnarent urbemque Romam caperent*, 5.33.5). More importantly, it repeatedly emphasizes Alpine crossings as the source of continual conflict between Gauls and Transpadane Italians (*Alpes transisse*, 5.33.2; *transeuntibus Alpes*, 5.33.4; *Alpes transierint*, 5.33.5).

Through a shared geographical itinerary, the subsequent account of the Gallic migrations (5.34.1-35.2) looks ahead even farther to the Hannibalic invasion. Both the Gauls and the Carthaginians cross the Tricastin (5.34.5 and 21.31.9), halt before the Alps (5.34.6 and 21.30),

and enter Italy through the Taurine Pass (5.35.8 and 21.38.5-39.6). More noteworthy still, Hannibal's speech cites the Gallic migrations as proof that the Alps are traversable: he contravenes the idea ascribed to the Gauls (5.34.7) that the mountains are yoked to the sky (21.30.7); he recalls the diverse population led into Italy (5.34.5) when he declares that families, not soldiers, previously crossed the Alps (21.30.8); and to emphasize Rome's vulnerability he even cites the Gallic sack itself (21.30.11). Most striking of all, Livy's digression mentions a Gallo-Etruscan skirmish near the river Ticinus (*fusisque acie Tuscis haud procul Ticino flumine*, 5.35.9), thereby foreshadowing the disastrous Roman defeat of Publius Cornelius Scipio (*uno consule ad Ticinum victo*, 21.57.2) by Hannibal (and some untrustworthy Gauls).

Livy even gives his transalpine topography contemporary resonance. In recounting the Gauls' passage over the Julian Alps (5.34.8), the historian invokes Caesar, the most recent transalpine invader. The *Periochae* confirm that Caesar's entrance into Italy featured prominently in Livy's history (*Per*. 109). More importantly, Livy imitates Caesar's own *Bellum Gallicum* in the digression (*Celtarum quae pars Galliae tertia est*, 5.34.1; Ogilvie 1965, 707; Williams 2001, 117). Given the unmistakable associations between Caesar and *Gallia*, including metaphors by contemporaries likening him to Hannibal and the Gauls (Cic. *Att*. 7.11.1-3), it is likely that our Transpadane historian would emphasize such collocations.

By using topography to link transformative events in Roman history, Livy's digression offers a unique vantage point for surveying the repeated challenges faced by Rome as a result of her expanding *imperium*. Besides supporting arguments which favor a broad narratological cohesion (e.g. Levene 2010, 1-81 on Livy's third decade), the geographical conflation of the Gallic and Carthaginian migrations shows Livy's creative reworking of Hellenistic source material, namely Polybius' extensive excursus on the Celtic migrations (2.14-35). Finally, the

digression creates numerous contact points between Italic and non-Italic peoples. By evoking

their extensive conflicts on a shared transalpine topography, the excursus confronts anxieties

about Italy's diverse ethnic heritage, a proven concern among Roman authors (Dench 2005), as

well as identity politics that were fundamental to Transpadane writers such as Livy (Williams

2001, 120-27).

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