

## The Legibility of Escorted Movement in Livy

On a coin depicting the consul Brutus flanked by two lictors and an *accensus*, Östenberg (2016: 16) notes “the elite and their escorts were potent and inclusive moving images that communicated with the cityscape and its people and shaped Roman views about society.” This paper examines these elite and their escorts in the works of Livy. It argues that Livy’s narrative structures the reading of the escorted movements of Rome’s early leaders, which in turn shapes the reader’s interpretation of this important socio-political phenomenon.

Grand processions such as triumphs and funerals were opportunities for display (Beard 1997; Flower 2001). Parades of elite citizens presented an image of Roman society and culture both to Romans and foreigners (Latham 2016); parades were also educational (e.g. Polybius *Hist.* 6.53.9 on aristocratic funerals’ effect on youths). While work has been done on movement and visibility in public life (O’Sullivan 2011; Corbeill 2004), this paper focuses on the everyday movements of the elite in Livy, showing how these movements, even when unplanned, followed unwritten protocols. Though escorted movement was a major part of elite life since Rome’s early days, this is still an under-studied area in Roman cultural history.

This paper examines two pairs of passages to show how escorted movement is a literary and visual trope in Livy’s account of the early Republican period. Each pair exhibits narrative, thematic, and lexical correspondences, yet each passage tells a distinctly different story from its counterpart. Livy includes these clues to shape history, craft characters, and educate his audience.

In the first pair, both passages narrate the summoning of a leader during a crisis. Both Cincinnatus (3.26) and his descendent Quinctius (7.39) are introduced as tilling fields (*colebat agrum; agrum colere*) and country-dwelling (*operi...agresti intentus; ruri agere*

*vitam...constituit*). They are both summoned from their farms—Cincinnatus to defeat the hostile Aequi, Quinctius to lead Romans against fellow Romans. Their contrasting calls to duty correspond to the shape and direction of their respective escorts. While Cincinnatus willingly proceeds (*processit*) and the townspeople intercept him (*excipiunt*), Quinctius is compelled by force and fear (*vim...ac metu*) and the rebels drag him (*pertraxerunt*) to camp. Whereas Cincinnatus, as respected dictator, is flanked by a crowd (*frequentia stipatus*), has lictors walking ahead (*antecedentibus lictoribus*), and is escorted to his house (*deductus est domum*), Quinctius, an unwilling general, is ordered by his own soldiers to lead them against the city (*ad urbem ducere iubent*). In the upheaval of civil war, not only are the roles of leader and follower reversed, but also the direction of movement.

The second pair of passages illustrates contrasting perceptions of honor and power surrounding lictors (bodyguards accompanying Roman magistrates). The episode of the abusive decemvirs (3.33-57), with their excess of lictors, illustrates their tyranny culminating in the chief decemvir's attack on Verginia, resulting in her death. On their first day in office, the decemvirs menacingly appear with twelve lictors each, instilling fear through symbols (*terroris insignia*) and evoking memories of the hated kings (*decem regum species*). In the aftermath of Verginia's death, the lictors are perceived as executioners, degraded to slave status (*carnifices, non lictores*).

A different picture is painted in 6.34, where a lictor's presence inspires envy. A lictor's loud knock triggers a series of observations and reflections by a certain Fabia, who notices that her lictor-less, plebeian husband lacks the entourage (*frequentia*) others possess; without this, she worries, her home has neither honor nor clout (*nec honos nec gratia*).

The two passages share the trope of power as spectacle. Lictors are connected with terror and force in the first passage, but prompt envy and emulation in the second. Their perception by characters in the narrative reveals to the external audience the fine distinctions between what is “right” and “wrong” in the use and display of entourages. Taken together, all four passages provide narrative and linguistic clues that help in reading and interpreting escorted movement in Republican Rome.

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