

Lucretia's Temporality in Livy

Lucretia's speech and suicide initiates the transition from Monarchy to Republic at the close of Book One of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*. Her myth occupies a prominent position in the historiographical record of Roman political thought and an important place in the structure of Livy's account of Rome's early development. Given this prominence, scholars have rightly examined the social contexts with which Livy frames his narrative by focusing on issues such as gender and exemplary discourse (Donaldson 1982, Matthes 2000, and Roller 2004). In this paper I investigate the role that Lucretia's temporal reality plays in the coming political transition because she, uniquely in Livy's mythic history, has a daily existence. Mythical monarchical time, loosely structured around kings' reigns, functions differently than consular Republican time, structured around the annalistic framework typical of Roman historiography (cf. Feeney 2007). Despite her existence in monarchical time, Lucretia has an everyday life: her quotidian, domestic activities are essential to the narrative of her assault and suicide (Highmore 2002). And, in his narrative of the events, Livy includes temporal markers in the form of adverbs (such as *inde*) and tense variation that Dionysius of Halicarnassus does not include in his account of the events. Thus, I argue, Livy introduces an innovation to the Lucretia myth by situating her within time in order to privilege her anticipation of the iterative practices of annalistic, and therefore republican, history. Her assault and suicide – events that happen in a daily, domestic sphere – are catalysts for the transfer out of unstructured mythic time to public, civic time. I conclude my paper by examining the temporal markers that Lucretia uses in her exemplary speech to Brutus and Collatinus. These markers present Lucretia as a co-historian with Livy: she models how the

writing and reading of Republican exemplarity works for a broader audience than her internal audience.

This paper is divided into three parts. In the first, I examine how Livy formulates Lucretia's everyday life in his narration of her domestic activities (such as weaving) and in the details that he includes in the events leading up to her assault. Her domestic activities in particular, when compared with the accounts of other women who appear in Book One of the *AUC*, are unique. The second part of the paper considers the innovations that Livy introduces to the prior Lucretia myth, especially as Dionysius reports it. Livy and Dionysius both report similar details in similar language, but Livy adds temporal markers to his syntax that are absent in Dionysius' account. I briefly show that these innovations are picked up by the subsequent imperial authors who treat Lucretia's myth, Valerius Maximus and the anonymous author of *Catalepton* 9. Finally, my third section considers Lucretia's own use of temporal markers in her speech, concluding that she builds temporality into her exhortation of political action against Rome's monarchy. She thereby asserts control over the shaping of her own narrative. Not only does Lucretia occupy a privileged temporal position, but her temporal position offers her a privileged narrative position: her actions (domestic and exemplary) signal the coming of republican historiography. Lucretia is, in Livy's narrative, the beginning of history.

Bibliography

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