

Livy's Civil Wars

Livy's accounts of the series of Roman civil wars that took place during the 1st century BCE are of course no longer extant. However, in the first decade of his *Ab Urbe Condita*, Livy provides narratives for two conflicts, which he describes as "similar to civil war." The first instance occurs in book 1, when the Romans fight the Albans in a "war most similar to a civil war" (*bellum...civili simillimum bello*, 1.23.1). Livy also compares a battle between the Romans and Latin tribes in book 8 to civil war (*civili maxime bello pugna similis*, 8.8.2). Beyond their designation as "similar to civil war," these episodes share many other striking parallels. First, both involve single combat between similar individuals (Lushkov 2015, 49-52). The first conflict is resolved, initially at least, by a battle between two sets of triplets, the Horatii and Curatii. During the second conflict, T. Manlius Torquatus engages in illicit single combat with the Latin soldier, Geminus Maecius, prior to the main battle. Second, both episodes include problematic displays of traditional martial prowess and the qualities *virtus* and *fortitudo*, which were fundamental to Roman identity. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, both episodes lead to internecine violence. Horatius, the lone survivor of the first battle, kills his sister upon his victorious return to Rome when she dares to mourn the death of her fiancé, who was one of Horatius' victims. Horatius' father must then make reparations for his son's actions. On the other hand, it is the victor, Torquatus, who suffers familial violence upon his return in the second episode. His father and consul, the elder T. Manlius Torquatus, must punish his son with death because his single combat was in direct violation of orders and threatened to jeopardize the *disciplina* of the Roman army. Although in both of these cases, Livy provides resolution through the actions of a single male authority figure, the negative ramifications are substantial.

In this paper, I demonstrate how Livy links these two episodes together with intratextual references and offers a commentary on the repercussions of civil war. Civil war, in these instances, problematizes traditional moral and ethical principles central to Roman identity. Further, such conflicts lead to additional bloodshed between family members. The effects of civil war are then extended to the larger community. Direct participants are not solely at fault for the corruption of morality and ethics in Livy's accounts. The internal audiences in both of these narratives are also unable to assess actions and moral characteristics properly, which suggests a fragmentation in communal cohesion and values. Livy highlights the faulty judgments of his internal audiences with authorial interjections, which contradict the audiences' interpretation of events (1.26.12, 8.8.1). Both narratives thus served as useful tools for contemplating and discussing the effects of civil war that would have been particularly relevant to Livy and his contemporary audiences.

Bibliography

Lushkov, Ayelet Haimson. *Magistracy and the Historiography of the Roman Republic: Politics in Prose*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 2015.