

The Roman historical consciousness goes back at least to the reign of the elder Tarquin, offering Fabius Pictor and his successors “the collective, and accepted, oral memory of the nation” on which to draw for their written narratives.⁵² This collective memory would not only have been maintained by a tradition of dramatic performances on historical themes; it would have also been preserved by monuments, statues, and toponyms (place names that commemorate a particular event or story).⁵³ The places mentioned by Livy in connection with a particular story would have been familiar to many of his readers as visible reminders of a particular tradition. The temple of *Fortuna Muliebris* (Women’s Fortune) was said to have been built to commemorate the glory of the Roman women who went to plead with Coriolanus not to attack Rome (2.40). The Quinctian Meadows were in the area where Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus was living in poverty when he was named dictator (3.26). The Gallic Pyres in the Roman forum marked the place where the Gauls burned their dead during the occupation of Rome (5.48). History pervaded the city, reminding the Romans of both the glorious and inglorious deeds of their ancestors. From these reminders the Romans were to “choose for yourself and for your state what to imitate and what to avoid.”⁵⁴

Cornell writes of “a living tradition that formed part of the consciousness of the entire community of Roman citizens” and “an ideological construct, designed to control, to justify and to inspire.”⁵⁵ Traditional stories were constantly reassessed, adapted, and reinterpreted to reflect current social and political needs. The process was probably not unlike the evolution of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (late eighth century BCE), which also derive from oral tradition. As Wiseman observes, “It might seem paradoxical to invoke a strong and vivid memory of a half-forgotten epoch; but we are not concerned here with the genuine memory of real events as they actually happened. . . . Some part of the events, mixed with much that never happened, becomes a story, to be told and retold, adjusted and elaborated, shaped by the narrator’s art.”⁵⁶

Livy’s Preface to His History

Greek and Roman historians traditionally set the tone and declared the scope and aims of the work they were undertaking in a variety of prefatory remarks.

52. Oakley 1997: 23.

53. On toponyms see Oakley 1997: 35–8, and Jaeger 1997.

54. Livy, Pref. 10.

55. Cornell, “The Formation of the Historical Tradition of Early Rome.” 1986: 83.

56. Wiseman 1994: 11.

In the case of Livy's history, such remarks form a separate and elegant historiographical essay that is nonetheless integral to the understanding of the ensuing narrative. With apparent diffidence, Livy initially engages the reader with this disarming statement: "Whether I am going to receive any return for the effort . . . I do not really know. Nor, if I did know, would I dare to say so" (Pref. 1). In a series of authorial statements, he declares his theme, "the history of the Roman people from the foundation of the city," acknowledging that this is "an immense undertaking" (Pref. 1 and 4). It will, however, be a "pleasure to have celebrated, to the best of my ability, the memory of the past achievements of the greatest people on earth" (Pref. 3). Nonetheless, despite the personal forms of address and authorial comments, Livy reveals very little about himself. In both the Preface and the narrative, he remains an elusive personality. As Kraus has observed, Livy's *persona* "sends thoroughly mixed signals," since he "adopts a position of nearly incredible modesty, a combination of magisterial assurance and polite uncertainty that will recur throughout the work."⁵⁷

Despite allusions to the greatness of Rome, the overall mood of the Preface is one of regret and pessimism that is alleviated only by the brief conclusion in which Livy prays for good omens and the blessing of success as he begins his great enterprise. He expects that the majority of his readers will find "less delight" in the earlier history of Rome because of their haste to get to the events of recent times "in which the might of a most powerful people has long been destroying itself" (Pref. 4). He himself deplores "the evils that our age has seen," the gradual collapse of discipline, the disintegration of morals, and the final collapse whereby "we have reached the present times in which we can tolerate neither our own vices nor their remedies" (Pref. 5 and 9). And so the reader is urged to direct close attention to "the kind of lives men lived; what their moral principles were; by what individuals and by what skills, both at home and in the field, our dominion was born and grew" (Pref. 9). The purpose of history is "to behold object lessons of every kind of model as though they were displayed on a conspicuous monument." Livy finally addresses the reader directly: "From this you should choose for yourself and for your state what to imitate and what to avoid as abominable in its origin or abominable in its outcome" (Pref. 10).⁵⁸ History is essentially

57. Kraus 1994: 2.

58. See the brief but incisive comments in the section "This Means You," in Kraus 1994: 13–4 with bibliography.

didactic, a series of moral lessons that constitute "the particularly healthy and productive element of history" (Pref. 10).⁵⁹

His moralizing zeal notwithstanding, Livy underscores the problematic nature of the evidence for the early history of Rome, as he declares the intent "neither to affirm nor refute the traditions that belong to the period before the foundation of the city or the anticipation of its foundation, for these are embellished with poetic tales rather than based on uncorrupted records" (Pref. 6). He grants to antiquity "the indulgence of making the beginnings of cities more impressive by mingling human affairs with the divine" but states that he himself will not regard such things "as of great importance" (Pref. 7 and 8).⁶⁰ In this way he distances himself, perhaps deliberately, from anything he may imply. As an example, Livy cites the Romans' claim that their father, and the father of their founder Romulus, was the god Mars. The subsequent conditional clause, however, challenges the reader to decide for himself whether to accept this claim: "If any people should be allowed to sanctify their origins and reckon their founders as gods, surely the military glory of the Roman people is such that . . . the nations of the world tolerate this claim with the same equanimity with which they tolerate our dominion" (Pref. 7). Well may the reader ask, "With what kind of 'equanimity' was Roman dominion tolerated?" Similarly nuanced remarks in the narrative raise further questions about Livy's intent.⁶¹

Although Livy professes the intent "neither to affirm nor refute" the traditions of early Rome (Pref. 6), direct and indirect authorial comments are interspersed throughout the narrative as a challenge to the reader to assess the evidence for himself. The subtle distinctions between "as I suppose" (*ut credo*), "there is sufficient agreement" (*satis constat*), "they say" (*ferunt*), or "the tradition is" (*tradunt*) can easily escape the notice of the unwary reader.⁶² These and similar editorializing comments, which enable Livy to moralize without being overly didactic, reveal not only his precision as a historian but also his genius as a storyteller.

59. See Miles 1995: 14–8, and Chaplin 2000: 1–31.

60. See Wiseman, "History, Poetry and *Annales*" 2002: 331–8, especially p. 337: "What we see in him [Livy] is not so much Augustan piety as a tolerant and patriotic form of Ciceronian skepticism."

61. See Appendix 2, pp. 421–4, on the question of Livy's attitude toward Augustus.

62. Forsythe (1999) makes a quantitative rather than a qualitative analysis of Livy's editorial comments; see pp. 22–38 for tabulation of these remarks. See also Miles 1995.

Livy as Storyteller and Historian in Books 1 through 5

History is very close to the poets. It is, in a way, a poem in prose that is written to tell a story, not to convince. . . .

—Quintilian, *Training in Oratory* 10.1.31

This comment by an ancient scholar underscores a major difference between the Roman concept of history and historiography and our own.⁶³ In observing that history is closer to the storytelling of poets than to the attempts of orators to persuade a judge or jury, Quintilian was reacting to Cicero's view that history is "the one task that is especially close to oratory" (*On the Laws* 1.5), a reaction that apparently applies to Livy's achievement. For, though Quintilian did not think that Livy's narrative was sufficiently clear to make a judgment about credibility (*fides*), he nevertheless remarked on the "creamy richness" (*lactea ubertas*) of Livy's style and "elegance of exposition."⁶⁴ Later Quintilian gives a more detailed analysis of the characteristics of Livy's work, putting Livy on a par with the fifth-century BCE Greek historian Herodotus:

Herodotus would not resent having Livy as his equal. For Livy not only has a wonderful charm and brilliant transparency in narrative, but he is eloquent beyond description in his set speeches; so well are all the spoken words adapted to the circumstances and the characters. As for the emotions, especially the more attractive ones, the least I can say is that no historian has presented them better.⁶⁵

Quintilian's observations enable us to approach Livy's *History of Rome* with a greater understanding of the expectations of the ancient reader, while also offsetting some of our modern preconceptions about "history." For, as Woodman has observed, "Though we today see poetry, oratory and historiography as three separate genres, the ancients saw them as three different species of the same genus—rhetoric. All three types of activity aimed to elaborate certain data in such a way as to affect or persuade an audience or readership."⁶⁶

63. On the standards of Roman historiography, see Woodman 1988: 70–116.

64. Quintilian, *Training in Oratory* 10.1.32: "Nor will Livy's creamy richness give clear enough information for a judge who looks, not for elegance of exposition, but for credibility [*fides*]."

65. Quintilian, *Training in Oratory* 10.1.101.

66. Woodman 1988: 100.

In the early books of his history, Livy selects, shapes, and elaborates a rich variety of traditional stories, creating a continuous narrative that mingles these stories with more factual information. Each book has its own structure and organization but, at the same time, is an integral part of the ongoing narrative.⁶⁷ Book 1 covers the period from the foundation of the city (traditionally c. 753 BCE) to the end of the monarchy (c. 510 BCE). In his account of the reign of Romulus, whom he portrays as a fierce warrior, Livy continually reminds the reader of the problematic nature of the received tradition by frequent reference to rumor or report (*fama*), a tale (*fabula*), tradition (*ferunt*, literally "they say"), and by occasional, but significant, authorial comments. After a brief outline of the story of Aeneas' arrival in Italy, Livy raises the question of whether Creusa or Lavinia was the mother of Ascanius, asking, "Who could confirm as a certainty something that is so ancient?" (1.3). At the beginning of the story of the birth of Romulus and Remus, Livy implies his skepticism by interpolating the authorial comment "as I suppose" in his attribution of Rome's origin to the fates. The twins' mother, a Vestal, merely "claimed that Mars was the father of her doubtful offspring" (1.4). These and other such authorial comments are integral parts of Livy's skills both as storyteller and historian; through such comments, he keeps the reader's interest and at the same time reminds us of the problems inherent in the historiography of early Rome.

In contrast to Romulus, Numa is characterized as a man who "was famed for his justice and his sense of obligation to the gods (*religio*)" (1.18). Insisting on historical accuracy, Livy systematically refutes a tradition that the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (mid-sixth century BCE) was Numa's teacher, first on chronological grounds and then by a series of questions that demonstrate the unlikelihood of such a connection. He concludes with the strong assertion that Numa "was trained not by foreign learning, but by the strict and severe teaching of the Sabines" (1.18). After relating the details of Numa's inauguration and the closing of the temple of Janus, Livy tells how Numa instilled the fear of the gods in his people by inventing the story that he had nocturnal meetings with the goddess Egeria, who advised him to establish rituals that had the gods' approval (1.19).

Numa was followed by the warlike Tullus Hostilius, in whose reign the ancient ritual of making a treaty was established (1.24). The ritual for declaring war was attributed to Tullus Hostilius' successor Ancus Marcius, a man whose disposition "was midway between that of Romulus and that of

67. The book divisions are Livy's, but the chapter or section divisions were made in the Renaissance.

Numa" (1.32–3). The story of the punishment of Mettius Fufetius by King Tullus Hostilius (1.28) is one of the most memorable object lessons that were promised in the Preface (10). Fufetius, an ally who had attempted to double-cross the Romans, was bound, spread-eagled, to two chariots; his body was then torn apart when the horses were whipped in different directions. To the doomed Fufetius, King Tullus declared, "As you divided your mind between the Fidenates and the Romans, so now you will give your body to be torn apart." The punishment is described as "a conspicuous lesson to all" and "an abominable spectacle" from which "everyone averted his eyes" (1.28).⁶⁸

Factual details, some of which can be corroborated by archaeology,⁶⁹ become a greater part of Livy's narrative as he recounts the reigns of the last three kings of Rome: Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius, and Tarquinius Superbus. Included in the later portions of this book are the expansion of the city, the establishing of the temple of Diana on the Aventine (1.44–5), the building of the Circus Maximus and the temple of Jupiter (1.35, 1.38, 1.55), and the construction of the Cloaca Maxima, the Great Drain (1.56). Book 1 ends with the dramatic story of the rape of Lucretia and the avenging of her death, which culminates in the overthrow of the monarchy and the selection of two consuls in place of a king.

Starting with Book 2, Livy presents the history of the republic year by year, prefacing the narrative for each year by noting the elected magistrates; the year's events are generally divided into domestic and foreign affairs. In the case of variants or discrepancies in the written sources, he displays caution and common sense. For example, on the question of whether the battle of Lake Regillus occurred in 499 or 496 BCE, he admits that the great antiquity of events and sources makes it impossible to discern which consuls followed which or what happened in each particular year (2.21).

After announcing the new theme of *libertas* (freedom or liberty), Livy traces events from 509 through 468 BCE, recounting particular stories as object lessons depicting the struggle to keep that freedom. Brutus, who had been instrumental in driving the Tarquins from Rome, became the first con-

68. On the concept of "beholding" history, see Pref. 10, and Feldherr 1998: 1–4. The image of the punishment of Fufetius is included by Virgil in his description of Aeneas' shield (*Aeneid* 8.642–5).

69. See Grandazzi 1997: 149–53, on recent excavations in the area at the foot of the Palatine, dating to the period after 550 BCE. Four or more large houses, probably belonging to the aristocracy, have been discovered built on a large earth platform. Also discovered, along the lower northeast slope of the Palatine, are the remains of a wall built of clay and timber on a stone foundation, dating between c. 730 and 720 BCE, which may well be the sacred boundary of the city (*pomerium*) attributed to Romulus by the ancient literary sources.

sul. His official position, however, obliged him to condemn his sons to death for their attempted betrayal of the new republic and also to witness their execution (2.5). Horatius Cocles defended the Tiber bridge against the Etruscans, finally plunging into the river and swimming to safety when the bridge was destroyed by his fellow Romans. On Horatius' exploit, Livy remarks that it was "a deed of daring that was destined to obtain more fame than credibility with posterity" (2.10). Spurius Cassius was killed for aiming at kingship, and Coriolanus defects from Rome and is only stopped from attacking his native city by his mother's pleas (2.39–41).

These tales of the early heroes and villains of the republic are set in the annalistic framework of the accounts of Rome's almost incessant warfare with her various neighbors and the major political events—most notably the beginning of the plebeian struggle for access to political office, the first secession of the plebs with the parable of the belly and the limbs, and the institution of the plebeian tribunate. It is in the context of this struggle that Livy fleshes out the figures of Appius Claudius, the consul of 495 BCE, and later Appius Claudius' son, who was consul in 471 BCE (both father and son are portrayed as the vehement opponents of the plebeians).⁷⁰ Several episodes in the conflict between patricians and plebeians are described in terms of the political struggles of the late republic, resulting in a number of apparent anachronisms. But, as Cornell has argued, this "modernizing process was for the most part the result of an honest attempt at historical explanation and the source of unconscious error. It was not, as some scholars have supposed, a dishonest literary device for filling gaps in the record and making the narrative more entertaining."⁷¹

The problem, of course, is to discern genuine historical fact from the later superstructure or embellishment, be it in the context of politics, economics, or warfare. For example, the Fabian family is prominent in accounts of warfare against the Veientes, with members of the family holding one of the two consulships every year from 485 to 479 BCE. Finally, as if they were a private army, the Fabii undertook the Veientine war at their own expense. However, after establishing a garrison by the river Cremera, the Fabii were ambushed and killed to one man because of their recklessness and overconfidence. Livy (2.50) reports that "306 men lost their lives; one alone remained, who was hardly more than a boy." The introductory *caveat* "there is sufficient agreement" suggests, however, that he was skeptical about at least this part of the Fabian tradition.⁷²

70. On the Claudii, see Appendix 1, pp. 406–11.

71. Cornell, "The Value of the Literary Tradition Concerning Archaic Rome." 2005: 60.

72. At the end of Book 8, Livy deplors the unreliability of family records, noting that he

Book 3 covers the years 467 to 446 BCE and has a greater focus on domestic politics, though warfare with Rome's neighbors continues. The central part of the book, and thus the pentad, deals with the institution of the decemvirate, the formulation of the Laws of the Twelve Tables whereby Roman law was first codified, the fall of the decemvirate, and the restoration of the consulship and plebeian tribunate (3.33–59). Two moralizing stories punctuate the narrative of political and military events. The first is that of Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, an impoverished noble who epitomizes the ideal of public service.⁷³ Working as a farmer outside Rome, Cincinnatus responded immediately when called by the senate to assume the dictatorship and rescue a Roman army that was besieged by the Aequi. As soon as he had defeated the enemy, Cincinnatus resigned from office and returned to his farm (3.26–9). The story of the decemvir Appius Claudius and his lust for the maiden Verginia is interwoven with the accounts of the first and second decemvirates. The plebeian Verginius chose to preserve the chastity of his unmarried daughter by killing her, rather than yield her to the libidinous decemvir. The people's outrage led to the fall of the decemvirate and the trial and death of Appius Claudius (3.44–58).

In both of these stories, it is hard to discern fact from the layers of fiction in Livy's depiction of the traditional stereotypes of the tyrannical decemvir Appius Claudius and the upright dictator Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus. This difficulty is also apparent in the actions attributed to Valerius and Horatius in the stories of the restoration of the consulship and the plebeian tribunate. Near the end of the book, the continuing discord between patricians and plebeians is the theme of a rousing speech by Titus Quinctius Capitolinus (brother of Cincinnatus), in which he severely reproaches the Roman people by pointing out that their discord only served to invite further attacks from their neighboring foes.

In Book 4, which covers the years from 446 through 406 BCE, there is less storytelling and consequently few extended characterizations of individual figures, as Livy focuses on the continued failure of the plebeians to gain high office. In relating the struggle to remove the ban on marriage between patricians and plebeians, Livy again demonstrates the eloquence of his set speeches, as Canuleius, a plebeian tribune, refutes the patrician case for retaining the ban (4.3–5). The institution of the military tribunate with con-

thinks "the records have been vitiated by funeral eulogies and lying inscriptions under portraits, with every family falsely appropriating victories and magistracies to itself" (8.40); see also Cicero, *Brutus* 62.

73. On the Quinctii, see Appendix 1, pp. 415–8.

sular power and the censorship are reported together with the renewal of the treaty with Ardea (4.7). When civil strife breaks out at Ardea, the Romans intervene and colonize Ardea (4.9–10). Later, Livy gives an extended account of the killing of Spurius Maelius, who established a grain dole and was thought to be aiming at kingship. The aged Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus was appointed dictator to deal with the situation, and Livy continues to portray the Quinctian brothers as upholders of aristocratic values (4.13–5). One of the prominent episodes in the wars during this period is the digression concerning the award of the spoils of honor (*spolia opima*) to Aulus Cornelius Cossus, who had killed the King of Veii (4.19–20). The book ends with Rome's acquisition of Anxur (later known as Terracina) and the beginning of the siege of the Etruscan city of Veii.

In Book 5 Livy creates an epic narrative with an abundance of stories about the Romans' capture of Veii and the Gauls' capture of Rome. The central figure of the book is Marcus Furius Camillus, whose involvement in the second of these two historic events has long been regarded as highly suspect. Much of the heroizing of Camillus is fictitious, a series of stories that developed over time to obscure the ignominy of Rome's capture by the Gauls. As a character he is unreal, a composite of various stereotypes:⁷⁴ the destined or fated leader at the time of his command at Veii; the triumphing general whom the people thought was committing sacrilege by using white horses to draw his triumphal chariot, seemingly making him the equal of Jupiter and the Sun (5.23); and also "a man who was most diligent in his attention to religious obligations" (5.50). When "fortune" granted him "an opportunity to show the valor that he had already displayed in war," he nobly refused the offer of the schoolmaster of Falerii to betray that city (5.26–7). Later, as Fate began her assault on Rome after the Romans had disregarded the gods' warnings of the Gauls' approach, Camillus, "Rome's only human help," was sent into exile (5.32) and so had no part in the Roman defeat at the Allia. After the Gauls had occupied most of Rome, "Fortune herself" brought a band of plundering Gauls to Ardea (5.43). And so Camillus, the destined leader, made a dramatic comeback. He was again appointed dictator and returned to Rome in the nick of time to drive out the Gauls.

Quintilian's observation of the "brilliant transparency" and unsurpassed portrayal of human emotions in Livy's narrative are exemplified by the following episodes of the Gallic invasion: the battle of the Allia, when men were drowned in the swirling waters of the Tiber, unable to swim or weakened by

74. Cornell 1995: 317: "the lifeless figure of Camillus, the most artificially contrived of all Rome's heroes."

the weight of their corselets and other armor; the eerie suspense in Rome as the Gauls approached the city but did not enter immediately; and the elderly senators who refused to take refuge on the Capitol, preferring to die in their own homes, wearing the insignia of the highest public offices they had held. The last scene is described through the eyes of the Gauls: "With a feeling akin to veneration, they saw beings seated in the vestibules—beings who . . . seemed most like gods in the majesty of their faces and gravity of expression" (5.41). The Romans besieged on the Capitol are described as being "more to be pitied than any other people who have been besieged because they were under siege, cut off from their fatherland, yet able to see all their possessions in the power of the enemy." It was "as if they had been placed there by fortune to view the spectacle of their country's demise" (5.42).

Near the end of Book 5, a magnificent speech is attributed to Camillus in which he eulogizes the city of Rome, her history, and her religious traditions as he advocates rebuilding the city rather than relocating to Veii. The pentad concludes with an omen confirming the decision to rebuild Rome and the beginning of the reconstruction, thus recalling one of the early stories of Book 1: the original foundation of Rome.

Note on the Text and Translation

My translation attempts to be literal rather than free. This approach aims to help the modern reader appreciate Livy as not only a superb literary artist but also as a historian whose achievement has all too often been underestimated in modern times.

In so far as is possible, original metaphors have been preserved in order to retain the effects intended by Livy. Care also has been taken to avoid the importation of new or false metaphors. On the other hand, particularly complex Latin sentences have been broken up into shorter and simpler sentences closer in style to conventional English. These practices help keep the translation exact in literal meaning while also conveying the vitality and flow of Livy's narrative.

Minimal background in Greco-Roman culture is assumed. The notes are intended both for general readers and for students with more specialized interests. Readers are encouraged to consult the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edition, revised 2003) and to examine other translations, while also taking note of the original Latin. To this end, key Latin words are given where appropriate.

My translation uses the 1974 Oxford Classical Text of Livy 1–5, edited by R. M. Ogilvie (referred to throughout the text as *OCT*), and reference is made in the notes to Ogilvie's 1965 commentary on the same books. For notes on historical and historiographical questions, the basic reference is Cornell's *The Beginnings of Rome* (1995).

Three appendices following the translation outline the careers and the genealogies of the major figures in the early republic, discuss Livy's attitude toward Augustus, and examine Roman religion in Livy's first pentad.

Acknowledgments

Davina McClain has been unstinting with her perceptive and constructive advice. I am most fortunate to have had her as a reader, and Julie Laskaris as a second reader. My editor, Rick Todhunter, provided continual encouragement and patient support. Working with the entire Hackett team has been a pleasure. Finally, my appreciation and gratitude go to Ernst Badian, Cynthia Damon, and Jerzy Linderski.

Cambridge, Massachusetts
April 2006