

Ethnic Prejudice and Violence in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*: The Gauls as a Case Study

In the famous Preface to his monumental *Ab Urbe Condita*, Livy sounds a strongly patriotic note, asserting that however his own historiographical efforts turn out, even to have taken consideration to the utmost of his ability of the history of the chief people on earth (*principis terrarum populi*) will be pleasing (*Praef.* 3). Much of Livy's surviving history is an account of the wars that Rome waged since its foundation, which were a chief factor in the growth of Roman political power throughout the Mediterranean world and beyond, with the ensuing result that the Roman people encountered a growing diversity of peoples. In this paper, I investigate how Livy, who presents himself as a Roman patriot at the outset of his work, treats one particular ethnic group who played a significant role in the Early Republic: the Gauls. In particular, I explore Livy's representation of the Gauls as a site for analyzing ethnic differences and prejudices in Livy's history and their relation to violence.

The Gauls first appear in the *Ab Urbe Condita* virtually in passing, as Livy reports for the year 397 BC that a number of the Etruscans refused to help relieve the siege then underway at Veii in part because an unseen/unknown people (*gens invisitata*) had settled in Etruria, and these new neighbors (*novi accolae*) were the Gauls (5.17.8). Nevertheless, this brief initial reference is both characteristic and ominous, as the newness and strangeness of the Gauls will emerge as one of the motifs associated with them, and, of course, by the end of Book 5 Rome will face its greatest challenge yet when it is sacked by the Gauls in 390. Numerous memorable conflicts with the Gauls ensue over the next five books, including during the climactic battle of Sentinum in 295 BC in the course of the Third Samnite War. There we are told that the consul Q. Fabius Maximus Rullianus deployed a strategy of delaying his soldier's attack because he knew that the

Gauls lacked physical endurance and that while at the onset of battle they would be more than men, at the end they would be less than women (10.28.2-4). In this instance we encounter ethnic prejudice intersecting with sexism in a context that will lead to death and political domination by Rome.

These two episodes essentially bookend the appearances of the Gauls in the early books of Livy and evince two different reactions to them: fear and contempt. While these responses seem to sit at opposite ends of a spectrum, they both can be precursors to or motivating factors for episodes of ethnic violence. And as Livy's history is predominately one that tells the story of how the political hegemony of the Roman people rests upon their prowess in war—in connection with which we should recall Livy's statement in his Preface that the glory of the Roman people is such that when they boast of Mars as their founder, the human races (*gentes humanae*) endure this claim with as much equanimity as they endure their rule (*imperium, Praef. 7*)—investigating the part that ethnically driven violence plays in Livy's depiction of Rome's wars and expansion will help to illuminate Livy's understanding of Rome and his role of historian of Rome.

While this topic could be explored in all that survives of Livy's massive work, in this paper I will concentrate on the depictions of the Gauls in Books 5-10. Furthermore, while Livy's own narrative descriptions are noteworthy (e.g. his discussion of the migrations of the Gauls into Italy at 5.33-35), I am particularly interested in how the various characters and peoples in his history describe the Gauls, especially in contexts that lead to violence (e.g. Camillus at 5.44).

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