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No Leg to Stand on: Menenius Agrippa's Fable in Book 2 of Livy's Ab urbe condita

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Menenius Agrippa's Fable in Book 2 of Livy's *Ab urbe condita*

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Note on Texts and Translations

All translations in this thesis are my own, unless otherwise noted. All quotations from Livy's *Ab urbe condita* come from the 1974 Oxford Classical Text *Titi Livi Ab Urbe Condita Libri I-V*, edited by Robert Ogilvie. All quotations from Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities* come from the the 1940 Loeb Classical Library series 357 *Roman Antiquities, Volume III: Books 5-6.48*, edited and translated by Earnest Cary and the 1943 Loeb Classical Library series 364 *Roman Antiquities, Volume IV: Books 6.49-7*, edited and translated by Earnest Cary. All quotations from Cassius Dio's *Roman History* come from the 1914 Loeb Classical Library series 32 *Roman History, Volume I: Books 1-11*, edited and translated by Earnest Cary and Herbert B. Foster. All quotations from Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus* come from the 1916 Loeb Classical Library series 80 *Lives, Volume IV: Alcibiades and Coriolanus. Lysander and Sulla*, edited and translated by Bernadotte Perrin.

Introduction: The First Plebeian Secession and Menenius Agrippa's Fable

In the preface to his monumental 142-book *Ab urbe condita* (*From the Founding of the City*), the historian Livy uses illness imagery to conceptualize his understanding of the course of Roman history. Arguing that the recent history of Rome has seen gradual and then accelerated moral decline that culminated in the several decades of civil war and societal collapse that he witnessed during his own lifetime,[1] Livy deems his contemporary moment as a time in which the state can endure neither its vices nor their remedies: *nec vitia nostra nec remedia pati possumus* (Liv. *praef*. 9-10).[2] Shortly afterwards, however, he champions the healing power of studying the past, by which one may draw examples of civically helpful behavior to emulate or harmful behavior to avoid: *Hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri* (praef.10).[3]

This sort of language of illness and remedy echoes the broader motif that Livy employs throughout his history: the imagery of the body politic, a cross-cultural metaphor whereby the state is compared to a human body, in which political harmony (*concordia*) corresponds to bodily health, and political unrest corresponds to illness or injury.[4] Sometimes the metaphor is abstracted, as in the preface, and sometimes it is symbolically reified by characters within narrative itself; scholars have argued, for example, that the sexual violence suffered by Lucretia

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[1] Historians generally consider the first pentad to have been written c. 27 BCE, at the cusp of Republic and Empire. There is, however, some controversy over the exact dating, with some scholars putting the date of composition earlier than this, but 27 BCE remains the most commonly accepted date. See Luce 1965 and Burton 2000 for overviews of the debate and perspectives that challenge the conventional dating.
[2] "We are able to endure neither our vices nor our remedies."
[3] "This is especially salubrious and beneficial in the study of history, for you to consider lessons of every example, placed as if on a clear monument."
[4] For general overviews of the body politic topos, both in a Roman context and elsewhere, see especially Hale 1968, Lloyd 2003, and Walters 2020.

and Verginia in Books 1 and 3, respectively, analogizes the violence and unrest suffered by the state that those episodes involve.[5] Broader uses of the body-politic metaphor were ubiquitous in ancient literature. Comparisons between a human body and the political state can be found in Cicero's writings and speeches, in Sallust's historical monographs, and Lucan's historical epic poem *Bellum Civile*.[6] The Apostle Paul applies a similar analogy in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, where he compares the spiritual unity of the Christian Church in Corinth to the parts of a human body working together (1 Cor. 12.14-26).[7] Language analogizing the state to a body or, more commonly, a soul can be found in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*.[8] Perhaps the most memorable and explicit manifestation of the body politic metaphor in Livy is the senator Menenius Agrippa's speech to the plebeians in Book 2. In this speech, delivered in the context of the debt crisis and the first *secessio plebis* (2.23-33), Agrippa compares the cooperation of the patricians and plebeians to the proper function of the different parts of the human body. This thesis explores Agrippa's use of this analogy, especially in connection to the context of Book 2, and the ways that Livy's presentation of the history surrounding the fable complicates common scholarly interpretations of Agrippa's speech.

Livy situates the first plebeian secession—traditionally dated to 494 BCE, shortly after the abolition of the monarchy and the foundation of the Republic—and Menenius' speech within a larger controversy over the issue of debt reform. The historian introduces the problem of *nexum* (the practice of debt bondage) through the character of a veteran soldier; following the conclusion of the Latin War (2.22), and with another war against the Volscians imminent

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[5] Cf. Joplin 1990 and Joshel 1992.
[6] For a detailed examination of the body-politic in Ciceronian literature, cf. Walters 2020; in Sallustian literature, cf. Walters 2019; in Lucan, cf. Mebane 2016.
[7] Cf. Hale 1968.
[8] Mebane 2017, 17.

(2.23.1), military veterans from the plebeian class began to complain about the exorbitant debts they had accrued on their properties while they were away being mobilized for the war effort, and the subsequent severe abuse they suffered at the hands of creditors due to their inability to repay the debts (2.23.1-8). In a foreshadowing of Menenius Agrippa's eventual comparison of the state to a body, an elderly, emaciated veteran enters the forum, his body bearing visible signs of mistreatment from his creditors: *inde ostentare tergum foedum recentibus vestigiis verberum* (2.23.7).[9] His physical testimony causes an uproar among the citizenry, many of whom have experienced similar abuse from their money-lenders. The plebeians congregate in the forum and demand that the senators take action, and soon the whole city begins to descend into chaos. The senate convenes for an emergency meeting, but the senators and consuls themselves are divided over the best course of action; the hot-headed consul Appius Claudius advocates for settling the matter by force, while his moderate colleague Publius Servilius argues for a more lenient response (2.23.14-15).

A sudden threat of attack from the Volscian army tables the debate (2.24.1). Servilius addresses the plebeians and promises that, after the war is concluded, the debts will be canceled, and the plebeians agree to enlist. The ensuing war with the Volscians, followed closely afterwards by one with the Sabines and Auruncans, occupies the next three sections (2.24-26). Upon the war's conclusion, Servilius is forced to renege on his promise, facing unanimous opposition from the other senators, led by Appius Claudius; Servilius' failure to keep his promise earns him the opprobrium of both his colleagues and the plebeians (2.27.13). The following year, Appius Claudius and Servilius leave office, and two more consuls are elected (2.28.1). The

[9] "Then he showed his back, scourged with the recent marks of a whip."

plebeian assemblies, now distrustful of the senate, begin holding meetings at night, in separate locations on the Aventine and Esquiline hills. The senators consider this a dangerous and untenable situation, as the city and its assemblies are split into different parts: *nunc in mille curias contionesque dispersam et dissipatam esse rem publicam* (2.28.3).[10] Livy, in a rare revelation of his own authorial opinion, agrees: *eam rem consules rati, ut erat, perniciosam ad patres deferunt* (2.28.2).[11] The senators decide to call for another levy, thinking the plebeians were causing trouble due to a lack of military activity; when the consuls address the plebeians, however, the plebeians refuse to enlist. The consuls return to the senate, and the younger senators, swarming the consuls, verbally accost them and demand their resignation (2.28.9).

The consuls return to the plebeians and attempt to arrest those who refused to enlist, but the plebeians push the lictor away. The assembly very nearly attacks the senators, but the consuls defuse the situation, and the confrontation does not become physical (2.29.1-4). The senate convenes yet again, but the meeting devolves into a shouting match. After the consuls censure the senators for the lack of decorum, another debate is held, but they are still unable to agree on how to address the crisis. Appius Claudius, now just a senator and no longer consul, but still exercising an outsized influence on Roman politics, suggests appointing a dictator to resolve the problem with force, including executing anybody who manhandles a lictor (2.29.9-12). Many senators consider this solution too extreme, and the historian, once again, voices his own agreement: *multis, ut erat, horrida et atrox videbatur Appi sententia* (2.30.1).[12] Appius, however, does prevail in appointing a dictator, which Livy blames on the intense partisanship at play in the

[10] "Now the state is split and divided into a thousand senates and assemblies."
[11] "The consuls considered this a dangerous situation, as it was, and reported it to the senators."
[12] "To many, Appius' opinion seemed harsh and cruel, as it was."

senate that interferes with the legislative process: *sed factione respectuque rerum privatarum, quae semper offecere officientque publicis consiliis, Appius vicit* (2.30.2)[13]. With the city once again under threat of attack from the Aequi and Volscians, Manius Valerius, an experienced and moderate politician, is named dictator, and this time the plebeians enlist. The war occupies the rest of section 30 and most of 31.

After a Roman victory in this war, the narrative once again returns to the debt issue (2.31.7). Valerius, still dictator, attempts to introduce a motion to the senate to address the debt problem, but it is blocked, and, realizing he cannot solve the problem as dictator, Valerius resigns (2.31.9-11). The senate, fearful once again that the absence of external conflict would prompt the inactive plebeians to create more domestic unrest, attempts to enlist the plebeians again, under the pretext of yet another attack from the Aequi (2.32.1). This is the final straw for the plebeians; not only do they refuse to enlist, they also decide to emigrate *en masse* from the city and camp on the nearby Mons Sacer, a few miles outside of Rome, starting the first plebeian secession. As the plebeians comprised the majority of the city's population and workforce, as well as its military power, their absence brings the city to a halt and leaves it vulnerable to external attacks. The plebeians that remain in the city fear retaliatory action from the patricians, and the patricians, likewise, fear violence from the plebeians: *pavor ingens in urbe, metuque mutuo suspensa erant omnia. Timere relicta ab suis plebis violentiam patrum; timere patres residem in urbe plebem, incerti manere eam an abire mallent* (2.32.5-6).[14] Desperate to resolve the situation, the senate sends a representative, Menenius Agrippa—who had served as consul a

[13] "But because of factionalism and regard for personal interests, which always hinder and will continue to hinder public affairs, Appius won"
[14] "There was great anxiety in the city, and from the mutual fear all things were suspended. The remaining plebeians, abandoned by their own, feared the patricians; the patricians feared the plebeians left in the city, uncertain whether they wanted them to stay or leave."

decade earlier (2.16.7), and whom Livy suggests was of plebeian origin himself (2.32.8)—to the Mons Sacer to speak with the plebeians. Upon his arrival there, the elderly, experienced senator, who was well-known for his rhetorical skill, simply tells the plebeians the Fable of the Belly. The fable bears repeating in full:

> is intromissus in castra prisco illo dicendi et horrido modo nihil aliud quam hoc narrasse fertur: tempore quo in homine non ut nunc omnia in unum consentiant, sed singulis membris suum cuique consilium, suus sermo fuerit, indignatas reliquas partes sua cura, suo labore ac ministerio ventri omnia quaeri, ventrem in medio quietum nihil aliud quam datis voluptatibus frui; conspirasse inde ne manus ad os cibum ferrent, nec os acciperet datum, nec dentes quae acciperent conficerent. Hac ira, dum ventrem fame domare vellent, ipsa una membra totumque corpus ad extremam tabem venisse. Inde apparuisse ventris quoque haud segne ministerium esse, nec magis ali quam alere eum, reddentem in omnes corporis partes hunc quo vivimus vigemusque, divisum pariter in venas maturum confecto cibo sanguinem. Comparando hinc quam intestina corporis seditio similis esset irae plebis in patres, flexisse mentes hominum (2.32.8-12).
>
> He, after being admitted into their camp, is said to have told them, in that old-fashioned and unpolished manner of speaking, nothing other than this story: in a time in which all the parts in the human body were not, as now, united, but each individual part had its own intention and its own speech, the rest of the parts were angry that all the products of their care, labor, and service were demanded by the stomach, and the inactive stomach did nothing else but enjoy the pleasures given to it. So, they entered into a conspiracy: the hands would not bring food to the mouth, nor would the mouth accept what was given to it, nor would the teeth chew what they accepted. Although they wanted the stomach to be subdued by its hunger, because of their anger, each body part, and the entire body, was afflicted with the utmost decay. Then it became clear that the stomach's duty was hardly useless either, and it was not nourished any more than it provided nourishment. It returns to the other parts of the body that blood which keeps us alive and healthy, divided equally into the veins and matured by the consumption of food. By showing in this way how the internal sedition of the body was similar to the anger of the plebeians against the patricians, he changed the people's minds.

After listening to this analogy, the plebeians return to the city. Upon their return, the senate agrees to create a political office for the plebeians to occupy, the tribune of the plebs, to protect their interests and serve as a check on senatorial power (2.33.1). Curiously, the debt problem,

which caused the secession in the first place, is never resolved or even mentioned again in Livy's account of the story.

With their return to the city and the establishment of the tribunate, the first *secessio plebis* came to a close. It was, however, simply the end of the beginning; the Struggle of the Orders, the socioeconomic and political conflict between the plebeian and patrician classes of which the first secession was the opening chapter, would continue for roughly two more centuries of republican history. As the name implies, the first secession would be followed by a second less than fifty years later, and then three more in the decades and centuries after that. Menenius Agrippa himself would not live much longer; he died the year after the first secession ended, in 493 BCE. Livy honors him with a very rare obituary, deeming him a man respected by both patricians and plebeians[15] and instrumental to the restoration of peace.[16] As he evidently did not possess enough wealth to pay for his own funeral, members of the plebeian class contributed to the cost as a show of their gratitude (2.33.10-11).

It should be noted from the outset that the historicity of the entire narrative of the debt problem, plebeian secession, and Menenius Agrippa's fable is debated, as is most of the content of Livy's early books. The historian, writing some five centuries after the events in question, is aware of the doubts surrounding Rome's distant past; in Book 1, he asks *quis enim rem tam veterem pro certo adfirmet?*[17] While he poses the question specifically with regard to the mythological origins of Rome, it is equally applicable to much of his portrayal of its early history. As Tim Cornell notes, "to what extent the First Secession is an authentic historical event

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[15] *in vita pariter patribus ac plebi carus*: "In life, equally beloved by the patricians and the plebeians" (2.33.10).
[16] *interpreti arbitroque concordiae civium*: "the mediator and arbiter of *concordia* among the citizens" (2.33.11).
[17] "Who could assert such an ancient matter for certain?" (1.3.2). For more on Livy's caution with respect to events of the distant past, cf. Forsythe 1999 pp. 40-51 (Chapter 2 "Livy's Caution toward the Historical Traditions of Early Rome").

is difficult to say," observing that stories like these involve "a mixture of legend and romance."[18] As such, many modern historians do not consider the narrative historically reliable. As R.T. Ridley bluntly asserts, "in favour of the historicity of [the secession] little can be offered."[19] Alan Griffiths, likewise, points out a tendency for the early events of the Republic to mirror simultaneous events in Greek history; for example, the traditional date of the foundation of the Republic (509 BCE) closely corresponds to Cleisthenes' introduction of democracy to Athens in 508 BCE.[20] There is also a noticeable tendency for late-republican historians to anachronistically retroject events from the more recent and better-documented past onto the earlier, more fragmentary history of Rome as a way of filling in gaps in the annalistic record.[21] Dagmar Gutberlet argues that the agrarian laws that figure so prominently throughout the rest of Book 2 of *AUC*, for example, might be partially modelled after the land redistribution projects undertaken by the Gracchi brothers and other populist politicians centuries later in the late second century BCE.[22]

Gary Forsythe, furthermore, remarks that the Roman historians of the late Republic "tended to think that their political and social institutions had been brought into being fully formed by one of the early kings or by a landmark statute of the early republic," when, in reality, complex institutions such as the tribunate likely developed and evolved over longer periods of time.[23] As a result of this, Forsythe concludes, "we are…justified in suspecting the accuracy of the ancient view of the history of the plebeian tribunate."[24] Livy himself admits some uncertainty

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[18] Cornell 1995, 258.
[19] Ridley 1968, 536.
[20] Griffiths 2013, 85.
[21] Cornell 1995, 267.
[22] Gutberlet 1985, pp. 29-30 and *passim*.
[23] Forsythe 1994, 265.
[24] Ibid.

regarding the events of the first secession, noting that his source material is not completely unanimous regarding even the location to which the plebeians seceded; most of his sources agree that the plebeians camped out on the Mons Sacer, but one author, Calpurnius Piso, an annalistic historian who lived approximately a century before Livy, believes it was the Aventine Hill: *Trans Anienem amnem est, tria ab urbe milia passuum. Ea frequentior fama est quam cuius Piso auctor est, in Aventinum secessionem factam esse*.[25] Livy, moreover, when describing the establishment of the tribunate, acknowledges that there are variant accounts of the precise identities and number of the first tribunes: *In his Sicinium fuisse, seditionis auctorem: de duobus, qui fuerint minus convenit. Sunt qui duos tantum in Sacro monte creatos tribunos esse dicant, ibique sacratam legem latam*.[26] Even the story of Menenius Agrippa's visit to the Mons Sacer is shrouded in some mystery and distance; Livy introduces it with the impersonal verb *fertur*, which serves to reinforce that the story is part of his source tradition, but also potentially questions its authenticity; Livy tends to use impersonal verbs like *fertur*, *traditur*, *dicunt*, *vel sim*. to lend "a skeptical coloring" to the events he inherits.[27] Nevertheless, despite the difficulties in reconstructing the exact events of Roman history of the sixth century BCE, we need not be completely agnostic either. The multiplicity of laws surrounding debt in the Twelve Tables, which were codified roughly half a century after the first secession, suggests that the debt

[25] "[The Mons Sacer] is across the Aniene river, three miles from the city. This is the more common account than the one the writer [Calpurnius] Piso gives, that the secession was made on the Aventine Hill" (2.32.3).
[26] "It is agreed that Sicinius, the instigator of the secession, was among these [i.e. tribunes]. There is less agreement regarding who the other two were. Some sources say only two tribunes were created on the Mons Sacer, and there the *lex sacrata* was passed" (2.33.2-3).
[27] Steele 1904, 21.

problems that caused the secession may be a historical reality, even if the precise details of the story are later embellishments.[28]

For our purpose, however, the historicity is less important than the way Livy is framing and presenting the material from his sources, even if he did not invent the basic content or course of the narrative. The fable did not originate with Livy, nor is he the only ancient author to leverage it. When exactly the story of the fable and secession entered the Roman historiographical tradition is subject to debate. Some scholars, like Wilhelm Nestle, argue that the fable was introduced to the Roman annalistic corpus as late as the early first century BCE, by the historian Aelius Tubero.[29] Robert Ogilvie claims it was earlier than this, and locates its introduction into Roman historiography as early as the time of the historian Fabius Pictor in the late third century BCE.[30] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Greek historian who lived more or less contemporaneously to Livy[31] claims the story was prevalent in all his source material: ὁ λόγος καὶ φέρεται ἐν ἁπάσαις ταῖς ἀρχαίαις ἱστορίαις (Dion. Hal. 6.83.2).[32] It is clear, therefore, that despite the dubious historicity, the story was prevalent in most of the source material Livy had at his disposal. Our strongest evidence for the ubiquity of the story is the fact that Dionysius and Livy both use it, even though they are likely not dependent on each other.[33] Michael Hillgruber argues that the considerable contrasts in presentation between Livy's and Dionysius' accounts of

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[28] Cornell 1995, 267. For a view that affirms the authenticity of the first secession in 494 BCE as a historical event, cf. Ogilvie 1965, pp. 309-312. For more discussion of the institution of *nexum* and the economic landscape of the early Roman Republic, cf. Bernard 2016.
[29] Nestle 1927, 24 and *passim*.
[30] Ogilvie 1965, 312-313.
[31] Dionysius states in the preface to *Roman Antiquities* that he is writing in the consulship of Claudius Nero and Calpurnius Piso, which would date the preface to the year 7 BCE (Dion. Hal. 1.3.6). He also reveals that he arrived in Rome and began his lifelong study of history at the end of the civil war and rise of Augustus, in the year 30 BCE (1.7.2), just three years before Livy is traditionally said to have begun writing *Ab urbe condita*. See p. 1 n. 1 for brief discussion on the date of composition for Livy's history.
[32] "The account is also included in all the ancient histories."
[33] Hillgruber 1996, 45.

the first secession rules out the possibility of direct dependence on each other, even though they were contemporaries, and the network of historians writing in Rome in the 20s BCE must have been comparatively small. Nevertheless, Hillgruber claims that the similarities in basic subject matter that the two historians share suggests they were using the same annalistic sources, or at least very similar sources.[34] Stephen Oakley likewise agrees that Livy and Dionysius shared the same sources.[35] Whenever the fable entered the Roman historiographical tradition, it enjoyed widespread, enduring use long before Livy's time. The basic story of the parts of a body rebelling against the stomach (without an explicitly sociopolitical application) exists in the fables of Aesop.[36] There is evidence that the analogy goes even further back than this, and has origins in Egyptian folklore.[37]

Despite, or perhaps because of its dubious historicity and its long literary tradition, Menenius Agrippa's speech has provoked considerable discussion among scholars of Livy. Scholars bring a multiplicity of perspectives to Agrippa's analogy, but some general patterns can be identified. Although their interpretive approach and precise conclusions differ, many commentators subscribe to the view that Agrippa's fable is paradigmatic of Livy's own perception about the proper functioning of a harmonious, healthy republic. Bernard Mineo's interpretation of the fable and its role in Livy's history is possibly the most visible manifestation of this approach; he opens his chapter on Livy's political philosophy by claiming, "Livian political philosophy and its potential relationship with the political ideology accompanying the establishment of the principate may only be understood within an organicistic (sic) framework,"

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[34] Ibid., 46.
[35] Oakley 2010, 118
[36] de Quiroga 2007, 248.
[37] Adrados 1999, 329.

and that Menenius Agrippa's fable serves as a "veritable template" for this framework.[38] The fable, Mineo argues, with its stark division between the limbs and the stomach, represents the duality present between the masses and leaders in Livy's body politic, a division with antecedents in Platonic philosophy and its delineation of political functions, especially in Plato's *Republic*.[39] The fable reifies "the harmonious functioning of a nation" and the "subordination of individual interests to the general interest" for the well-being of the republic.[40] Livy's civic dualism, furthermore, reveals "what should…be the general framework, the political and social architecture likely to guarantee the success of Rome as well as its durability."[41] Leaders will embody virtues such as *temperantia*, *continentia*, *clementia*, and *moderatio*; conversely, the masses will respect such virtues as obedience, *modestia*, and submission to senatorial authority.[42]

Daniel Kapust, subscribing to a view similar to Mineo's, concludes that Menenius Agrippa's fable symbolizes the interdependence of the state, and that "when the seceded plebs saw themselves, in a sense, as part of an interdependent organism, they relented" and *concordia* was restored.[43] Kapust reads the fable as an act of misapprehension and misunderstanding; *seditio* is caused by "the perceived non-performance of duties," and when this misperception is corrected, the crisis is resolved.[44] Consequently, in Kapust's analysis, Livy's republic rests on a spirit of goodwill and mutual benevolence, a situation that Kapust contrasts with Sallust, who views social cohesion as rooted in a "collective fear" of common external threats (*metus hostilis*).[45] Kapust recognizes that Livy's republic always harbors "great potential conflict

[38] Mineo 2015, 125.
[39] Ibid., 128-129.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 131.
[42] Ibid., 131-132.
[43] Kapust 2011, 108-109.
[44] Ibid. 109.
[45] Ibid.

between many and few," but nonetheless such conflict was a productive and generative source of "sustainable republic politics."[46] Kapust, therefore, like Mineo, reads the fable as representative of Livy's understanding of political harmony, and indicative of the sort of virtuous and educative behaviors he prizes in his *exempla*. Robert Brown agrees with this assessment, stating that "the whole episode"—that is, Menenius Agrippa's fable and his death the following year—"is an important illustration of Livy's belief in the power of goodwill and compromise to effect political harmony," thereby drawing a direct correlation between the moral of Agrippa's story and Livy's own ideology as a historian.[47]

Andrew Feldherr, in a comparable vein to Mineo, Kapust, and Brown, argues that the story, as well as other stories in Book 2 of *Ab urbe condita*, such as Lucius Junius Brutus' execution of his sons and the Coriolanus story, shows the "subordination of the smaller unit in the interests of the larger state" and "reinforce[s] both the interdependence and parallelism between family, state, and body."[48] In particular, the fable "encourage[s] a perception of the state not just as the protector of the family or body but *as* a family or body" (emphasis in original), a comparison that "provides a constant resource for the generation of collective loyalty."[49] Feldherr even goes so far as to say that the fable, beyond indicating an inherent connection between family, body, and state, "suggests that the fable is a family or a body in macrocosm."[50] Responding to Bruce Lincoln's comments on the fable (about which I offer a summary shortly), Feldherr claims that the situation the parable analogizes is based "less on hierarchy" than on cohesion, and "it is not so much the relative order of the bodily parts as simply the acceptance

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[46] Ibid. 109-110.
[47] Brown 1995, 316.
[48] Feldherr 1997, 120
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid. 121.

that there is an inseparable organic relationship binding the components of the *patria* together that provides the key to the preservation of the state."[51] Feldherr, consequently, like Mineo and Kapust, sees the fable as emblematic of Livy's own interpretation and presentation of Roman history, and also extends the interpretation to the metaphor of family relations. As I show in this thesis, however, the fable fails to analogize the creation of civic harmony, as Livy presents it.

Paula López Cruz takes a slightly different view than Feldherr, Kapust, and Mineo, but still argues that the fable represents Livy's ideal vision of the republic. By comparing Livy's and Dionysius of Halicarnassus' accounts of the fable, she notices that Livy's version is considerably shorter than that of Dionysius, and that, unlike Dionysius, Livy entirely neglects to mention the fable in the context of the debt problem that caused the secession in the first place.[52] Livy's version, furthermore, is much more compressed, and only includes the analogy, while Dionysius' account includes several long-winded speeches along with the fable. The reason for this, Cruz concludes, lies in Livy's exemplary model of historical analysis, where Livy uses *exempla*, like Menenius Agrippa, not so much to chronicle the history of social movements and political institutions, but rather to recall a glorified past according to the interests of elite Romans.[53] It is for this reason that Livy, by only mentioning the fable, and the vital role of the stomach, foregrounds the role of the patrician class in Roman society.[54] This presentation of the fable, Cruz asserts, validates the leading role of the patricians, both for the plebeians in his narrative, and also for his readership.[55] In Cruz's reading, therefore, the fable operates in a metaliterary

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Cruz 2011, 120.
[53] Ibid., 122. See chapter 2 of this thesis for a more thorough investigation of the differences between Livy's and Dionysius' presentation of the episode.
[54] Ibid., 123.
[55] Ibid., 127.

way; the emphasis is less on using Agrippa's tale to exemplify how a state may function harmoniously, and more on highlighting the vital role of the patrician class in Rome. As a result of this, Cruz's argument makes an attempt to connect the analogy more explicitly to Livy's literary tendencies, but, like Mineo, Feldherr, and Kapust, she still ultimately reads it as analogizing his view of how the state should function.

Bruce Lincoln advances a somewhat similar argument to Cruz, and attempts to locate the exact effect of Agrippa's fable on the rest of Livy's history beyond merely communicating a basic, unoriginal moral about civic harmony. He notes that in ancient historiography and literature more broadly, the patrician class and senate were traditionally associated with the head, not the stomach, because the stomach was identified with greed and excess, in line with the other limbs' thinking in the fable itself.[56] Menenius Agrippa, however, challenges this perception by assigning to the stomach a critical (and anatomically accurate) role in the healthy function of the body, thus "reassert[ing] patrician primacy on novel grounds, arguing now that the nurturance of the belly must of necessity precede that of any other organ."[57] Through these "dramatic imagery reversals," Lincoln argues, "the patricians reconstituted Roman society and, as the cost of this concession, regained their position as the dominant party within the social aggregate."[58] While this claim correctly recognizes, in a way that most other writers do not, the reorganization of Roman society after the secession, it should nevertheless be met with skepticism, for reasons I outline in more detail in this thesis.

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[56] Lincoln 1992, 147. See pp. 55-56 of this thesis for further discussion of the rhetorical purpose of Agrippa's speech.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 148.

Other scholars analyzing the fable are less inclined to assign to it such a central role in framing Livy's political philosophy, and identify its function in Livy's narrative differently. Joy Connolly, for example, writes that while "it is true that in stories like that of Livy's Menenius Agrippa" we see a vision of an ideal state, "we should not make the mistake of identifying Menenius' parable with Livy's vision, and still less with Roman self-understanding," pointing to Cicero's writings that recognize "a society with antagonism built into it."[59] Ann Vasaly compares Menenius Agrippa's parable with the speeches delivered by Horatius and Valerius during the second plebeian secession. She observes that Livy favorably portrays all of them as "admirable characters attempting to restore concord in the midst of crisis," and all of them, Vasaly argues, stress the necessity of hierarchy in the state where the many fulfill a subordinate role in service of the few.[60] Both stories, Vasaly writes, "envision plebeian liberty as a freedom from abuse and promote a clear hierarchy in which the function of the man is to obey, that of the few to command."[61] Nevertheless, she argues that while these accounts are impactful and memorable, they are not particularly illustrative of Livy's conception of history, as their ubiquity in ancient literature would mean the historian would be remiss to omit either story from his narrative; as such, the morals of the stories are not "distinctly Livian."[62] Vasaly, while drawing attention to the limitations of Menenius Agrippa's parable, does not say much more about it and its role in Livy's history, beyond it conveying "a traditional idea of *libertas*" that exists outside of Livy's text.[63]

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[59] Connolly 2009, 63.
[60] Vasaly 2015, 98.
[61] Ibid., 120.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.,119.

Other authors, like Martin Breaugh, deem Agrippa's fable as "a political mission" that incorporates the plebeian class as an element of the body politic.[64] Specifically, and in stark contrast with the arguments that Cruz and Lincoln offer, Menenius Agrippa's fable "commits an error that is fatal to the patriciate," because "by recounting the fable of the belly and the parts, he assumes that the plebs are capable of understanding and speaking, thereby opening a gap in the domination of the few over the many."[65] Curiously, Breaugh maintains that "Livy fails to grasp the deeper meaning of Agrippa's gesture," which is "heavily charged with symbolism" because it allows the plebeians to gain a voice in the body politic and also affirms their humanity.[66] Menenius Agrippa, in Breaugh's reading, was "the one responsible for having created a space for egalitarian exchange," because he invited the plebeians to consider their own role in the machinery of the state.[67] Breaugh thus connects Menenius Agrippa's story not just to the plebeian secession (something many scholars fail to do) but to the Conflict of the Orders more broadly. Nonetheless, his attitude towards Livy's own alleged misinterpretation of the fable is unhelpful (not to mention unsubstantiated), and fails to do justice to the sophisticated ways the historian uses the story in his history.

Another author who locates Menenius Agrippa's fable within the context of the rest of Livy's history is Jane Chaplin. Her piece is more sensitive than many others to the need for reading the story along with the rest of the narrative, as a result of which her analysis of the speech does not encounter the pitfall of interpreting the speech in an exclusively abstract, idealized manner. She explicitly cautions against the "tendency to extract episodes" like

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[64] Breaugh 2007, 11.
[65] Ibid., 94.
[66] Ibid., 93.
[67] Ibid., 94.

Menenius Agrippa's story "from their setting" and, furthermore, notes the tendency for previous scholarship to investigate the event "in isolation from the surrounding context," such as the Coriolanus narrative.[68] Specifically, she observes several thematic and narratological parallels between the Menenius Agrippa and Coriolanus episodes, such as the insertion of Menenius Agrippa's death during the Coriolanus story,[69] and the recurring motif of food that appears in both narratives.[70] She uses these observations to conclude that "Livy saw Roman history as a coherent whole," and was offering his own interpretive lens of historical events through the thematic continuities between them.[71] This sensitivity to how episodes in Livy interact with the wider background of which they are part, and with each other, allows Chaplin to draw a more comprehensive conclusion about the relevance of the fable to Livy's history, beyond Livy merely marshaling the quite common historical and rhetorical topos of the body politic in order to participate in an abstracted discussion about the contours of *concordia* in the state. She also discusses the role of the tribunate in more detail than most other commentators do; Coriolanus' hostility to tribunician power, the office being, as it was, a "product of the secession," is another of the structural similarities her piece explores.[72] Her point about the thematic connection between the Coriolanus story and the fable is one I build upon later in this thesis as I explore the ways Livy complicates the applicability of the fable.

This thesis aims to add further nuance to the complexities of the fable and its role in the story. We need not categorically refute the arguments of Feldherr, Mineo, Kapust, and the others regarding the traditional interpretation of the fable. We can speculate about Livy's intentions and

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[68] Chaplin 2003, 196.
[69] Ibid., 202.
[70] Ibid., 205.
[71] Ibid., 211.
[72] Ibid., 205.

beliefs, but we cannot read his mind. It is entirely possible that he subscribed to the sort of civic behavior the fable idealizes, where the different parts of the state cooperate and compromise for the sake of the common good; it is certainly a pleasant enough sentiment. Nevertheless, Vasaly and Chaplin draw our attention to the complexities of the story and ways it is not behaving straightforwardly. I argue that the effect of the fable on the narrative is more complicated and more ambiguous than merely symbolizing the cooperation of the different classes in the Republic. While, as Vasaly claims, the moral of the story by itself is not "distinctly Livian," the way the fable interacts with the rest of the narrative, and the consequences it has on how we interpret Menenius Agrippa's character, *can* be read within broader stylistic and thematic techniques that are, in fact, particular to Titus Livius and his approach to history. To argue this, in the next chapter I isolate Livy's unique presentation of the fable by contrasting his version with the corresponding versions of other historians. Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities* will be the main point of comparison, but I also examine Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus* and Cassius Dio's *Roman History*. In this chapter, I argue that Livy, while largely agreeing with these other authors on the basic course of events before and after the secession, organizes his account in such a way that, consistent with his historical approach, foregrounds Menenius Agrippa and the analogy as moral *exempla*, and also keeps them structurally and thematically linked to the surrounding narrative.

In chapter 2, I offer a close reading of the events leading up to and following Agrippa's fable in Livy's narrative, and explore the ways that his structural and thematic presentation that I outline in chapter 1 complicate the fable's applicability to the situation it supposedly analogizes. I argue that Agrippa's analogy does not accurately portray the nature of the conflict that caused

the first secession, as Livy frames it, and the fable, rather than instructively symbolizing the conflict, misrepresents the dynamics at play; specifically, the disappearance of the debt problem in Livy's narrative, the incompetence of the senate when contrasted with the critical role of the stomach, and the implications of the necessity of the tribunate for the restoration of civic harmony all severely limit the fable's relevance. Because of this, I suggest that a reassessment of the effect of both the fable and Menenius Agrippa in Livy's history is needed. Given the fable's limited helpfulness, I suggest that the senator is intentionally or unintentionally misrepresenting the situation, a tendency that is often characteristic of negative *exempla*. Nevertheless, I note that the historian still portrays Menenius Agrippa as an admirable *exemplum* who restored harmony, and who shares many of the attributes of positive *exempla*. This contradiction results in a figure who is more contradictory and ambiguous than he seems. Building on the work of Solodow, Pausch, Moore, Roth, and Tsitsiou-Chelidoni, I argue that this ambiguity and lack of clarity makes Menenius Agrippa a pointedly Livian *exemplum*, and, furthermore, invites the reader to join in the interpretive process of history.

This analysis of the Menenius Agrippa story leads us to three important conclusions about Livy's text, which I lay out in the final chapter. First, Livy's unique use of Menenius Agrippa and his fable warns readers against extracting *exempla* from their context: *exempla* must be read within their narrative. Second, the limited applicability of the fable challenges readers to avoid drawing simplistic lessons from Livy's history, and to consider that figures like Menenius Agrippa can serve noble, exemplary roles in the narrative even as their lessons present complications and resist easy answers. Third, the Menenius Agrippa fable offers a lesson about *concordia*, but not in the way that it seems. *Concordia*, rather than involving the constituent parts

of the state working together seamlessly, is messy, fragile, and precariously coexistent with discord. We may speculate that, for a historian writing in the final decades of the first century BCE, a time of immense social and political unrest and anxieties about the future, this latter vision of *concordia* appeared far more attainable and realistic.

Chapter One: Four Accounts of Menenius Agrippa's Fable of the Belly

Comparing episodes of Livy's history with the corresponding accounts of other ancient historians is a particularly instructive means for defining Livy's standpoint as a writer. Dionysius of Halicarnassus is an especially fruitful source of comparison; his *Roman Antiquities* (Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία) spans twenty books, beginning, as Livy does, with the mythical origins of Rome, and ending with the conclusion of the Pyrrhic War. Dionysius' account of Menenius Agrippa's fable and the first secession occurs in Book 6, and his version of the story, while largely agreeing with Livy's account on the basic course of events leading up to, during, and after the first secession, differs considerably from *Ab urbe condita* in its approach. This has consequences for our understanding of Livy's narrative and the role of Menenius Agrippa's fable in it, because even though Livy did not invent the story, and is constrained in some respects on the basic subject matter, he still is able to manipulate the precise framing and content in his own way. This chapter considers these differences in framing, based on three broad categories: each historian's basic approach to narrating history, their emphasis (or lack thereof) on speeches, and their own intervention in the story. While Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy are my primary points of comparison, at the end of the chapter I also include some discussion of Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus* and Joannes Zonaras' 12th-century reconstruction of Cassius Dio's *Roman History*. I argue that, compared to the others, Livy's presentation of the story foregrounds the primacy of individual character and *mores*—particularly Menenius Agrippa—on the unfolding of the debt narrative, but in a way that is subtle and allows reader interpretation. His account is thematically

and structurally consistent and unified in a way that the other versions are not, such that the fable is more conspicuously tied to the surrounding narrative than the others are.

Livy's approach to studying the past employs an episodic lens that prioritizes morals, personalities, and character, and examines how these elements contributed to the expansion of the Roman state into the world's foremost power.[1] This philosophy of history, centered around portraits of characters and events called *exempla*, is one that he outlines in his preface; history, in all its good and bad, is to be a guide of conduct for the present, and a remedy for contemporary ills: *ad illa mihi pro se quisque acriter intendat animum, quae vita, qui mores fuerint, per quos viros quibusque artibus domi militiaeque et partum et auctum imperium sit* (*praef*. 9).[2] While P.G. Walsh's quite critical claim that Livy's "narrative is more concerned with the attributes of the persons involved" in historical events than "with the significance of the changes themselves" is unfair to Livy,[3] it is true that Livy's interpretive method privileges the virtues—or the lack thereof—that individual people hold and the ways such virtues and vices shape history. Livy's value as a historian and interpreter of the past lies in his ability to, as Joy Connolly writes, "construct the past as a source of collective memory designed to enhance readers' sense of common identity and provide them with examples for moral imitation."[4] Livy, moreover, "saw moral uplift as the major purpose of historiography" and "aimed by literary means to achieve this," including by rhetorical flair and also by emulation of tropes characteristic of tragedy.[5]

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[1] For detailed scholarly discussion of Livy's episodic narrative structure, cf. Walsh 1961, 178–81, Burck 1964, 182–95, and Ogilvie 1965, 18–19.
[2] "I ask that any reader turn their attention most earnestly to the following questions: what sort of lives people led, what their moral characters were, through what men and by what skills our power was created and grew."
[3] Walsh 1961, 164. See Chaplin 2003, 195 ff. and especially Luce 1977: 230-297 for refutations of Walsh's claim.
[4] Connolly 2009, 193.
[5] Claassen 1998, 74.

To be sure, the use of history for a moralizing, instructive purpose did not start with Livy. The concept of history as a moral teacher was commonplace in ancient historiography. Analogues to it can be found in the Greek historians Thucydides, Herodotus, and Xenophon, not to mention Dionysius of Halicarnassus himself; didactic instruction was explicitly pursued in Cato the Elder's *Origines*, and moral degradation is a key theme in Sallust's writings.[6] By the first century BCE *exempla* in Roman literature and artwork were ubiquitous and culturally salient modes of popular instruction.[7] Nevertheless, as Jane Chaplin notes, Livy "goes to uncommon lengths in his exploration and exploitation" of the exemplary framework.[8] Stephen Oakley claims that Livy even went so far as to adjust and adapt the facts of his source material in order to highlight exemplary virtues and vices.[9] Moreover, as Walsh notes, for Roman historians more generally, quality historical writing did not merely "describe events as they happened, and account for them in a scientific spirit" as Polybius did, but was also an exercise in "literary presentation;" and Livy's unique talent "lie[s] preeminently in his adaptation of the material in his sources to the elegant form of Augustan prose."[10] Livy's literary and historical methods are not unprecedented, but he does execute them in unprecedented ways.

At the same time, as Gary Miles cautions, Livy's history "is more than just a series of episodes culled more or less arbitrarily from legend and literary sources," and "more than a succession of stories linked by a common interest in traditional values and attitudes."[11] Livy's use of *exempla* is neither uncritical nor superficial; they are not isolated stories to be read and

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[6] Oakley 1997, 115.
[7] Cf. Roller 2018.
[8] Chaplin 2000, 30.
[9] Oakley 1997, 115.
[10] Walsh 1961, 173.
[11] Miles 1995, 220.

thereafter forgotten, but are inextricably tied to the broader ideological matrix of the text, and also to each other. As Walsh writes, "instead of a barren list of unconnected events Livy constructs a series of moral episodes which are designed to bring out the character of the leading figures."[12] While this lens of historical analysis leads Livy to compress history and leave out details, it is in service to articulating a clear and elegant lesson for the reader through memorable and distinct personalities

Conversely, Dionysius of Halicarnassus is less interested in individual *exempla*. Instead, he employs a highly detailed and precise narration of history (what Greek historians termed ἀκρίβεια), with particular interest in the legal, social, and political circumstances of events. As a result of this, his account of the debt crisis and secession is far longer than Livy's; while the portion of *Ab urbe condita* that details the debt problem and first secession occupies a relatively concise eleven sections of the 65 sections of Book 2, the corresponding version in *Roman Antiquities* extends over a sprawling 68 sections of Book 6 (Dion. *Rom*. *Ant*. 6.22-90). Livy's account emphasizes the dramatic nature of the debt crisis, enlivened by memorable characters like the fiery Appius Claudius and the folksy Menenius Agrippa, and punctuated by a series of battles with Rome's Latin neighbors. Dionysius, conversely, focuses in great, painstaking detail on dozens of laborious speeches and legal debates. The entirety of his *Roman Antiquities* is far more extensive than the corresponding content of *Ab urbe condita*. For perspective, Dionysius takes four books to cover the mythological founding of Rome, the legendary seven kings, and the fall of the monarchy; Livy covers the same material in one book. The decemvirate occurs in Book 3 of Livy, and in Book 10 of Dionysius. Emilio Gabba identifies part of the reason for this

[12] Ogilvie 1971, 8-9.

highly detailed narration in Dionysius' concern for "following the development of [an event's] causes, the intentions of the actors involved, and the manner of its accomplishment;" this level of precision allowed the audience to be fully immersed in the narrative, even if such specificity means sacrificing or downplaying the dramatic, emotional aspects of the circumstances described.[13]

This is not to say that Dionysius' view of history eschews the didactic, moralizing purpose to which other historians like Livy subscribe, nor that Dionysius' prose is inelegant, artless, or lacks literary sophistication, nor that he is uninterested in the effect of character on history. According to Gabba, Dionysius was well aware of the political, cultural, and educational power of history; in fact, one of Dionysius' criticisms of historians like Thucydides and Polybius was precisely that their approach to history, which foregrounded a "scientific" approach to history and a logical sequence of cause-and-effect, came at the expense of chronological clarity and reader enjoyment.[14] Nevertheless, Dionysius sees his intellectual and moral purpose of writing history, as Gabba describes it, best evinced in engagement with and reproduction of political and philosophical background that exposes the reader to the complete context and circumstances surrounding events.[15] As Stephen Oakley writes:

> [Dionysius] explains that ἀκρίβεια in political narrative demands the full exposition of the speeches made by the leading participants…[A]t 11.1, in his account of the fall of the Decemvirate, he again (§3) makes the point that a proper history needs the full exposition of arguments used in politics, but his justification goes further than in the earlier passage, and beyond the defence of speeches. For history to be a suitable instrument for teaching, and for it to give pleasure, it needs to offer a full and convincing account of important events themselves and (with a deep bow to Thucydides) of their causes.[16]

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[13] Gabba 1991, 81.
[14] Ibid., 66.
[15] Ibid., 77.
[16] Oakley 2010, 119.

We may see this approach instructively captured in Dionysius' account of the secession, where the causes of the debt crisis, and the senator's responses to it and their justifications, are laid out in meticulous detail. Dionysius' initial description of the debt problem, for example, spans over 230 words (Dion. *Rom*. *Ant*. 6.22.1-3); Livy's is only 61 (Liv. 2.23.1-3).

Dionysius' detailed description, however, comes at the expense of thematic unity and narrative cohesion. The role of the wounded veteran is an illustrative example of this. In Livy, the soldier's story is coextensive with the introduction of the debt problem, as they appear in the same section (2.22.1), and the veteran is used as a visible, symbolic manifestation of the disorder besetting the state. Furthermore, the emphasis on the soldier's corporeality (his pale appearance, his unkempt hair and beard, his filthy clothes, the scars on his back) links his story with the body-politic fable that closes the secession narrative ten sections later, creating a sort of ring composition that keeps the debt and secession narrative structurally contained.[17] In Dionysius' account, however, the centurion's story (Dion. *Rom*. *Ant*. 6.26.1-2) is severed from the description of the debt problem by four sections. While Dionysius' veteran certainly cuts a sympathetic figure, he becomes less the symbolic representation of the division afflicting the state that he is in Livy's narrative and more of an active participant in the debate over debt reform.[18] Furthermore, the fact that Agrippa's fable in *Roman Antiquities* does not come at the end of the secession narrative (it occurs in section 86, but the saga of the debt problem and first secession is not fully concluded until section 90) removes the symbolic connection between the centurion and the fable; they no longer bookend the story, but are independent parts of it. As

[17] Cf. Degelmann 2019 for further discussion of the linking between the soldier and the fable in Livy's history.
[18] Cf. Burck 1964, 60-61 and *passim* for discussion of the differences between Livy's and Dionysius' depiction of the centurion, and Livy's episodic structure more broadly.

Stephen Oakley argues, Dionysius, although a talented writer in his own right and incisive political observer, lacks the ability to craft a creative narrative, as his tendency towards "ἀκρίβεια leads him to lose any sense of proportion."[19] The next chapter more thoroughly analyzes the consequences of Livy's structure of the narrative on how we might interpret the fable, but understanding how his episodic structure sets him apart from his Greek counterpart is a useful starting point for our analysis.

A further difference between Livy's and Dionysius' presentations of their history is their use of speeches. Livy includes speeches, whether direct or indirect, only sparingly and briefly (see chart below). Dionysius, conversely, focuses in great, painstaking detail on several laborious speeches and legal debates. In the 63 sections that comprise Dionysius' narrative, there are no fewer than 20 speeches, some of them spanning multiple sections. The stark difference in the number of speeches each account offers, and the differences in length and presentation in the speeches that are shared, can be seen in the following table. Speeches are in direct discourse, unless otherwise noted:

Table 1.1: Comparison of Speeches in Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus

Speech:	**Location in Livy:**	**Location in Dionysius of Halicarnassus:**
Appius Claudius: first speech to the senate (*NB: this speech occurs after the centurion's story in Livy's narrative, but before it in Dionysius'*)	2.23.15 (in indirect discourse)	6.24.1-3

[19] Oakley 2010, 138.

Speech:	**Location in Livy:**	**Location in Dionysius of Halicarnassus:**
Publius Servilius: first speech to the senate (*NB: this speech occurs after the centurion's story in Livy's narrative, but before it in Dionysius'*)	2.23.15 (in indirect discourse)	6.23.3 (in indirect discourse)
Centurion: explanation of his debt bondage	2.23.5-6 (in indirect discourse)	6.26.1
Servilius: speech to the plebeians	2.24.4-7 (in indirect discourse)	6.28.1-3 (in indirect discourse)
Publius Verginius: speech to the senate	2.29.7 (in indirect discourse)	6.37.1
Titus Larcius: speech to the senate	2.29.8 (in indirect discourse)	6.37.2
Consuls: joint address to the senate	2.29.1	Absent (text is fragmentary in 6.34, the section corresponding to Liv. 2.29)
Appius Claudius: second speech to the senate to appoint a dictator	2.29.11-12	6.38.1-3
Valerius: speech to the plebeians as dictator	2.30.6 (referenced but not recorded in direct or indirect speech)	6.41.1-3
Valerius: speech to the senate resigning dictatorship	2.31.9-10	6.43.3-6.44.1-3
Sicinius: speech to the plebeians instigating the secession	Absent (Sicinius briefly mentioned as leader of the secession)	6.45.3
Menenius Agrippa: speech to the senate	Absent	6.49.3-6.56.5
Manius Valerius: speech to the senate	Absent	6.58.1-3 (in indirect discourse)

Speech:	**Location in Livy:**	**Location in Dionysius of Halicarnassus:**
Appius Claudius: third speech to the senate	Absent	6.59.2-6.64
Consuls address to the senate	Absent	6.66
Appius Claudius: fourth speech to the senate	Absent	6.68
Spurius Nautius: speech to the senate	Absent	6.69.1-3
Manius Valerius: speech to the plebeians	Absent	6.71
Brutus: speech to the senators	Absent	6.72.3-80
Titus Larcius: speech to the senate	Absent	6.81.3-4
Menenius Agrippa: speech to the plebeians	Absent	6.83.4-86
The fable	2.32.9-12 (in indirect discourse)	6.86

Of the twenty speeches in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' narrative of the debt crisis, Livy's corresponding account only shares nine. Six of these are presented in indirect statement (including the fable), in contrast to the three speeches in indirect statement in Dionysius. What speeches Livy does include, furthermore, he very heavily condenses; Titus Larcius' and Publius Verginius' speeches to the senate, for example, are both in indirect discourse and together occupy two sentences (Liv. 2.29.7-8). The equivalent speeches in *Roman Antiquities*, by contrast, occupy several sections of direct speech. Speeches, indicative as they are of "the practice of politics, the democratic forms of Greek political life, the search for truth through discussion and the arrival at

political decisions after free and open debate between contrasting opinions," figure prominently in the Greek historiographical tradition that Dionysius inherits.[20]

This is not to say that Livy, in his presentation of Roman history, neglects recorded speeches; to the contrary, as N.P. Miller comments, "formal, elaborate speeches are one of the most striking elements of the history of Livy."[21] Walsh remarks that "Livy took considerable pains" in "the composition of his speeches, on which his literary reputation at Rome above all rested," earning him the admiration and approval of future writers like Quintilian, Seneca, and Tacitus.[22] Camillus' speech to the Roman people after the sack of Rome at the end of Book 5, which occupies four sections (5.51-54), is a rhetorical *tour de force*; no less impressive are the speeches of the senator Cato the Elder against the repeal of the *Lex Oppia* in 195 BCE (34.2-4) and of Scipio Africanus to his army during the Second Punic War (26.41; 28.27-29). Nevertheless, according to Miller, while "Livy's speeches certainly show his rhetorical skill, and he obviously enjoyed writing them…they are there primarily to distil [sic] and dramatize a situation's essence…to demonstrate a character…or contrasting characters…or to mark and emphasize a critical point in the narrative."[23] Walsh agrees, claiming that "in his speeches…Livy aims to evoke a more compelling and dramatic atmosphere, and on certain occasions for purposes of characterization and from artistic motives makes changes or additions to the source-content."[24] As evidence of this tendency, Walsh draws on the secession narrative; he observes the relative brevity with which Livy recounts the speech acts involved in the episode, compared to Dionysius' "interminable compositions," and argues that this succinct handling of the material

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[20] Ibid., 69-70.
[21] Miller 1975, 50.
[22] Walsh 1961, 219.
[23] Miller 1975, 51.
[24] Walsh 1961, 235.

"enhances [Livy's] rhetorical effectiveness."[25] While Dionysius, then, reproduces detailed, elaborate speeches as a result of his interest in recreating the precise political and legal circumstances surrounding historical events, Livy's use of speeches is a reflection of his concern for prioritizing the effect of character on narrative and accentuating the rhetorical impact of the speech act.

Livy and Dionysius' distinct presentation of the speeches in their narratives is as remarkable as their number and length. Livy tends heavily towards recording speech acts in *oratio obliqua*; of the nine speech acts in his secession narrative, only three are in direct discourse. In Dionysius, the proportions are reversed: of his twenty speeches, only three are in indirect discourse. Such a proportion is largely representative of Livy's wider stylistic tendencies; Walsh notes that "in the first six books [of Livy] there is almost four times as much indirect as direct speech."[26] In fact, the very first sentence of *Ab urbe condita* is rendered in *oratio obliqua*, introduced by the impersonal verb *constat*.[27] Statistical analysis performed by Konrad Gries reveals, furthermore, that, relative to other historians like Sallust and Xenophon, such a distinct proportion of *oratio recta* and *oratio obliqua* is unique to Livy.[28] According to Walsh, while indirect discourse lacks the visibly vivid and persuasive force of direct speech, it still serves the purpose of developing characterization.[29] This is not to say that direct speeches are not incisive lenses into the characters of the people delivering them: one need only look at Livy's use of direct discourse in Coriolanus' mother's speech to her son later in Book 2

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[25] Ibid., 231.
[26] Walsh 1961, 243.
[27] *Iam primum omnium satis constat Troia capta in ceteros saevitum esse Troianos*: "Now first of all it is generally agreed that when Troy was captured, violence befell the rest of the Trojans" (1.1.1).
[28] Gries 1949, 140.
[29] Walsh 1961, 244.

(2.40.4-9). Indirect discourse, however, removes readers from the speaker's exact words, gives them a more general impression of content, and "convey[s] to the reader a psychological impression of the thought processes of groups of people witnessing an event or pondering a course of action."[30]

Livy's choice to present the fable in indirect discourse is striking; Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Cassius Dio, via Joannes Zonaras, record it entirely in direct discourse, and Plutarch uses a mixture of direct and indirect. The consequences of this choice must be examined carefully if we are to understand Livy's use of the fable. Part of the reason for this may be pragmatic: as André Lambert observes, Livy tells us that Menenius Agrippa speaks in an old-fashioned, simple manner,[31] and transmitting the fable indirectly allows Livy to report the fable, and also reveal this detail about Agrippa's character, without having to adopt archaisms himself or compromise his own literary style.[32] There is more to it than this, however. Lambert agrees with Walsh that indirect speech, which reports words without interrupting the flow of the narrative, permits Livy to express the thoughts and feelings of the characters involved and seamlessly—and sometimes almost imperceptibly—incorporate them into the broader text.[33] Direct speeches may be more vivid and marked, but they are not as closely tied to the narrative as indirect speeches are; in fact, according to Michael von Albrecht, Livy's speeches were often extracted from the rest of the text and read separately, something which is difficult, if not impossible, to do with indirect speeches without altering the syntax.[34] Indirect speech, conversely, is a means whereby justifications, explanations, and logical consequences are made

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[30] Ibid.
[31] *prisco illo dicendi et horrido modo*: "in that old-fashioned and unpolished manner of speaking."
[32] Lambert 1945, 16.
[33] Ibid., 50.
[34] von Albrecht 1997, 847.

personal extensions of the individuals delivering them, as they are in direct speech, but are also integral parts of the narrative and Livy's own presentation of it. This sort of presentation of speech is of paramount importance for a historian intimately concerned with the effect of an individual's *mores* on history.[35]

As a result of this, Livy's choice to represent Menenius Agrippa's speech in indirect discourse holds a number of consequences. It lays less emphasis on the words that are used and more on the fable as an integral part of the narrative, and on Menenius Agrippa as a representative of the fable, allowing Livy to express his portrayal of Menenius Agrippa's character organically without explicitly inserting his own interpretation. The fable calls less attention to the speech act itself, as it would if it were presented in direct speech, and more to the circumstances under which it was delivered: to the plebeians assembled on the Mons Sacer. The use of indirect discourse may remove the readers from the immediate scene—we do not "hear" the fable being told as the plebeians heard it, as we do in Dionysius' account—but we are granted a more omniscient perspective that invites us to encounter the fable in its context, consider its consequences and limitations as a rhetorical device, and also to receive it as a reflection of Menenius Agrippa's character, in the absence of much explicit description as a person.[36] The use of indirect discourse allows the fable to be transmitted to the reader, but in a way that maintains the narrator's hold on the story; indirect discourse can only exist if there is a medium—a narrator —by which direct discourse is rendered indirect. In the episode, Livy enters indirect discourse, introduced by the verb *fertur*, transmits the fable, and then at the very end, intimates the

[35] Ibid. Cf. also Utard 2004 for further discussion of the use of indirect discourse in Roman historians.
[36] For the role of the reader in Livy's history, cf. especially Pausch 2011. I return to the role of the reader in the Menenius Agrippa episode in chapter 2 of this thesis.

psychological effect on the plebeians (*flexisse mentes*), but while still in indirect discourse, dependent on *fertur*. His narrator shifts rapidly but subtly from reporting Agrippa's words to reporting what the source tradition claims (*fertur*) was the speech's effect on the audience, all with the same narratological technique. In this way, the speech itself, and its effect within the narrative (changing the plebeians' minds) become narratively and inextricably linked, demonstrating what Tsitsiou-Chelidoni calls "the dominion of the narrator in the narrative."[37] As I show later, this technique is not present in the other accounts—Cassius Dio, as summarized by Joannes Zonaras—that report the fable entirely in indirect discourse.

A final difference between Livy's and Dionysius' accounts of the secession is the degree to which they intervene to explain the significance of elements of their narrative. Dionysius is much more comfortable telling the readers exactly what he wants them to know; Livy, by contrast, is far more reticent. Their treatment of Menenius Agrippa's character is a good example. Through his initial description of Agrippa in 6.49.1-2, and through his speeches, Dionysius fleshes out the senator and his political personality in great detail; he becomes paradigmatic of Dionysius' philosophy of history as Gabba describes it—detailed language that immerses the reader in the intricacies of the debate and the individuals engaged in it. The senator is first mentioned after the plebeians secede to the Mons Sacer, but before he gets sent there himself, and in his introduction, Dionysius emphasizes his wisdom, moderation, and his savviness as a politician:

> πρῶτον ἀποφήνασθαι παρακαλοῦντες ἄνδρα ἡλικίας ἐν τῇ κρατίστῃ τότε ὄντα καὶ συνέσει δοκοῦντα τῶν ἄλλων διαφέρειν, μάλιστα δ᾽ ἐπὶ τῇ προαιρέσει τῶν πολιτευμάτων ἐπαινούμενον, ὅτι τῆς μέσης τάξεως ἦν, οὔτε τὴν αὐθάδειαν τῶν ἀριστοκρατικῶν αὔξων οὔτε τῷ δήμῳ ὅσα βουληθείη πράττειν ἐπιτρέπων, Ἀγρίππαν Μενήνιον (6.49.1-2)

[37] Tsitsiou-Chelidoni 2009, 534.

> The first one they called on to state his opinion was a man, Agrippa Menenius, then advanced in age and considered superior to the others in his intellect, and who was especially well-regarded for his political reputation, because he was moderate, and wished neither to increase the arrogance of the aristocracy nor to yield to the people to have their way.

Livy's Agrippa, however, cuts a more enigmatic figure: we really do not learn that much about him. He was consul ten years before the events of the story, in 503 BCE (Liv. 2.16.7); he was known for his eloquence (*facundum virum* 2.32.8); he apparently—and quite implausibly—was of plebeian origin (2.32.8);[38] he spoke with an old-fashioned, rough dialect (2.33.8); he was respected by both the plebeians and patricians (2.33.10); upon his death a year later, he was not wealthy enough to pay for his own funeral (2.33.11); his son, T. Menenius, served as consul some decades later, and was prosecuted by the tribunes for mishandling the military at the Battle of the Cremera, but his father's popularity helped mitigate his punishment (2.52.5). These are all the details Livy reveals to us about Menenius Agrippa.

Dionysius' account, consequently, locates Menenius' role explicitly as a rhetorician and politician, and situates the fable more distinctly within that context. The senator is an effective speaker and capable politician, but so are many other figures in Dionysius' history: persuasive oratory is the primary lens by which Dionysius recounts historical events, and Agrippa is not

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[38] The question of Menenius Agrippa's social status, and Livy's offhand comment that the senator is of plebeian origin, is a puzzling one that is not easy to satisfactorily resolve, and Ogilvie's commentary is silent on the matter. Livy tells us that Agrippa served as a consul a decade before the first secession; given that plebeians were not granted access to the consulship until over a century afterwards, in 367 BCE with the passage of the Licinio-Sextian laws, this would seem to preclude Agrippa from being a plebeian. Perhaps Livy imported the detail of Agrippa's status from one of his sources, but he is the only extant historian to include it, and in any case it would be an extremely careless and uncritical error on his part, indicating a considerable ignorance of basic political history. Perhaps Livy was, in fact, right, and Agrippa was a plebeian; according to Forsythe 1994 p. 271, historically plebeians likely did serve as consuls before the legal ratification, especially since the categories of "patrician" and "plebeian" were ill-defined even in the early Republic; but this still contradicts the binary division between plebeian and patrician in Roman historiography, which, albeit ahistorical, was nonetheless central to the conception of history by republican authors like Livy. Perhaps the detail is a later addition to the manuscript. There are numerous possibilities, but the problem is likely to remain unresolved.

unique in this regard. Therefore, Menenius Agrippa's singular function in the story as the savior of the republic and protector of *concordia* is muted, and with it the significance of the fable itself, which becomes just another rhetorical tool Agrippa employs in his speeches, and another speech out of many speeches. Livy's Agrippa, conversely, exists almost exclusively as a single-handed restorer of *concordia* through his use of the fable. Other than a brief, formulaic mention in section 16 (the year of his consulship), Livy does not introduce him until after the plebeians secede, and he dies very shortly thereafter. Menenius Agrippa and his fable both are thereby isolated and emphasized within the broader matrix of Livy's work, inviting us to consider more closely the impact of both of them in the broader context of the narrative.

Moreover, the historians differ in their explanation of the relevance of the fable for the situation. Dionysius' Agrippa explicitly spells out how the analogy corresponds to a state:

> τὸν αὐτὸν δὴ τρόπον ὑπολάβετε καὶ περὶ πόλεως. πολλὰ γὰρ δὴ τὰ συμπληροῦντα καὶ ταύτην ἔθνη καὶ οὐδὲν ἀλλήλοις ἐοικότα, ὧν ἕκαστον ἰδίαν τινὰ τῷ κοινῷ χρείαν ὥσπερ τὰ μέλη τῷ σώματι παρέχεται. οἱ μὲν γὰρ τοὺς ἀγροὺς γεωργοῦσιν, οἱ δὲ μάχονται περὶ αὐτῶν πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους, οἱ δ' ἐμπορεύονται πολλὰς διὰ θαλάσσης ὠφελείας, οἱ δὲ τὰς ἀναγκαίας ἐργάζονται τέχνας…μαθόντες οὖν, ὦ δημόται, ὅτι καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν ἡμῶν ἡ λοιδορουμένη κακῶς ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν γαστὴρ τρέφει τὸ σῶμα τρεφομένη καὶ σώζει σωζομένη…οὕτως ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἡ διοικοῦσα τὰ κοινὰ καὶ τοῦ προσήκοντος ἑκάστῳ προνοουμένη βουλὴ πάντα σώζει καὶ φυλάττει καὶ ἐπανορθοῖ. (6.86.4)
>
> Consider the same situation regarding a state as well. For many things compose it, and they are not similar to one another, each of which provides some distinct service to the common good, just like the parts do for the body. Some tend to the fields, some fight against enemies on behalf of the fields, some conduct much useful trade by the sea, and some work the necessary trades…learn, then, citizens, that just as in our bodies the stomach, wretchedly hated by the masses, nourishes the body while it is nourished, and protects the body while it is protected…so too in the state the senate, which administers public affairs and provides that which is necessary for everyone, protects and guards and restores all things.

Dionysius makes the purpose of the analogy in his narrative crystal clear. Livy, however, is much more ambiguous. All he says is that by comparing the sedition of the state to the sedition of the body, Agrippa was able to change the plebeians' minds.[39] Livy leaves it to the reader to figure out for themselves what is being analogized to what, and why—and if—the comparison is relevant in the first place. Granted, the analogy is not hard to interpret, but Livy involves the reader in his narrative to a greater degree, and also thereby destabilizes the function of the analogy by leaving it more open to interpretation. We might therefore pithily deem each historian's presentation of the fable as illustrative of his wider historical project: Dionysius imbues his with more description and ἀκρίβεια, but, consequently. with a less clearly-defined and less visible thematic apparatus that undergirds Livy's account. Dionysius presents it in direct discourse, which replicates the sort of verbal back-and-forth that forms the bulk of the preceding events. He explains the meaning of the analogy to the reader, making it very clear to them but also disengaging them from the interpretive process. Livy, on the other hand, condenses his fable, but ties it more pointedly to the rest of the text of Book 2. He renders it in *oratio obliqua*, the consequences of which I have already outlined, and makes the relevance to the political situation less apparent, but in service of engaging the reader.

Having juxtaposed Livy's and Dionysius' accounts of the secession narrative, this chapter concludes by contrasting Livy's version with the versions offered in Cassius Dio's *Roman History* and Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus*. Their accounts of the debt crisis and first secession are far shorter and less involved than what Dionysius describes, as a result of which they require a less elaborate analysis. Nonetheless, some discussion is necessary in order to further identify the

[39] *Comparando hinc quam intestina corporis seditio similis esset irae plebis in patres, flexisse mentes hominum* (2.32.12).

unique ways Livy uses the fable in *Ab urbe condita*. Plutarch's account of the story occurs in his biography of the Roman general Coriolanus, from his larger work *Parallel Lives* (Βίοι Παράλληλοι), written around the beginning of the second century CE, and which uses Dionysius of Halicarnassus as a main source.[40] His narrative of the debt crisis, secession, fable, and establishment of the tribunate is even more condensed than Livy's: it occupies a mere three sections (Plut. *Cor*. 5-7) of the 39-section biography. This is not unexpected; Plutarch's biography of Coriolanus is, after all, a biography, and as such the author's focus is on the general's life and actions. Timothy Duff identifies moral instruction as Plutarch's motivation for writing biographies of historical figures; biography should provide a didactic, imitative service.[41] While the Greek biographer is not uninterested in sociopolitical developments like the debt crisis and secession, and minor individuals like Menenius Agrippa, these are secondary to Coriolanus himself. Nevertheless, Plutarch's account sheds more light on the different ways the story of Menenius Agrippa was received in ancient writing, and therefore rewards closer inspection.

Plutarch covers the buildup to the secession and Agrippa's fable only very briefly. The veteran soldier who instigates the crisis is entirely missing. The internal disagreements among the senators are mentioned in passing, and their intensity is greatly downplayed.[42] Appius Claudius does not figure into the secession story at all, although he does appear later on once, in the context of the grain shortage (19.2); instead, Coriolanus himself seems to play the part of the hotheaded senator who wishes to aggressively resolve the debt problem (5.4.). The well-meaning but ineffectual Servilius is excluded. The duration of the debate and depth of hostility among the

[40] Cf. Russell 1963 and Pelling 2023, 15.
[41] Cf. Duff 2023.
[42] συνιούσης δὲ περὶ τούτων πολλάκις ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ τῆς βουλῆς καὶ μηδὲν τέλος ἐκφερούσης: "The senate met often in a short span of time to resolve these matters and did not arrive at any solution." (6.1).

senators so evident in Dionysius' and especially Livy's account is absent, and with it the ironic contrast between the idealized fable and the incompetent senators. Menenius Agrippa's role in resolving the crisis is similarly greatly downplayed:

> Ταῦτ᾽ ἔδεισεν ἡ βουλή, καὶ τοὺς ἐπιεικεῖς μαλιστα καὶ δημοτικοὺς τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἐξαπέστειλε. προηγόρει δὲ Μενήνιος Ἀγρίππας· καὶ πολλὰ μὲν τοῦ δήμου δεόμενος, πολλὰ δ᾽ ὑπὲρ τῆς βουλῆς παρρησιαζόμενος τελευτῶντι τῷ λόγῳ περιῆλθεν εἰς σχῆμα μύθου διαμνημονευόμενον. ἔφη γὰρ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὰ μέλη πάντα πρὸς τὴν γαστέρα στασιάσαι, καὶ κατηγορεῖν αὐτῆς ὡς μόνης ἀργοῦ καὶ ἀσυμβόλου καθεζομένης ἐν τῷ σώματι, τῶν δ᾽ ἄλλων εἰς τὰς ἐκείνης ὀρέξεις πόνους τε μεγάλους καὶ λειτουργίας ὑπομενόντων· τὴν δὲ γαστέρα τῆς εὐηθείας αὐτῶν καταγελᾶν, ἀγνοούντων ὅτι τὴν τροφὴν ὑπολαμβάνει μὲν εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἅπασαν, ἀναπέμπει δ᾽ αὖθις ἐξ αὐτῆς καὶ διανέμει τοῖς ἄλλοις. "Οὕτως οὖν," ἔφη, "καὶ τῆς συγκλήτου λόγος ἐστίν, ὦ πολῖται, πρὸς ὑμᾶς· τὰ γὰρ ἐκεῖ τυγχάνοντα τῆς προσηκούσης ἐπιμελείας καὶ οἰκονομίας βουλεύματα καὶ πράγματα πᾶσιν ὑμῖν ἐπιφέρει καὶ διανέμει τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ ὠφέλιμον." (6.2-4)
>
> The senate was alarmed by these things, and sent out some of its older senators who were especially moderate and popular. Menenius Agrippa was their spokesman, and after much beseeching of the people and much free speaking on behalf of the senate, he finished off his speech in the form of a well-known fable. He said that all the parts of a person's body rebelled against the stomach, and accused it alone of being lazy and sitting about in the body and not contributing its share, while the others endured great difficulties and tasks for the sake of its appetite. The stomach, however, laughed at their ignorance, for not knowing that it received nourishment from all of them, but then sent it back out again and distributed it to the others. "Such, then," he said "is the case of the senate for you, citizens. For there, the matters that it receives are deliberated with the necessary consideration and management and it sends to you all and apportions that which is beneficial and useful"

Other than telling the reader that Menenius Agrippa is one of the older senators and better-received by the people, Plutarch reveals nothing about the senator. His facility with public speaking and his unpretentious demeanor are perhaps hinted at by the word παρρησιαζόμενος, but are otherwise left unacknowledged, and any mention of his death a year after the secession, and any personal virtues as we see in Livy and Dionysius, are missing. While Plutarch does state

that harmony was restored following Agrippa's meeting with the plebeians,[43] the biographer omits any explicit identification of *Agrippa* as the cause of the reconciliation, unlike Livy, who does so twice.[44] Menenius Agrippa's role, consequently, as a moral and civic paragon, while perhaps not entirely eliminated, is greatly muted. Christopher Pelling reads Plutarch's inclusion of Menenius Agrippa and his fable in the story as a foil for Coriolanus, but admits that Plutarch "does not take it far," and that the contrasts between Coriolanus and Menenius Agrippa are more substantially developed in Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus*.[45]

Plutarch's and Livy's descriptions of the fables also differ substantially. As noted earlier, while Livy's presentation of the fable is entirely in indirect discourse, and Dionysius' entirely in direct speech, Plutarch uses a mix of the two. The fable itself is told indirectly, and Agrippa's explanation of it is rendered in direct speech. The use of direct speech lays emphasis on Agrippa's explanation of the fable's relevance to the political situation, a relevance which Livy hints at only very tangentially, with the gerund *comparando*, but largely leaves up to the reader to determine. Plutarch's version in general focuses more heavily on the political language of the fable. As Jane Chaplin comments, "probably the most noticeable feature of [Plutarch's] version is how little it touches on the body and how much the emphasis has shifted to politics."[46] Plutarch's fable has a less systematic catalog of the parts of the body—in fact, no specific parts are mentioned at all, save the stomach (γαστήρ), with the rest being subsumed by τὰ μέλη πάντα. Instead, Chaplin observes, "political vocabulary is the dominant language here," such as λειτουργίας and στασιάσαι.[47] Chaplin does not comment much on this difference, beyond noting

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[43] Ἐκ τούτου διηλλάγησαν: "from this, there was a reconciliation" (7.1).
[44] At 2.32.12 and 2.33.9.
[45] Pelling 2002, 388-9.
[46] Chaplin 2003, 208.
[47] Ibid.

its existence, but by minimizing the bodily aspects of the fable and highlighting its political applications, especially through the use of direct speech, Plutarch renders the fable's relevance to the story more clear than Livy does; even though Plutarch, like Livy, never addresses the debt problem again, his version of the fable makes its moral and political function in the story more readily apparent.

At the same time, Livy's version enmeshes his fable more inextricably within the broader narrative than Plutarch does: the motif of food consumption in Livy's fable, as per Chaplin's argument, gets reintroduced in the figure of Coriolanus later on; the fable, with its greater emphasis on the body, mirrors the character of the injured centurion at the beginning of the debt narrative; the fable is entirely reported in indirect discourse, allowing none of it to be isolated or removed from its context without changing its grammar; the figure of Agrippa is fleshed out in greater depth, with his death and obituary in section 33 recalling the fable to the reader even after its conclusion. All of this leaves Livy's version of the fable less explicitly relevant to the situation within the narrative, but more open to interpretation and with greater implications for the rest of the story. Plutarch's version of the fable reads more as an addendum inherited from Dionysius, whom Plutarch used as his source.[48] While the political applications are left unambiguous, the fable and Menenius Agrippa's character are heavily condensed and not imbued with the same interpretive potential that Livy's version has.

Finally, we turn to the senator and historian Cassius Dio's *Roman History* (Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία). This work of Roman history, written in Greek over the course of two decades in the second century CE, originally spanned 80 volumes, covering the origin of the city until the reign

[48] Cf. Russell 1963.

of Septimius Alexander. The first 21 volumes of the original text that Dio authored have been lost, but fragments survive, as well as substantial summaries in the 12th-c. Byzantine historian and monk Joannes Zonaras' *Epitome historiarum*, which uses Cassius Dio's volumes, as well as Plutarch, as sources; Zonaras is our only source for these early books of Cassius Dio that are now lost to us.[49] While Zonaras' work, according to Christopher Burden-Strevens, does "abridg[e] the content of twenty books of Dio," the content "is often so close to Dio's original that, where parallel passages survive, they are nearly identical."[50] In fact, Burden-Strevens claims that "as a general rule it is safe to assume that material included in Books 7-9"—which includes the account of the secession and the fable—"figured also in the early books of Dio."[51] John Rich gives a similar, if slightly more measured, assessment, fortuitously about the secession and fable: "No doubt Zonaras made some omissions, but his version of Menenius' speech (just over 200 words long) evidently gives an accurate impression of Dio's original."[52] We may therefore accept with some confidence that what Zonaras reports in his reconstructed account is quite close, if not identical, to Cassius Dio's original text.

Dio's text, and Zonaras' reconstructed account, agree with the others on the course of events leading up to the secession and the fable, but differ in two key ways from Livy. The first is the role of Menenius Agrippa. While the senator plays a small, unelaborate role in Plutarch's biography of Coriolanus, he figures even less prominently in Dio's text. He is named merely as one of the senators sent to quell the secession (εἷς τῶν πρέσβεων Zonaras 7.14), and he is identified as the one who tells the fable. No other descriptive characteristics are given to him,

[49] Burden-Strevens 2019, 14.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 15.
[52] Rich 2019, 241.

such as his age, wisdom, eloquence, or the high esteem in which he is held by the people and his colleagues. He is not directly credited with restoring harmony, and he is never mentioned again. The fable itself has more in common with Dionysius' version than anyone else's, as Zonaras develops a hierarchical schema of the parts of the body, with variegated functions: the eyes direct the hands and feet; the mouth reveals the thoughts of the mind; the ears carry speech to the mind; the hands work; the legs carry the body (7.14). This hierarchical schema has a consequence similar to what it has in Dionysius: more description is provided (ἀκρίβεια) but at the expense of the tight thematic cohesion we see in Livy.

Zonaras' application of the fable to the rest of the story is the most consequential way that his description departs from any other account of the fable. The Byzantine scholar, like Livy and unlike Plutarch, does credit Menenius' fable with changing the minds of the plebeians. However, he removes the agency from Agrippa that Livy gives him through the gerund *comparando* and the verb *flexisse* and instead transfers it to the people and their ability to comprehend the fable's point. More importantly, however, is the explanation of the point of the fable, and in this regard Zonaras is unique among all the authors this chapter examines: he is the only one who applies the fable not to civic harmony more generally, but exclusively to the debt problem. He writes:

> Τούτοις τοῖς λόγοις τὸ πλῆθος συνῆκεν ὡς αἱ τῶν εὐπόρων οὐσίαι καὶ τοῖς πένησίν εἰσιν εἰς ὠφέλειαν, καὶ εἰ κἀκεῖνοι ὠφελοῖντο ἐκ δανεισμάτων καὶ τὰς οὐσίας αὔξουσιν, οὐκ εἰς βλάβην τοῦτο τῶν πολλῶν ἀποβαίνει, ὡς εἴ γε μὴ ἔχοιεν οἱ πλουτοῦντες, οὐδ' οἱ πένητες ἂν ἐν καιροῖς ἀναγκαίοις ἔξουσι τοὺς δανείσοντας, καὶ ἀπολοῦνται χρείας κατεπειγούσης. ἐντεῦθεν ἠπιώτεροι γενόμενοι κατηλλάγησαν, κουφισμὸν τῶν ὀφειλῶν καὶ τῶν ὑπερημεριῶν ἄφεσιν τῆς βουλῆς ψηφισαμένης αὐτοῖς. (7.14)
>
> By these words the multitude understood that the wealth of the rich was also for the poor's benefit, and even if the former should benefit from the loans and increase their income, this did not do any harm to the masses, because if the wealthy did not have anything, neither would the poor, in times of necessity, have people to give them loans,

> and would die, burdened by poverty. Then, they became more reasonable and were reconciled, when the senate had voted to forgive the debts and release them from their forfeitures.

Zonaras' use of the fable is therefore much more contained. The lesson of the fable is spelled out very clearly for the reader, and its applicability to the specific situation that caused the secession in the first place is described in a much more precise way than any other historian does. The fable has less to do with civic harmony *per se*, and the role of the stomach is analogized more to the aristocracy's ability to provide monetary support to the poor, rather than to their ability to govern. Zonaras' version, as a result of this, takes a far more limited—and, arguably, more cynical—view of the fable than any other author, and especially more than Livy, who largely leaves its meaning open to interpretation. The connection between the fable and the situation surrounding it is much more tightly bound. Furthermore, in Zonaras' account, as in Dionysius', the senate does, in fact, vote to resolve the debt problem. The fable, in Zonaras' account, analogizes the situation in a way that is not altogether inappropriate or unreflective of the situation. It avoids the idealizing, broad-scope applications to which other versions subscribe, that are so susceptible to criticism for their failure to truly capture the situation. At the same time, it leaves the interpretive capacity of the fable and its role in the story even more limited than Dionysius and Plutarch, and certainly more than Livy.

To synthesize the discussion up to this point, we can identify some useful conclusions that will become critical for the next part of my argument. By juxtaposing Livy's version of the secession narrative and Agrippa's fable with corresponding versions, we see various patterns emerging that are unique to Livy's presentation of the story, and that have consequences for our interpretation of the fable and of Menenius Agrippa. Unlike Plutarch's and Zonaras' versions,

Livy's version reveals more about the character of Menenius Agrippa and his function as a moral and civic *exemplum*. Nevertheless, he is more reticent than Dionysius, who fleshes out the senator in great detail, telling the reader exactly what he wants them to know about Agrippa. Instead, Livy reveals sparing details, preferring to let Agrippa's character speak through his words and overall effect on the political situation. Furthermore, unlike Dionysius' Agrippa, who is an accomplished and skilled politician and rhetorician, but not substantially or qualitatively unique or exemplary in a history peopled with similarly skilled rhetoricians, Livy's Agrippa stands out in the secession narrative for his ability to do what Valerius, Appius Claudius, and Sicinius could not: unite the people, at least temporarily.

Moreover, while Dionysius' Agrippa delivers many speeches to the people and to the senators, Livy's Agrippa only delivers one. He becomes an embodiment of the fable as a whole, but not in the faceless, anonymous way that he is in Plutarch's and Zonaras' renditions. Livy's Agrippa therefore strikes a middle ground between two extremes: Dionysius' account crafts Menenius Agrippa's character with as much detail and precision as possible, in a way that is consistent with his philosophy of history where all relevant information is provided for the reader, but that also sacrifices Agrippa's singularity and ambiguity as a character and his narrative function. Conversely, Plutarch's and Zonaras' versions of Agrippa tell us virtually nothing about him, such that he becomes the mouthpiece of the fable, but has no wider impact on the story and provides less material for interpretation. Livy's Agrippa is largely coextensive with the fable, but because of his explicit role in restoring harmony, and the fable's thematic congruity with the rest of Book 2, the depiction of Agrippa in *Ab urbe condita* lends itself to a more nuanced reading than any other author allows.

The structures of each historian's account also illustrate the distinctiveness with which Livy crafts his version. Dionysius' structure, a series of long speeches in the context of debates in the senate and among the people, immerses the reader in the full historical and political context of the secession, but lacks thematic clarity and unity that Livy's offers, as well as the emphasis on the fable and Agrippa. Plutarch's and Zonaras' versions are heavily condensed, serving more as addenda inherited from their sources and the historiographical tradition of early Roman history. Thematic unity is not their concern, especially for Plutarch, whose chief scholarly objective as a biographer is a moralizing, instructive picture of Coriolanus specifically. Livy's stated philosophy of history, however, involved a series of moral *exempla* to educate and challenge his readers. He does not present these in a mechanical, artificial way, but with literary flourish; as such, an artful and refined presentation is of paramount importance to him.

As a result of this, Livy structures his episodes in a neat and contained manner that brings them into contact with one another and juxtaposes them, and we see his technique at play in the secession story. Below is a brief summary of how Livy's structure reinforces the story's meaning:

1. The centurion's story and Agrippa's fable bookend the debt narrative, highlighting the body-politic motif inherent to both episodes.
2. The theme of *concordia* is never far removed from the fable (in fact, the word is used immediately before and immediately after Agrippa's speech) or separated from Menenius Agrippa himself, whose obituary in the section after the fable brings up *concordia* again.

3. The condensed retelling of the fable (relative to Dionysius' version) and narrower focus on food consumption connects the story to the wider context of Book 2, which is similarly occupied with food motifs, through the grain shortage the occurs immediately after the secession, and the subsequent controversies over the popular agarian laws. This keeps the fable closely linked to the rest of the book.
4. The compressed nature of the secession and the fable puts them into closer contact with the senate conflicts that precede them. This invites the two halves of the story to be compared in a way that Dionysius' version, because of its considerable length, and Plutarch's version, because of its even more compressed nature, do not.

The exclusive use of indirect discourse in Livy's account, furthermore, inextricably intertwines Agrippa's fable with the surrounding text, requiring the reader to interpret the speech as an extension of Agrippa's character and of the broader narrative. Dionysius' fable, which is entirely in direct speech, lends vividness to the analogy, but separates it from the surrounding context—one could feasibly read the speech in isolation from the story and still get most of the meaning, especially since Agrippa explains the meaning of the fable at the end of his speech. Plutarch's version involves a mixture of direct and indirect; the direct speech lays emphasis on Agrippa's explanation of the fable's lesson. The indirect discourse in which the fable itself is told does keep Plutarch's fable closely linked with the surrounding text, but this effect is muted by the lack of any explicit thematic or structural connections between the fable, which is mostly included as an add-on, and the rest of the story, which focuses on the figure of Coriolanus. As a result of all of this, we see that Livy, although working with the same material as other

historians, shapes and molds the material in a way that the others do not. Considering these elements and the ways they interact with one another and with the broader narrative in informative but challenging ways will be the task of the next chapter.

Chapter Two: The (In)applicability of Menenius Agrippa's fable in Livy's history

In the previous chapter, we saw how Livy's authorial techniques, especially when compared to those of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and other authors, make the fable and Menenius Agrippa thematically and structurally bound to the rest of the secession narrative that Livy adopted from his source material. This chapter focuses on how Livy's presentation of the fable in its context complicates the moral lessons that many scholars read into it.[1] By taking the fable in conversation with the developments before and after the secession, especially the establishment of the office of the tribunate, I argue that the analogy, however admirable and ideal its moral may be, fails to accurately symbolize both the causes and resolution of discord. While the basic claim about the fable's limited applicability can be made for the other historians as well, by building on my analysis from the previous chapter, I show that Livy's narratological and stylistic techniques emphasize the analogy's irrelevance and incongruity with the rest of the story in a way that the other writers do not. In particular, the disappearance of the debt problem from the narrative, Livy's emphasis on the senate's incompetence, and the evolution of the political constitution of the state after the secession all render the fable largely unreflective of the situation. As a result of this emphasis, Livy renders Menenius Agrippa's *exemplum* ambiguous in a fashion that is consistent with the rest of his exemplary project.

After he records the fable itself, Livy writes, while still in indirect statement, that by comparing the revolt of the body parts against the stomach to the plebeian secession, Menenius Agrippa was able to convince the plebeians to return to Rome: *comparando hinc quam intestina*

[1] Refer to the introduction for a summary of common scholarly interpretations of the fable.

corporis seditio similis esset irae plebis in patres, flexisse mentes hominum (Liv. 2.32.12).[2] Nevertheless, there are several key features of the episode that challenge the comparison. Like the proverbial dog that did not bark in the night, perhaps the most revealing detail is the one that is missing: the debt problem. The absence of any reference to the debt problem after the secession is striking, given the frequent emphasis Livy lays on it previously as the primary cause of unrest: *sed et bellum Volscum imminebat et civitas secum ipsa discors intestino inter patres plebemque flagrabat odio, maxime propter nexos ob aes alienum* (2.23.1).[3] Even if his sources were unhelpful on this point, Livy still made the choice to not include any explanation of the relevance of the fable or establishment of the tribunes as a suitable response to the problem that caused the crisis in the first place. This is in contrast to Dionysius of Halicarnassus; his Menenius Agrippa opens his speech to the plebeians by acknowledging the crisis will only be fully resolved if its cause is addressed, and promises universal debt forgiveness (Dion. *Rom*. *Ant*. 6.83.3-5), and in his account, the senate does, in fact, follow through on this guarantee (6.88.3). As Dionysius of Halicarnassus likely used the same annalistic sources for his history that Livy used, the absence of the debt problem in Livy's account becomes even more striking.[4] Cassius Dio's account is even more pointed. The fable in *Roman History* is framed in an explicitly economic lens, as the plebeians learn that the rich are able to use their wealth to help the dispossessed in times of need, as a result of which the whole state flourishes—an attitude that is not surprising, given that Dio was a senator himself (Zonaras 7.14). Livy's version of the story

[2] "By showing in this way how the internal sedition of the body was similar to the anger of the plebeians against the patricians, he changed their minds."
[3] "But a war with the Volscians was imminent, and the state, divided among itself, was brewing with internal animosity between the patricians and the plebeians, especially on account of the debt bondage."
[4] Oakley 2010, 118.

offers no such explanation of the relevance of the fable for the debt problem, or even how the debt problem was addressed.

In fact, Livy's account is the only one that does not clearly spell out the meaning of the fable at all. The closest he comes is by saying that the situation with the patricians and plebeians was similar (*similis*) to the revolt of the body against itself (*intestina corporis seditio*), but leaves it to the plebeians—and the readers—to figure out exactly what is being analogized to what. The other authors, conversely, explain the sociopolitical meaning of the fable for their readers. As I note in the previous chapter, Dionysius' Agrippa explains how the different parts of the body correspond to the different classes of people in the state, each with their own proper function, such as military, craftsmen, merchants, farmers, and, of course, the senate (Dion. *Rom*. *Ant*. 6.86.4). He warns the plebeians that if they continue in their revolt against the senate, the state will suffer in the same way the body does (6.86.4). Zonaras, too, identifies the precise meaning of the allegory in economic terms. Plutarch's Agrippa, likewise, tells the plebeians how the fable resembles their own circumstances: "Οὕτως οὖν," ἔφη, "καὶ τῆς συγκλήτου λόγος ἐστίν, ὦ πολῖται, πρὸς ὑμᾶς· τὰ γὰρ ἐκεῖ τυγχάνοντα τῆς προσηκούσης ἐπιμελείας καὶ οἰκονομίας βουλεύματα καὶ πράγματα πᾶσιν ὑμῖν ἐπιφέρει καὶ διανέμει τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ ὠφέλιμον" (Plut. *Cor*. 6.4).[5] Livy, however, leaves the exact meaning and application of the analogy open to the readers. He invites them to engage more fully than the other authors do in the interpretation of the episode, and to decide for themselves how—and if—the fable relates to the context in which

[5] "Such, then," he said "is the case of the senate for you, citizens. For there, the matters that it receives are deliberated with the necessary consideration and management and it sends to you all and apportions that which is beneficial and useful."

it is told. He thereby destabilizes the role of the fable in the story by leaving its function unaddressed.

Livy limits the applicability of the fable to its surrounding context in other ways, including with the content of the analogy itself. While he does not explain the meaning of the fable directly, the basic interpretation we are meant to divine is simple enough: the *venter* represents the senate, which nourishes and supports the rest of the state, and the other *partes* (specifically, the *manus*, *os*, and *dentes*) represent the plebeians who supply the patricians with the resources and manpower needed to maintain the state. Just as the misunderstanding of the body parts of the stomach's true role causes the weakening of the whole body, the plebeians' misunderstanding—according to the analogy—of the senate's function causes the breakdown of the whole state.

Under scrutiny, however, the dynamics of the conflict prior to the secession, as Livy presents them, do not correspond to the situation in the fable. For example, the fable treats the patricians and plebeians (represented by the stomach and the other parts, respectively) as monoliths. The parts conspire (*conspirasse*) in a unified, coordinated way to deprive the stomach of its sustenance: *conspirasse inde ne manus ad os cibum ferrent, nec os acciperet datum, nec dentes quae acciperent conficerent* (Liv. 2.32.10).[6] The actual secession, however, lacks this deliberate coordination, as Livy says that the plebeians assembled on the Sacred Mount were without any leader (*sine ullo duce*), a detail which he is the only historian to include (2.32.4). Furthermore, he makes a point of noting—and, once more, he is the only author who does so—that not all the plebeian class participated in the secession: *pavor ingens in urbe, metuque mutuo*

[6] "They began to conspire that the hands would not bring food to the mouth, nor would the mouth accept what was given to it, nor would the teeth chew what they accepted."

suspensa erant omnia. Timere relicta ab suis plebis violentiam patrum; timere patres residem in urbe plebem, incerti manere eam an abire mallent (2.32.5).[7] These details, while relatively minor, suggest that there are nuances to the secession and the circumstances surrounding it that the fable does not capture.[8]

The fable misrepresents the nature of the episode in other, more substantial ways. Livy—as well as the other historians—identify the cause of the body's revolt against the stomach as a misunderstanding of the stomach's function. When the body begins to waste away, and it becomes apparent that the stomach's role is, in fact, quite important, the body parts realize their error: *inde apparuisse ventris quoque haud segne ministerium esse* (2.32.11).[9] The fable in the other texts is similarly based on misunderstanding; in Plutarch's, for example, the stomach laughs at the other members for their ignorance: τὴν δὲ γαστέρα τῆς εὐηθείας αὐτῶν καταγελᾶν, ἀγνοούντων ὅτι τὴν τροφὴν ὑπολαμβάνει μὲν εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἅπασαν, ἀναπέμπει δ' αὖθις ἐξ αὐτῆς καὶ διανέμει τοῖς ἄλλοις (Plut. *Cor*. 6.3).[10] This misunderstanding has led scholars to read the cause of the secession itself as misperception; Daniel Kapust writes that "[i]t is the appearance of the parts not doing what they should do that promotes discord; that is, discord emerges as a result of discontent and dissatisfaction rooted in the perceived non-performance of duties."[11] As soon as the plebs recognize their place in the republic, Kapust continues, as well as that of the senate,

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[7] "There was great anxiety in the city, and from the mutual fear all things were suspended. The remaining plebeians, abandoned by their own, feared the patricians; the patricians feared the plebeians left in the city, uncertain whether they wanted them to stay or leave."
[8] The binary division between *plebeians* and *patricians* is itself a simplistic and problematic tendency in historiography that fails to account for the complexities of the socioeconomic composition of the Roman Republic. These nuances are beyond the scope of this thesis, but for an in-depth discussion of what constituted the "plebeian" and "patrician" classes, cf. Cornell 1995, 246-258.
[9] "Then it became clear that the duty of the stomach was hardly useless either"
[10] "The stomach, however, laughed at their ignorance, for not knowing that it received nourishment from all of them, but then sent it back out again and distributed it to the others."
[11] Kapust 2011, 109

and especially when they recognize the virtuous behavior the senate exemplifies, they rejoin the civic community.[12]

At this point, some broader discussion of Agrippa's rhetoric in his speech is warranted, as the content of the analogy is not the invention of Livy, Plutarch, or any of the other historians, and Agrippa occupies an oratorical context that is distinct from Livy's historiographical intentions. Agrippa's choice to identify the senate with the stomach is striking. Given that the senate served as the main government institution in the early Republic, we might intuitively expect it to be analogized to the head, especially since, as Julia Mebane comments, "Romans assigned the head a privileged place in the hierarchy of the human body, associating it with the reasoning faculties, using it as a symbol of citizenship, and describing capital cities as *capita*."[13] In ancient literature more broadly, the stomach is generally associated with unthinking greed, desire, and excess; in Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, Odysseus calls the stomach "a whining dog" that "begs and forces one to notice it" (*Od*. 7.216-217).[14]

By identifying the senate with the stomach and not the head, Menenius Agrippa accomplishes three things. One, assigning the senate's role to the stomach is reflective of Roman anxieties about monarchy. The comparison to the stomach allows the senate to have a critical role in the state, without the autocratic associations that the head carries.[15] Given that the first secession occurred barely fifteen years after the abolition of the monarchy, Agrippa's choice is a savvy and diplomatic one. Two, in identifying the senate with the stomach, and ascribing to the senate the characteristics the body parts see in the belly—namely, greed and laziness—he seems

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[12] Ibid.
[13] Mebane 2017, 3.
[14] Emily Wilson's translation. See also 17.287-288.
[15] Mebane 2017, 3.

to validate the plebeians' view of the situation; the analogy thus acts as a *captatio benevolentiae* and secures the plebeians' goodwill, no doubt reinforced by Agrippa's folksy manner of speaking. Three, by revealing the critical role that the stomach plays in the body, Agrippa engages in what Bruce Lincoln calls "dramatic imagery reversals," whereby the plebeians' initial perception is, almost literally, turned on its head.[16] In the context of the secession itself, independent of any historian's description of it, Agrippa's speech is rhetorically effective in persuading the plebeians and correcting their misunderstanding.

However, while the fable suggests that the cause of the plebeians' discontent and rebellion was their misapprehension and misrecognition of the senate's role, this assessment is incomplete, and it is here that Agrippa's rhetorical intentions and Livy's presentation of history diverge. While the fable emphasizes the stomach's usefulness, in his description of the events leading to the secession, Livy emphasizes just how incompetently the patricians mishandled the situation. While the *partes* of the fable revolt because of their ignorance, the plebeians revolt because of the senate's continued abuse, subterfuge, and misconduct. The *venter* contributes nothing to the *seditio*, and instead is passively prevented from receiving its nourishment through no fault of its own. Conversely, Livy presents the senate as at least partially responsible for the secession. The straw that breaks the camel's back and triggers the revolt, after all, is the senate's attempt to levy the plebeians under the false claim of an attack from the Aequi: *per causam renovati ab Aequis belli educi ex urbe legiones iussere. Quo facto maturata est seditio* (Liv. 2.32.1).[17] The cause of the unrest from the very beginning, furthermore, is the physical abuse the

[16] Lincoln 1992, 147.
[17] "Under the pretext of another war from the Aequi they ordered the legions to be led from the city. From this, the sedition came to a head."

plebeians experienced from their creditors, symbolized by the injured centurion (2.23.3-8). Unlike the stomach, which performs important, but misunderstood, duties, the patricians abuse and misapply the duties that they have.

Moreover, in the prelude to the secession, the senate is hardly the functional, vital organ that its comparison to the *venter* would indicate. Instead, Livy portrays it as a largely inept body that is torn apart by factional politics and internal disagreements. From the very beginning of the debt crisis, Livy emphasizes that the senators were unable to come to any conclusion about how to proceed: *frequentique tandem curia non modo inter patres sed ne inter consules quidem ipsos satis conveniebat* (2.23.14).[18] The aggressive Appius Claudius and his colleague, the incapable Servilius, remain at odds with each other for the remainder of their term of office, including for matters unrelated to the debt problem, like the dedication of a temple (2.27.5-6). Their successors the following year fare no better; after the plebeians begin holding their own meetings at night, some of the senators openly question the ability of the new consuls to lead (2.28.3-4). At one point, the younger senators swarm the consuls' chairs and demand their resignation (2.28.9). Shortly after this, after quelling a riot by the plebeians, the session devolves into a chaotic shouting match (2.29.5). The historian reserves his harshest criticism for Appius Claudius, writing that his inflammatory nature and personal ambition are civically harmful: *medium maxime et moderatum utroque consilium Vergini habebatur; sed factione respectuque rerum privatarum, quae semper offecere officientque publicis consiliis, Appius vicit, ac prope fuit ut dictator ille idem crearetur* (2.30.1-3).[19] Far from being the useful and critical organ that the

[18] "Nevertheless, when the chamber was full, not only was there disagreement among the senators, but not even the consuls themselves, in fact, could agree."
[19] "The most moderate and reasonable opinion of the two was thought to be that of Verginius; but because of factionalism and regard for personal interests, which always hinder and will continue to hinder public affairs, Appius won, and it nearly happened that he was appointed dictator himself."

stomach is in the body (the stomach is described as *haud segne*), the senate clearly exacerbates the unrest.

To be sure, Livy is no popular sympathizer. As an elite Roman, ideologically he tends to support the senate.[20] In fact, according to Walsh, there are times where Livy omits details that paint the senate in a negative light. The Greek historian Polybius reveals occasions of the senate reneging on promises regarding issues of foreign policy, which Livy fails to mention.[21] Similarly, after the disastrous Battle of Lake Trasimene in the Second Punic War, Livy "depicts the *terror ac tumultus* of the common folk, but says that the Senate was coolly deliberating measures to meet the emergency," although Polybius states that both the senate and people were in a state of panic.[22] The prelude to the first secession, however, is no such instance. The senators are emotional, capricious, and ineffectual and aggravate the crisis through their subterfuge and partisanship. This depiction is thrown into sharp relief with the idealized role of the senate, symbolized by the stomach in the fable.

Moreover, while the other authors acknowledge the effect of the senate's deadlock and division on the situation, they downplay its extremity. Dionysius makes note of the hostility between Appius Claudius and Servilius (Dion. *Rom*. *Ant*. 6.27.1), as well as the general tumult in the chamber, such as the younger senators aggressively rushing the consuls (6.39.1). However, Dionysius downplays and even justifies Appius Claudius' assertiveness, writing: ὅ τε γὰρ ἴδιος αὐτοῦ βίος ὁ καθ᾽ ἡμέραν σώφρων καὶ σεμνὸς ἦν, ἥ τε προαίρεσις τῶν πολιτευμάτων εὐγενὴς καὶ τὸ ἀξίωμα σώζουσα τῆς ἀριστοκρατίας (6.59.1).[23] Dionysius' Appius Claudius also never

[20] von Albrecht 1997, 860.
[21] Walsh 1961, 152.
[22] Ibid.
[23] "His personal life was moderate, sober, and reasonable, and his purpose for political engagement was noble and intended to preserve the class of the aristocracy."

offers the extreme suggestion of executing citizens who assault public officials, as he does in Livy's account. Furthermore, the fact that the senate, via Menenius Agrippa, does eventually address the debt issue and promise to resolve it once and for all lends some credibility to the idea that the senate is a productive and salutary institution. Likewise, Cassius Dio notes that the patricians' behavior contributed to the crisis: πλείστων γοῦν δεινῶν τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις αἰτία ἡ τότε τῶν δυνατωτέρων πρὸς τοὺς ὑποδεεστέρους ἀκρίβεια γέγονεν (Zonaras 7.14).[24] Like Dionysius, however, Dio validates the senate's role, at least in part, when he reports that the senate voted to forgive the plebeians' debts. Plutarch, similarly, mentions the senate's reneging on its promise to cancel the debts (Plut. *Cor*. 5.3) and their general inability to agree on a solution (6.1), but the references are quite abbreviated. The intense hostility and dysfunction that characterize the senate in Livy's version are absent, as well as the active deception of the plebeians that was the immediate trigger of the secession.

The final way that Livy undermines the fable's relevance in his telling of the story is through the resolution of the unrest. While the fable does not explicitly say if the body recovered from its *tabes*, it is reasonable to assume that once the other parts realized the stomach's importance, they resumed their normal duties of feeding the stomach, and the body's original health was restored. This is not how the secession is resolved. Although Agrippa's fable changes the plebeians' minds (*flexisse mentes hominum*), they do not simply return to Rome, suddenly content with their place in the civic hierarchy. They negotiate their return to the city through the establishment of the office of plebeian tribunes: *agi deinde de concordia coeptum, concessumque in condiciones ut plebi sui magistratus essent sacrosancti quibus auxilii latio adversus consules*

[24] "At any rate, the strictness of the powerful towards the poor was the reason for many of the misfortunes that happened to the Romans."

esset, neve cui patrum capere eum magistratum liceret (Liv. 2.33.1).[25] Only plebeians could occupy this office, of which there were originally five, and by 457 BCE, ten.[26]

The creation of the plebeian tribunate dramatically altered the political landscape of the Roman Republic. Tribunes had the ability to veto senatorial decrees, as well as other tribunes, and they were able to convene plebeian assemblies and submit bills.[27] By 449 BCE, after the passage of the Valerio-Horatian laws in the aftermath of the second plebeian secession, legislation ratified by the plebeian council (*concilium plebis*) was binding on the entire Roman state.[28] Plebeians had the right to appeal to the office for protection against punishment, and the tribunes were also able to arrest senators and consuls.[29] Finally, and perhaps most significantly, they enjoyed, as Livy mentions, legal and religious sacrosanctity; to physically harm a tribune was a capital crime.[30] By Livy's lifetime in the late Republic, the tribunate had become an especially powerful and influential position, occupied by unorthodox politicians like the Gracchi brothers and Publius Clodius Pulcher. Many of the conservative constitutional reforms enacted by the dictator Lucius Sulla in the 80s BCE were aimed squarely at stripping the tribunes of their legal power (*tribunicia potestas*), demonstrating the profound effect the office had on the political composition of the Republic.

The establishment of the tribunate has consequences for understanding the relevance of the fable in Livy's history. The fable is emblematic of the status quo; each part has a job to do,

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[25] "Then, they began an undertaking to restore harmony, and it was agreed that the plebeians would have their own sacrosanct magistrates by whom one might get help against the consuls, and it would not be allowed for any of the senators to hold this office."
[26] Cornell 1995, 259.
[27] Russell 2021, 260.
[28] There is some disagreement over whether the law that made plebiscites binding on the entire state was passed as part of the Valerio-Horatian laws in 449 BCE, or the *Lex Hortensia* in 287 BCE, due to the fact that nearly identical laws were passed in both these years. Cornell 1995, pp. 277-278 offers a possible solution to the discrepancy.
[29] Russell 2021, 260.
[30] Ibid.

and while their functions are momentarily suspended during the *seditio*, the implication is that once the parts realize their mistake, they resume their functions as they did before. Other than being temporarily interrupted, the nature of the body's health does not change in quality, nor do the functions of the organs themselves. The creation of the tribunate, however, changes the legal and political constitution of the Republic, because it marks the beginning of the participation of the plebeian class in the political process. This increased participation culminated in 367 BCE, when the Licinio-Sextian laws finally granted plebeians access to the highest office, the consulship.[31] While Martin Breaugh's boldly optimistic claim that "plebeian freedom and equality reigned in the Eternal City" after the establishment of the tribunate almost certainly overstates things, the plebeian tribunes muted, over time, the strict hierarchies visible between the classes before the first secession.[32] The fable fails to analogize this process, or even allow for it to be analogized at all; to extend the comparison a bit, the creation of the tribunes is tantamount to adding an entirely new organ to the body that did not exist before.

The tribunate as a solution for the secession is also qualitatively different from the solution of the *seditio* of the parts of the body. The solution to the body's revolt rests on correction of the misperception that caused it; as Kapust writes, when the parts recognize the proper role of the stomach, they cease their rebellion, and, likewise, when the plebeians recognize the goodwill and virtuous behavior of the patricians, they stop their secession.[33] The fable thus reifies the mutual benevolence that is necessary for Roman republicanism, and that is

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[31] Cornell 1995, 334.
[32] Breaugh 2007, 10. By the late Republic, plebeians had become fully incorporated into the dominant class of Roman politics; Marcus Crassus, before he had molten gold unceremoniously poured down his throat, was the wealthiest man in Rome and a close ally of Julius Caesar, and was from a plebeian family.
[33] Kapust 2011, 109. "Concord emerges through action and perception, and the republic is bound together in a community based on shared values and their recognition."

essential for Livy's conception of *concordia*.[34] Mineo agrees, arguing that the fable represents the virtuous behavior of the patricians and the masses that is necessary for social cohesion.[35] The tribunate, however, represents antagonism; Livy, as well as the other historians, explains that its existence was explicitly to provide the plebeians with protection against the abuses of the patricians (*auxilii latio adversus consules esset*).

Such antagonism was a feature of Roman republicanism; according to Julia Mebane, political disagreement and difference was "a cornerstone of republican thought," especially in Ciceronian political theory, to which Livy's is often compared.[36] Cicero, Mebane continues, "like his contemporaries, considered the struggle between different elements of society to be the essence of the political process."[37] Ann Vasaly, likewise, notes instances where Livy suggests that such discord, and the potential for discord, is, in fact, *necessary* for the maintenance of *libertas*; in the aftermath of the second secession and passage of the Valerio-Horatian laws, for example, Livy approves of the reinstitution of the tribunate after the decemvirate had abolished it, despite the potential for unrest that the office created.[38] Indeed, as Vasaly comments, Rome's mixed constitution "practically guaranteed such discord, since its strength"—namely, its system of checks and balances among its component parts—"is also its weakness, allowing each constituent group to obstruct the ability of the others to act effectively."[39] The fable does not represent this antagonism in a substantive way at all; in fact, the dynamic Vasaly describes is the opposite of the fable, because when the parts block the ability of the stomach, the entire system

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[34] Ibid., 108.
[35] Mineo 2015, 131. See pp. 8-9 of the introduction for a summary of Mineo's interpretation.
[36] Mebane, 2017, 39. For a comparison of Cicero's and Livy's political thought, cf. Kapust 2011, 83.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Vasaly 2015, 109. For more discussion of the necessity of discord for civic harmony, cf. Connolly 2015, pp. 35-36 and Vasaly pp. 111-116.
[39] Ibid., 135.

collapses. While the conspiracy of the parts against the stomach is certainly antagonistic, it is based on their ignorance of the stomach's role, and, assuming they resume their responsibilities, it is temporary. The *tabes* is not presented as a feature of the body's health, but an aberration that needs to be corrected.

While these remarks about the limited helpfulness of the fable in light of the establishment of the tribunate could be made of the other texts as well, they are especially applicable to Livy, because of the close structural and thematic link he draws between the tribunate and the fable. He links the two events not just by their proximity in the text (Agrippa ends his fable, and the tribunes are brought up in the sentence immediately following), but also by their connection as historical events. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, conversely, after Agrippa ends his fable, does not discuss the creation of the office until well into the following section (Dion. *Rom*. *Ant*. 6.87.3), and their specific powers are not enumerated until two sections later (6.89.2-3).

Livy also joins the fable and the tribunate thematically via *concordia*. *Concordia* is of central importance to the historian throughout the entirety of *AUC*, and it bookends the episode. He introduces the debt problem by referring to the unrest (*discors*) it created: *discors intestino inter patres plebemque flagrabat odio* (2.23.1). When the plebeians secede, and immediately before the fable is recounted, Livy intimates the senate's desire to restore *concordia* by any means necessary: *nullam profecto nisi in concordia civium spem reliquam ducere; eam per aequa, per iniqua reconciliandam civitati esse* (2.32.7).[40] He prefaces the creation of the tribunes by framing it as the restoration of *concordia* (2.33.1). When Menenius Agrippa dies the year after

[40] "[They thought] indeed that no hope remained for the citizens except in *concordia*; and that this needed to be reconciled to the state either by favorable or unfavorable means."

the secession, Livy honors him as the restorer of civic harmony (*concordiae civium* 2.33.11). By putting the fable and the tribunate in close connection to each other, both in their proximity in the text, and thematically, Livy juxtaposes the idealized *concordia* in the fable, which is based on goodwill, and the *concordia* of the tribunate, which presupposes antagonism. This juxtaposition demonstrates even further how the fable and its lesson provide only an incomplete picture of the situation. *Concordia*, for Livy, may indeed involve the harmonious cooperation of the parts of the state, each of them engaged in a benevolent spirit of compromise for the sake of the public welfare—this is the *concordia* that the fable represents, as Kapust, Mineo and others helpfully demonstrate. *Concordia*, however, is more than this; while it may not *include* antagonism and conflict, they all can and do exist concurrently in a healthy state. *Concordia*, consequently, is more unstable and ephemeral than the fable suggests; shortly after the secession ends, discord returns to Rome in the figure of the general Coriolanus.

Now that I have outlined the ways that Livy's use of the fable in its context is limited and incomplete, where does this leave us? What, exactly, is the historian doing with the analogy? In the final part of this chapter, I argue that these limitations I have pointed out are significant for what they reveal about Menenius Agrippa as an *exemplum*, and, more broadly, Livy's historical methods. Scholarship surrounding the fable tends to pay more attention to the fable itself, and less to the person delivering it, but as I argue in the previous chapter, Livy's presentation of the entire debt saga, especially when compared to the other historians, foregrounds the impact of characters like Agrippa on the unfolding narrative. As I note previously, Livy's depiction of the senator differs from the other historians. Unlike Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who tells us everything we could ever want to know about Agrippa, Livy is far more sparing. Conversely,

unlike Plutarch and Cassius Dio, who tell us virtually nothing at all beyond Agrippa's name, Livy does give us some material to work with. He clearly presents the senator as an *exemplum*. He emphasizes his eloquence (*facundum virum*) and the fact that he was popular with the plebeians.[41] When Agrippa dies, Livy marks the event with a death notice, something he does very rarely, and generally only for the most exemplary figures.[42] In fact, in all of Book 2, only three figures receive obituaries, all of whom played some role in shaping *libertas*: Lucius Junius Brutus, who was instrumental in overthrowing the kings and establishing the republic (2.7.8); Valerius Publicola, who, during his sole consulship, expanded the rights and power of the people (2.16.7); and, of course, Agrippa himself. In Agrippa's death notice, the historian calls attention to Agrippa's poverty, citing his inability to pay for his own funeral, a distinction Agrippa shares with Publicola.[43] More importantly, Livy deems Agrippa a creator of civic harmony. Livy certainly approves of these aspects of Agrippa's character, and his status as an *exemplum* seems secure.

What, however, do we make of Menenius Agrippa's exemplarity in light of the substantial limitations of his fable? Livy may very well agree with the basic premise of the fable; in a perfect world, the parts of the state would cooperate harmoniously as the parts of the body do. As a model of conduct, it is noble enough, but as a reflection of the situation—which it is purported to be (*similis esset*)—it really has no leg to stand on. What does this say about Agrippa himself? Perhaps he truly believes the fable is an accurate reflection of the situation, and that its moral really is attainable, in which case he is rather naïve and uncritical. Alternatively, he

[41] For Menenius Agrippa as an oratorical *exemplum*, cf. Pieper 2016.
[42] Cf. Pomeroy 1988.
[43] Ibid., 173.

recognizes its inapplicability and impossibility, but nonetheless uses it as a persuasive tool to convince the plebeians to cooperate, in which case he is conniving and condescending. Perhaps it is a combination of these two; it is not uncommon for politicians of all stripes to be idealistic while also engaging in realpolitik maneuvering to persuade and even manipulate others to achieve certain ends. Regardless of his beliefs on the matter, the senator is either intentionally or unintentionally misrepresenting the situation; in Livy, misrepresentation of the past or the present is often associated with negative *exempla*.[44] Livy does not tell us what to think or which judgment to make, nor does he reveal what he thinks. Instead, the effect of the fable's political limitations on Menenius Agrippa as a moral *exemplum* is a question Livy leaves open, and that, I argue, is the whole point.

This difficulty that I have identified in reading Agrippa's character is a product of Livy's wider tendency as an author to introduce moral and interpretive ambiguity into his history. Agrippa is clearly an exemplary figure, but there is more complexity, nuance, and uncertainty to his character than that; this does not undermine his exemplarity, but, in fact, is *part* of his exemplarity. Livy does the same with other *exempla*. Joseph Solodow, for example, in his essay on the Horatius episode from Book 1, where Horatius defeats the Curiatii in battle, but then murders his own sister, focuses "on the absence of clarity and on the resulting complexity of moral judgment" that the event involves.[45] Solodow points out how the architecture of Livy's version of the account, especially when compared with Dionysius, exacerbates the moral

[44] Chaplin 2000, 82.
[45] Solodow 1979, 251.

uncertainty, by juxtaposing two competing halves of Horatius—his patriotism and his tendency towards sororicide—with one another.[46]

Likewise, Timothy Moore asserts that, despite the moralizing purpose of Livy's historical project, "Livy disappoints this expectation of moral clarity throughout his narrative."[47] As evidence of Livy's complicated approach to morality, Moore cites the examples of Lucius Junius Brutus, who founded the Republic but executed his own sons for treason; Scipio Africanus, who saved the Republic from annihilation during the Second Punic War but set a dangerous precedent for future military leaders like Sulla and Julius Caesar; and especially the Carthaginian general Hannibal, who posed an existential threat to Rome during the same war, and is a decidedly negative *exemplum*, but still possessed many traits that Romans would have associated with positive exemplarity.[48] Of course, Menenius Agrippa is a bit less extreme of an example—he did not, as far as we are told, murder any family members or lead an army against Rome. Furthermore, it is possible to overstate the prevalence of ambiguity in Livy's history, and identify complexity where there need not be any; sometimes a cigar is just a cigar, and sometimes a good or bad *exemplum* is just a good or bad *exemplum*.[49] Nevertheless, Livy's inclination towards obscuring the clarity of his narrative is evident in the Menenius Agrippa episode.[50] This point is strengthened by comparison with the other authors. Livy could have portrayed Agrippa's character differently. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, as I have noted previously, fleshes out his character in great detail, such that there is little room for ambiguity or interpretation. We may

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[46] Ibid., 255.
[47] Moore 2010, 135.
[48] Ibid., 135-137.
[49] Sextus Tarquinius, for example, who raped Lucretia and brought about the fall of the monarchy, is an unambiguously negative *exemplum* with no redeeming qualities.
[50] For more on Livy's use of ambiguity in his *exempla*, cf. Vasaly 2015, 38; Kraus 1994, 13-15; Chaplin 2000, 137-167; Stevenson 2011, 176.

certainly detect some condescension when Agrippa tells the plebeians that they are an ignorant mob who must be ruled.[51] The difference, however, is that whatever condescension or negative qualities Dionysius' Agrippa has are clearly broadcasted to the reader. Conversely, Plutarch and Cassius Dio tell us almost nothing at all about him; we are unable to form an opinion about his character because there is not much of a character at all. Livy's Agrippa sits somewhere in the middle of these extremes: the historian gives us enough material to form a judgment, but not so much that we are pushed one way or another.

In doing so, Livy involves the reader in the interpretive process of history, a topic that is of particular interest among scholars of Livy, and what Dennis Pausch has termed "the involved reader" ('*der involvierte Leser*').[52] As Michael von Albrecht helpfully summarizes, "the portraits of individual figures…are not free from internal contradictions. In the judgment of his characters, Livy 'guides' his readers" but allows them to come to their own conclusions.[53] In the words of Mary Jaeger, moreover, "Livy constructs a model reader, who does not play a passive role…this reader participates in constructing the meaning of the text and decodes its various rhetorical gestures."[54] It is for this reason that the historian often offers variant accounts of the same event—for example, the death of Remus in Book 1—and leaves it to the readers to determine which version is more plausible.[55] So too, in the Menenius Agrippa episode, the value of the *exemplum* is not as clear or straightforward as it appears at first blush. Its purpose and meaning are left open to the reader, and it is up to them to construct it. This reader involvement and the interpretive ambiguity Livy infuses into the episode give the Menenius Agrippa story a

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[51] ἀμαθὲς πλῆθος (Dion. Hal. *Rom*. *Ant*. 6.85.1).
[52] Pausch 2011, 191–250, and *passim*.
[53] von Albrecht 1997, 858-859.
[54] Jaeger 1997, 28.
[55] For more on reader involvement in Livy's history, cf. Pausch 2011; Roth 2010; and Tsitsiou-Chelidoni 2009.

distinctly Livian flair, and turn the otherwise commonplace fable into an extension of his wider literary technique and historical methods.

Conclusion: Reassessing Menenius Agrippa's Fable

In a letter to his friend Nepos, the lawyer and author Pliny the Younger tells the story of a man who so admired the writings of Livy that he made the long journey from his home in Gades (modern-day Cádiz in Andalusia) all the way to Italy just to see the famous historian. Upon his arrival at Rome, as soon as he saw Livy, the man, now satisfied, immediately turned around and went back to Spain.[1] The anecdote, although likely apocryphal, nevertheless demonstrates the distinguished celebrity Livy enjoyed during his lifetime and afterwards. His wide-ranging intellectual legacy is a testament: his influence can be detected in ancient texts like Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, Silius Italicus' *Punica*, Cassius Dio's *Roman History*, and St. Augustine's *Confessions*.[2] Later on, *Ab urbe condita* served as the source material for Niccolò Machiavelli's work of political philosophy, *Discourses on Livy*. Thomas Jefferson admired the historian, and even remarked that Livy provided a better model for speeches than Cicero did.[3] Some of Livy's influence, however, has been far more pernicious; Nazi educational reforms in 1938 incorporated Livy—among other ancient authors, including Plato, Caesar, Sallust, Vergil, Cicero, and Tacitus—into school curricula specifically to inculcate ideas of racial and cultural superiority in German youth.[4] In his preface, Livy encourages his readers to learn from the good and the bad of history; his own reception demonstrates that the consequences of doing so can be as inspiring as they are tragic.

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[1] *Numquamne legisti, Gaditanum quendam Titi Livi nomine gloriaque commotum ad visendum eum ab ultimo terrarum orbe venisse, statimque ut viderat abisse?* "Haven't you ever read about a certain man from Gades, who, inspired by the name and fame of Titus Livius, came to see him from the farthest reaches of the earth, and as soon as he had seen him, immediately went home?" (Plin. *Ep*. 2.3).
[2] Ridley 2010, 537.
[3] Wright 1943, 228.
[4] Chapoutot 2016, 135.

Despite his renown, Livy's historical methods have earned him criticism from latter-day observers who subscribe to a modern "scientific" view of history that is grounded in a supposedly objective collection of facts, unencumbered by ideological or moral preconceptions. Certainly, there is no shortage of criticisms to be made. His moralizing, exemplary approach to history has led some, like Walsh, to claim that he is uninterested in broader historical and social developments.[5] Livy's use of sources is inconsistent and occasionally careless, and he will sometimes inattentively reduplicate errors from his earlier sources.[6] Like other Roman historians, his status as an elite Roman male can bias his interpretation of events, particularly those involving slaves, women, or non-Roman foreigners—although some commentators credit Livy with holding a greater degree of impartiality than his contemporaries.[7] Unlike Tacitus and Sallust, who were senators with extensive political experience and access to government records, or Suetonius who served as the head archivist of the senatorial archives, Livy was not a politician, and his sophistication, relative to these historians, in analyzing political phenomena has come under scrutiny.[8] Similarly, as far as we can tell, he never served in the military, as a result of which "he is guilty of geographical errors and factual mistakes on military matters."[9] Certainly by contemporary standards of historical analysis, Livy leaves a lot to be desired.[10]

Livy's talent and value, however, lie in his ability to expertly craft a narrative that is as intellectually challenging as it is artful and compelling. Livy's *exempla* are not simple, just-so children's stories to be read and then subsequently forgotten, but complex episodes that require

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[5] Walsh 1961, 164.
[6] Ibid., 143-144.
[7] Ibid., 273. Cf. Bittarello 2009, Bernard 2015, and Joly 2022 for discussions of Livy's depiction of foreigners, enslaved people, and other marginalized figures.
[8] Ibid., 163.
[9] Ibid., 139.
[10] Cf. Lendon 2009 for a spirited rebuttal of what Lendon perceives as an overemphasis on the historiographical deficiencies of Roman historians like Livy.

careful attention and thought; after all, in his preface he asks the reader to earnestly direct their minds to the individuals and morals his history covers, but nowhere does he say that this will ever be easy. The Menenius Agrippa episode that this thesis analyzes is a particularly instructive example. When read at face value, the fable appears to be a relevant and appropriate analogy for the situation, and Menenius Agrippa appears to be a straightforward *exemplum*. As I argue in this thesis, however, when read in its context, and especially with attention towards Livy's narrative technique, the fable's purpose becomes far more opaque. As a result of this, Menenius Agrippa, while still clearly an exemplary figure, assumes a more ambiguous dimension. The effect of the fable's limited applicability on how we are to understand Agrippa's character is a question Livy leaves for us to decide.

Based on this argument, I offer three conclusions. The first is a warning against removing episodes from their context. This is the same conclusion Jane Chaplin arrives at, noting that while analyzing individual episodes "is understandable, valid, and productive," abstracting stories like that of Menenius Agrippa from their surroundings risks failing to understand Livy's "history as a coherent whole."[11] This does not mean that isolating *exempla* and adapting them to suit particular rhetorical purposes is wrong or unhelpful; in fact, the Romans frequently used *exempla* in exactly this way, and facility with an array of extracted exemplary stories was a core part of oratorical training. Doing so, however, necessitates an awareness of the context from which the episode is isolated, and recognition of the potential for a different interpretation of episodes when taken in context. Reading Menenius Agrippa's speech simply as a detached meditation on the harmony of the individual parts of a state is all well and good, but when taken

[11] Chaplin 2003, 211.

into conversation with the rest of the secession narrative, another view emerges. Chaplin connects the Menenius Agrippa story to the wider framework of Book 2, by drawing parallels of structure and theme between the fable and the Coriolanus episode. I take this a step further and apply the consequences of this contextualization to Menenius Agrippa's character. The senator himself has received far less attention in scholarship than his fable has, and this thesis provides a new perspective on a largely overlooked figure.

The second conclusion my analysis provides is that the Menenius Agrippa story reveals how carefully and deliberately Livy constructs his history and complicates even the most seemingly simple moments. The Menenius Agrippa episode lacks the clear moral weight and urgency of *exempla* like Brutus, Horatius, Scipio, or Hannibal. It is also quite short; Menenius Agrippa gets very little airtime relative to most other *exempla*. In other words, Livy *could* have adopted the story of the secession and the fable from his source material into his own history and then left it there, without introducing any additional twists or uncertainties. This is, after all, what Cassius Dio and Plutarch do with the fable. Instead, Livy refuses to make even his briefest *exempla* easy. In addition to warning us against divorcing *exempla* from their context, he challenges us to adopt multifaceted and nuanced conclusions about the lessons of his narrative, conclusions that are sensitive to moral and political complications.

The third conclusion I offer is an alternative explanation of the fable's lesson. The previous chapter destabilizes and challenges the moral of Menenius Agrippa's fable as it is traditionally conceived. I note that Livy's literary presentation of the narrative, and his ambiguous portrayal of Agrippa, invites the reader to assist in constructing the didactic purpose of the episode, but I have not yet volunteered my own interpretation of what exactly that purpose

is. If the fable does not represent the parts of the state harmoniously cooperating with one another, then what does it represent? If Menenius Agrippa is not the straightforward, unambiguously positive *exemplum* that he seems, then what is he? I propose that to answer these questions, we might think about Livy biographically. Trying to reconstruct the psychological motivations of an individual two thousand years removed from us, and who occupied a cultural and philosophical system radically different from our own, is inherently dangerous business, especially since the relevant books of *Ab urbe condita* that detail Rome's more recent history, through his own lifetime, have been lost. Nevertheless, Livy gives us some hints. In the preface, he remarks that the study of history provides solace for the multiplicity of tragedies, changes, and unrest Rome had experienced during his lifetime: *ego contra hoc quoque laboris praemium petam, ut me a conspectu malorum quae nostra tot per annos vidit aetas…avertam* (*praef*. 5).[12] Shortly before and during Livy's life, Rome witnessed decades of near constant civil war, first between Marius and Sulla, then Julius Caesar and Pompey, and finally Augustus and Marcus Antonius; violent fighting between the rival *optimates* and *populares* political factions; and ultimately the total collapse of the republican order and the establishment of a radically different system of government under Augustus.

For this generation of Romans, the fable's neat, romantic lesson about the parts of the republic happily working together for the common good may very well have seemed far too facile and unrealistic in a world gone mad. Instead, the inapplicability of the fable in history is a useful reminder that civic harmony need not be neat and stable; maybe harmony, paradoxically, can be disharmonious and precarious. *Concordia* is messy, unstable, filled with latent tensions,

[12] "I, on the other hand, also will seek this reward for my labors, that I might…turn myself away from viewing the evils which our generation has witnessed for so many years."

circumstance-dependent, and must be constantly negotiated. For Livy and his generation, who had witnessed the failure of the republican system, and for whom the future under the new principate was still uncertain, this vision of *concordia* may have seemed much more attainable and realistic. Likewise, politicians like Menenius Agrippa, rather than being insipid, one-dimensional figures, can affect positive social and political change while still harboring moral complexities. This type of ambiguous *exemplum* may have seemed far more applicable and relevant for a period of history peopled with individuals like Augustus, who brought much needed stability to Rome, but at the cost of countless lives and the dramatic expansion of the imperialist project.

Of course, Livy does not tell us any of this. His own thoughts about the meaning of the text and the events it describes are ultimately unknowable, but he still leaves clues and guides us, and that is his great talent as a historian. Rather than giving us easy answers, Livy requires us to encounter history's limitations, reconsider our first impressions, and rethink our assumptions about its lessons. In short, Livy forces us to think hard. If the study of history is, as he suggests in the preface, a medicine for social ills that is healthful and beneficial,[13] it is a healthful but demanding remedy indeed.

[13] *salubre ac frugiferum* (*praef.* 10)

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