

Monumental Palatine

In his preface, Livy writes: *hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri, Praef. 10* (“what is particularly salubrious and profitable in the consideration of history is that you look upon the proofs of every *exemplum* set on a conspicuous *monumentum*”). *Monumentum* can have a range of meanings, including tombs, temples, ruins, trophies, geographic features and other physical landmarks, and even written documents (Jaeger: 1997; Miles: 1995; Wiseman: 1979). Their basic function is “for the sake of memory” but also to remind (*monere*) as Varro says (*LL* 6.49). In this function they both connect and separate the viewer from the past; a *monumentum* brings to mind the event(s) to which it was commemorated but also clearly marks a temporal difference, though with a force of timelessness included. It should be visible and evoke significant sentiments for groups as a whole.

In his preface to Book 6, Livy acknowledges the difficulties of relying on writing as *monumenta* for the earliest portions of Roman history: *parvae et rariae per eadem tempora litterae fuere, una custodia fidelis memoriae rerum gestarum, 6.1.2* (“written records concerning those times were few and far between, the one reliable guardian of the memory of history”). So too public and private monuments are less useful (*publicis privatisque...monumentis, 1.2*) as they were lost when the city was burned. Even where physical remains do exist for distant antiquity, they are not necessarily trustworthy, as Livy shows in his discussion of Cornelius Cossus’ *spolia opima* (4.20.5-11; Sailor: 2006), or may have conflicting accounts attached, as with the etiology of the *Lacus Curtius* (1.12; 7.6.1-6). It follows that the earliest tales of Rome, especially those in Book 1, must fall into the category of those where time has obscured them beyond assessment of veracity (1.3.2; 5.21.9; etc.). Livy, however, is searching for and creating a *monumentum* that

will stand the test of time (Moles: 1993). His written work is to fill this role, but it needs physical landmarks within. There is a physical constant, and a timelessly visible one, between the earliest periods and those that begin with Book 6: the original site of Rome, a *locus* to which Camillus himself returns before re-founding the city (5.54.4). In this paper, I argue that Livy depicts the Palatine Hill as a *monumentum* in its own right and uses it as a focal point for his episode on Romulus.

The Palatine is a clear focus in Livy's episode on Romulus: it is the site of the twins' exposure (1.4.1-6); it is the place of their rescue, whether by she-wolf or otherwise (4.6-8); it is the setting of their upbringing (*passim*, esp. with forms of *educare*); it forms the nexus between Romulus and Hercules (7.3-15); and it is the eventual witness of Rome's first fratricide (7.3). For his first act as king, Romulus' mind returns to the place where he was reared (*Palatium primum, in quo ipse erat educatus, muniit*, 7.3). For Romans the hills of Rome are more than objects of memorial importance; they are the memory of Rome itself, the physical reminders of an abstract notion of identity (Jenkyns: 2014; Rea: 2007). In this respect, the Palatine is especially important for the earliest conception of Rome.

In his initial preface, Livy expresses disinterest in proving or disproving elements more fitting to poetry than the sound monuments of history (*poeticis magis decora fabulis quam incorruptis rerum gestarum monumentis, Praef. 6*; Forsythe: 1999). Whereas *monumenta* are solid, *fabulae* are malleable. But *monumenta* also can change, lose their meaning, or be subsumed by other associations. The city itself changes, as is displayed by the rebuilding after the Gallic sack (5.55.2-5; 6.4.2; etc.). Where a hill is concerned, constancy is guaranteed. Mythic episodes surround the locale, but it exists in its own right, and its continuance is not beholden to a program of restoration, whether that of Camillus or Augustus.

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