

THE *AMBITIO* OF LIVY'S TARQUINIUS PRISCUS

In Livian studies, the word *ambitio* might well cause initiates to think of the preface to Livy's first pentad and the absence of this word there. In his preface Livy remarks that Rome is plagued by *avaritia* and *luxuria*, but he also notes how late it was in Rome's history when those vices arrived (11–12). *Avaritia* was commonly associated with *ambitio*, perhaps most notably by Sallust (*Cat.* 10.3–5; *H.* fr. 1.11 Maurenbrecher).¹ Sallust places the arrival (or significant augmentation) of the twin vices at Rome after her final destruction of Carthage in 146 B.C. Livy, it has been suggested, is tacitly correcting Sallust. On the one hand, he thinks that Sallust has put the arrival of *avaritia* too early (*tam serae auaritia luxuriaque immigrauerint . . . nuper diuitiae auaritiam . . . inuexere*, says Livy).² On the other hand, he says not a word about *ambitio*. Ogilvie suggested that Livy 'is silent about *ambitio* . . . because he recognizes that . . . [it] had always been at work from the very foundation of the city'.³ That is not exactly right. Livy certainly did not believe that *ambitio* came *sera* to Rome; but, as Moles points out, the Augustan historian tells us at 1.35.2 exactly when he believed that *ambitio* came to Rome: during the reign of Tarquinius Priscus.⁴

My interest here is precisely in Livy 1.35, an important passage that has not received the attention it deserves.⁵ I want to examine it closely, interpreting the significance of *ambitio* for Livy in Book 1 (section I) and speculating on the annalistic background of what he says about it in 1.35.2 (section II).

I

At 1.35.2 Livy tells us that Tarquinius Priscus was the first to seek the kingship *ambitiose*: *isque primus et petisse ambitiose regnum et orationem dicitur habuisse ad conciliandos plebis animos compositam*. The second part of this compound sentence, which alludes to part, if not to all, of Tarquinius' 'ambitious' behaviour, helps us to tease out the precise connotation of *ambitiose* here: it surely means 'by canvassing, by actively seeking to win support'. Tarquinius argued before the Roman people that his immigrant status was not an obstacle to Roman kingship and that he deserved the office (1.35.3–5). What he told them, Livy comments, was not false, and it convinced them to make him king: *haec eum haud falsa memorantem ingenti consensu populus Romanus regnare iussit* (1.35.6). We have already been prepared to see Tarquinius Priscus as a successful winner of support from what Livy says in 1.34.11–12 about his rise to prominence at Ancus Marcius' court:

et ipse [Tarquinius Priscus] fortunam benigno adloquio, comitate inuitandi beneficiisque quos poterat sibi conciliando adiuuabat. . . . notitiamque eam breui apud regem [Ancum Marcium] liberaliter dextereque obeundo officia in familiaris amicitiae adduxerat iura.

¹ See J. Korpaný, 'Sallust, Livius und *ambitio*', *Philologus* 127 (1983), 63–6.

² Unless Livy regarded the middle of the second century B.C. as already 'late' and 'recent'. Cf. H. Oppermann, 'Die Einleitung zum Geschichtswerk des Livius', in E. Burck (ed.), *Wege zu Livius*, *Wege der Forschung* 132 (Darmstadt, 1977), 178. See also the comments on *tam serae* and *nuper* in M. Paschalis, 'Livy's *Praefatio* and Sallust', Ph.D. diss. Ohio State University (1980), 139–40, 148. I am using R. M. Ogilvie's text of Livy's first pentad (Oxford, 1974).

³ R. M. Ogilvie, *A Commentary on Livy, Books 1–5* (Oxford, 1970), 24.

⁴ J. Moles, 'Livy's preface,' *PCPS* 39 (1993), 155–6.

⁵ Ogilvie (n. 3) is not interested in the *ambitio* motif at all in his comments on 1.35. Korpaný can write a whole article on Sallust, Livy, and *ambitio* (n. 1) without even alluding to Livy 1.35.

The language here is a 'how to do it' manual of *ambitio*, including the term *conciliare*, which, as we have seen, also occurs at 1.35.2.⁶

Anyone who actively canvasses for support will normally desire the office he seeks; we may thus assume that *ambitiose* at 1.35.2 also has another of its connotations, 'with a desire for advancement, ambitiously'. Again, Livy has prepared us for this connotation in 1.34. Tarquinius Priscus came to Rome *cupidine . . . ac spe magni honoris* (1.34.1); he was *cupid[us] honorum* (1.34.7; cf. Dionys. Hal. 3.47). His wife Tanaquil, ambitious too, was determined to see him *honoratum* (1.34.5). But Livy cannot mean at 1.35.2 that Tarquinius was the first to feel a strong desire for advancement and political power. *Cupido regni*, after all, had already been in evidence at the time of Numitor and Amulius and of Romulus and Remus (1.6.4), and there was a *certamen regni ac cupido* after Romulus' death (1.17.1). Livy would perhaps have seen a desire for advancement and power as innately human. He might also have conceded that, in some sense, canvassing for support had always been part of human political behaviour: Aeneas, for example, knew how to conciliate (1.2.4, *conciliaret*) the Aborigines. Still, he sees something innovative in Tarquinius Priscus: that king introduced deliberately practised manoeuvres, with a distinctively Roman flavour to them, for winning political support—manoeuvres that became a standard part of Roman political life.

Does Livy's claim about Tarquinius Priscus' innovation hold up if we examine it against his account of earlier kings? The answer is most certainly 'yes' in the case of Numa. Numa did not solicit support; he was invited to rule at Rome (1.18.5–6). Tarquinius Priscus made that very point when he sought the support of the Roman people in his own bid for the throne: *et Numam ignarum urbis, non petentem, in regnum ultro accitum* (1.35.3).⁷ Nor does Livy give any indication that Tullus Hostilius or Ancus Marcius engaged in canvassing for support. We are simply told that each of them was made king in the normal 'constitutional' way (1.22.1, 1.32.1). In chronicling their accessions, Livy notes that the former was 'the grandson of that Hostilius whose fighting against the Sabines at the foot of the *arx* [during Romulus' reign] had been distinguished' and that the latter was the grandson of king Numa—almost as if to say that the way to the throne was already paved for them by their renowned ancestry.

Plutarch and Dionysius of Halicarnassus give versions of Tullus Hostilius' and Ancus Marcius' accessions respectively that might suggest that *ambitio*, in the sense of canvassing, was already operative when they came to the throne. According to

⁶ Cf. 1.46.1: *conciliata prius uoluntate plebis*. On *ambitio*, see esp. J. Hellegouarc'h, *Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la République* (Paris, 1972), 208ff.; also *TLL* and *OLD* s. vv. *ambitio*, *ambitiose*, *ambitiosus* (cf. *ambitus*). For Tarquinius Priscus' cultivation of King Ancus Marcius and the Roman citizenry, cf. Cic. *Rep.* 2.35, *Erat in eo praeterea summa comitas, summa in omnis civis opis, auxilii, defensionis, largiendi etiam benignitas. itaque mortuo Marcio cunctis populi suffragiis rex est creatus L. Tarquinius*. Dionysius of Halicarnassus 3.48.3–49.1 also reports how Tarquinius Priscus cultivated the support of King Ancus and went on to court the patricians (ταῖς εὐεργεσίαις) and the people (εὐπροσηγόροις τε ἀσπασμοῖς καὶ κεχαρισμέναις ὁμιλίαις καὶ χρημάτων μεταδόσει καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις φιλοφροσύναις), concluding that 'This was the character of Tarquinius and for these reasons he became during the lifetime of Marcus the most illustrious of all the Romans, and after that king's death was adjudged by all as worthy of the kingship' (trans. E. Cary). Dionysius links Tarquinius' canvassing with his rise to prominence under Ancus Marcius as well as with his election as king. Cicero is thinking more narrowly of his election as king. Neither Cicero nor Dionysius remark on anything innovative in Tarquinius' behaviour. (All references to Dionysius are to his *Roman Antiquities*). See also Polyb. 6.11a7, p. 254 Büttner-Wobst; Diod. Sic. 8.31; Cass. Dio 2.9; Zonaras 7.8, pp. 105–6 Dindorf.

⁷ Cf. Cic. *Rep.* 2.25; Dionys. Hal. 2.58, 60.1–2, 76.5; Plut. *Num.* 3.4–5, 5–7.1, *Syncrisis Lycurg. et Numae* 1.3–5, 4.15.

Plutarch, Numa's kinsman Marcius, the grandfather of the future king Ancus, competed with Tullus Hostilius for the throne after Numa's death (*Numa* 21.5). And Dionysius reports a variant tradition (3.35), which he does not accept, according to which Ancus Marcius himself came to the throne by murdering Tullus Hostilius in a plot abetted by many Romans. One might suppose that adherents of these two stories imagined both the elder Marcius and his grandson using the tactics of *ambitio* in competing for the throne and securing partisans respectively. But there is not a hint of these stories in Livy. Dionysius also shows Tullus Hostilius using the tactics of *ambitio* right *after* securing the throne: Tullus won the support of the lower classes by giving them grants of royal land and lots on the newly incorporated Caelian hill on which to build houses (3.1.4–5). When Dionysius notes that Tarquinius Priscus won the people over by various benefactions, again after obtaining the throne, he remarks that this king was following the example of his predecessors (3.67.1).

Livy's account of Romulus' accession requires special comment (1.6.4–7.3). Here there were two 'candidates,' Romulus and Remus, and one might assume that standard methods of *ambitio* came into play on this occasion. But Livy gives no indication that they did. It is perhaps worth noting that he avoids the normal political term *factiones* here (see next paragraph) to describe the twins' bands of supporters, using the bland *sua multitudo* instead. Livy suggests that, if the two brothers had not been twins, the contest might have been decided simply by giving the throne to the older one. Since they were twins, it was agreed that the Romans would let the gods decide the outcome (cf. Dionys. Hal. 1.86.1). Neither method of deciding was part of normal Roman politicking, nor was normal Roman canvassing yet in evidence. That would have to wait for Tarquinius Priscus.

Let us return now to the moment of Tarquinius' elevation to the throne. Winning the support of the Roman people by what he told them, he is made king: *haec eum haud falsa memorantem ingenti consensu populus Romanus regnare iussit*. We then have the following remarkable comment:

ergo virum cetera egregium secuta, quam in petendo habuerat, etiam regnantem ambitio est; nec minus regni sui firmandi quam augendae rei publicae memor centum in patres legit qui deinde minorum gentium sunt appellati, factio haud dubia regis cuius beneficio in curiam venerant. (1.35.6)

Livy here makes a distinction between the *ambitio*—both the desire for power and the methods of canvassing for support, let it be assumed—observable in Tarquinius' candidacy for the kingship and that observable during the course of his reign. He does not find fault with the former. Canvassing for support was necessary because one of Ancus Marcius' two sons might seem to be the logical successor to their father.⁸ But Tarquinius' sustained *ambitio*, encouraged by his great success in winning popular support at his election (note the word *ergo* at the beginning of 1.35.6), is criticized. He was *cetera egregiu[s]*, but not *egregius* in this. Through a *beneficium*, the adlecting of 100 men to the senate, he created a *factio*; this was self-serving as much as dictated by needs of the state.⁹ So Livy sees the reign of Tarquinius as a case

⁸ They were almost adult (*prope puberem aetatem*) at their father's death. Tarquinius was insistent that a new king be chosen quickly, and on the day of the *comitia* he made sure that the sons of Ancus Marcius were not in the city (1.35.1–2). According to Zonaras 7.8, p. 105 Dindorf, the senate and people were intending to elect Ancus' sons (as joint kings?).

⁹ The only prior use of the word *factiones* in Book 1 is to describe the 'old Roman' and the Sabine segments of the Roman population after Romulus' death (1.17.1, 1.18.5); Livy has not yet used the word to describe the supporters of a specific candidate for the kingship or a king.

of *ambitio* taken to an extreme. Tarquinius was too focused on his own power; he used the manoeuvres of *ambitio* in excess.¹⁰ When we later see him wanting to give his own name to newly created centuries and insulting the augur who challenged him (1.36), it is apparent that this behaviour is of a piece with his creation of a senatorial *factio*.

Livy also shows Servius Tullius and Tarquinius Superbus employing the techniques of *ambitio*—as if to say that, once Tarquinius Priscus introduced them into the monarchy, they were there to stay. Servius initially ruled only with the approval of the senate (1.41.6). When he decided to get the formal consent of the people, he first curried favour—*ambitiose*, we could say—with the people: *conciliata prius uoluntate plebis agro capto ex hostibus uiritim diuiso, ausus est ferre ad populum uellent iuberent se regnare; tantoque consensu quanto haud quisquam alius ante rex est declaratus* (1.46.1–2).¹¹ Again, when Tarquinius Superbus had already embarked on his criminal pursuit of the throne, but before he actually seized it by force, he resorted to *ambitio*:

Tarquinius [Superbus] circumire et prensare minorum maxime gentium patres; admonere paterni beneficii ac pro eo gratiam repetere; allicere donis iuuenes; cum de se ingentia pollicendo tum regis [Servii] criminibus omnibus locis crescere. (1.47.7)

Livy could have held Servius' initially unconstitutional exercise of royal power against him, but he does not do so. Even though Servius first rules only with senatorial approval, he is *haud dubius rex, seu patrum seu plebis animos periclitaretur* (1.42.3), he holds power *haud dubie* (1.46.1), his reign is legitimate (1.48.8). And when he does bring the issue of his kingship to the people for formal approval, he receives a greater majority of votes than any previous king (1.46.1).¹² Livy might also have criticized Servius for acquiescing in trickery to ensure Roman hegemony in central Italy;¹³ after all, when Tarquinius Superbus and his son Sextus employed trickery in foreign affairs, Livy condemned that in no uncertain terms: *minime arte Romana* (1.53.4). But for Livy the Latin Servius is a good king: he was comparable to the good king Numa, attentive to matters of both war and peace, responsible for the comitia centuriata formed after a census (a *rem saluberrimam*), hard to equal in his moderate exercise of power, and a republican before the Republic in his willingness to give up royal power (1.42.2–5, 45.1, 48.8–9). In Livy, Servius' *ambitio* looks like the neutral *ambitio* of routine campaigning, like the neutral *ambitio* Tarquinius practised when he was seeking the kingship. Tarquinius Superbus, though, is a criminal usurper from the start; in him we are to see *ambitio* in the service of tyranny.¹⁴ We have, then, in

¹⁰ Zonaras 7.8, p. 106 Dindorf, understands Tarquinius Priscus' post-accession canvassing for support as a defence against a possible challenge from Ancus Marcius' sons. There is no such specification in Livy.

¹¹ Cf. Servius' currying favour with the people in Dionys. Hal. 4.8–11 and Zonaras 7.9, p. 109 Dindorf. In Dionysius and Zonaras, though, Servius does not have the approval of the senate.

¹² For the normal procedure, in the proper sequence, for obtaining kingship according to Livy, see 1.22.1 (*regem [Tullum Hostilium] populus iussit; patres auctores facti*), 32.1, and 17.7–11, which was a special case. Livy surely believes that Tarquinius Priscus was appointed in the normal way, even though he neglects to mention senatorial authorization at 1.35.6. He would have commented, as he does in his accounts of Servius and Tarquinius Superbus, if Tarquinius Priscus had gained office in an irregular way. All reigns were *legitima*, according to Livy (1.48.8), except that of Tarquinius Superbus.

¹³ For the story, see Livy 1.45.3–7. The trick is actually carried out by a Roman priest, but *id mire gratum regi atque ciuitati fuit*. There is a variant, significantly not adopted by Livy, that makes Servius himself carry out the trick (Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 4.264d).

¹⁴ According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus 4.30.5, Tarquinius Superbus' *ambitio*, at the time

Livy's Book 1 a glimpse of three stages in the evolution of *ambitio*: the neutral *ambitio* of office-seeking (1.35.2, 1.46.1–2), an overripe and excessive *ambitio* associated with a too zealous cultivation of one's political power (1.35.6), and *ambitio* in the service of outright political degeneracy. Elsewhere in Livy, *ambitio* is often something that merits criticism; men motivated by *ambitio*, whether in the civilian or the military arena, are not always perceived to be acting in the best interest of the state.¹⁵

There is a clear divide between the first four and the last three kings in Livy. An important motif—the gradual synthesis of Romulan concerns (physical force, warfare) and Numan concerns (peace, religion, civilizing virtues)—terminates with the fourth king.¹⁶ The fifth king introduces the Tarquinian dynasty to Rome, which sets the stage for the ultimate degeneration of the monarchy into tyranny. Rome reaches a new scale of growth and development under the last three kings. One thinks especially of the Tarquins' work on draining the city, on the Circus Maximus, and on the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and of Servius Tullius' creation of the comitia centuriata and the first tribes as well as of his Dianium (1.35.8, 38.6–7, 42–43, 45, 53.3, 55, 56.2). The first Tarquin put on games *opulentiore instructiusque quam priores reges* (1.35.7); the second Tarquin's circus seats and cloaca maxima, Livy says, could scarcely be equalled by building projects of his own day (1.56.2). Tarquinius Priscus' introduction of *ambitio* is yet another marker separating the first four from the last three kings. It also looks forward, in its excessive and corrupted forms, to the *superbia* of the second Tarquin. The linking of *ambitio* to *superbia* appears again in Livy's account of the move from the moderate first year of the decemvirate to its tyrannical second year (3.35–36). There was much canvassing for a second consecutive decemvirate, even by the *primores* (*tanta . . . ambitio ut primores quoque ciuitatis . . . prensarent homines, . . . suppliciter petentes*). Appius Claudius, an exemplary member of the first decemvirate who would become the tyrant par excellence in the second decemvirate, canvassed for re-election with special vigour. When re-elected, he and his colleagues, equally converted to tyranny, did not conceal their *superbia* (3.36.2); they were called 'ten Tarquins', displaying the same *superbia* and *violencia* as the last king (3.39.3–4). When Appius was standing for re-election, it had been seen that *perfecto haud gratuitam in tanta superbia comitatem fore* (3.35.6)—that is, that his canvassing had behind it the hope of something more than mere office well held.

II

Livy 1.35.2 connects Tarquinius Priscus' innovatory importation of *ambitio* into Roman politics specifically with his seeking of the kingship from the people of Rome.

when he was trying to drive Servius Tullius off the throne, included bribery (*χρήμασιν ἐξωνούμενοι*). Dionysius' Tarquinius Superbus not surprisingly accuses Servius himself of having employed bribery to win popular support (4.31.2, *καταμισθοδοτήσας καὶ πάντα τρόπον διαφθείρας*). Dionysius would not disagree (4.40.1, *δεκασμοῖς καὶ δωροδοκίαις* [καὶ *δωροδοκίαις* *del. Cobet*]), although this does not affect his generally favourable assessment of Servius. It need not be remarked that the line between bribery and gift-giving can be a very thin one.

¹⁵ 2.27.4, 2.27.10, 2.41.8, 3.47.4, 4.25.12–13, 5.36.9, 22.42.12, 28.40.2, 29.16.5, 39.7.3, 43.11.10, 43.14.3, 43.14.7, 45.36.8, 45.37.12. In my view, then, Livy does not have as positive a view of *ambitio* as Korpanty (n. 1), 68–71, thinks.

¹⁶ See R. J. Penella, 'War, peace, and the *jus fetiale* in Livy I', *CP* 82 (1987), 233–7, and 'Vires Iroburlopes and ferocia in Livy's account of Romulus and Tullus Hostilius', *CQ* 40 (1990), 207–13.

One might maintain that canvassing for support is canvassing for support, whether it is undertaken before, during, or after campaigning for office; nevertheless, I want to stay focused on the precise context within which Livy places Tarquinius' innovation as I now link conjecturally to Livy 1.35.2 a passage from Dionysius of Halicarnassus that itself deals with change in the process of selecting Roman kings.

According to Dionysius 4.40.1–3, before the people formally elected Servius Tullius to the throne, there had been a fixed procedure for the creation of a new king: after the death of a king, the senatorial *interreges* would select a single candidate to succeed to the throne; if the people and the auguries confirmed this choice, the candidate became king; if not, the *interreges* selected another single candidate. This process continued until the single candidate got popular and divine approval. Servius, however, bypassed this normal procedure, eventually presenting himself directly to the people, 'the poorer sort of whom he had won over by bribery and many other ways of courting popular favour'; he had 'gained the affections of the people by certain ingratiating acts' (trans. E. Cary). Dionysius seems to be describing here a change of political behaviour that looks very much like the one Livy locates at the time of Tarquinius Priscus' accession and calls innovatory. If a single candidate was presented to the people with prior senatorial approval, he might (or might not) have nonetheless actively cultivated popular support, but he would have presented himself for popular acceptance already in possession of a prestigious seal of approval. If, on the other hand, a candidate went directly to the people, he would have had to sell himself, or sell himself much harder.

What we seem to have in Livy is a variant of Dionysius' notice, one that ascribes the innovation to the time of Tarquinius Priscus' accession rather than to that of Servius Tullius. Livy is not interested in describing the procedural changes, about which, in any case, he would not have fully agreed with Dionysius, for Livy believed that popular approval of a new king was sought first and only then capped off with senatorial endorsement. What Livy was interested in was the introduction of canvassing tactics that resulted from the procedural changes and especially the political and moral ramifications of those tactics. We typically cannot know how Dionysius' and Livy's positions are related to the positions taken by other Republican annalistic historians whose works have not survived.

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PHILO, LUCRETIVUS, AND *ANIMA*

At Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* 21.66 the author tells us that God created Man and upon him νοῦν ἐξαίρετον ἔδωρεῖτο, ψυχῆς τινα ψυχὴν κάθ'απερ κόρην ἐν ὀφθαλμῷ.¹

At *DRN* 3.275 Lucretius tells us that the fourth element (the nameless element) of the *animus/anima* is *anima animae*.

Commentators on Lucretius give no indication that his striking phrase has any parallels. Commentators on Philo believe that the expression occurs only in Philo. Further, at *DRN* 3.402–16 (especially 406–9) Lucretius draws an analogy between the pupil/eye and the *animus/anima*, just as Philo does here. The fact that this very

¹ Philo again uses the expression ψυχῆς ψυχὴ at *Heres* 55.