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Lesson Plan for Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 2.40: Veturia *The Worlds of Roman Women Part 6: State*

I Background

Coriolanus, Gaius Marcius: According to tradition, a Roman patrician and a gallant general of the first half of the 5th century BCE. He earned the name Coriolanus for the capture of Corioli from the Volscians, a people originally from central Italy who took over an area southeast of Rome by the 6th century BCE and captured the Latin city of Antium. He was prosecuted by the tribunes on the charge of aspiring to become a tyrant, and exiled; whereupon he went to his old enemies, the Volscians, and led them against Rome, occupying a number of towns in Latium and approaching within five miles of the city. But yielding to the entreaties of his mother, Veturia, and his wife, Volumnia, he drew off his army and returned to Antium, where the Volscians put him to death. The story is told by Plutarch and is the subject of one of Shakespeare's Roman plays, *Coriolanus*. Livy does not know Coriolanus's end but mentions that the 2nd century BCE historian Quintus Fabius Pictor reports he died in old age (see the full article in the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*).

II Additional Vocabulary and Notes

1

Note the use of the Historical Present (*coeunt*) for vividness

Id . . . fuerit: indirect question: "Whether it was *consilium* or *timor* . . ." *certe* – "in any case" (whether it was one or the other)

2

ex Marcio – "by Marcius" that is, the two children Marcius had fathered

3

ventum est and *nuntiatum est* -- two examples of the Impersonal Passive often used in narrative. Translate as "they came" and "they announced" respectively *ut qui*-- introducing a relative clause of characteristic that often conveys an additional notion of cause: "seeing that he . . ." or "since he . . ."

5

consternatus -- springing/jumping up wildly

accipio -- present for future *accipiam*

sciam -- ("allow me to know") introduces two indirect questions to which you should supply the introductory subordinate conjunction *utrum* ("whether"):

utrum ad hostem an (= "or") ad filium venerim, utrum captiva materne (-ne = "or" here) in castris tuis sim.

6

in hoc me traxit -- "dragged me into this"

potuisti -- the emphasis gives the force of "could you bring yourself to" + *populari*, a complementary infinitive

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non -- the emphatic position of the negative gives the force of the meaning “it seems incredible that it did not”

7

cado, -ere, cecidi, casum -- fall, drop away, die

succurro, -ere -- “succeed” is wrong; instead translate with *tibi* understood, “Did this thought not occur to you that” or “Did it not come into your mind that. . .” which she then clarifies with *intra moenia* etc.

8

ergo -- therefore; for all these reasons (introducing, as it often does, a conclusion from all the circumstances not immediately connected with the preceding line).

ego -- this pronoun is opposed to the *his* of line 9

nec ut -- the note advises translating “seeing that”: this applies to *ut*; the *nec* negates *sum*, i.e., *nec diu futura sum*.

9

videris -- the rare Hortatory Subjunctive in the perfect tense (here used for emphasis or finality); translate as if in present tense.

10

suos -- his family (taking the gender from his two sons).

11

sua -- used instead of the expected *earum*, on account of the idea of unusual or special contained in it

vivebatur -- the Impersonal Passive; translate “they lived.”

III Comprehension Questions

Please prepare these questions for class. The questions take you through the passage to help you gauge your understanding of it. Each question can be answered with a specific reference to the text and not simply by paraphrasing or interpreting it, so please be prepared to cite the Latin.

1. Who is Veturia?
2. Who is Volumnia?
3. Why did the *matronae* meet?
4. Was the meeting a success?
5. What did the meeting accomplish?
6. How many children did Volumnia and Marcius have?
7. Where did the women go?
8. How do men defend a city?
9. How do women defend a city?
10. Where is Coriolanus?
11. What was announced to him?

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12. When legates and priests had approached him earlier, what had his reaction been?
13. Therefore what was his response to the women?
14. Did he know initially that his mother was there?
15. How did he find out?
16. How was Veturia recognized?
17. Where was she standing?
18. What was Coriolanus's reaction to his mother?
19. What was his mother's response to him?
20. Will she embrace him?
21. What three questions does Veturia pose to her son in section 6?
How does she characterize his *animus*?
22. What recollections or realizations should have blocked or neutralized his anger (*ira*)?
23. Why does Veturia blame herself for the attack on Rome?
24. Why does Veturia say that neither she nor her son will have to endure anything more miserable or disgraceful?
25. On the other hand, what fate awaits Coriolanus's family if he persists?
26. At the conclusion of Veturia's speech what do Coriolanus's wife and children do?
27. Two emotional reactions follow: what are they? How do they affect Coriolanus?
28. What three acts does Coriolanus perform in section 10?
29. In the epilogue (section 11) Livy generalizes on the way the Romans acknowledged brave women. What did they not begrudge to women?
30. How did the Romans commemorate the bravery of female citizens?

IV Exercise: Identification and Discussion: Structure and Themes

Livy uses pairs of opposites or dichotomies, called in structuralist terms "binary polarities," to achieve the following effects:

1. structurally to shape and dramatize the episode
2. thematically to suggest what is at stake politically and culturally
3. programmatically to define what it meant to be a Roman.

Livy's sentence structure and imagery underscore the dichotomies that are posed by this serious standoff between Coriolanus and Rome but are successfully mediated by Veturia. Some of these dichotomies or polarities are listed below, occasionally with glosses. Each student should select or be assigned a different dichotomy, or identify another set of opposites not on the list, and write a short response explaining how it functions in the passage.

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- *matronae* and the pair *mater* and *uxor* (why are these dichotomies when they should be mutually inclusive?)
- mothers and wives
- sons and mothers
- husbands and wives
- men and women
- Romans and others
- youth and old age
- birth and death
- reason and emotion
- *arma* and *preces lacrimaeque*
- negotiations and war
- freedom and slavery
- private and public
- domestic and military
- *urbs* and *castra*

The following pairs apply to Coriolanus, who possesses each dichotomy within himself, an unnatural condition

- *civis* and *exsul*
- *exsul* and *hostis*
- *filius* and *hostis*

V Quiz: Livy 2.40: Veturia

Familiar dichotomies or binary polarities are used by Livy

1. structurally to shape and dramatize an episode
2. thematically to suggest what is at stake politically and culturally
3. programmatically to define what it meant to be a Roman.

Discuss how the following selection from Livy 2.40 illustrates this practice:

Coriolanus prope ut amens consternatus ab sede suā cum ferret matri obviae complexum mulier in iram ex precibus versa, “sine, priusquam complexum accipio, sciam,” inquit, “ad hostem an ad filium venerim, captiva maternē in castrīs tuīs sim. In hōc me longa vita et infelix senecta traxit ut exulem te deinde hostem viderem? Potuisti populari hanc terram quae te genuit atque aluit? Non tibi, quamvis infestō animō et minacī perveneras, ingredienti fines ira cecidit? Non, cum in conspectū Roma fuit, succurrit: intra illa moenia domus ac penates mei sunt, mater coniunx liberique?”