

THE LACUS CURTIUS IN THE FORUM ROMANUM AND THE DYNAMICS OF MEMORY

A contribution to the study of memory in the Roman Republic



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INTRODUCTION

In the Forum is the *Lacus Curtius* ‘Pool of Curtius’; it is quite certain that it is named from Curtius, but the story about it has three versions: for Procilius does not tell the same story as Piso, nor did Cornelius follow the story given by Procilius (Varro *Ling.* 5.148).¹

With these words, in the 40s BC, Varro introduces to the reader one of the most mysterious monuments located in the core of the city of Rome—the *Lacus Curtius*. As a good antiquarian, Varro confines himself to offering just the different stories associated with this monument. Nothing looks certain. According to Varro, at least three distinct authors—Piso, Cornelius, and Procilius—tried to explain in Late Republican times the origin of the monument; surprisingly, none of the versions coincide. To make matters more complicated, Giacomo Boni, guided by ancient sources, found in the beginning of the 20th century the physical spot of the *Lacus Curtius*. Its archaeological analysis reveals that the monument underwent several reconstructions and still survived in the central area of the *Forum Romanum* from the second century BC to the fall of the Roman empire. Such as long-lasting monument located in the *Forum Romanum* is still nowadays barely understood. With several legends, a substantial number of reconstructions, and six centuries of life in the most prominent place of the public life in Rome, how can we conduct the study of such a complex monument?



Figure 1. The *Lacus Curtius* in 1906, after Giacomo Boni's excavation

In 1975, Moses I. Finley—one of the greatest modern scholars—wrote an article in which, referring to the difficulties in Greek history, he analysed various methodological issues regarding the study of antiquity.² According to him, research in ancient history can be done from three different perspectives—history, myth, and memory. If we carry out a brief historiographical review considering these three methodological approaches, antiquity has traditionally been studied from the perspective of history, in which the

¹ Marcus Terentius Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, transl. Roland G. Kent. Varro, *On the Latin Language*, 2 volumes (Cambridge, Mass, 1938), I: 137.

² Moses Finley, *The use and abuse of history* (London, 1975), 11-33.

different vicissitudes of the historical schools have played a key role in its analysis.³ Regarding myth, the study of its origin and evolution has experienced a great revitalization in the last decades, especially thanks to the fruitful studies by the *École française*.⁴ However, memory—perhaps because of its conflicting relation with history—has received less attention by ancient historians.⁵ Nonetheless, prestigious scholars of the Annales School, such as Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, recognized the cruciality of collective memory, and identified the starting point to specify the function of this obscure concept in the scientific sphere.⁶ Even though modern scholarship makes use of these three levels, it must be kept in mind that myth, history, and memory are modern notions; such a division did not exist in antiquity.⁷

If we use Finley's distinction as a reference, the few studies that have dealt with the *Lacus Curtius* have conducted their research from the perspectives of history or myth. None of these perspectives have been able to offer a holistic approach in which the legends and the reconstructions of the *Lacus Curtius* were analysed as part of a socio-political evolution of the Roman society. On the one hand, the most eminent—and also most recent—monographs dedicated to the topography and monuments of Rome concentrate on a factual analysis of the *Lacus Curtius*. From this historical and descriptive approach, all of them focus on 'how': How the monument was (re)constructed, and how it was presented by ancient authors.⁸ On the other hand, some scholars have approached the problem from a mythological perspective: How Greek mythology influenced the construction of the legends associated with this monument, and how a monument becomes the materialization of a myth.⁹ Nevertheless, modern scholars have not studied 'why' the *Lacus Curtius* had different legends explaining its origin, and 'why' the *Lacus Curtius* was reconstructed several times through the centuries. It is in this gap in the scholarship that the present study is contextualized, and memory will be the tool used to undertake this task.

Nowadays, 'memory studies' is an expanding field, but still the concept of memory has barely been used in the study of antiquity. In this context, the general purpose of this research is to contribute to the field of 'memory studies', by providing an example of how memory worked during the Roman republic until the Principate of Augustus. In addition,

³ Guy Bourd  and Martin Herv , *Les  coles historiques* (Paris, 1983).

⁴ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mythe et soci t  en Gr ce ancienne* (Paris, 1974); Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and tragedy in ancient Greece* (New York, 1990); Claude Calame, *Mythe et Histoire dans l'antiquit  Grecque* (Paris, 2011).

⁵ George Duby, *Dialogues* (Paris, 1980), 10-20.

⁶ Jacques Le Goff, *Histoire et m moire*, (Gallimard, 1988); Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de m moire' *Representations* 26 (1989), 7-24.

⁷ For further reading, see: Jennifer Rea, *legendary Rome: myth, monuments and memory on the Palatine and Capitoline* (London, 2007), 15-26.

⁸ Lawrence Richardson, *A new topographical dictionary of ancient Rome* (Baltimore, 1992), 229-230; Filippo Coarelli, *Rome and environs: an archaeological guide* (Berkeley, 2007), 72-74; Andrea Carandini and Paolo Carafa, *Atlante di Roma antica; biografia e ritratti della cit *, Vol.1 (Milano, 2012), 143-182. These recent and updated monographs have based their archaeological analysis of the *Lacus Curtius* on the work of Cairoli Giuliani and Patrizia Verduchi, *L'area centrale del Foro Romano* (Firenze, 1987), 105-116. This last study is the most extensive archaeological analysis of the *Lacus Curtius*.

⁹ Bremmer, Jan, 'Three Roman aetiological myths', in: James Richardson (ed.), *The Roman historical tradition: regal and republican Rome* (Oxford, 2014), 147-167.

through this theoretical framework, this research digs into the processes of remembrance and the dynamics of memory of the *Lacus Curtius*—one of the most unknown ancient monuments in the city of Rome—in order to understand why it was reconstructed and reinterpreted over the centuries. Unlike the other two perspectives mentioned by Finley, the use of memory as a theoretical framework permits us to consider the variety of perceptions of the past that are associated with this monument; the *Lacus Curtius* was experienced, depicted, and remembered in diverse ways, depending on the social framework and the political circumstances. Consequently, with this approach, we can go beyond the questions of ‘how’, and focus on those aspects that explain ‘why’. Bearing these goals in mind, the research question is: Why were the *Lacus Curtius* and its memory shaped and reshaped in the Late Roman Republic?¹⁰ In order to carry out a clear analysis, this paper first focuses on ‘memory studies’ as the framework to undertake the present research. Second, the archaeological and literary sources linked to the *Lacus Curtius* are analysed. Finally, we study the dynamics of memory of the *Lacus Curtius* through a thorough analysis of the legends linked to its origin.

¹⁰ Despite the *Lacus Curtius* survived in the city of Rome for six centuries, I will just focus on the Republican period where the different legends associated to this monument competed to become the canonical way of remembrance. The limitations of the present paper and the complexity of this monument do not permit me to approach the problematic of the *Lacus Curtius* for the entire period it survives in the core of the *Forum Romanum*. However, in the first chapter, I will trace the life of the monument, and I will offer an overview of its evolution, in order to show its complexity and the potentiality of this research.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Among the different uses of the concept of memory, it is not easy for a historian to identify which one is more useful for a historical critical analysis. Generally, memory is known as the intellectual capacity that allows one to remember what one has already lived. But its application to the field of history is limited. Since the memory is a faculty of the human brain and the result of it, the extinction of the physical subject also implies the obsolescence of the use of his memory and, therefore, the disappearance of his capacity to remember. However, from this first ability of remembrance, memory may move from being a mere mental activity to being a developed concept whose influence on the ideological evolution of a society becomes a historical matter. This type of memory, based on the capacity to voluntarily evoke the past, is used in this research to analyse the ideological evolution of the Roman society in a period where the traditional aristocratic regime suffered important transformations, which led to the Augustan principate. But first, what is the theoretical framework of this approach?

1.1 The evolution of ‘memory studies’

Since the last decade of the 20th century, ‘memory studies’ has become an expanding field in the discipline of humanities. Scholars like Halbwachs, Aby Warburg, Nora, and Aleida and Jan Assmann have constructed a solid theoretical base, from which later historians have been able to frame their studies. Despite this growing interest, this perspective has barely been considered in the study of antiquity, as Finley highlights.¹¹ However, in the last decade, some ancient historians have started to turn to the field of memory in relation to what Pierre Nora calls the *Lieux de mémoire* —the sites of memory.¹² This approach has proved to be a powerful mechanism to analyse the multiple—and occasionally contradictory—visions that the Romans held of their own past.¹³ Nevertheless, due to the fast development and its broad use, the concept of memory has become nebulous. For this reason, the following paragraphs aim to trace the evolution of ‘memory studies’ and to define a clear and practical basis for the present investigation, considering the particularities of the Roman world. In order to achieve a full understanding of this field, we first analyse the two theorist who laid the foundations of the study of memory—Halbwachs and Warburg. After this, Pierre Nora and his *lieux de mémoire* are discussed, following which we elaborate on the idea of cultural memory, built by Aleida and Jan Assmann from the precedent theories.

After the World War I, Halbwachs (1877–1945) set the stage for the modern study of memory and directed his attention to the relationship between memory and society. It was in 1925 that he published a crucial work, in which he offered a sociological perspective of the question of memory: *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire*.¹⁴ This monograph, on the one hand, includes considerations about the social elements of memory; on the other hand, it analyses the processes of collective memorization of the family, religious groups, and

¹¹ Moses Finley, *The use and abuse of history* (London, 1975), 14.

¹² For instance: Diane Favro, ‘Moving events: Curating the memory of the Roman triumph’, in: Karl Galinsky (ed.) *Memoria Romana: memory in Rome and Rome in memory* (Michigan, 2014), 85-103; Jessica Hughes, ‘Memory and the Roman viewer: looking at the arch of Constantine’, in: Karl Galinsky (ed.) *Memoria Romana: memory in Rome and Rome in memory* (Michigan, 2014), 103-117.

¹³ Karl Hölkeskamp, ‘History and collective memory in the middle republic’, in: Nathan Rosenstein Robert Morstein-Marx (eds.), *A companion to the Roman republic* (Oxford, 2006), 478-496.

¹⁴ Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris, 1925).

social classes. The conclusion of this research is that, according to Halbwachs, there are different social frameworks of memory—both general, like space, time, and language, and specific, i.e. related to different social groups— which create a global system of the past that allows for both individual and collective remembrance.¹⁵ This means that it is not possible to speak of a purely individual memory—what we call memory always has a social dimension. In this sense, a shared understanding of the past, monuments, or certain natural places can develop a group perception and mark the thoughts of the individual within the group to which he belongs.

Contemporarily to Halbwachs, the art historian Aby Warburg (1866–1929) also worked with the idea of memory and also had an important impact on later historians. However, unlike Halbwachs, Warburg focused on the memory of art. Through the analysis of images, Warburg studied the mechanisms through which a visual idea prevails through time, appearing and disappearing from visual representations, influenced by elements of the culture in which it is embedded.¹⁶ In this sense, Warburg always highlighted the importance of the details, and how through their analysis it is possible to explain the historical connections that exist in certain images and their continuity in time. These ideas permitted him to stress the importance of what he called pathos formulas. It explains how some artists, trying to transmit a strong emotional image, based their works on certain formulas created previously, like the artists of the Renaissance with the ancient models. These formulas repeated themselves through the centuries. The task of the historian is then to discover these formulas and, through them, trace the culture, the remembrance, and the visual memory of a group or community.¹⁷ The use of images to trace culture permits the historian to see how different periods of time relate to each other and how these cultural symbols can trigger memories. In this way, “Warburg developed a concept of cultural memory of images which he called, among other terms, social memory”¹⁸

The theories of Halbwachs and Warburg differ from each other fundamentally in the way they carry out their approaches. While Warburg focused on a material level, highlighting the connection between images, Halbwachs avoided any kind of allusion to objective representations of culture. On the one hand, the analysis by Halbwachs emphasizes the social dimension of culture. Groups create a common past through the relation between the individuals who belong to the group, while, at the same time, the individual memories are shaped by the framework of a sociocultural environment. In other words, “the power and persistence of memories come not from tradition, but from feeling, from the individual’s need to belong to one or more groups”.¹⁹ On the other hand, unlike Halbwachs, Warburg primarily focused on the power of the images to bring forth memory and tighten a cultural continuity. Warburg’s focus on the role of the visual culture had an important impact on later authors, and is expanded by Pierre Nora in his theory of *Lieux de mémoire*. However, despite their differences, both Halbwachs’s concept of collective memory and Warburg’s use of social memory refer to the same idea: Culture and its transmission are products of human activity.²⁰

¹⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *On collective memory* (Chicago, 1992), 167-182.

¹⁶ Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An intellectual biography* (Chicago, 1986), 349-361.

¹⁷ Aby Warburg, *The renewal of pagan antiquity: Contributions to the cultural History of the European Renaissance* (Los Angeles, 1999), 1-79.

¹⁸ Astrid Erll and Sara B. Young, *Memory in culture* (Basingstoke, 2011), 20.

¹⁹ Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies* (Stanford, 2006), 95.

²⁰ Erll and Young, *Memory in culture*, 22.

Both Halbwachs and Warburg gained prominence some years later when the studies by Pierre Nora and Aleida and Jan Assman brought back the concept of memory to the centre of the scholarly debate. In the 1980s, Pierre Nora coined the novel concept of *Lieux de Mémoire* (Sites of Memory), which was interpreted as a new way of writing history and thinking about the collective memory of France. Presented in three books published between 1984 and 1992, this new notion aimed to answer questions about collective and national memories, and their relationship with history as an academic discipline.²¹ The so-called *lieux* can be very disparate—a monument, a physical place, or even an individual, a legend, or a symbol. In this sense, what makes a place a *lieu de mémoire* is both its condition of crossroads where diverse ways of memory intersect and its capacity to keep up with the times and be remodelled, revisited, and remembered. The *Lacus Curtius* apparently fulfils these conditions and might be analysed from Nora's perspective. However, to gain a complete understanding of this theoretical framework, we must first analyse Nora's historical context.

The work of Nora provided a new way of understanding history through a new methodology: the analysis of the past in the present. This enabled the French historian to pose questions about the historical memory of his contemporary France: What do 14 July, La Marseillaise, or the figure of the king represent in contemporary France? It was a process where the historian consciously brought the past to the present—contrary to the historians who were unconsciously projecting the present onto the past. With the *lieu de mémoire*, the scholar tries to understand the general administration of the preterit in the current times.²² In other words, how is the past used in the present? This perspective had a significant impact on later scholars and was even influential in the field of ancient history. However, we must bear in mind that Nora's approach was centred on a concrete period of time, in which the past was at the service of the nation. His *lieux de mémoire* contributed to the process of nationalization of the past and the creation of state unity.²³ For Nora, the state was the organism behind the construction and selection of items that had to be remembered. However, the so-considered premodern states, such as the Roman Republic, did not have the same socio-political structure and there were no collective mechanisms to create such a 'national unanimity'. In a competing environment, as in the Roman Republic, the concept of *lieux de mémoire* can be a potential tool, but it must be nuanced.

From this point, considering Pierre Nora's theory and the concept of collective memory as drawn by Halbwachs, Jan and Aleida Assmann developed the idea of cultural memory, demonstrating that memory can be a useful framework to examine cultural development in non-nation states.²⁴ From their perspective, the same understanding of the past creates a communal knowledge inside a society. As a starting point, Jan Assmann suggests the

²¹ Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire: la république* (Paris, 1984); Pierre Nora, *les lieux de mémoire: la nation* (Paris, 1987); Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire: le France* (Paris, 1992).

²² Pierre Nora and Josefina Cuesta, 'La aventura de les lieux de mémoire' *Ayer* 32 (1998), 17-34.

²³ Rianna A.M. Hermans, *Latin cults through Roman eyes: myth, memory and cult practice in the Alban hills* (Amsterdam, 2017), 5.

²⁴ Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: formen und wandlungen des kulturellen gedächtnissen* (München, 1999), 33-55; Aleida Assmann, *Der lange schatten der vergangenheit: erinnerungskultur und geschichtspolitik* (München, 1992), 21-62.; Jan Assmann, *Of god and gods: Egypt, Israel and the rise of monotheism* (Madison, 2008), 9-28.

distinction between ‘communicative memory’ and ‘cultural memory’.²⁵ According to him, these are the two ways in which collective memory is revealed. On the one hand, communicative memory is assembled through the oral discourse. It refers to the recent past and comes into being within the existing social framework of each moment. Consequently, it is related to the individual experience, while collective memory is created due to the relations with other individuals inside one social group: family, religious community, social group, etc. This communicative memory spans three to four generations—around 100 years—and does not have institutional support.²⁶ On the other hand, unlike the communicative memory that is constructed within a social framework, cultural memory is created within a cultural framework. In this sense, cultural memory is constructed and established; it does not come up unconsciously. It is not based on individual experiences, and it is fixed and stable. Cultural memory transcends epochs and refers to events from an absolute past. Consequently, this memory is created when there are no witnesses of an event around which symbolic representations have been elaborated. In other words, cultural memory is objectified, externalized, and stored in stable symbolic forms. It goes beyond specific situations; it is not related to daily life practices, but to a ceremonial communication.²⁷ Assmann highlights the importance of the institutions that oversee cultural preservation, since cultural memory tends to be established and ceremonialized by this kind of institutions. In this sense, external symbols—including sites of memory—trigger the memory of a constructed past remembered by the members of a community.

Assmann’s work proved to be an important contribution to the field of ‘memory studies’; memory and its creation can provide an apparatus by which to study the cultural development of non-nation states. However, later studies highlight the limitations of Assmann’s theory.²⁸ The main problem lies in his focus on the process of consolidation, recreation, and strengthening of cultural memory. His approach is too static and does not permit the consideration of the socio-political dynamics that influence the construction of memory. In this sense, one of the most influential scholars, Astrid Erll, gives a new perspective to the concept of ‘cultural memory’. On the one hand, unlike Assmann, Erll does not make a difference between the social and the cultural level; rather, she defines cultural memory as “the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts”.²⁹ On the other hand, regarding the distinction made by Assmann between communicative and cultural memory, Erll does not agree with setting a limit between the two forms of memory. She points out that the communication in daily life—including the narratives of remembrance exchanged by the individuals of a community—are also part of the cultural practices. In this sense, if we consider the case study of the present research, in which we aim to understand why the *Lacus Curtius* was reinterpreted and reconstructed during the Roman Republic, Assmann’s theory proves to be too rigid. On the contrary, Astrid Erll’s theory offers a more flexible approach, in which the social and cultural level come hand in hand, permitting the consideration of different and conflicting images of the past that coexisted contemporarily in the same society. This is the case of the *Lacus Curtius* and

²⁵ Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München, 1992), 48-64.

²⁶ Jan Assmann, ‘Communicative and cultural memory’, in: Peter Meusburger (ed.) ‘Cultural memories’, *Series knowledge and space* 4 (2011), 15-27.

²⁷ Assmann, ‘Communicative and cultural memory’, 117.

²⁸ Erll and Young, *Memory in culture*, 30.

²⁹ Astrid Erll, ‘Towards a conceptual foundation for cultural memory studies’, in: Astrid Erll, Nünning Ansgar, and Sara B. Young (eds.), *Cultural memory studies: an international and interdisciplinary handbook* (Berlin, 2008), 1-18, 2.

its three conflicting legends, where no authority could set the way in which the monument had to be remembered during Republican times. Erll's theory, therefore, opens the door to study the dynamics of memory of the *Lacus Curtius* and, consequently, to analyse how memory worked and evolved in the Late Roman Republic.

1.2 The application of 'memory studies' in ancient Rome

In the Roman society, memory performed some of the functions which were traditionally attributed to the field of history—it facilitated access to information about the culture and politics, it transmitted a moral model and rules of conduct, and, in short, it provided a social cohesion through the certainty of a common past. This way of dealing with memory had a specific character, which was articulated around 'the culture of the *exempla*'.³⁰ Thanks to these *exempla*, the different stories that formed the Roman memory had a moral, political, and socio-pedagogical function. From this perspective, the *Lacus Curtius* is a paradigmatic example that shows how "archaic monuments were interpreted or misinterpreted in various ways by later generations", to fulfil at any moment those moral, political, and socio-pedagogical functions.³¹ In fact, the *Lacus Curtius* had no unique significance attached to it; all the known legends associated with this monument could be considered 'memorable'. A monument of this kind could always be read as an open text, "open to different explanations and interpretations at different time, in different contexts, and even by different people, and that is just the reason why it acquired a particularly long-lasting aura".³² From this starting point, how can 'memory studies' be applied to the analysis of ancient Rome? What sources and tools will be necessary to study the evolution of the *Lacus Curtius*? And how should we approach the problem of memory in the Roman Republic?

'Cultural memory', as presented by Erll, helped the Roman society to articulate a cohesion of its most characteristic features, and constituted the basis for its self-representation. As Hölkeskamp points out: "the cultural memory is the main source for patterns of perception, for conceptions of order, right and wrong, and for the framework in which to interpret one's own contemporary social environment and world of experience".³³ To do so, cultural memory needs diverse ways to be preserved, transmitted, and regenerated. In the Roman society, this was mainly done through orality, written texts, and monuments. These various ways were all part of the same dimension and constitute what Pierre Nora calls landscapes of memory.³⁴ All of them are essential elements of the Roman cultural memory. Consequently, in order to inspect how the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* was shaped, I consider not only the physical remains of the monument itself, but also the literary sources that address the understanding of the *Lacus Curtius*. Furthermore, if we consider memory as the way the past is perceived, there must be an agency for such remembrance. Therefore, to study how the *Lacus Curtius* was reconstructed and reinterpreted, I also analyse the authority behind the memory-

³⁰ Rex Stem, 'The exemplary lessons of Livy's Romulus', *Transactions of the American philological association* 137:2 (2007), 435-471, 437.

³¹ Timothy Peter Wiseman, 'The Minucii and their monument', in: Jerzy Linderski (ed.) *Imperium sine fine* (Stuttgart, 1996), 59.

³² Hölkeskamp, 'History and collective memory', 483.

³³ Hölkeskamp, 'History and collective memory', 486.

³⁴ Nora, *Le lieux de mémoire*, 3-15.

building—i.e. the three authors who, according to Varro, offered the different legends linked to the *Lacus Curtius*.

Together with the concept of cultural memory—or collective, if we want to use Halbwachs's concept—and considering the role of visual culture as developed by Warburg, Pierre Nora provides us with the tool to analyse the spaces and places where this cultural memory is evoked, transmitted and even manipulated. The *Lacus Curtius* is one of these sites of memory, but the concept of *lieu de mémoire* covers not only the monument itself but also the rituals around it and the different legends associated with it. The *Lacus Curtius* allows us to inspect how different forms of memory—oral, literary, and monumental—relate to the cultural and social situations of the Roman society. Hence, if we zoom in on the Roman Republic—the period relevant to the present research—we must note that memory was inherently connected to the *gentes*. As Diefenbach points out, the different Roman families created, recreated, and shaped the perceptions of preterit times, seeking prestige in a highly competitive context.³⁵ As a result, different and contradictory representations of the past coexisted with one another, in a context where there was no strong authority capable of setting *the* cultural memory. This seems to be the case of the *Lacus Curtius*. The conflicting representations of the past would be the three different legends that try to set the remembrance of this place. In this sense, and following Pierre Nora, the Roman society and its political aristocracy constitute a collective landscape of memory (*millieux de mémoire*), where the different *lieux de mémoire* maintained the remembrance of the community by reproducing, reinterpreting, and adapting their significance over time.

In the coming chapters, as I mention in the introduction, I uncover the reasons behind the reconstruction and reinterpretation of the *Lacus Curtius* in the Roman Republic. We discuss whether the three different legends and the reconstructions of the monument are solely part of a competitive context in which the families try to gain notoriety—as Diefenbach suggests—or whether these variety of stories additionally respond to a socio-political evolution that the Roman society underwent in the process of change from republican times to the Augustan era. To do so, the first chapter focuses on the literary sources and the archaeological evidence associated with the *Lacus Curtius*. Here, we study the different forms of memory associated with the monument in order to finally understand why it was (re)shaped over Republican times. The three next chapters are a thorough analysis of the three different legends and why they were created. The analyses of these three chapters always start with the study of the author who created and transmitted the legend and continue later with an examination of 'why' he did it. Only by comparing the three legends in this manner will we be able to illustrate the dynamic nature of the Roman cultural memory.

³⁵ Steffen Diefenbach, *Römische erinnerungsräume* (Münster, 2007), 10-12.

2. THE *LACUS CURTIUS*. THE MONUMENT AND ITS LEGENDS

Introduction

For modern scholars of the earliest periods of Roman history, the lack of literary sources and the scarcity of archaeological remains pose a serious challenge in their attempt to understand the Roman Republic. But ancient authors also dealt with this challenge in (re)constructing their own past. A clear example of this problem in Roman historiography is provided by the mysterious *Lacus Curtius*. As already mentioned, this is a monument located in the *Forum Romanum*. The ancient Romans believed that the place marked the opening of what was thought to be a bottomless chasm. The monument's origin is unclear; different legends have been associated with different figures and authors have tried to explain the origins of its name. Despite its obscurity, the monument was worshiped throughout the Republican and Imperial periods. This chapter aims to study the sources associated with the *Lacus Curtius* offering an overview of the evolution of both material and immaterial remains. Only like this, it will be possible to understand how this monument was (re)interpreted and (re)constructed throughout Roman times.

2.1 The Ancient Sources

2.1.1 Varro and the uncertainty of the *Lacus Curtius*' memory

The earliest reference that addresses the *Lacus Curtius* is found in the fifth volume of Varro's treatise, *De lingua latina*. This is a work in 25 books, written from 47 to 45 BC.³⁶ Unfortunately, only the books from V to X are surviving, and there are major gaps in these.³⁷ Book V examines the names of places under discussion in Varro's time. It is in this framework that the allusion to the *Lacus Curtius* has its roots. In his narrative, Varro acknowledges the existence of three different versions that describe the origins of this monument. Nevertheless, the Latin author does not take the side of any explication, and confines himself to offering the reader the different versions in circulation in his time.

In the Forum is the *Lacus Curtius* 'Pool of Curtius'; it is quite certain that it is named from Curtius, but the story about it has three versions: for Procilius does not tell the same story as Piso, nor did Cornelius follow the story given by Procilius (Varro *Ling.* 5.148).³⁸

The first version is offered by Piso, who was consul in 133 BC and censor in 120 BC (Figure 2).³⁹ His story is about the Sabine knight Mettius Curtius who, chased by the Romans during the war between Romulus and Titus Tatius, was miraculously saved when he rode his horse into a swamp and was able to escape.⁴⁰ This legend sets the origin of the monument in the very foundation phase of the city of Rome—the eighth century BC, conferring great antiquity to the *Lacus Curtius*.

Piso in his Annals writes that in the Sabine War between Romulus and Tatius, a Sabine hero named Mettius Curtius, when Romulus with his men had charged down from higher ground and driven in that time was in the Forum, before the sewers had been made, and escaped from

³⁶ They were published after the demise of Cicero in 43 BC. See: Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, I: 139.

³⁷ From the other books—which are not from V to X—we just preserved scattered fragments. For more information about them, see: Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, I: 20.

³⁸ Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, I: 137.

³⁹ Piso and the date of his work will be discussed in the chapter 'Piso and the Sabine legend of Mettius Curtius', see page 22.

⁴⁰ For the war between Sabines and Romans, see: Livy 1. 9-13.

there to his own men on the Capitoline; and from this pool found its name (Varro *Ling.* 5.149).⁴¹

According to Varro, Lutatius and Cornelius, at the beginning of the first century BC, offered a different explanation of the *Lacus Curtius* (Figure 2).⁴² Their version refers to Gaius Curtius, one of the consuls in 445 BC, who consecrated the place after it was struck by lightning. *Lacus Curtius* was named after him.⁴³ We must keep in mind that in Rome, a place touched by a lightning was a *locus religiosus*, and the procedure specifies that the site must be fenced in and equipped with an altar.⁴⁴ This legend is set in the fifth century BC, two centuries after the legend of Mettius Curtius.

Cornelius and Lutatius write that this place was struck by lightning, and by decree of the senate was fenced in: because this was done by consul Curtius, who had M. Genucius as his colleague, it was called the *Lacus Curtius* (Varro *Ling.* 5.150).⁴⁵

The last version is the story of Marcus Curtius. Varro identifies Procilius, who wrote in the 70s BC, as the author of this legend (Figure 2).⁴⁶ According to this account, “a chasm opened in this place, which the soothsayers announced could only be closed by offering that *quo plurimum populus Romanus posset*.”⁴⁷ Thereupon a young patrician, M. Curtius, armed and mounted, rode his horse into the pit, which forthwith closed”.⁴⁸ Varro does not give a date to this event, but Livy, who wrote his *Ab Urbe Condita* two decades after Varro, set this legend in 362 BC.⁴⁹ Therefore, if we take this into consideration, the extraordinary deed of Marcus Curtius dates back to the fourth century BC.

Procilius states that in this place the earth yawned open, and the matter was by decree of the senate referred to the haruspices; they gave the answer that the God of the Dead demanded the fulfilment of a forgotten vow, namely that the bravest citizen be sent down him. Then a certain Curtius, a brave man, put on his war-gear, mounted his horse, and turning away from the Temple of Concord, plunged into the gap, horse and all; upon which the place closed up and gave his body a burial divinely approved, and left to his clan a lasting memorial (Varro *Ling.* 5.148).⁵⁰

Hence, as Varro’s passages show, four different authors from the second and first centuries BC wrote different accounts to give significance to the monument located in the *Forum Romanum*. Before these authors, there is no other record left that gives an explanation of the origin of the *Lacus Curtius*. Therefore, in the Late Republic, the memory associated with this place was dim, and for various reasons, different historians tried to fix the remembrance of this site through different explanations. Before diving into the dynamics of memory of this period, we must understand first what happened to these

⁴¹ Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, I: 140.

⁴² These two authors and the date of their account will be discussed in the chapter ‘Cornelius and Lutatius, the Legend of the Consul Gaius Curtius’, see page 28.

⁴³ Thanks to Varro account, and according to the *fasti consulares*, the date of the event can be dated in 445 BC. Robert Broughton, *The magistrates of the Roman Republic*, 3 Volumes (New York, 1951-1952), I: 52.

⁴⁴ Bremmer, ‘Three Roman aetiological myths’, 156; Schilling, Robert, *Rites, cultes, dieux de Rome* (Paris, 1979), 40.

⁴⁵ Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, I: 140.

⁴⁶ Procilius and the date of his work will be discussed in the chapter ‘Procilius and the Roman legend of Marcus Curtius’, see page 34.

⁴⁷ This is the way Livy explains the same legend in his account. See, Livy 7.6.2.

⁴⁸ Richardson, *A New Topographical Dictionary*, 229.

⁴⁹ Livy 7.6.1, and, also, Dion. Hal. 14.11.

⁵⁰ Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, I: 139.

legends after Varro’s account and, second, what the trajectory of the *Lacus Curtius* was in its material dimension.

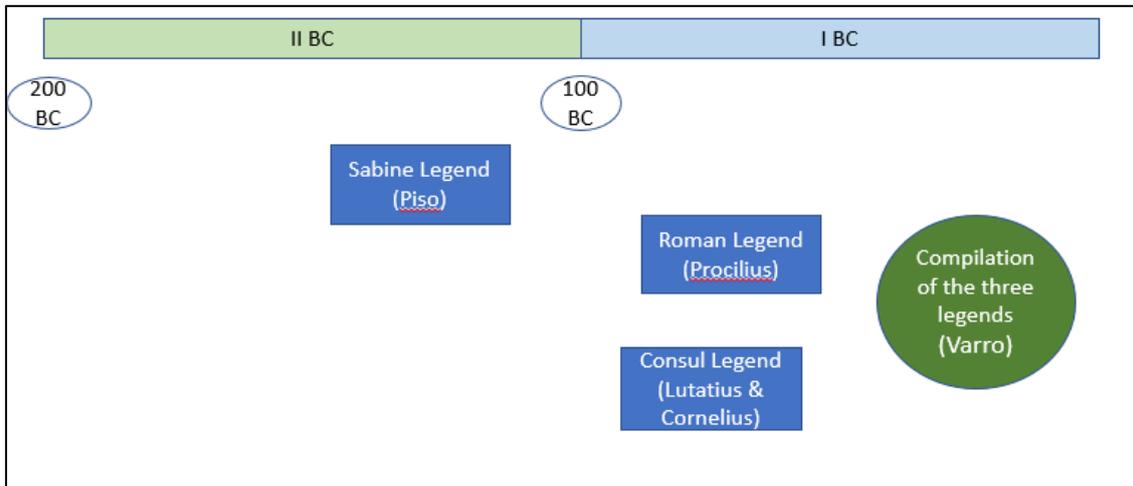


Figure 2. The three legends offered by Varro. An overview of when they were written.

2.1.2 Livy and the crystallization of the remembrance

During the second and first centuries BC, the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* was diffused. Piso, Procilius, Cornelius, and Lutatius gave different versions, none of which seemed to prevail over the others during the Late Republic. As Varro shows, these three legends were still in circulation by the end of the first century BC. However, it is nearly impossible to know which of them was the most popular among the Romans. If we want to understand the dynamics of the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* from Varro onwards, the study of later authors is indispensable.

After Varro’s account, the next Roman author who discusses the origin of the *Lacus Curtius* is Livy. He wrote an extensive history of Rome in 142 volumes entitled *Ab Urbe Condita*.⁵¹ This work goes back to the foundation of the city and finishes with the death of Drusus in the 9 BC. Livy began writing this titanic work around 27 BC, and we must suppose that the first ten books were written in this decade.⁵² It is in these volumes that the allusions to the *Lacus Curtius* are found; surprisingly, he uses two different legends to explain its origin. In his very first book and probably following Piso’s account, Livy explains the origin of the monument using the legend of the Sabine knight, Mettius Curtius:⁵³

While he pronounced this boast a band of gallant youths, led on by Romulus, assailed him. It chanced that Mettius was fighting on horseback at the time, and was therefore the more easily put to flight. As he fled, the Romans followed; and the rest of their army, too, fired by the reckless daring of their king, drove the Sabines before them. Mettius plunged into a swamp, his horse becoming unmanageable in the din of the pursuit, and even the Sabines were drawn off from the general engagement by the danger to so great a man. As for Mettius,

⁵¹ Unfortunately, nowadays we only preserve 35 volumes out of 142.

⁵² Stem, ‘The Exemplary Lessons of Livy’s Romulus’, 436. Furthermore, Livy could not publish his work earlier than 27 BC. Already in book one—Livy 1.19.3—, Livy addresses Octavian as Augustus, title which was given to him by the Senate in the year 27 BC. Therefore, Livy could not have written his work previous at that date.

⁵³ See chapter ‘Piso and the Sabine legend of Mettius Curtius’, page 22.

heartened by the gestures and shouts of his followers and the encouragement of the throng, he made his escape (Livy 1.12.9-10).

As a reminder of this battle they gave the name of Curtian Lake to the pool where the horse of Curtius first emerged from the deep swamp and brought his rider to safety (Livy 1.13.5).⁵⁴

However, just six volumes later, he seems to have changed his mind and offers a different explanation of the origin of the *Lacus Curtius*. Disregarding the legend of the Sabine knight, Livy presents the version of the young Roman patrician, Marcus Curtius:

That same year, whether owing to an earthquake or to some other violent force, it is said that the ground gave way, at about the middle of the Forum, and, sinking to an immeasurable depth, left a prodigious chasm. This gulf could not be filled with the earth which everyone brought and cast into it, until admonished by the gods, they began to inquire what it was that constituted the chief strength of the Roman People; for this the soothsayers declared that they must offer up, as a sacrifice to that spot, if they wished the Roman Republic to endure. Thereupon Marcus Curtius, a young soldier of great prowess, rebuked them, so the story runs, for questioning whether any blessing were more Roman than arms and valour. A hush ensued, as he turned to the temples of the immortal gods which rise above the Forum, and to the Capitol, and stretching forth his hands, now to heaven, and now to the yawning chasm and to the gods below, devoted himself to death. After which, mounted on a horse caparisoned with all possible splendour, he plunged fully armed into the gulf and crowds of men and women threw offerings and fruits in after him. (Livy 7.6.1-4).⁵⁵

Right after explaining the legend of Marcus Curtius, who sacrifices himself for the sake of the Roman people, Livy tries to fix the incoherence in his narrative. He takes a position for the version of the Roman soldier as the one that should explain the origin of the *Lacus Curtius*, and he discards the version of the Sabine knight, Mettius Curtius:

It was he [Marcus Curtius], they say, and not Curtius Mettius, the soldier of Titus Tatius in days of old, who gave his name to the Curtian Lake. Diligence would not be wanting, were there any path which could lead the inquirer to the truth; as it is, one must hold by the tradition, where antiquity will not allow us to be certain; and the name of the pool is better known from this more recent legend (Livy 7.6.5-6).⁵⁶

The reason for this choice can be found in the very beginning of Livy's work. In the preface, he already states the importance "to learn from the monument of history (...) to uphold that which advances both personal morality and the public good".⁵⁷ The legend of Marcus Curtius accomplishes this goal stated in the preface, and links the memory of *Lacus Curtius* with this idea of exemplarity: Marcus Curtius sacrificed himself for the sake of the safety of the Roman people.⁵⁸ Hence, in his narrative, Livy presents two different versions explaining the origin of the *Lacus Curtius*, but takes the side of the version of the Roman knight, Marcus Curtius.⁵⁹ Does this choice have an impact on the remembrance of the *Lacus Curtius*?

⁵⁴ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, transl. Benjamin Oliver Foster, Livy, 5 volumes (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1919-1929), I: 49-51.

⁵⁵ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, III: 373-375.

⁵⁶ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, III: 373-375.

⁵⁷ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, I: 5-6.

⁵⁸ For a further developed explanation of this idea of exemplarity, see: Stem, Rex. 'The Exemplary Lessons of Livy's Romulus', 441-471.

⁵⁹ Probably the reader is wondering why Livy offered two different versions in his work, if eventually he dismisses one of the legends. To give an answer to this question, it is important to understand the literary sources that Livy used to compose his enormous work. Such an extended period covered by Livy's history

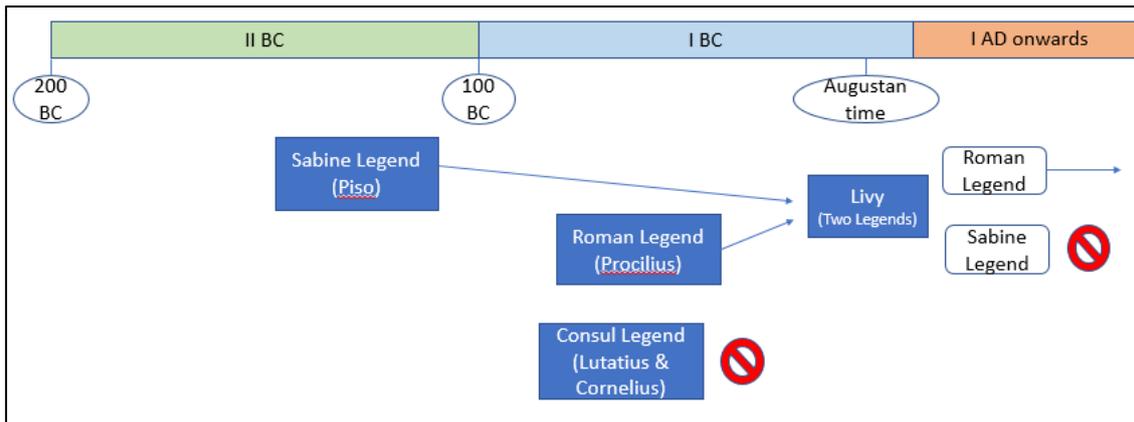


Figure 3. The evolution of the legends from the Roman Republic to Livy.

After Livy's narrative, later Roman authors also included the explanation of the *Lacus Curtius* in their works. All of them, starting from Valerius Maximus in the first century AD up to Orosius in the fifth century AD, recorded the legend of Marcus Curtius as the unique way of remembering this monument.⁶⁰ From this moment, none of them mention either the legend of Mettius Curtius or the legend of Gaius Curtius.⁶¹ From Livy onwards, the version of Marcus Curtius is fixed and canonized.⁶² This shift in memory of the *Lacus Curtius* after Livy was influential in the centuries that followed. An example can be seen in Tacitus (2.55.1). In his narrative about the Year of the Four Emperors, he associates the death of Galba with the *Lacus Curtius*; as Rebecca Edwards wrote, "the *Lacus Curtius* becomes the symbol of Galba's self-sacrifice".⁶³ Through this representation, a new layer of memory was added and the *Lacus Curtius* acquired a new significance based on Livy's

needed several works from different authors to cover all the stages of the Roman history. Piso, as Forsythe examines, dedicated his first book to the legends of the Regal times, something that earlier historians did not do. That makes Piso's account indispensable for later historians, like Livy, to reconstruct the earlier stages of the city of Rome. Livy needed to use Piso to write about the Regal period. Therefore, he had to use the story of Mettius Curtius, which is essential for the episode of the war between the Sabines and the Romans. Once Livy advances in his history, his sources changed, and some of the new accounts for later periods are in contradiction with stories written some books before -as it happened with the legend of the Roman Knight, Marcus Curtius-. At this point, he must take side with one of them to keep his narrative coherent.

⁶⁰ The authors and the passages were: Val. Max. 5.6.2; Pliny HN 15.78; Cass. Dio 30.1-2; Paulus ex Fest. 42L; Orosius 3.5.

⁶¹ In this thesis, I am just focusing on the Roman authors because of my interest in studying the dynamics of memory within the Roman society. However, if we turn to the Greek world, surprisingly, in the second century AD, Plutarch (*Rom.* 18.1-19.5) explains the *Lacus Curtius* through the legend of Mettius Curtius. Furthermore, before Plutarch and contemporary to Livy, Dionisius of Halicarnassus also explained the *Lacus Curtius* through two different versions: the Mettius Curtius' (Dion. Hal. 2.42.5-6) and Marcus Curtius' legend (Dion. Hal. 14.11). However, unlike Livy, Dionisius of Halicarnassus does not take side with any of the versions. For further research, it would be interested to analyse why among the Greek authors the dynamics of the *Lacus Curtius* do not follow the same patron than the Romans.

⁶² This is a novel idea. There has not been any scholar before who had drawn attention to the canonization of the legend of Marcus Curtius. This idea well deserves further research in order to get more insight about how the legend was fixed and the reasons behind this canonization. However, if we want to acquire a good understanding of the dynamics of memory of the *Lacus Curtius*, it is necessary first to study how memory worked in Republican times. That is why this thesis focuses on the processes of remembrance of the *Lacus Curtius* in the Roman Republic and not yet in the canonization of Marcus Curtius' legend in the Augustan period.

⁶³ Rebecca Edwards, 'Deuotio, disease, and remedia in the Histories', in: Victoria Emma Pagan (ed.), *A companion to Tacitus* (Chichester, 2012), 237-260, 247.

canonization.⁶⁴ Hence, after Livy, the version of the Roman patrician, Marcus Curtius, became the way in which the Romans experienced and portrayed the memory of this monument. However, can this change be seen in the material level?

2.2 The archaeological remains and the dynamics of the material dimension

The excavation of the area where the *Lacus Curtius* was found began on 13 April 1904, under the direction of Giacomo Boni. However, the possible location of this monument was already suspected because of the lack of paving stones in that particular spot, and based on the description in various literary sources.⁶⁵ On 9 February 1906, the base where the marble stones that surrounded the *Lacus Curtius* rests was discovered. Just after 20 days, by 29 February of the same year, the pavement of the enclosing area that constitutes the monument itself was found as well (Figure 4).⁶⁶

The *Lacus Curtius* is still visible today; it is located in the central area of the *Forum Romanum*, between the foundations of the *Equus Domitiani* and the column of Phocas. The visitor who gets to this point finds a well-preserved monument of trapezoidal shape, measuring 8.95 meters high and 10.15 meters wide.⁶⁷ Not all the remains, however, date back to the same period, as discussed in the following paragraphs.



Figure 4. The *Lacus Curtius* in 1906 after Boni's excavation.

The remains of the *Lacus Curtius* belong to different chronological phases. The oldest layer consists of a foundation of cappellaccio on which a pavement of tufa blocks was set. On top of it, we find blocks of peperino. As a final layer, the monument is covered by a sheet of travertine slabs. Some authors have considered the cappellaccio as a phase in itself, dating it back to the fourth century BC.⁶⁸ However, recent studies doubt such an early date, and consider the elements of cappellaccio, peperino, and tufa as a sole phase

⁶⁴ We see how from Livy's canonization of this legend, later authors remodelled the way of remembrance of the *Lacus Curtius* building upon the Marcus Curtius' legend. It would be very interesting to study how and why the *Lacus Curtius* and its memory were (re)shaped after the Augustan Period and throughout Imperial times. The use of the past in this period seems to vary from that one in the Roman Republic. This deserves further research.

⁶⁵ Alessandra Capodiferro, Patrizia Fortini and Miriam Taviani, *Gli scavi di giacomo boni al foro romano: documenti dall'archivio disegni della soprintendenza archeologica di Roma* (Rome, 2003), 36; The authors who mention the monument are: Plaut. *Curcul.* 477; Livy 7.6.1; Plin. *NH* 15; Stat. *Silv.* 1.66; Suet. *Aug.* 57; Suet. *Galba* 20; Tac. 1.41; Dio Cass. 64.6.

⁶⁶ Romolo Artioli, 'Il foro romano e le sue scoperte' *Arte e storia* 15 (1906), 49-52.

⁶⁷ Filippo Coarelli, *Guida archeologica di Roma* (Milan, 1974), 78-80.

⁶⁸ Thomas Ashby, *Recent excavations in the Roman forum* (London, 1904), 229; Giuseppe Lugli, *Roma antica: il centro monumentale* (Roma, 1946), 156-157.; Jacques Poucet, *Recherches sur la légende sabine des origines de Rome* (Louvain, 1967), 240-241.

that dates from 184 BC.⁶⁹ This would be the first and the earliest phase of the monument; it was dated by Åkerström through a passage by Livy, which connects the tufa layer with the works undertaken by the censors of 184 BC.⁷⁰ In this year, important drainage works were undertaken, among them the *lacus sternendos lapide*.⁷¹ The passage is as follows:

[In 184] The censors cut off from the public aqueducts all supplies of water for private houses or land, and wherever private owners had built up against public buildings or on public ground, they demolished these structures within thirty days. They next made contracts for lining the reservoirs with stone and, where it was necessary, cleaning out the sewers, money having been set apart for the purpose, and also for the construction of sewers in the Aventine quarter and in other places where as yet there were none. Flaccus constructed a raised causeway at the Fountain of Neptune to serve as a public road and also a road along the Formian Hill. Cato purchased for the State two auction halls in the Lautumiae, the Maenium and the Titium, as well as four shops, and on the site, he built a basilica, known afterwards as the Porcian (Livy 39.44.3-7).⁷²

The hypothesis of Åkerström could be reinforced with another passage by Plautus, who composed his work in the first decades of the second century BC. If we believe that he refers to the *Lacus Curtius*, it would prove that the monument already existed by the beginning of the second century, as Åkerström suggests:

In the lower forum citizens of repute and wealth stroll about;
in the middle forum, near the Canal, there you find the merely showy set.
Above the Lake are those brazen, garrulous, spiteful fellows
who boldly decry other people without reason [...] ⁷³
(Plaut. Curcul. 475-478).⁷⁴

Therefore, modern studies (see footnote 69) discard the hypothesis of the cappellaccio as a phase dated from the fourth century BC, and accept Åkerström's interpretation that the *Lacus Curtius* was constructed in 184 BC. This is interesting because, despite the antiquity of the legends—as a reminder, the most recent one sets its events in 362 BC—both the monument and the surviving accounts date back at the most to the second century BC.

The second phase of the monument would be marked by the travertine slabs mentioned above (Figure 5). In Sulla's time, probably shortly after his demise, the Forum seems to have experienced a broad repaving with travertine slabs—attributed to an Aurelius Cotta.⁷⁵ As Richardson highlights, “in preparation for Cotta's repavement, the elaborate system of subterranean passages usually called *cuniculi* seems to have been constructed now”.⁷⁶ The principal sewer run from the Temple of Divus Iulius to the Rostra Augusti,

⁶⁹ Giuliani and Verduchi, *L'area centrale*, 106; Richardson, *A new topographical*, 229; Coarelli, *Guida archeologica di Roma*, 79.

⁷⁰ Åkerström, *Lacus Curtius und seine Sagen*, 82.

⁷¹ Livy 39.44.5. It is important to highlight this passage in Latin to appreciate the term *lacus*.

⁷² Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, transl. Evan T. Sage, Livy, 2 volumes (Massachusetts, 1935-1936), I: 162.

⁷³ It is interesting to read the Latin text: *In foro infimo boni homines atque dites ambulant / in medio propter canalem, ibi ostentatores meri/confidentes garrulique et malevoli supera lacum/ qui alteri de nihilo audacter dicunt contumeliam [...]*.

⁷⁴ Titus Maccius Plautus, *Curculio*, transl. Melo Wolfgang, Plautus, 5 Volumes (Cambridge 2011-2013), II: 239.

⁷⁵ Giuliani and Verduchi, *L'area centrale*, 60-61.

⁷⁶ Richardson, *A new topographical dictionary*, 230.

while different branch passages cross the central area of the *Forum Romanum*. Such an architectural work affected the zone where the *Lacus Curtius* was located, which explains the travertine layer found in the archaeological record. Furthermore, this phase shows an integral reconstruction of the *Lacus Curtius*, adding new elements and restructuring some others.⁷⁷ Scholars have dated Aurelius Cotta works; consequently, the reconstruction of the *Lacus Curtius* took place between the 78 and 74 BC, almost hundred years after its construction (Figure 6).⁷⁸

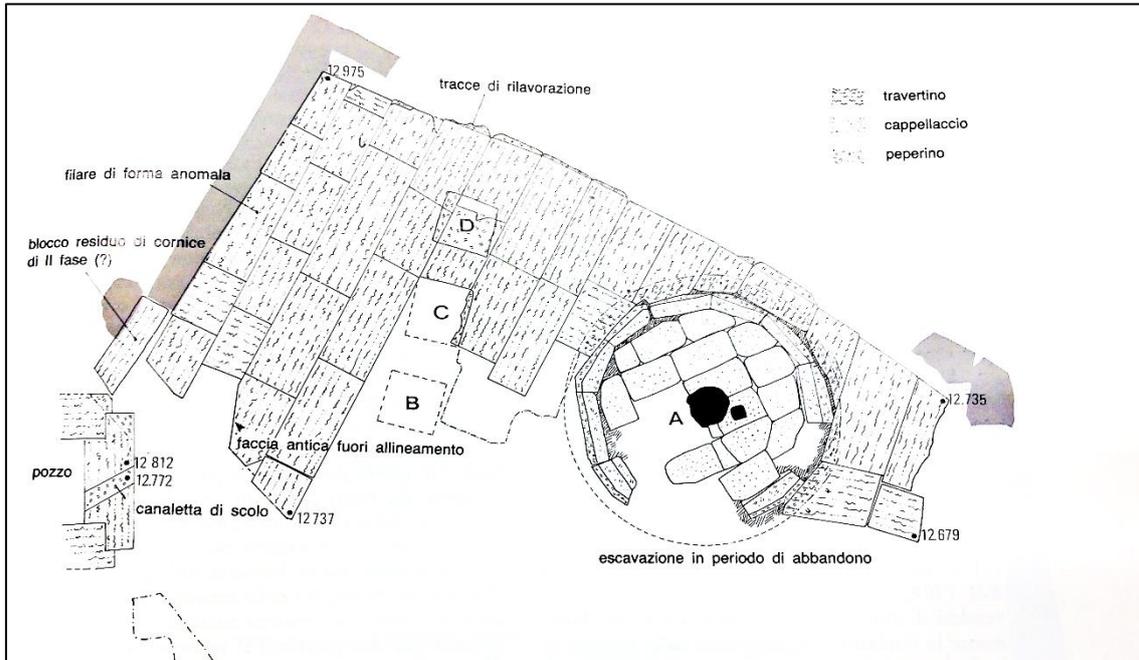


Figure 5. Structure of the *Lacus Curtius* in the second phase.

Apart from these two initial phases, a restoration of the *Forum Romanum* was carried out in Augustan times and the *Lacus Curtius* was restyled.⁷⁹ However, at this moment, there seems to be an attempt to fix the memory of the monument, since the *Lacus* itself was not only modified but a relief was attached to it (Figure 6).⁸⁰ This relief depicts the legend of the Roman patrician, Marcus Curtius.⁸¹ On the back of the relief, there is an inscription that says: L(ucius) NAEVIUS L(uci) F(ilius) SURDINUS / PR(aetor) / INTER CIVIS ET PEREGRINOS (Figure 7).⁸² Interestingly, the very same name is depicted in the pavement close to the *Lacus Curtius*—still visible nowadays—which was renovated in Augustan times. Hafner points out that the inscription on the back of the relief dates from

⁷⁷ See more: Giuliani and Verduchi, *L'area centrale*, 108-110.

⁷⁸ Giuliani and Verduchi, *L'area centrale*, 53; Richardson, *A New Topographical Dictionary*, 229.

⁷⁹ Coarelli, *Guida Archeologica Di Roma*, 79.

⁸⁰ This relief was found in 1552 and 1553 but, unfortunately, the exact position is unknown. According to Richardson, *A New Topographical Dictionary*, 47, it appeared between the arch of Septimius Severus and the Temple of Castor and Pollux. However, it is a large area that includes almost the entire central part of the *Forum Romanum*.

⁸¹ This hypothesis is supported by scholars like: Bremmer, 'Three Roman Aetiological Myths', 158. However, other scholars like: Poucet, *Recherches sur la légende sabine*, 244, point that the relief represents the version of the Sabine knight Mettius Curtius. Still nowadays, this seems to be a problem for scholars. Nevertheless, in my perspective, if we take into consideration the archaeological and literary sources, as it has been done in this paper, everything points to understand this relief as depicting the Roman legend of Marcus Curtius.

⁸² CIL 6.1468 = 31662.

ca. 12 BC, the same period in which the pavement was renovated.⁸³ Most of the modern scholars agree with this. In this sense, there seems to be a connection not only between the *Lacus Curtius* and the relief, but also between the *Lacus Curtius* and the entire renovation of the Forum carried out in Augustan times. Furthermore, a coin from ca. 15 BC, on which Augustus appears along with the name of Naevius Surdinus as moneyer, highlights the close connection between these two figures. Consequently, it is not a risk to link Augustus himself to the renovations of the Forum and the refurbishment of the *Lacus Curtius*.



Figure 6. Relief of Marcus Curtius. Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome.



Figure 7. Inscription behind the relief of Marcus Curtius. Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome.

After this last renovation in Augustan times, the monument did not experience any change until the third century AD. In Severan times, there was a new refurbishment of the Forum's pavement, but elements from the age of Augustus—such as the inscription of Naevius Surdinus—were kept.⁸⁴ This indicates that, despite the renovation, a new process of remembrance was still associated with the changes carried out in Augustan times. After that, the monument seems to have entered a phase of decline, and we cannot trace new modifications. Therefore, the different chronological phases of the *Lacus Curtius* can be summed up into four stages: 1) the construction of the monument in 184 BC, 2) an integral reconstruction of the *Lacus Curtius* between 78 and 74 BC, 3) a renovation of the monument and the addition of a relief in Augustan times, and 4) a late refurbishment in the early third century AD.

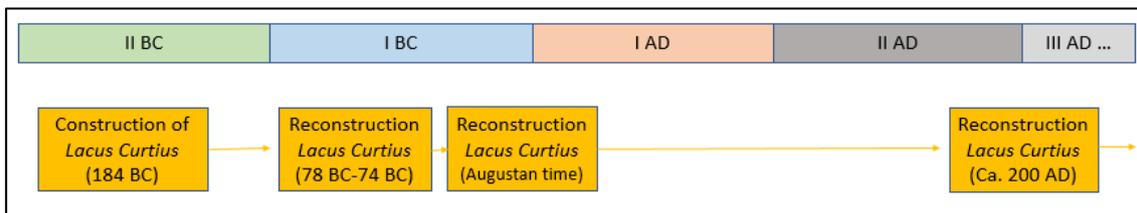


Figure 8. The evolution of the (re)construction of the *Lacus Curtius*.

⁸³ The best study of the relief is: Hafner, G., 'Sieg und Frieden. Zur Deutung des Reiterreliefs vom Forum Romanum' *JDAI* 93 (1978), 228-251; others who agreed with Hafner: Giuliani, Cairoli & Verduchi, Patrizia, *L'area centrale*, 115-116; Richardson, *A New Topographical Dictionary*, 229. However, Hülsen, Christian, *Il Foro romano: storia e monumenti* (Roma, 1906), 121, dated the same relief in the fourth century AD. Nevertheless, this hypothesis, based on the artistic style, have been discarded among later scholars.

⁸⁴ Gregor Kalas, *The Restoration of the Roman Forum in Late Antiquity: Transforming Public Space* (Texas, 2015), 78.

2.3. The name of the *Lacus Curtius*

2.3.1 Why *Lacus*?

The word *lacus* seems to illustrate that this area was primarily immersed in water. According to De Angelis d'Ossat, at the time of the foundation of Rome, the *Forum Romanum* was a valley into which water from the Viminal, the Quirinal, and the Oppian hill would come together.⁸⁵ As a result, the space between the Capitoline and the Palatine hills, where the *Lacus Curtius* is located, was a marshy area. However, as reported by the Roman tradition, the Tarquin Kings undertook drainage works through the construction of the Cloaca Maxima, and by the sixth century BC this was no longer a swamp. In that case, why was it named as a *lake* in the later legends?

Forsythe points out that the *Lacus Curtius* “probably served the function of a sump hole for the Forum”.⁸⁶ This would imply that the monument was still connected to the water in later times. The ancient sources and the archaeological remains seem to agree with this hypothesis. On the one hand, a passage from Ovid suggests that the *Lacus Curtius* contained originally water:

That Lake Curtius, which supports dry altars,
is now solid ground, but formerly it was a lake.
(Ovid Fast.6.403).⁸⁷

On the other hand, if we examine the archaeological reports compiled by Giuliani and Verduchi, in the first phase of the monument, there is a lining of ‘cocciopesto’—opus signinum.⁸⁸ This is an impermeable material, which could suggest that the *Lacus Curtius* contained water, or at least it had to be waterproofed. Furthermore, in the second phase, as mentioned, the *Lacus* was subjected to an integral renovation. Among the changes, the increasing of the slope of the monument’s pavement is striking. According to Verduchi, this had the goal of draining and avoiding the stagnation of water.⁸⁹ In this sense, we can assume that the monument was linked to water in one way or another.

Furthermore, this kind of pools was common in Rome. The Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome contains a catalogue with 22 *lacus*, three of them in the *Forum Romanum*.⁹⁰ Hence, the association of the word ‘lake’ to topographical places was a common practice in the city of Rome. Moreover, Suetonius reports that every year, Romans of all classes gathered at the *Lacus Curtius* and threw a coin in it for the health of Augustus.

How much he was beloved for his worthy conduct in all these respects, it is easy to imagine. I say nothing of the decrees of the senate in his honour, which may seem to have resulted from compulsion or deference. The Roman knights voluntarily, and with one accord, always celebrated his birth for two days together; and all ranks of the people yearly, in performance of a vow they had made, threw a piece of money into the Curtian lake, as an offering for his welfare. They likewise, on the calends [first] of January, presented for his acceptance new-

⁸⁵ Gioacchino De Angelis d'Ossat, ‘Storia geologica della regione dei Fori romani sino all'insediamento dei primitivi’ *Studi Romani* 2 (1954), 625-648, 626.

⁸⁶ Gary Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi and the Roman Annalistic Tradition* (Lanham, 1994), 158.

⁸⁷ Publio Ovidius, *Fasti*, transl. James George Frazer, Ovid, *Fasti* (London, 1931), 349.

⁸⁸ Giuliani and Verduchi, *L'area centrale*, 108.

⁸⁹ Giuliani and Verduchi, *L'area centrale*, 109.

⁹⁰ Richardson, *A New Topographical Dictionary*, 229-232.

year's gifts in the Capitol, though he was not present: with which donations, he purchased some costly images of the Gods, which he erected in several streets of the city: as that of Apollo Sandaliarius, Jupiter Tragoedus, and others (Suet. *Aug.* 57.1).⁹¹

Åkerström argues that this practice was associated with a popular rite, well-attested in central Italy, which consists of making offerings into bodies of water.⁹² Consequently, the practice in the times of Augustus would be reminiscent of the aquatic significance of earlier times or, as Forsythe reasons, it could be a later development based on the belief that the *Lacus Curtius* originally contained water.⁹³ Be that as it may, there seems to be enough evidence that relates the *Lacus Curtius* with water. Hence, the name *Lacus* still had some logic in later times, after the monument was built and the legends were created.

2.3.2 Why Curtius?

The explanation of the term Curtius is more complicated. As we have seen, Varro informs us that in *Foro Lacum Curtium a Curtio dictum constat*.⁹⁴ This certainty that the monument was named after a member of the Curtian family might be a product of hindsight; therefore, the analysis should be done from a wider perspective. The *gens* Curtia was a plebeian clan, which was attested in the archaeological record for the first time at the end of the second century BC. A coin dating from 116 or 115 BC is the first material evidence of the political activity of this *gens* (Figure 9).⁹⁵ Before this date, the only Curtian member who can be traced is the consul in 445 BC, Gaius Curtius.⁹⁶ However, there are reasons to believe that this figure is a product of the political dynamics of the Late Republic. First of all, at that time, plebeian families could not opt to hold the consulate.⁹⁷ But even if Gaius Curtius was able to do so, why do not we find any other Curtian member in the Roman political scene until a much later date? Second, from 116 BC onwards, members from this *gens* started to occupy relevant positions. This should make us think that it is at this moment, and not before, when this *gens* showed up in the Roman political setting. The question here is this: If this term cannot originally refer to the Curtian clan, how can the Curtius epithet be explained?



Figure 9. Q. Curtius and M. Silanus, Denarius, Rome, 116 or 115 BC

To give an accurate answer to this question, we must take a step back and consider the other *lacus* of the city. As mentioned above, there are several *lacus* in Rome and all of

⁹¹ Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum*, transl. John Carew Rolfe, Suetonius, 2 Volumes (Cambridge-London, 1998), I: 237.

⁹² Åkerström, *Lacus Curtius und seine Sagen*, 81-83.

⁹³ Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 159.

⁹⁴ Varro *Ling.* 1.148.

⁹⁵ RRC. I 300.

⁹⁶ Broughton, *The magistrates of the Roman republic*, I: 52.

⁹⁷ It could have been a *gens* with both patrician and plebeian families. However, the fact that we do not know any other Curtian member from the earliest periods makes me think that the figure of Gaius Curtius was made up in later times.

them are attached to an epithet. Only one—the *Lacus Servilius*— of the 22 attested lakes in Rome seems to have taken its name from a Roman *gens*. All other names are just descriptive or topographical. As a result, Forsythe, in ‘the Eighty-Sixth General Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America’, came up with a brilliant interpretation of the name *Lacus Curtius*.⁹⁸ Curtius could be an adjective derived from *Curs*, *Curtis*, a syncopated vernacular form from *cohors*, *cohortis*. Originally, *Cohors* meant simply an enclosed zone; only later was it used to name the subdivisions of the Roman legions. Forsythe’s hypothesis is reinforced by comparison with another topographical description, the *Campus Martius*. As *Campus Martius* signifies ‘the field of Mars’, the *Lacus Curtius* would formerly have meant ‘the pool of the enclosure’. Furthermore, this philological interpretation finds a parallel in the archaeological remains. As Verduchi’s study shows, in the outer slabs of the monument, there are traces that point to the reconstruction of a fence that was raised to enclose the monument.⁹⁹ Hence, the *Lacus Curtius* was not originally named after a member of the Curtian *gens*, but after its physical description.

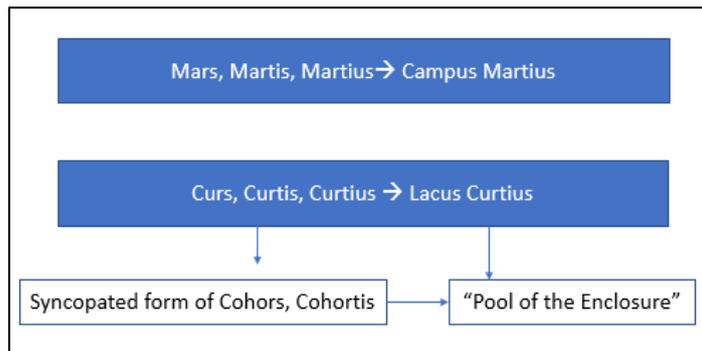


Figure 10. Forsythe's interpretation of the name *Lacus Curtius*.

2.4 A starting point for the study of the dynamics of memory of the *Lacus Curtius*

The analysis of the ancient sources and the archaeological remains constitutes the starting point of the present study. To fully understand the processes of remembrance that affected the *Lacus Curtius*, it is indispensable to simultaneously consider both the literary and the material dimension. As noted, there has been a similar development in both cases.

On the one hand, the three legends about the origin of the *Lacus Curtius* were written between the late second century and the middle of the first century BC. Before these dates, there are no other written testimonies about this site.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, the monument itself was constructed in 184 BC and underwent its first reconstruction in the 70s BC. During this time, the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* was unclear, and at least three different versions strove to give significance to a site that was not understood anymore by the Romans of that time. It was not until the end of the first century BC, in times of Augustus, when the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* was eventually fixed through different means: Livy’s narrative, the renovation of the monument, and the relief of the Roman soldier Marcus Curtius. At this point, the Sabine legend of Mettius Curtius and the legend of the consul Gaius Curtius seem to have been forgotten among the Romans, and the legend of the Roman knight, Marcus Curtius, stood as the canonical version.

⁹⁸ Gary Forsythe, ‘The Eighty-Sixth General Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America Toronto, Ontario’ *American Journal of Archaeology* 89:2 (1985), 320-356.

⁹⁹ Giuliani and Verduchi, *L’area centrale*, 107.

¹⁰⁰ I do acknowledge that might have been other versions of the *Lacus Curtius* which were transmitted orally but not recorded by the ancient authors. However, this cannot be known and, therefore, I will just focus on those legends that have been preserved until today.

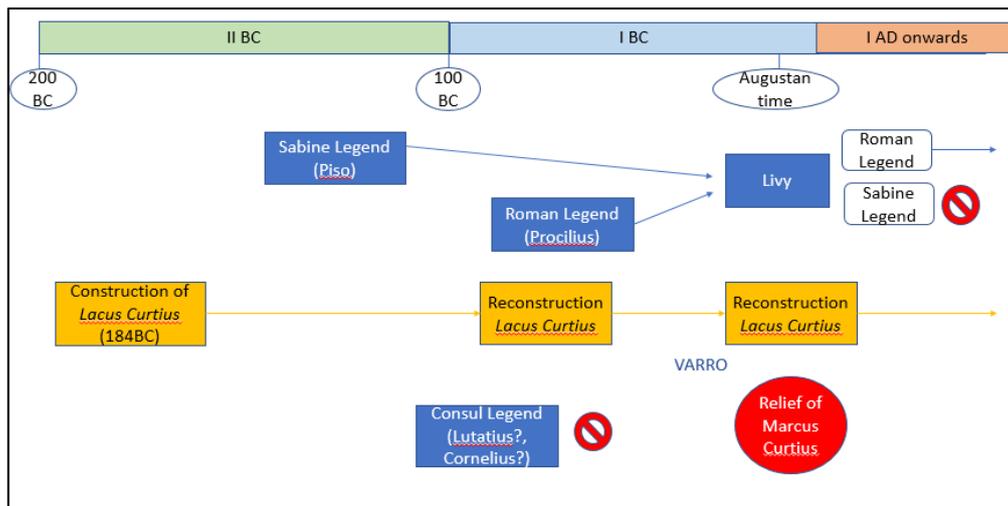


Figure 11. Overview of the legends and (re)constructions of the *Lacus Curtius* from 184 BC to Livy's narrative

Before the second century BC—i.e. before the scheme above (Figure 11)—it is complicated to know what happened at this spot. It is most likely that in 184 BC, the construction of the *Lacus Curtius* was just a monumentalization of an existing memorial.¹⁰¹ However, over the years, its meaning faded away, until by the beginning of the second century the people were not able to understand its meaning anymore. For about two centuries, until the Augustan times, different authors and diverse reconstructions of the monument tried to fix its memory. But only after Livy was this place remembered for itself. The goal of this study is to give an explanation of the dynamics of the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* from the moment the monument was constructed until its memory was fixed in Augustan times. In other words, why were the *Lacus Curtius* and its memory shaped and reshaped in the Late Roman Republic?

In order to answer the research question of the present thesis, I will analyse separately the three different ways in which the *Lacus Curtius* was commemorated. That means, the three legends presented by Varro. These three versions will be used as a vehicle for understanding the dynamics of memory of the *Lacus Curtius*, and they will constitute the three main blocks of this work. However, that does not mean that only literary sources will be analysed, also the material dimension and even the orality will be considered in the study of the Roman cultural memory of this period. Regarding the structure, the first chapter focuses on the legend of Mettius Curtius and his author, Piso. I will discuss when this legend was created, and why Piso was interested in shaping the remembrance of the *Lacus Curtius* through the legend of the Sabine knight. The second chapter will consist on a thorough analysis of the tale of Gaius Curtius, and the discussion about who Lutatius and Cornelius could have been. I will also explain the reasons behind the creation of this legend and the intentions of those who commemorated the *Lacus Curtius* through this version. Last but not least, I will inspect the legend of Marcus Curtius and the role it played in Roman society. As the other two versions, I will study the authority and creation of this legend and the purpose behind its invention.

¹⁰¹ Adriano La Regina, 'Lacus Curtius' *Eutopia. Commentarii novi de antiquitatibus totius Europae* 4:2 (1995), 233-253 is the only scholar who has tried to offer a hypothesis about the existence and meaning of *Lacus Curtius* before its actual construction in 184 BC. Its whole theory is based on a passage of Suidas (Culex 363-364) in which *Lacus Curtius* is named *Lacus Libernus*.

3. THE *LACUS CURTIUS*. THE DYNAMICS OF MEMORY IN REPUBLICAN ROME

Introduction

Meminisse ‘to remember’, from *memoria* ‘memory’, when there is again a motion toward that which *remansit* ‘has remained’ in the *mens* ‘mind’: and this may have been said from *manere* ‘to remain’, as though *manimoria*. Therefore the Salii, when they sing “O Mamurius Veturius”, indicate a *memoria vetus* ‘memory of olden times’. From the same is *monere* ‘to remind’, because he who *monet* ‘reminds’, is just like memory. So also the *monimenta* ‘memorials’ which are on tombs, and in fact alongside the highway, that they may *admonere* ‘admonish’ the passers-by that they themselves were mortal and that the readers are too. From this, the other things that are written and done to preserve their *memoria* ‘memory’ are called *monimenta* ‘monuments’ (Varro *Ling.* 6.49).¹⁰²

Already in the first century BC, Varro presents a definition of the verb *meminisse*, ‘to remember’. On the one hand, he highlights that all the things that are written and done to preserve ‘memory’ are called ‘monuments’. To trace why the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* varied throughout the decades, we must consider all the ‘monuments’ that preserved its remembrance. This idea implies the analysis of not only the physical representation of the *Lacus Curtius* but also orality, rituals and literature associated with it. On the other hand, remembering is recovering what has remained in one’s mind, and ‘monuments’ are the vehicle through which memories are triggered off. If the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* is so pluralistic, it means that different ‘monuments’ offer diverse ways of remembrance. Behind this diversity of meanings, there is always an authority attempting to fix the memory and, therefore, a purpose. Consequently, if we want to understand the reasons behind the (re)shaping of the *Lacus Curtius*, we need to analyse all the ‘monuments’—physical remains and legends—and the authority behind their construction.

3.1 PISO AND THE LEGEND OF METTIUS CURTIUS

3.1.1 Who was Piso?

L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi was a Roman politician and historian who held the consulate in 133 BC. According to Cornell, his grandfather may have been C. Piso, the urban praetor of 211, and his father could have been the legate of 198, C. Calpurnius Piso, who is mentioned by Livy in his book 32—Livy 32.19.11.¹⁰³ Taking into consideration other members of his family, Piso was the fourth Calpurnius Piso who held the consulate since 180 BC, when his uncle was the first one of the family in achieving the highest magistracy.¹⁰⁴ This shows how the family Calpurnii Piso gained prominence in the course of the second century BC, becoming one of the most important actors of the Roman political landscape. There is no explicit evidence of Piso’s education and early career. We know however, that Piso was tribune of the plebs in 149 BC, when he promoted the *Lex Calpurnia Repetundis*.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, he achieved the consulate in 133 BC, taking part as a commander in the war in Sicily against rebel slaves.¹⁰⁶ To end his political career, he

¹⁰² Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, I: 332.

¹⁰³ Tim Cornell, Edward Bingham, John Rich and Christopher Smith (eds.), *The fragments of the Roman historians*, 3 Volumes (Oxford, 2013), I: 231.

¹⁰⁴ Broughton, *The magistrates of the Roman republic*, I: 387.

¹⁰⁵ Broughton, *The magistrates of the Roman republic*, I: 459.

¹⁰⁶ Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 233.

was appointed censor in 120 BC.¹⁰⁷ As reported by Cicero, Piso was very diligent in the courts, participating actively supporting or rejecting laws. In this line, he published speeches, that unfortunately had already faded away by the time of Cicero, but they could have played a significant role in later sources, influencing their perspective.¹⁰⁸

Piso wrote a history of Rome from its foundation to his own day.¹⁰⁹ The title of his work was presumably *Annales*—as Piso refers in several of the fragments that have been preserved—but his work has not survived the passage of time.¹¹⁰ We know of it from later authors who cite Piso, and only 49 fragments have been ascribed to him.¹¹¹ In this sense, it is difficult to give an exact date for the work of Piso’s history. According to Forsythe—and Cornell seems to agree with him—the production of Piso’s work might have taken place after his censorship, since there is no testimony which can firmly prove an earlier production.¹¹² To write his history, Piso made use of earlier writers, probably oral traditions, and memorial sources, as the fragments show. Nevertheless, to carry out a strict analysis of Piso’s narrative, we must bear in mind the fragmentary nature of his work and the resulting difficulties.

The study of Piso’s fragments shows the moralizing tone of his work. Cornell discusses that this position is similar to that one found in contemporary authors, like Cato.¹¹³ However, Piso’s narrative would be the first from whom we have clear attestation of a moralizing process in a Roman narrative. Piso depicted the Roman morals of the past as better than in his own time, but his own narrative brings about something more important: an *apologia pro uita sua*.¹¹⁴ Piso tended to depict the deeds related to him and his *gens* with great majesty, attempting to confer grandeur to his lineage and, therefore, to his person. This will be the main idea which we will discuss in the coming lines. But before diving into that, it is necessary to discuss the antiquity of the legend of Mettius Curtius.

3.1.2 The antiquity of the legend of Mettius Curtius

Tracing back the antiquity of a legend, without having written testimonies nor archaeological evidence related to it, is almost an impossible task. However, we can discuss whether Piso was the inventor of this story or, on the contrary, he just followed another account. Ogilvie, in his commentary of this passage, points out that the Pisonian version was the oldest of the three, Greek in character, and dated to the fourth century BC

¹⁰⁷ There are different fragments of his work that attest his censorship, see Broughton, *The magistrates of the Roman Republic*, I:523. The date is deducted from a coin: MRR 1.523.

¹⁰⁸ Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 235.

¹⁰⁹ On the one hand, the latest event recorded in the preserved fragments that we have dates from 146 BC. However, the account might have gone as far as 112 BC. On the other hand, authors like Peter Wiseman, *Clio’s cosmetics: Three studies in Greco-Roman literature*, (Bristol, 2004), 10, assume that Piso’s production was organized in seven books, but others as Luca Cardinali, ‘Quanti libri scrisse L. Calpurnio Pisone Frugi? Congestture sull’estensione dell’opera’, *Maia* 40 (1988), 45-55, 40 suggest that there were eight or even nine.

¹¹⁰ Lact. *Inst.* 1.6.9; Varro *ling.* 5.148-149; Varro *ling.* 5.165; Pliny *nat.* 2.140; Pliny *nat.* 28.13-14; Gell. 15.29.

¹¹¹ This is argued by Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 24, but most of the authors agreed in 45. However, lately, new investigations point out that those fragments belong to different Piso and not only one.

¹¹² Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 26. For a more detailed argumentation, see: Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 234.

¹¹³ Cornell, Tim, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 235.

¹¹⁴ Cornell, Tim, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 239.

at the latest.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, Bremmer thinks that such an early date for a Greek influence would be debatable, and only at a later time, an intensive cultural exchange with Greece seems to have taken place.¹¹⁶ From my point of view, Bremmer's argument is not solid enough to refute Ogilvie analysis, since in the fourth century BC important contacts with the Greek world already existed.¹¹⁷ However, Ogilvie argumentation is explained by saying that "myths which explain caverns by telling of heroes being swallowed up in the ground are of great antiquity. So, it is likely that this was the original aetiology, Greek in character".¹¹⁸ His point is not convincing enough. As a consequence, to date the story of the Sabine knight, instead of analysing the characteristics of the legend, I have decided to take another route. I will discuss the exceptional praenomen *Mettius*, and I will scrutinize the narrative of those writers who carried out their works before Piso.



Figure 12. Mettius Curtius chased by the Romans. Raphael Sanzio. 'Stanza della segnatura', Musei Vaticani.

The first interesting fact highlighted by Bremmer is that the *praenomen* *Mettius* is found solely in two occasions in Roman history: in the legend of Mettius Curtius and in the story of Mettius Fufetius.¹¹⁹ In the first one, during the war between Romans and Sabines, the Sabine general Mettius Curtius faced the Roman general Hostus Hotilius.¹²⁰ In the second one, during the war between Alba Longa and Rome, the dictator Mettius Fufetius faced the third king of Rome, Tullus Hostilius.¹²¹ As Forsythe wisely points, the story of

Mettius Curtius is clearly patterned after the far more celebrated confrontation between Tullus Hostilius and Mettius Fufetius.¹²² Interestingly, it is known through extant fragments of Ennius and Cato that the story of Fufetius and the King Hostilius already existed before Piso's time.¹²³ However, the legend of the Sabine knight Mettius Curtius has not been found in narratives before Piso.¹²⁴ Therefore, even though the scarcity of evidence does not permit to give any categorical conclusion about the antiquity of the legend, an analysis of Piso's historical situation supports the possibility of this author inventing the legend of Mettius Curtius.

¹¹⁵ Robert Maxwell Ogilvie, *A Commentary on Livy: Books 1-5* (Oxford, 1965), 76.

¹¹⁶ Bremmer, 'Three Roman Aetiological Myths', 157.

¹¹⁷ Tim Cornell, *The beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c.1000-264 BC)* (New York, 1995), 7-9.

¹¹⁸ Ogilvie, *A Commentary on Livy*, 77.

¹¹⁹ Bremmer, 'Three Roman Aetiological Myths', 159.

¹²⁰ Livy 7.6.1-7; Dion. Hal. 14.11

¹²¹ Livy 1.23.1; Dion. Hal. 3.2.30

¹²² Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 160.

¹²³ For Ennius passage see Propertius 3.3.6 and Festus 188. For Cato see Festus 196L.

¹²⁴ Wilhelm Soltau, *Die Anfänge der Römischen Geschichtsschreibung* (Leipzig, 1909), 66-68, proposed that Piso used the work of Ennius, *Sabinae*, as source for the story of Mettius Curtius. This an interesting and plausible idea. However, only one fragment of this work has survived, and it barely gives information about the content of the narrative. In this sense, it is not possible to prove the existence of the legend of Mettius Curtius before Piso's narrative.

3.1.3 Mettius Curtius and Hostus Hostilius: an attempt to fix the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* and the *Lapis Niger*

Piso explains the toponym of *Lacus Curtius* as a consequence of the confrontation between the Sabines and the Romans, and the miraculously escape of the Sabine knight, Mettius Curtius, from the marshy area of the *Forum Romanum*. If Piso is considered to be the inventor of the tale, there must be a reason for the creation of this legend. In this sense, Forsythe suggested that the use of this legend gave significance to two separate places in the *Forum Romanum* which were not understood by the Romans at the time of Piso: The *Lapis Niger* and the *Lacus Curtius*.¹²⁵ How can this legend explain two different monuments of the *Forum Romanum*?

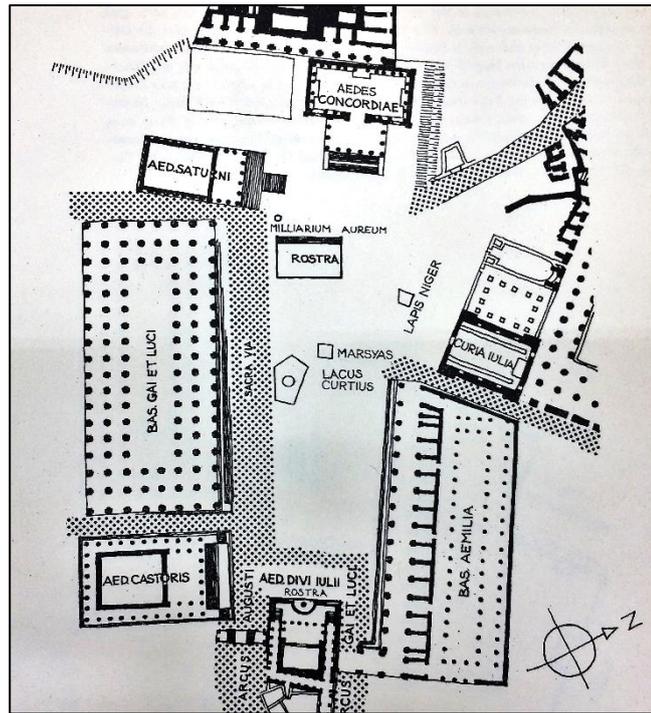


Figure 13. Sketch of the central area of the *Forum Romanum* in Late Republican times.

First, it is necessary to analyse the elements of the legend of the Sabine knight, Mettius Curtius. As already mentioned, during the war between the Sabines and the Romans, the general of Titus Tatius, Mettius Curtius, faced the Roman hero, Hostus Hostilius.¹²⁶ The first interesting element of this passage is the presence of Hostus Hostilius who, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, was the grandfather of the third king of Rome Tullus Hostilius. In fact, Hostus Hostilius, who died fighting the Sabines, was buried in the *Forum Romanum* with a stela marking the spot:

This man [Hostus Hostilius], after taking part with Romulus in many wars and performing mighty deeds in the battles with the Sabines, died, leaving an only son, a young child at the time, and was buried by the kings in the principal part of the Forum and honoured with a monument and an inscription testifying to his valour. His only son, having come to manhood and married a woman of distinction, had by her Tullius Hostilius, a man of action, the same who was now chosen king by a vote passed by the citizens concerning him according to the laws; and the decision of the people was confirmed by favorable omens from Heaven (Dion. Hal. 3.1.3).¹²⁷

What is this spot? Thanks to a fragment of Festus, it is known that it refers to the pavement of the *Lapis Niger*. However, the memory of this spot was dim, and different versions attempted to give it significance. As Festus explains, this pavement marked the burial place of either Romulus, or his father Fastulus, or the grandfather of the king Tullus Hostilius, Hostus Hostilius:

¹²⁵ Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 160.

¹²⁶ Livy 1.12.1.

¹²⁷ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman antiquities*, transl. Cary Earnest, Dyonisius of Halicarnassus, Roman Antiquities, 7 volumes (massachussets, 1937-1950), II: 36.

The Black Stone in the Comitium marks off a place of burial. Some say it was destined to be the burial spot of Romulus, before he disappeared and made his burial impossible. Others say his foster-father Faustulus was buried here, still others, that it was Hostilius, grandfather of the Roman king Tullius Hostilius (Festus 184L).¹²⁸

Thereupon, the confrontation in the *Forum Romanum* between the two heroes, Mettius Curtius and Hostus Hostilius, attempts to fix the memory of two sites which were no longer understood by the Romans: The *Lacus Curtius* through the figure of Mettius Curtius, and the *Lapis Niger* in the *Comitium* through the figure of Hostus Hostilius. Consequently, Piso's legend offers an explanation, not only for Mettius Curtius involvement, but also for Hostus Hostilius burial place. What were Piso's purposes of shaping the memory of these two prominent places of the *Forum Romanum*?

3.1.4 Piso and the appropriation of memory

When the name *Lacus Curtius* was analysed at the beginning of this thesis, we noticed that, originally, the name of the monument did not have any relation with the *gens* Curtia (see p. 19). However, as time passed and the memory of *Lacus Curtius* faded away, this family took advantage of the topographical name of this site to publicize their respectable ancient lineage. But how ancient was this lineage? If one takes a look at the Broughton's guide of the political positions achieved by different members of the Roman families during the Republic, it reveals that the only Curtian consul attested is dated in 445 BC—and, as we have seen, it is most likely a product of later inventions.¹²⁹ However, apart from him, the first archaeological evidence of an elected official of this *gens* is a moneyer dated to 116-115 BC by a coin found in Rome (Figure 9).¹³⁰ Interestingly, this first demonstrated political activity of the *gens* Curtia coincides chronologically with Piso's speculation of the *Lacus Curtius*. Piso's work, written after 120 BC, might have been the first historical narrative to reveal the propaganda of this *gens*, which tries to find its place in the world of Roman politics.¹³¹ But, the main question is: how does this propaganda benefit Piso's interest?

Through the legend of Mettius Curtius, the *gens* Curtia placed the antiquity of its lineage as early as the Romulean times, conferring to its members an exceptional prestige in the city of Rome. Meanwhile, the family Calpurnii Piso benefited from this legend through the figure of Hostus Hostilius. During the second century BC, the family Calpurnii Piso seems to have had tight connection with the *gens* Hostilia. Firstly, the uncle of the historian Piso, C. Calpurnius Piso, the first of the Calpurnii in reaching the consulship, got married with Quarta Hostilia ca. 180 BC (Figure 14).¹³² Secondly, in 148 BC, another Calpurnius Piso held the consulship and L. Hostilius was one of his subordinated officials.¹³³ Thus, it is evident that there was a strong connection between these two *gentes*, which benefited extraordinarily the reputation of the Calpurnii. Why? Because the *gens* Hostilia—that was already linked to the third king of Rome—is now able to trace

¹²⁸ Niger Lapis in Comitio locum funestum significat, ut ali, Romuli morti destinatum, sed non usu ob in [...Fau]stulum nutri[...host]tilium avum Tu[lli]. The translation of this passage has been extracted from: Peter J. Aicher, *Rome alive: A source-guide to the ancient city*, 2 volumes (Illinois, 2004), I: 86.

¹²⁹ Broughton, *The magistrates of the Roman Republic*, I: 52.

¹³⁰ Crawford. RRC. I 300.

¹³¹ Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 62.

¹³² [In 180 BC] The death of the consul [Piso] was most suspected. It was reported that he had been murdered by his wife, Quarta Hostilia (Livy 40.37.5-6).

¹³³ Livy *Per.* 51.

its antiquity as far as the Romulean times and the very same foundation of the city of Rome. Due to its tight connection with the *gens* Hostilia, the antiquity of the lineage also conferred an honourable prestige to the family Calpurnii Piso. Furthermore, it would be even possible that the Calpurnius Piso who got married with Quarta Hostilia in 180 BC had something to do with the construction of the *Lacus Curtius*. Both, the creation of the *Lacus Curtius* and the political activity of this Calpurnius Piso, dated from the same period: ca. 180 BC (Figure 14). Despite this is a mere hypothesis and it cannot be proved, it could be possible that, already at the beginning of the second century BC, the emergent Calpurnii Piso's family tried to create a legendary memory through the monumentalization of this spot, which would have contributed notably to the prestige of its family.¹³⁴

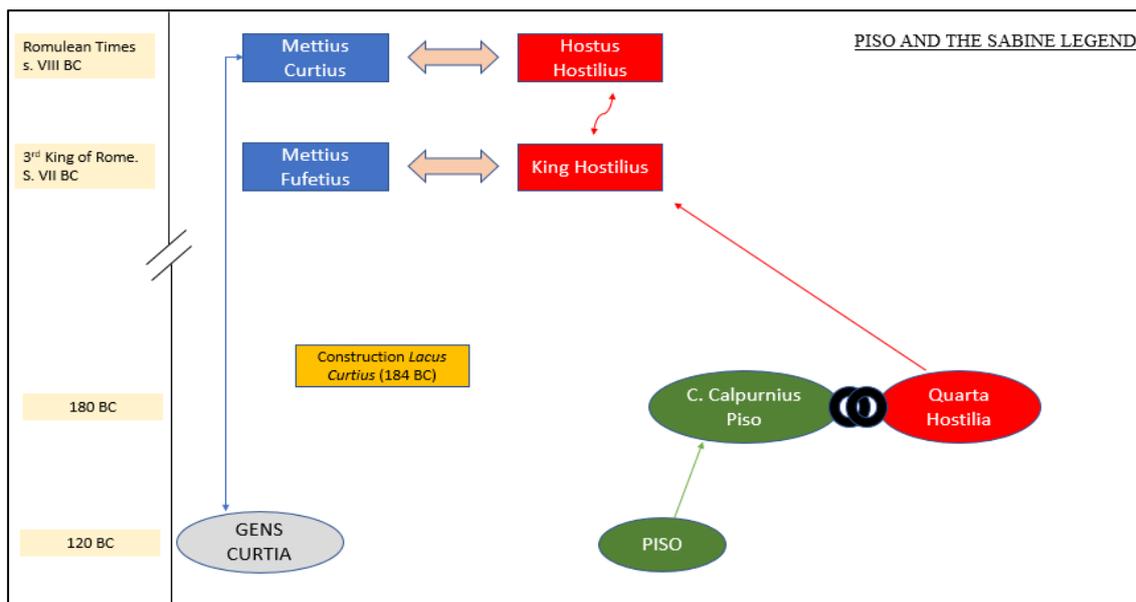


Figure 14. Relation between Piso, the *gens* Hostilia and the *Lacus Curtius*.

It is in the second century BC when the *Forum Romanum* became an increasingly coveted space where the new political elite displayed its propaganda. During this century, the Roman aristocracy, greed for glory, prestige and honour, filled the space between the Palatine and the Capitoline with stunning monuments and magnificent buildings. Driven by a desire of standing out, the Roman aristocrats were capable of exploiting the achievements of their ancestors. The habit of preserving the memory of their forefathers, with a view to the future, was a distinctive feature of the Roman aristocracy. It was up to the following generations to preserve, and even reconstruct if it was necessary, the buildings and monuments which commemorated their own families. The thoughtful descendants of illustrious figures knew that the memory of their forefathers not only give prestige to their lineage, but could also be a strong tool to achieve a successful political career. Consequently, there were not few the descendants of different aristocratic families

¹³⁴ If Soltau's hypothesis about Ennius could be proved (see footnote 124), my suggestion of C. Calpurnius Piso' involvement in the construction of the *Lacus Curtius* would gain importance. Ennius wrote most of his work at the beginning of the second century BC, period in which also the *Lacus Curtius* was constructed. That would mean that through two different means—written and monumental—a new layer of memory was created, and it intended to fix the remembrance of the *Lacus Curtius*. However, this is a speculation based on two facts that cannot be demonstrated. That is why I have decided to confine this hypothesis to a footnote, to show a different way of reflecting upon the dynamics of memory.

that profited from the belonging of distinguished *gentes* to build a prominent political career, and the monuments were the present proof of their illustrious past.

The *Lacus Curtius* was located in the core of the *Forum Romanum*. Its memory was confused, and Piso attempted to confer it significance. Through the legend of the Sabine knight Mettius Curtius, he tried to appropriate the remembrance of this monument in order to place his ancestry as early as the foundation of Rome. The use of the past to fulfil this goal conferred to the Curtian and Pisonian lineages a legendary prestige. Piso's strategy reflects how the families not only constructed monuments to worship their ancestors, but they even took advantage of weak memories to try to fix new legends which reinforce the antiquity of their pedigree. At this moment of the Roman Republic, therefore, memory is fundamentally connected to the *gentes*, who strive to control and appropriate the images of the past—as Diefenbach points out.¹³⁵ In a moment where the families tried to legitimize their right to be part of the political life of Rome, the role of memories associated with buildings and monuments became essential. The past was a tool to legitimate the political situation of the present, and the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* was used to fulfil such a goal.

¹³⁵ Diefenbach, *Römische erinnerungsräume*, 11.

3.2 LUTATIUS AND CORNELIUS, THE LEGEND OF GAIUS CURTIUS

3.2.1 Who were Lutatius and Cornelius?

The identity of Lutatius is a difficult problem. Most of the authors who have dealt with the fragment of Gaius Curtius have tended to associate him with Q. Lutatius Catulus (102 BC).¹³⁶ However, this identification poses a problem for two distinct reasons. First, most of the fragments assigned to ‘Lutatius’ refer to the earliest stages of the city of Rome, from its foundation to the early Republic.¹³⁷ However, Lutatius Catulus’ work is a narrative of his accomplishments and memories during his consulship, at the end of the second century BC. Hence, it is complicated to link the legend of Gaius Curtius, consul in 445 BC, with the ‘memoirs’ of Lutatius Catulus, whose events are set 250 years later. Secondly, if we analyse the fragments of the consul of 102, he is always called ‘Lutatius Catulus’ or ‘Catulus’, while the author who wrote about the early history is always called ‘Lutatius’. From my perspective, we are dealing with two different authors, and, consequently, ‘Lutatius’ cannot be identified with the consul Q. Lutatius Catulus.

On the other hand, Cornell pointed to Lutatius Daphnis as the person behind the name ‘Lutatius’.¹³⁸ Apart from Lutatius Catulus, Daphnis is the only Lutatius known who was involved in the intellectual life of the Late Republic. We must keep in mind that Lutatius had to write his narrative before Varro’s allusion to the *Lacus Curtius*—ca. 40 BC. According to Suetonius, Lutatius Daphnis was a freedman, firstly bought by the consul of 78 BC, Q. Catulus:

Indeed, so great were the prices paid for grammarians, and so great the fees paid to them, that it is known that Lutatius Daphnis, whom Gaius Melissus, joking about his name, called ‘Pan’s darling’, was bought for 700,000 sesterces by Quintus Catulus and soon manumitted [...] (Suet. Gramm. 3.5).¹³⁹

He would have written around the 70s, the period in which Q. Catulus political life reached his highest point.¹⁴⁰ In this sense, I agree with Cornell that Lutatius Daphnis is the most plausible author behind the fragments assigned to ‘Lutatius’. Otherwise, we would have to accept that ‘Lutatius’ is a completely unknown figure.

Regarding the identity of Cornelius, the discussion is even more complicated due to a textual difficulty. In Varro *Ling.* 5.148, it is said originally *nec quod is Cornelius Stilo secutus*. However, in Varro *Ling.* 5.150 can be read: *Cornelius et Lutatius scribunt*, and the epithet Stilo does not appear anymore. Mueller, in his edition of 1833, erased Stilo from the passage *Ling.* 5.148, when considering it a corruption of the text. Later editions of Varro’s work have tended to follow this interpretation. Hence, if we accept Mueller’s analysis, the Cornelius of Varro’s passage must have been the same one cited by Varro some books later, in Varro *Ling.* 7.39. Nowadays, the most extended interpretation is that

¹³⁶ Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 60; Bremmer, ‘Three Roman Aetiological Myths’, 150.

¹³⁷ Probus *Vir. Georg.* 3.292-3; Serv. *Aen.* 9.710, *Georg.* 4.563; *OGR* 11.1-3, 13.6-7, 18.1, 9.2-5, 10.1-2; Solin. 1.27; Varro. *Ling.* 5.148.

¹³⁸ Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 342.

¹³⁹ Suetonius, *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus*, transl. John Carew Rolfe, Suetonius, 2 volumes (Cambridge-London, 1998), II: 401.

¹⁴⁰ If we consider the passage of Suetonius (*gramm.* 27), the first freedman to undertake to write history was M. Otacilius Pitholaus. He would have written about the achievements of Pompeius’ father. Therefore, his work could not have been written before 87 BC. That suits with the date of Lutatius Daphnis’ work, which would have been undertaken barely after Otacilius narrative.

this Cornelius would be Cornelius Epicadus, Sulla's freedman, and known for writing several treatises.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, there is still a possibility that Stilo was not an error, and the name Cornelius Stilo was a corruption of Aelius Stilo, Varro's teacher.¹⁴² But it is difficult to understand why he did not mention him in 1.150. To conclude, Cornelius Epicadus seems to me the most likely option, but the problem with the text of Varro makes it difficult to discard other possibilities like Aelius Stilo.

3.2.2 The antiquity of the legend of the consul

This legend could not be older than the construction of the *Lacus Curtius* in 184 BC. Lutatius and Cornelius' version was not a story of pure imagination, and its creation was likely based on the architectural elements of the monument, as Bremmer correctly states.¹⁴³ As mentioned before,

when in Rome a place was struck by a lightning, it was considered to be a *locus religiosus*.¹⁴⁴ The procedure was always the same: the site was fenced and an altar was constructed.¹⁴⁵ If these elements are compared with the archaeological findings, we can see how the features of the *Lacus Curtius* could match with those related to a lightning-struck spot: a balustrade, a *puteal* and the altar.¹⁴⁶ The digital reconstruction based on the archaeological reports shows precisely these characteristics (Figure 15). Consequently, it is easy to think that this legend fits the monumentality of the *Lacus Curtius* and, therefore, it was created once the monument was constructed in the *Forum Romanum*, and its characteristics unleashed the interpretation of this place.

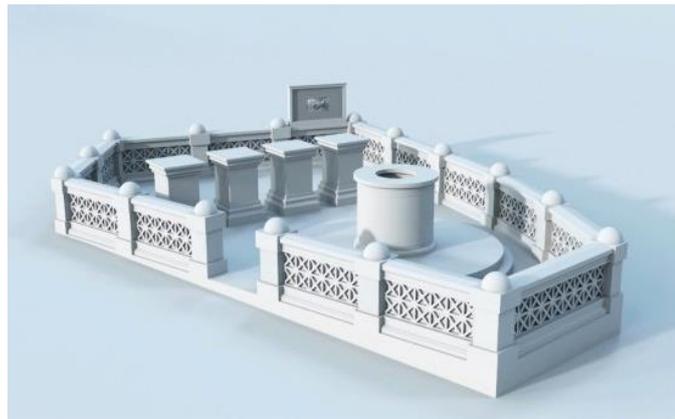


Figure 15. Reconstruction of the *Lacus Curtius* in the Augustan period

As has been discussed above, it seems likely that the persons behind the authority of this legend were Lutatius Daphnis and Cornelius Epicadus. Both must have written their narratives between the 70s and 60s. This is relevant because it coincides with the period of major political activity of the *gens* Curtia. Apart from the moneyer from 116-115 BC, we do not find members of this clan occupying a political position until 71 BC. However, from this year onwards, there seems to be an explosion of their political activity in the city of Rome. According to Broughton, in 71 BC two Curtii occupied the quaestorship and the aedileship. The next year, in 70 BC, a Curtian member is designated *Iudex Quaestionis* and, during the next decade, several members of this *gens* held distinct positions, even up to the point to reach the Tribune of the Plebs. Furthermore, this political success among the Curtians coincides with the reconstructions of the *Lacus*

¹⁴¹ Elizabeth Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (London, 1985), 72.

¹⁴² Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 456. In addition, Aelius Stilo is cited by Varro some books later, in *Ling* 7.2. We know of this relation between Aelius Stilo and Varro thanks to Cicero (*Brutus* 207).

¹⁴³ Bremmer, 'Three Roman Aetiological Myths', 156.

¹⁴⁴ Schilling, *Rites, cultes et dieux de Rome*, 40.

¹⁴⁵ Kunt Latte, *Römische religionsgeschichte* (Munich, 1960), 81.

¹⁴⁶ Giuliani and Verduchi, *L'area centrale*, 107.

Curtius which took place in the 70s (see p. 17-18). Thus, it seems likely that the creation of this legend dates from this moment and not before. The importance of the architectural elements of the monument for the creation of the story must have been stressed by the refurbishment carried out in Sulla's time, and the increase in the political activity of this *gens* must have triggered off this new way of remembering the *Lacus Curtius*. But how and why then, did the legend of the consul Gaius Curtius have an impact among some authors of the first century BC?

3.2.3 The legend of the consul Gaius Curtius: creating a political tradition for the *gens Curtia*

It is always difficult to give a definite answer to a question like this: when and by whom was this legend created? Both the archaeological evidence and the analysis of the literary sources, however, seem to point at this period, 70s-60s, as the moment in which this legend was set out. To reinforce this idea and understand the nature of this legend, in the following paragraphs the next points will be analysed: 1) the importance of the orality in the construction of Roman memory, 2) the ceremony of the *laudatio funebris* as hypothesis of the transmission of the legend of Gaius Curtius, and 3) we will inspect what the ancient authors thought about this family oral traditions.

It is essential to keep in mind that Republican Rome was an aristocratic society. As we have seen with the legend of Mettius Curtius, the status of the *nobilitas* was a solution of achievements and birth.¹⁴⁷ In order to legitimize their domination, the aristocrats celebrated the accomplishments of their ancestors. What we have seen so far is how the earliest historians adapted, shaped and appropriated the past to benefit their families and, therefore, their own career. However, the different aristocratic families had diverse ways to preserve their own memories. In the houses of these aristocrats, there were portraits of their ancestors and family trees with exhaustive information about triumphs and offices held by their forefathers.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, some of the wealthiest families could even sponsor the histories of their own family in a literary format.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, most of the memories which circulated in Rome belonged to the oral tradition. We must be aware of the possible impact the orality had on the memory associated with persons and monuments. The process of shaping memory was bidirectional: literary sources influenced on the remembrance of monuments and sites, but conversely, orality had also an impact on the literary sources. The legend of Gaius Curtius seems to be one of these last cases, and this suggestion will be analysed in the coming lines.

It is almost impossible to know if these aristocratic Roman families had any evidence to hold their claims about the past. However, we do know that one of the ways these families had for promoting their lineages were the eulogies at funerals. Luckily, this act is well described by Polybius, and his description allows us to understand one of the ways in which memories were publicly transmitted in the city of Rome.¹⁵⁰ The burial was attended by members of the same family wearing the wax-masks of their forefathers and the clothes they would have worn according to the rank they accomplished in their careers.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Cornell, *The beginnings of Rome*, 9.

¹⁴⁸ Harriet I. Flower, 'Spectacle and political culture in the Roman Republic', in: Flower, Harriet I. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic* (Cambridge, 2003), 322-347.

¹⁴⁹ Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, 231.

¹⁵⁰ Polyb. 6.53-6.

¹⁵¹ See: Flower, 'Spectacle and political culture', 331.

So, if some ancestors had held a consulship, the descendants could wear the toga with a purple line, sign of the notoriety of their rank.¹⁵² As we can imagine, this is a powerful way of stressing and visualizing the prestigious memory of a family. It is worthy to read directly the passage of Polybius in which this ceremony is described:

They all ride in chariots preceded by the fasces, axes, and other insignia by which the different magistrates are wont to be accompanied according to the respective dignity of the offices of state held by each during his life; and when they arrive at the rostra they all seat themselves in a row on ivory chairs. There could not easily be a more ennobling spectacle for a young man who aspires to fame and virtue. For who would not be inspired by the sight of the images of men renowned for their excellence, all together and as if alive and breathing? What spectacle could be more glorious than this? Besides, he who makes the oration over the man about to be buried, when he has finished speaking of him recounts the successes and exploits of the rest whose images are present, beginning with the most ancient. By this means, by this constant renewal of the good report of brave men, the celebrity of those who performed noble deeds is rendered immortal, while at the same time the fame of those who did good service to their country becomes known to the people and a heritage for future generations. But the most important result is that young men are thus inspired to endure every suffering for public welfare in the hope of winning the glory that attends on brave men (Polyb.6.53-4).¹⁵³

In this passage, Polybius describes the full funerary ceremony. Among all the elements, there is one which is especially striking for the analysis of the legend of Gaius Curtius: the *laudatio funebris*—the funerary eulogy—of both the corpse and the ancestors of the family. The structure of the eulogy is simple. The orator began to enumerate the merits of the death, to continue later to worship the successes and deeds of the ancestors of the family. The *laudatio* was normally pronounced by the son of the person who had died, and it was basically a performance of family praise.¹⁵⁴ The eulogy permitted the orator to give prestige to himself through the memory and glory of his ancestors. It was a way to promote himself politically in front of his fellow citizens. Thus, the memory of the remarkable forefathers pushed their descendants further into their political careers, creating an intergenerational solidarity in which the young generations had the moral obligation to remember publicly the memory of their ancestors.¹⁵⁵

It is known that these funerals were celebrated only for figures of Rome's political elite. That means, men who had held at least the office of aedile.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, the Curtian family could have been one of the families holding this ceremony from the 70s onwards—when they started to occupy important magistracies. This would explain the content of this legend. The tale of Mettius Curtius did not provide an ancient lineage of personalities who had held high positions in the *cursus honorum*. However, the story of the consul Gaius Curtius depicts a member of the Curtian family holding the consulship as early as the fifth century BC. From this perspective, I think this legend is result of the funerary eulogies for two reasons. First, the public speeches in these funerals were celebrated on

¹⁵² Flower, 'Spectacle and political culture', 332.

¹⁵³ Polybius, *The Histories*, transl. William Roger Paton, Polybius, 6 volumes (Massachusetts, 2010-2012), III: 281.

¹⁵⁴ Jocelyn Toynbee, *Death and Burials in the Roman World* (Baltimore-London, 1971), 46-48.

¹⁵⁵ Francisco Pina Polo, 'La celebración de la muerte como símbolo de poder en la Roma republicana', in: Heinz-Dieter Heimann, Silke Knippschild and Victor Mínguez (eds.), *Ceremoniales, Ritos y representación del poder* (Barcelona, 2004), 143-181, 165.

¹⁵⁶ Flower, 'Spectacle and political culture', 331.

the *Rostra*, which is located very close to the *Lacus Curtius* (see above, Figure 13). This would have been a strong element to reinforce the praise of the ancestors through the memory of a prominent monument in the *Forum Romanum*. Secondly, the use of this tale implied that in the ceremony, one member of the family could wear a toga symbolizing the status of consul of one of his ancestors—Gaius Curtius. This would provide to the *Curtii* the opportunity to celebrate their history and show how prominent they were in the political life of Rome over generations. Hence, the strongest memory to legitimize their political development was the depiction of a consul already as early as the fifth century BC. And thanks to the achievement of important political magistracies in the 70s-60s, the *Curtii* could celebrate *Laudationes funebres* and share publicly the memory of their past.

As Cornell highlights, it is well attested that aristocratic family traditions played a key role in the construction of the narratives of early Rome.¹⁵⁷ Contemporary authors to this period already acknowledge the influence of the *laudationes funebres* on the writing accounts. In fact, Cicero even says that many of the stories recorded were invented, and among those fabrications, it could be counted the invention of consulships, as it seems to have happened with the legend of Gaius Curtius:

For it was customary in most families of note to preserve their images, their trophies of honour, and their memoirs, either to adorn a funeral when any of the family deceased, or to perpetuate the fame of their ancestors, or prove their own nobility. But the truth of history has been much corrupted by these laudatory essays; for many circumstances were recorded in them which never existed; such as false triumphs, a pretended succession of consulships, and false alliances and elevations, when men of inferior rank were confounded with a noble family of the same name: as if I myself should pretend that I am descended from M. Tullius, who was a patrician, and shared the consulship with Servius Sulpicius, about ten years after the expulsion of the kings (Cic. *Brut.* 62).¹⁵⁸

Even though ancient authors already knew about the impact of orality on the narratives, it is rather complicated to determine to what extent these family memories influenced on the perceptions of the past. What seems clear is that aristocratic families do not hesitate to adapt monuments and memories to pursue their own interests.¹⁵⁹ Despite the difficulty of tracing oral traditions, in the case of the legend of Gaius Curtius we have reasons to think that a public ceremony, such as a funerary eulogy, left its traces in the narratives of minor writers. Especially, if we consider the fact that such narratives were written down around the same period by two different authors, Lutatius Daphnis and Cornelius Epicadus. However, as we mentioned in the first chapter, this legend was already dismissed—and forgotten—by later authors. Even Livy, who wrote about the other two legends, did not include the tale of Gaius Curtius in his *Ab Urbe Condita*. In fact, if my hypothesis is right, the reason why this legend was not even considered by Livy can be found in his very narrative:

The records have been vitiated, I think, by funeral eulogies and by lying inscriptions under portraits, every family endeavouring mendaciously to appropriate victories and magistracies to itself—a practice which has certainly wrought confusion in the achievements of individuals and in the public memorials of events. Nor is there extant any writer

¹⁵⁷ Cornell, *The beginnings of Rome*, 10.

¹⁵⁸ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Letters to Quintus and Brutus* transl. David Roy Shackleton Bailey, Cicero (Massachusetts, 2002), 44.

¹⁵⁹ Diefenbach, *Römische erinnerungsräume*, 11-13.

contemporary with that period, on whose authority we may safely take our stand (Livy 8.40).¹⁶⁰

As this passage shows, memory is not just simply remembering but also forgetting. When Livy, or any other author, chooses what must be remembered, they are deliberately setting what must be forgotten. In this sense, the *Lacus Curtius* and its legends are a clear example of these dynamics. The story of Gaius Curtius was—thoughtfully—forgotten by later authors who considered that this way of remembering the monument did not match their purposes. As it has been noted, Livy even stated in his narrative why some sources are not worth remembering and, for these reasons, he consciously discarded the version of the consul as conceivable way of remembering the *Lacus Curtius*. After this decision, inevitably, the story of Gaius Curtius was consigned to oblivion. Consequently, from Livy onwards, this legend does not seem to have had a significant impact on the Roman collective memory. However, before this memory faded away, we have seen how the Curtian family strove to strengthen their socio-political position through the appropriation of the memory of the *Lacus Curtius*. The remembrance of this site linked to the legend of the Sabine knight might not have been enough to fulfil the public and political necessities of the *gens Curtii*. On the contrary, the tale of the consul Gaius Curtius gave notoriety to this *gens*, that was in need to demonstrate an ancient political tradition.

¹⁶⁰ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, IV: 45.

3.3 PROCILIUS AND THE LEGEND OF MARCUS CURTIUS

3.3.1 Who was Procilius?

As in the case of Lutatius and Cornelius, there is very little information on Procilius. Taking into consideration his activity, he must have written his work in the 80s-70s BC. Procilius was moneyer in the 80 BC, according to numismatic evidence, and he probably was quaestor or legate in the 70s.¹⁶¹ Cicero compared him unfavourably with Dicaearchus in a letter sent to Attius in the 60 BC.¹⁶² This implies that, by this moment, Procilius would have already forged certain fame as a writer. Moreover, since Cicero compared him with Dicaearchus' *Constitution of the Pellinaeans* (see footnote 162), Rawson's hypothesis points that Procilius might have written about political or legal antiquities.¹⁶³ Nonetheless, this comparison does not unquestionably provide a hint of the character of Procilius' narrative. Therefore, to know more about the content and nature of his work, we must consider the fragments preserved nowadays—which are not many.

Varro, in his *De Lingua Latina*, mentions Procilius twice. The first fragment, as we have already seen, deals with the *Lacus Curtius*, and the second one discusses the site in the Circus known as *ad Murciae*.¹⁶⁴ In addition, Pliny mentions Procilius in *nat.* 1 as one of his sources for the books eight, twelve and thirteen. Specifically, we know of a direct reference to Procilius' work in Pliny *nat.* 8.4, where it is explained how the elephants of Pompey' chariot were unable to pass through the *Porta Triumphalis*, in the triumph celebrated in 81 BC. Munzer frames this explanation of Procilius in a wider discussion about the gates of the city.¹⁶⁵ Hence, considering the three different fragments, the work could have been a *periegesis* of the city of Rome. Cornell admits the attractiveness of this hypothesis, and he adds that, due to the nature of these fragments, Procilius was more an antiquarian than a historian.¹⁶⁶ However, the fact of preserving only three fragments of this author makes it extremely difficult to offer an accurate analysis of the nature of his work.

3.3.2 The antiquity of Marcus Curtius' legend

It is practically impossible to know with certainty if Procilius himself was the inventor of the legend, or he just merely was the first one to write it down. However, there are reasons to think that the legend was created in the first century BC, regardless of whom was the genuine author. As Forsythe points, following Wiseman, in the time of the Mithridatic Wars, there was a tremendous Hellenistic influence as a result of the Roman control of Asia Minor.¹⁶⁷ The Roman rule of this territory led to an important number of scholars to move to Rome and, consequently, new literary gusto quickly spread all over the Roman

¹⁶¹ Crawford RRC 396; Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 645.

¹⁶² 'Take care of my dear nephew Cicero, I beg of you. I seem to share his illness. I am engaged on the "Constitution of Pellene," and, by heaven, have piled up a huge heap of Dicaearchus at my feet. What a great man! You may learn much more from him than from Procilius [...]' (Cic. Att. 2.2).

¹⁶³ Rawson, Elizabeth, 'Cicero the Historian and Cicero the Antiquarian' *The Journal of Roman Studies* 62 (1972), 33-45.

¹⁶⁴ 'The very centre of the circus is called *ad Murciae* 'at Murcia's,' as Procilius said, from the *urcei* 'pitchers', because this spot was in the potters' quarter;' (Varro 5.154).

¹⁶⁵ Friedrich Münzer, *Beitrage zur Quellenkritik der Naturgeschichte des Plinius* (Berlin, 1897), 36-40.

¹⁶⁶ Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 646.

¹⁶⁷ Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 66.

world. The legend of Marcus Curtius seems to be a result of this cultural context, and a Phrygian myth is proof of it.



Figure 16. The self-sacrifice of Marcus Curtius. Simon de Vos. Hermitage Museum.

The unknown Greek author who wrote pseudo-Plutarch's *Parallela Graeca et Romana* included the story of the Roman Soldier, Marcus Curtius, in his work. The structure and the elements are still the same than those found in Varro's account:

Because of the wrath of Jupiter Tarpeius the Tiber coursed through the middle of the Forum, broke open a very large abyss and engulfed many houses. An oracle was given that this would end if they threw in their precious possession. As they were casting in gold and silver, Curtius, a youth of noble family, apprehended the meaning of the oracle, and, reasoning that human life is more precious, he hurled himself on horseback into the abyss, and saved his people from their miseries (Pseudo Plutarch, 267).¹⁶⁸

Concurrently, drawing direct parallels with the legend of Marcus Curtius, Pseudo Plutarch presents the Phrygian myth of the King Midas and his son Anchurus. In the same manner as the Roman story, a chasm opened close to Celaenae and caused a catastrophe. According to the Oracle, it would only close once the most precious thing was thrown into the pit. At the end, Midas' son, Anchurus, rode on a horse into the hole and it closed behind him:

At the city of Celaenae in Phrygia the earth yawned open, together with a heavy rain, and dragged down many homesteads with their inhabitants into the depths. Midas the king received an oracle that if he should throw his most precious possession into the abyss, it would close. He cast in gold and silver, but this availed nothing. But Anchurus, the son of Midas, reasoning that there is nothing in life more precious than a human life, embraced his father and his wife Timothea, and rode on his horse into the abyss. When the earth had closed, Midas made an altar of Idaean Zeus golden by a touch of his hand. This altar becomes of stone at that time of the year when this yawning of the earth occurred; but when this limit of

¹⁶⁸ Pseudo-Plutarch, *Paralleli minori*, transl. Frank Cole Babbitt, Plutarch. *Moralia*, 5 volumes (Cambridge, 1926-1936), IV: 267.

time has passed, it is seen to be golden. So, Callisthenes in the second book of his *Metamorphoses* (Pseudo Plutarch, 267).¹⁶⁹

Consequently, it is not risky to think that the legend of Marcus Curtius was modelled after the Phrygian myth of the King Midas. Moreover, the Greek elements of Procilius' legend—the cataclysm, the soothsayers, the sacrifice, etc.—reveal the parallels with other Greek myths, principally in Euripidean tales.¹⁷⁰ In this context, we can agree with Forsythe in the fact that Hellenization played an undiscussable role in the creation of this legend.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the confirmation of the date, 80s-70s BC, can be reinforced by the fact that Procilius' legend was not the only tale using these Greek elements. According to Plutarch, Sulla, also in the 80s, represented himself in his memoirs with extraordinary resemblance to Marcus Curtius—and Anchurus:

And still further, in the dedication of his Memoirs to Lucullus, he advises him to deem nothing so secure as what the divine power enjoins upon him in his dreams. And he relates that when he was dispatched with an army to the Social war, a great chasm in the earth opened near Laverna, from which a great quantity of fire burst forth and a bright flame towered up towards the heavens; whereupon the soothsayers declared that a brave man, of rare courage and surpassing appearance, was to take the government in hand and free the city from its present troubles. And Sulla says that he himself was this man, for his golden head of hair gave him a singular appearance, and as for bravery, he was not ashamed to testify in his own behalf, after such great and noble deeds as he had performed. So much, then, regarding his attitude towards the divine powers (Plutarch, Sulla, 6.6.1).¹⁷²

Sulla's self-representation together with Procilius' version of the *Lacus Curtius* elucidate a substantial change in the historiography of this period. The cultural context after the Mithridatic Wars—highlighted by Wiseman—seems to have had an impact on the way of constructing the Roman past, and Hellenization played a key role in it.¹⁷³ In the next section, I will study the changes of the historiography in the first century BC, as a vehicle to understand how and why the Roman cultural memory varied and evolved at this moment. However, as it has been stated above, Procilius is just cited by Varro and Pliny, making a total of three surviving fragments. In this sense, it is almost impossible to consider Procilius' work as a *lieu de mémoire* from where to extract relevant information about the way of remembrance in this period. Luckily, unlike Lutatius' version, the story of Marcus Curtius survived in later accounts, and we can address the analysis of this legend considering a different Roman author. Therefore, I will analyse Livy's work since—after Procilius and Varro's narrative—it is the next Roman account that recorded the legend of Marcus Curtius. The structure will be as follow: 1) the differences between Procilius and Livy's account will be analysed in order to know if Livy used Procilius as a source. 2) From there, I will examine the use of sources in Livy's narrative, and the way Livy structured his work. 3) Eventually, there will be a thorough analysis of the possible author Livy followed to record the legend of Marcus Curtius. Only like this, it will be possible to set a starting point to understand why the *Lacus Curtius* acquired a new layer of memory over the course of the first century BC.

¹⁶⁹ Pseudo-Plutarch, *Paralleli minori*, IV: 267.

¹⁷⁰ Bremmer, 'Three Roman Aetiological Myths', 158-9.

¹⁷¹ Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 67.

¹⁷² Plutarch, *Bioi Parállēloi*, transl. Bernadotte Perrin, Plutarch. Lives, 11 Volumes (Cambridge, 1914-1926), IV: 362.

¹⁷³ Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 66.

3.3.3 The problematic of Livy's source

Just 50-40 years after Procilius had recorded the version of Marcus Curtius, Livy included the same legend in his work. Despite the fact that it is the same story, it is relevant to take into consideration the differences between the narrative of these two authors. First, unlike Procilius, Livy was able to date the event of Marcus Curtius' self-sacrifice. Secondly, while Procilius states that the God of the Dead demanded the fulfilment of a forgotten vow to close the chasm, Livy points that the soothsayers declared that they must sacrifice something valuable if they wished the Roman Republic to endure. For Livy, the Republic itself was in danger at this moment, something that for Procilius does not seem to be the case. Lastly, Procilius tale ends up with the self-sacrifice of Marcus Curtius, whereas Livy adds to it that crowds of men and women threw offerings and fruits in after him. Apart from the significance of Livy's new additions, what it is important to notice here is whether Livy used Procilius as a source for the legend of Marcus Curtius. Are these differences a result of Livy's creativity, or did he use another author as a source?

Livy composed his work using almost exclusively accounts from earlier historians.¹⁷⁴ Despite Livy modified and reshaped some of those sources in order to achieve his own goals, his account is not result of pure invention.¹⁷⁵ However, the main problem comes from the fact that Livy barely mentions the sources that he uses for his work. In total, for the 35 volumes that survived till today, there are only 86 citations distributed across eleven different authors (see table 1).¹⁷⁶ Procilius is not among them. Despite Livy does not mention his sources for most of the time, it is striking that Procilius has not even been cited once. This fact, together with the differences between Procilius and Livy's account—especially the fact that Livy dates the event, and Procilius not—indicates that most likely Livy followed another author to write the story of Marcus Curtius. To uncover the source that Livy followed, first we must analyse Livy's work structure and, subsequently, the citations of those historians he used to compose his narrative.

Livy structured his books in pentads, and each of these pentads form a unit.¹⁷⁷ The legend of Marcus Curtius is found in book 7 and, therefore, it is part of the second pentad—which goes from book 6 to 10. This unit starts with the sack of Rome by the Gauls in 390 BC, and it goes all the way to 292 BC. It is enlightening how Livy, at the beginning of this new pentad, marks a clear line between the first five books and the following ones. It is interesting to read it directly from him:

The history of the Romans from the founding of the City of Rome to the capture of the same [...] I have set forth in five books, dealing with matters which are obscure not only by reason of their great antiquity but also because in those days there was but slight and scanty use of writing [...] and because even such records as existed in other public and private documents, nearly all perished in the conflagration of the city. From this point onwards, a clearer and more definite account shall be given of the City's history (Livy 6.1.1-3).¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 83.

¹⁷⁵ Oakley, Stephen, *Commentary on Livy: books VI-X*, 4 volumes (Oxford, 1997-2005), I: 24.

¹⁷⁶ Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 84.

¹⁷⁷ Gary Miles, *Livy: Reconstructing Early Rome* (Ithaca, London, 1995), 22.

¹⁷⁸ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, III: 34.

He clearly states that in this new pentad, he counts on better information to give an accurate version of the history of Rome. That means, he possessed better sources on which he could base the events from 390 BC onwards—or, at least from this moment, the sources he already had can offer a better account than before. Hence, to trace the authority that provided Livy with the legend of Marcus Curtius, it is necessary to evaluate the historians cited in this second pentad—from book 6 to 10.

	1-5	6-10	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	Total
Fabius Pictor	3	2	1					6
Cincius Alimentatus			1					1
Acilius			1		1			2
Cato					1			1
Piso	3	2	1					6
Coelius Antipater			5	6				11
Rutilius Rufus						1		1
Claudius Quadrigarius		4	1		4	2	1	12
Valerio Antias	2		1	6	7	14	5	35
Licinius Macer	3	5						8
Tubero	1	2						3
Total Citations	12	15	11	12	13	17	6	86

Table 1. Citation distribution in Livy

The table above reflects the citations along Livy's extant books of his *Ab Urbe Condita*.¹⁷⁹ In the second pentad five different authors are cited by the Latin historian: Pictor, Piso, Claudius Quadrigarius, Licinius Macer, and Tubero. Considering that these are the only sources known to be used by Livy, the writer whom Livy followed to record the story of Marcus Curtius must be among them. Fabius Pictor and Piso, well known historians in the Late republic, wrote their accounts way before Procilius. They could not have been the authors of this version for two reasons: first, because of the period they wrote—above, we agreed this legend was created in the first century BC—and secondly, because otherwise Varro would have mentioned them, and not Procilius, as the authors of this legend. Consequently, there are three writers left who could have been the source of Livy's Marcus Curtius version: Tubero, Licinius Macer, and Claudius Quadrigarius. All of them wrote their work contemporarily or after Procilius work.

Tubero is cited by Livy twice in book 10.¹⁸⁰ It is still debated if the Tubero to whom Livy refers is Aelius Tubero or Quintus Tubero.¹⁸¹ In any case, if one considers that all the fragments of the historical writings of Tubero comes from the hand of one person, his work must have covered the period from Romulus to the mid-third century BC—at least.¹⁸² This means that if he wrote about Romulus, he wrote about the battle between Mettius Curtius and Hostus Hostilius. Why? Because it is not known any alternative story of the clash between the Romans of Romulus and the Sabines of Titus Tatius in which the Sabine knight, Mettius Curtius, does not take part of. This premise implies, therefore, that if Tubero also wrote about the Roman soldier, Marcus Curtius, he would have used in the same work two different legends explaining the origin of the *Lacus Curtius*—

¹⁷⁹ Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*, I: 84.

¹⁸⁰ Livy 10.9.10; Livy 10.11.9

¹⁸¹ Oakley, *Commentary on Livy*, III: 145-149.

¹⁸² Tubero refers to Romulean times in a passage found in DH 1.80.1-3, and in Livy 10.11.9, Tubero is cited in relation to Regulus death in 255 BC. That shows his work was quite extensive.

exactly as Livy did. This is not possible for one reason. Livy, in Book 6, takes side explicitly with the legend of Marcus Curtius. That means that the source Livy used for this story had enough authority to claim that the legend of Marcus Curtius was the one he must stand for. However, Tubero necessarily used the legend of Mettius Curtius in his work. If he had also used the story of Marcus Curtius, he would have entered a contradiction. Consequently, Livy would not have stood that clearly for the legend of Marcus Curtius, as he does in his book 6.¹⁸³ Hence, Tubero could not have been the author who wrote the legend of the Roman knight who sacrifices himself. That leaves us only with Licinius Macer and Claudius Quadrigarius.

Both authors, Macer and Quadrigarius are cited by Livy in passages close to the Marcus Curtius event. That already implies they could have easily been the source that Livy used. However, Licinius Macer is discredited by Livy, in relation to the events of 361 BC, in the following terms:

The credit sought by Licinius for his own family makes him an authority of lesser weight than others (Livy 7.9.5).¹⁸⁴

Again, it must be remembered that Livy states clearly after the legend of Marcus Curtius that “were there any path which could lead the inquirer to the truth; as it is, one must hold by the tradition, where antiquity will not allow us to be certain; and the name of the pool is better known from this more recent legend [of Marcus Curtius]”.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, the fact that, just some passages after the event of Marcus Curtius, Licinius Macer is defamed by Livy makes inconsistent his authority for this legend. Was then Claudius Quadrigarius Livy’s source for the story of the Roman knight?

The only information to date the activity of Claudius Quadrigarius is a passage of Velleius which refers to Quadrigarius as contemporary of Sisenna.¹⁸⁶ But the only chronological reference which seems certain is that he wrote his work the years following Sulla’s death.¹⁸⁷ One of the most interesting things of his work is that, unlike his predecessors, he started his narrative with the sack of Rome by the Gauls in 390 BC—just the same moment Livy decided to set the starting point of his second pentad. Quadrigarius dedicated most of his work to more recent and better documented periods of the Roman history, and this seems to be a reaction to the precedent historiography.¹⁸⁸ The *gens Claudii* was convinced that all previous historiography had been forged by writers interested in promoting their own lineage—as it was the case of Piso and the legend of the Sabine knight. This is deducible from the fact that one of the Claudius, author of *Elenchos Chronon*, attacked all tradition before the Sack of Rome in 390 BC:

A certain Clodius, in a book entitled "An Examination of Chronology", insists that the ancient records were lost when the city was sacked by the Gauls, and that those which are now exhibited as such were forged, their compilers wishing to gratify the pride of certain persons

¹⁸³ Livy 7.6.5-6.

¹⁸⁴ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, III: 221.

¹⁸⁵ Livy 7.6.5-6

¹⁸⁶ Velleius 2.19.4

¹⁸⁷ It is known that Quadrigarius dealt with events of 87 BC in his 19th book.

¹⁸⁸ Maria Ambrosetti, *Q. Claudio Quadrigario, Introduzione, edizione critica e commento* (Roma, 2009), 20.

by inserting their names among the first families and the most illustrious houses, where they had no cause to appear (Plut. Num. 1.2).¹⁸⁹

This criticism made by a Claudian could explain Quadrigarius' decision to start his narrative just from the moment he could offer a precise and well-founded account, and this matches with Livy's introduction to his second pentad, where he acknowledges that "from this point onwards a clearer and more definite account shall be given of the City's history".¹⁹⁰ In this sense, Quadrigarius appeared to be for Livy a reliable source that could explain the origin of the *Lacus Curtius* without contradicting himself—since he did not write about the earlier stages of the city of Rome—and offering an account based on more robust evidence than the years before the sack of Rome.¹⁹¹

Forsythe also agrees that Claudius Quadrigarius was Livy's source for the legend of the young Roman, Marcus Curtius. His reasoning is based on two other stories incorporated in Livy's books 6 and 7 that Forsythe considers as Quadrigarius' attempt to "reinterpret and to place in firmer historical setting famous Roman legends that preceded the Gallic capture of the city".¹⁹² Considering Quadrigarius' reasons to begin his narrative in 390 BC, Forsythe's argument is plausible. However, since Livy does not cite the authority for these passages, we do not know with certainty if they were taken from Quadrigarius work or not. In this sense, my analysis will focus on those fragments known as being from Quadrigarius, to try to understand the nature of his narrative and the purpose of his work. By doing so, we possibly could gain understanding on how the new way of remembering the *Lacus Curtius* fits in this new historiographical approach and in the dynamics of memory of the first century BC.

3.3.4 The legend of Marcus Curtius: memory at the service of the community

Livy, along his narrative, cites Claudius Quadrigarius twelve times.¹⁹³ It is obvious that Livy made use of Quadrigarius' narrative on several occasions, but it is difficult to 'recognize' him when his name is not literally mentioned. Nevertheless, not only from Livy, but from other authors, a total of 99 passages of Quadrigarius' history have survived until today.¹⁹⁴ These glimpses of his work permit us to reconstruct and understand his legacy. In the coming paragraphs, I will examine first the passages of Quadrigarius that deal with the period when the legend of Marcus Curtius was set. Secondly, I will analyse the nature of Quadrigarius' work and finally, I will reflect upon the change he brought to Roman historiography, and what this implies in the understanding of the Roman cultural memory of the first century BC.

In the second pentad, Livy cites Quadrigarius in Book 6. He mentions him as the authority for the tale of Titus Manlius, who in single combat defeated the Gaul Torquatus who had challenged the Roman army:

Claudius [Quadrigarius] writes that in this year a battle took place with the Gauls near the river Anio, and that it was then that the famous fight on the bridge took place, in which Titus

¹⁸⁹ Plutarch, *Bioi Parállēloi*, I: 30.

¹⁹⁰ Livy 6.1.1-3

¹⁹¹ Modern scholars of ancient history also agree on this point, considering that the historical record does not begin to be more enlightening until the middle of the 4th century BC.

¹⁹² Forsythe, *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso*, 69. He uses as an example Livy 6.29 and Livy 7.15.9.

¹⁹³ See Table 1.

¹⁹⁴ Ambrosetti, *Q. Claudio Quadrigario*, 20.

Manlius, in close combat watched by both armies, killed and despoiled of his necklace the Gaul who had challenged him (Livy 6.42.5).¹⁹⁵

Interestingly, Livy set the event of this story in 361 BC—just one year before the self-sacrifice of Marcus Curtius. Furthermore, this story brings an intriguing resemblance with the elements of the Roman knight: Manlius carried out his deed due to his loyalty to father and to country, he risked his life to save the Romans from a threat, and he is an example of the Roman values, leaving to the descendants of his family an honorific name. It is interesting to read this directly from Livy's words:

Titus Manlius, the son of Lucius, who had rescued his father from the persecution of the tribune, left his station and went to the dictator. "Without your orders, General," he said, "I would fain never leave my place to fight, not though I saw that victory was assured; but if you permit me, I would show that beast who dances out so boldly before the standards of the enemy, that I come of the family that hurled the column of Gauls from the Tarpeian Rock." To whom the dictator made answer, "Success attend your valour, Titus Manlius, and your loyalty to father and to country! Go, and with Heaven's help make good the unconquerable Roman name." [Once the Gaul Torquatus was defeated by the Roman Manlius] The Gauls were transfixed with fear and wonder, while the Romans, quitting their station, ran eagerly to meet their champion and brought him with praise and gratulation to the dictator. Amidst the rude banter thrown out by the soldiers in a kind of verse, was heard the appellation of Torquatus, and thereafter this was given currency as an honoured surname, used even by descendants of the family (Livy 7.10).¹⁹⁶

But this is not the only example. Just some passages later, in Livy 7.26, we find the legendary story of Valerius Corvinus. Despite the fact that Livy does not mention his source, we know through Aullius Gellius that this legendary episode was written by Quadrigarius. Both, Gellius and Quadrigarius' accounts, share the same elements which, surprisingly again, are like the tale of Marcus Curtius and the one of Titus Manlius: A brave Roman soldier face a threaten to save the entire Roman army.

There is not one of the well-known historians who has varied in telling the story of Valerius Maximus, who was called Corvinus because of the help and defence rendered him by a raven. That truly remarkable event is in fact thus related in the annals: In the consulship of Lucius Furius and Appius Claudius, a young man of such a family was appointed tribune of the soldiers. And at that time vast forces of Gauls had encamped in the Pomptine district, and the Roman army was being drawn up in order of battle by the consuls, who were not a little disquieted by the strength and number of the enemy. Meanwhile the leader of the Gauls, a man of enormous size and stature, his armour gleaming with gold, advanced with long strides and flourishing his spear, at the same time casting haughty and contemptuous glances in all directions. Filled with scorn for all that he saw, he challenged anyone from the entire Roman army to come out and meet him, if he dared. Thereupon, while all were wavering between fear and shame, the tribune Valerius, first obtaining the consuls' permission to fight with the Gaul who was boasting so vainly, advanced to meet him, boldly yet modestly. They meet, they halt, they were already engaging in combat. And at that moment a divine power is manifest: a raven, hitherto unseen, suddenly flies to the spot, perches on the tribune's helmet, and from there begins an attack on the face and the eyes of his adversary. It flew at the Gaul, harassed him, tore his hand with its claws, obstructed his sight with its wings, and after venting its rage flew back to the tribune's helmet. Thus the tribune, before the eyes of both armies, relying on his own valour and defended by the help of the bird, conquered and killed

¹⁹⁵ Livius, Titus, *Ab Urbe Condita*, III: 348.

¹⁹⁶ Livius, Titus, *Ab Urbe Condita*, III: 386.

the arrogant leader of the enemy, and thus won the surname Corvinus. This happened four hundred and five years after the founding of Rome (Aulus Gellius 9.11.1).¹⁹⁷

Hence, the story of Marcus Curtius seems to follow the same features of the two stories certainly known to be written by Quadrigarius. The characters of these three legendary occurrences shared a precise characteristic: the individual and the community become one, and the Roman morality is personified in one person. Marcus Curtius, Corvinus and Titus Manlius not only save the Romans from a threat, but symbolize the salvation of the Roman morality, and the traditional values. In this sense, Quadrigarius presents in his narrative those Romans who contributed to the prestige of Rome. These exceptional personalities made a synthesis between the moral dimension and the politico-military actions: Roman history is not a result of luck or good fortune, but an ethic-political achievement. Over the course of the first century BC, then, there is a transformation of the Roman cultural memory towards the use of *exempla* aimed to praise the ‘national’ Roman virtues. Memory continues being an aristocratic tool—since the heroic characters still belong to certain families of the *nobilitas*. However, it is not just aimed to praise the antiquity of the *gentes*, but also to worship the Roman values. At this moment, Roman collective memory is personified in heroic figures who put their lives and deeds to the service of the *res publica*.

The *Lacus Curtius* and its memory were shaped in this period to fit in this new cultural framework. Modern scholars have not found a political and civic commitment in Claudius Quadrigarius’ work—beyond the rivalries between aristocratic families eager to promote their own lineage through the role played by their ancestors. However, it is sometimes forgotten that Quadrigarius reflects a precise historical and political situation. It has a deep purpose and an important historical significance. In order to evaluate the conceptual principles and ideology of his work, it is essential to focus on the historical reality of his time. In this sense, it must be remembered that the historiography of Claudius Quadrigarius is ‘contemporary’ history, and the events of the past were used to understand the history of the present.¹⁹⁸ Consequently, if we examine the extant fragments of Quadrigarius from this perspective—as we have done above—there is a clear historiographical approach behind his narrative, and the new layer of memory of the *Lacus Curtius* respond to this new cultural context.

At this moment, the Romans were becoming more aware of their situation. The discovery of Greek philosophy had made the Romans to create their own literature.¹⁹⁹ Progressively, this literature began to gain strength while the Greek one started to become arid. Rome, through the law and the weapons, had imposed its dominance over the world, taking in certain way the former role of Greece: Rome inherited the Greek values and became the continuation of this culture.²⁰⁰ As Rome spread its power, the ‘national’ pride and the awareness of its achievements began to be essential elements of Roman historiography and, therefore, Roman cultural memory.²⁰¹ All the features of a complex and civilized

¹⁹⁷ Aullus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, transl. John C. Rolfe, Gellius, 3 Volumes (London, 1927), II: 184.

¹⁹⁸ Hölkeskamp, Karl, ‘In Defense of Concepts, Categories, and Other Abstractions: Remarks on a Theory of Memory’, in: Karl Galinsky, *Memoria Romana: Memory in Rome and Rome in memory* (Michigan 2014), 63-71, 65.

¹⁹⁹ Cornell, *The beginnings of Rome*, 23.

²⁰⁰ Cornell, *The beginnings of Rome*, 30.

²⁰¹ Laconi, *Q. Claudii Quadrigarii Annalium Reliquiae* (Roma, 2005), 33.

power were attributed to Rome. Consequently, Quadrigarius attempted to give a rational base to history through the conflicts with other peoples, the explanation of the constitutional principles, and especially, through the representation of *romanitas* as the reason which had permitted the eternity of Rome.²⁰² Thus, in Quadrigarius' work the idea of Rome is the idea of historical progress, idea of political and civil organization. When the historical dimension faded away due to its antiquity, Quadrigarius based his narrative in the traditions which existed according to the ethical values of *romanitas*. The understanding of the present events was connected to the interpretation of the occurrences of the past.

This transformation of the approach towards a *collectivization* of the Roman aristocratic memory is a consequence of the changes in Quadrigarius' time. The aristocracy and the man of the ruling class recognised themselves in personalities of the past. They identified themselves with the principles and values of figures like Marcus Curtius. The concept of *virtus*, an essential prerogative of the *nobilitas*, underwent an important change: it is not just an individual heroic effort, but an ethical example which represents the morality of the Roman aristocracy at the service of the community.²⁰³ Marcus Curtius, Titus Manlius, Corvinus, etc., all of them represent the values of the aristocracy that put their high principles and morality at the service of the Roman people. Thus, on the one hand, the memory of the great men of the past is a compendium of *exempla* that aim to be an ethical and social model for the community. But, on the other hand, since these memories become part of the ideological programme of the city, they stop being linked exclusively to the *gentes*, and they began to be connected to political aspirations of individuals who aim to control the power of the *urbs*. Memories linked to heroes of the past legitimize personal power based on the idea of undertaking individual actions for the sake of the community. This new way of using the past contributed to develop the figure of charismatic men like Sulla or Marius; in a process which will find its focal point in the figure of Augustus.

²⁰² Laconi, *Claudii Quadrigarii*, 35.

²⁰³ Claude Nicolet, *Les idées politiques à Rome sous la République* (Paris, 1964), 14-16.

CONCLUSION

By the end of the Roman Republic, at least, three legends attempted to explain the origin of the *Lacus Curtius*. Only after Livy's narrative and from Augustan times, the memory of this monument was fixed. Until then, during the second and first century BC, the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* was pluralistic and it varied depending on the moment, the group of people who interacted with the monument, and the socio-political circumstances. Memory in Roman republican times was essentially connected to the aristocracy, who vigorously shaped and manipulated the understanding of the past through the literature, the (re)constructions of buildings and monuments, and public ceremonies as the *laudationes funebres*. In the case of the *Lacus Curtius*, the confusion around its significance and origin was used by different families to promote their own lineage. These images that the *gentes* created of the past were never impartial or disinterested, and they found their reason and intention in the present: memory was a tool through which families legitimized and reinforced their socio-political situation. In short, the *Lacus Curtius* and its memory were shaped and reshaped in different moments and by different individuals during Republican times in order to fulfil the ambitions and socio-political necessities of different sectors of the aristocracy. A monument like the *Lacus Curtius* was a memorial of a far forgotten past which represented the social reality of the time from which was remembered.

The variety of stories linked to the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* has shown a politico-ideological evolution in the representation of the past. In the second century and beginning of the first century BC the aristocratic families are striving to manipulate literary sources and appropriate the memory of monuments in order to place the antiquity of their lineages as early as the foundation of Rome—as it was the case of Piso and the legend of Mettius Curtius. At this point of the Roman Republic, Rome had become a 'museum' where the *gentes* displayed the memories of their lineage's past through physical representations. Art and monuments were used as a mean of indoctrination and ideological-cultural dissemination. This system was convenient for the Roman aristocracy since the monumental propaganda permitted the public exhibition of their fame—the private worshipping of the past within the family became a matter of public concern. Monuments and public ceremonies allowed the constant remembrance of the ancestors' great deeds, and aristocrats used these memories to fulfil their political aspirations—as it has been seen with the legend of Gaius Curtius. However, as the time passed, these *lieux de mémoire* became part of the symbolic-ideological programme of the city of Rome, and ceased to be exclusively used by the *gentes* to promote their own fame. The memory of the *Lacus Curtius*, thanks to the legend of Marcus Curtius, continued during the first century BC as part of the extensive repertoire of *exempla* aimed to praise the 'national' Roman virtues. This new layer of memory extolled the virtues of the great men of the past who contributed to the aggrandizement of the *res publica*. The memory of the *Lacus Curtius*, then, acquired at this moment a socio-pedagogical function, providing a behavioural model to contribute to the greatness of Rome. Memory is still linked to the aristocracy. However, it does not praise the antiquity of the *gentes*, but the principles and values of individuals who put themselves and their deeds at the service of the community; at the service of Rome.

From this conclusion, it is possible to anticipate a potential and—necessary—research. As we have seen, from this new layer of memory Roman aristocracy identified with the principles and values of great heroes of the past. These memories are legitimizing individualistic actions on the pretext that they are done for the sake of the community and Rome. This new Roman memory culture lays the foundation for the development of charismatic individuals—like Sulla or Marius—who will dominate the political scene of the first century BC. This process would find its focal point in the figure of Augustus, and as I suggested in this thesis, there are evidence to think that in the Augustan period, the legend of the Roman knight, Marcus Curtius, was canonized. It would be interesting to study if Augustus was the one who institutionalized the new way of remembrance of the *Lacus Curtius* and if so why and how. This will offer an overview of the evolution of the use of the past from the Roman Republic to Augustan times. Furthermore, the memory of the *Lacus Curtius* continued during Imperial times, were there new layers of memory, or did the memory of the monument stay static? How can we understand the reconstruction this monument underwent during the second-third century AD? How did the accounts about the *Lacus Curtius*—like the one of Tacitus—engage with the socio-political situations of Imperial times? Unlike most of the ancient monuments of the city of Rome, the *Lacus Curtius* survived in the same spot for about six centuries. This monument gives us the opportunity to trace an integral study of how memory evolved in ancient Rome and the role it plays at any moment. But not only that, the memory of Marcus Curtius survived the passage of time beyond the Roman empire. During the renaissance and modern times, the legend of the Roman knight was a recurring theme among the European painters. What was the role of Roman memory in such a late period? Why was the legend of Marcus Curtius reused almost ten centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire? In short, this topic well deserves further research. The present thesis is just the starting point to analyse the dynamics of memory of the *Lacus Curtius* as a study case to understand how memory functioned, evolved, and shifted in the Eternal city of Rome.

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