

# PLUTARCH, DIONYSIUS, AND THE CREATION OF ROMULUS

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*Abstract:* By taking account of some particular idiosyncracies in Plutarch’s account of Romulus, and applying the revised understanding of archaic Rome that recent archaeological advances have brought about, this essay proposes historical contexts for the creation of the stories that became episodes in the life of the first king. It resists the idea, recently proposed, that the story of Romulus was already in existence in the eighth or ninth century BC, and it emphasises the importance throughout antiquity of performance at public festivals as a means of creating and developing myths.

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There are five surviving narratives of the life of Romulus—in Livy, Dionysius, Plutarch, Florus, and the anonymous *De viris illustribus*.<sup>1</sup> Those by the two Greek authors are the most elaborate, and much the most historiographically helpful in their citation of sources. However, there is a difference between those two which is worth bringing out.

## 1. Dionysius and Plutarch

Dionysius of Halicarnassus was rightly proud of the research he had conducted for his detailed account of the early history of Rome. He was of course thoroughly well read in the Greek historians, whose accounts of Rome he regarded as inadequate,<sup>2</sup> but his main claim to originality was in his mastery of Roman sources, both oral, gathered from the learned Romans he consulted, and textual, read in the ‘most approved’ Roman historians.<sup>3</sup> The names he gives at this introductory point are ‘Porcius Cato, Fabius Maximus, Valerius Antias, Licinius Macer, people such as Aelius [Tubero], Gellius and Calpurnius [Piso], and many others no less distinguished’—identifying

<sup>1</sup> Liv. 1.4–16; D.H. *AR* 1.77–2.56; Plut. *Rom.* 3–29; Florus 1.1; *De viris illustribus* 1–2.

<sup>2</sup> D.H. *AR* 1.5.4, 6.1 (e.g., Hieronymos of Cardia, Timaios, Antigonos, Polybios, Silenos, ‘and countless others’). Elsewhere (1.12.3, 73.4) he emphasises the value of the fifth-century historian Antiochos of Syracuse.

<sup>3</sup> D.H. *AR* 1.7.3: τὰ μὲν παρὰ τῶν λογιωτάτων ἀνδρῶν, οἷς εἰς ὁμίλιαν ἦλθον, διδαχῇ παραλαβόν, τὰ δ’ ἐκ τῶν ἱστοριῶν ἀναλεξάμενος, ὃς οἱ πρὸς αὐτῶν ἐπαινούμενοι Ῥωμαίων συνέγραψαν.

practically the whole range of authors (prior to Livy) who had written Roman history *ab urbe condita*.<sup>4</sup>

In the course of his treatment of Romulus, which extends over ninety-five Teubner pages (twenty-six of them devoted to a description of the ‘system of government’ he set up),<sup>5</sup> Dionysius named the following sources:

- Q. Fabius Pictor, four times (1.79.4; 2.38.3, 39.1, 40.2)
- L. Cincius Alimentus, three times (1.79.4; 2.38.3, 39.1)
- M. Porcius Cato, twice (1.79.4; 2.49.2)
- L. Calpurnius Piso, six times (1.79.4; 2.38.3, 39.1, 40.1–3)
- Aelius Tubero (1.80.1)
- Valerius Antias (2.13.2)
- M. Terentius Varro, three times (2.21.2, 47.4, 48.4)
- Zenodotos of Troizen (2.49.1)
- Licinius Macer (2.52.4)

Only one of the twenty-two citations was to a Greek author: Zenodotos,<sup>6</sup> on the supposed Umbrian origin of the Sabines. Dionysius’ account of Romulus seems to have been entirely based on Roman sources, none of which was earlier than the end of the third century BC.

With Plutarch, who had a much wider range of interests, the situation is significantly different. Of his nineteen named citations in the *Life of Romulus*, only nine were Roman:

- Promathion (2.6)
- Diokles of Peparethos, twice (3.1, 8.7)
- Fabius Pictor, three times (3.1, 8.7, 14.1)
- Varro, twice (12.3–4, 16.7)
- Valerius Antias (14.6)
- Zenodotos of Troizen (14.7)
- Juba, twice (14.6, 17.5)
- Sextius Sulla (15.2)
- Dionysius of Halicarnassus (16.8)
- Sulpicius Galba (17.5)
- Antigonos (17.5)
- Simylos ‘the poet’ (17.5)

<sup>4</sup> Respectively *FRHist* 5, 8, 25, 27, 38, 14, 9; the earliest of them, Q. Fabius Pictor and L. Cincius Alimentus (*FRHist* 1 and 2), had already been mentioned at D.H. *AR* 1.6.2.

<sup>5</sup> D.H. *AR* 2.7.2–29.2 on ὁ κόσμος τῆς πολιτείας, evidently based on Varro (Wiseman (2009) 81–98).

<sup>6</sup> *BNJ* 821 F 1 (undated, but presumably Hellenistic).

Butas, ‘who wrote mythical *aitia* in elegiacs’ (21.6)

Gaius Acilius (21.7)

Plutarch was less at home with Latin sources than Dionysius. Four of his Roman citations were of histories written in Greek (by Fabius Pictor and C. Acilius); his reference to Sulpicius Galba—and probably that to Valerius Antias as well—was taken at second hand from Juba.<sup>7</sup> It is unlikely that he had anything even remotely approaching Dionysius’ knowledge of the Roman historiographical tradition.

Paradoxically, that makes his evidence all the more valuable. The Roman tradition was based on Fabius Pictor,<sup>8</sup> who had to fill the gap between Aeneas’ flight from Troy, recently dated by Eratosthenes to 1184/3 BC, and the expulsion of the Tarquins in or about 508/7.<sup>9</sup> He evidently did it by creating the pseudo-historical chronology of an Alban dynasty fifteen generations long, from Ascanius to Numitor, followed by seven kings of Rome, complete with regnal dates.<sup>10</sup> For Dionysius, that was ‘the chronology of the imperial city’s foundation as stated by my predecessors and accepted by me’;<sup>11</sup> Plutarch, however, was not committed to any such narrative.

It is surely significant that two of the passages where Plutarch cited Latin authorities were concerned with the absence of reliable evidence for early Rome.<sup>12</sup> He knew the orthodox date for the city’s foundation, but regarded it as merely a matter of opinion, ‘for those who find it credible that any chronological accuracy can be preserved’.<sup>13</sup> He knew that according to the accepted Roman tradition Numa couldn’t possibly have been a pupil of Pythagoras, but he very deliberately left the question open, mildly observing

<sup>7</sup> *BNJ* 275 F 23–4. The *locus classicus* on Plutarch’s Latin is the introduction to the paired lives of Demosthenes and Cicero (Plut. *Dem.* 2.2–3); see Jones (1971) 81–7.

<sup>8</sup> Liv. 1.44.2 (*scriptorum antiquissimus Fabius Pictor*); 2.40.10 (*Fabium longe antiquissimum auctorem*); D.H. *AR* 7.71.1 (*παλαιότατος ... τῶν τὰ Ῥωμαικὰ συνταξαμένων*).

<sup>9</sup> Eratosth. *BNJ* 241 F 1 (fall of Troy); Pol. 3.22.1–2 (expulsion of Tarquins).

<sup>10</sup> Fabius’ responsibility, not explicitly attested, is clearly implied by the eighth-century dates for the foundation of the city that he and his successors now provided: *FRHist* 1 F 5 (748/7 BC), 2 F 2a (729/8), 5 F 13 (752/1), 32 F 9 (752/1), 33 F 2 (754/3), listed at D.H. *AR* 1.74.1–2 and Solinus 1.27 (both probably using Varro). For the regnal dates see D.H. *AR* 1.75.1–3.

<sup>11</sup> D.H. *AR* 1.75.4: τὰ μὲν δὴ περὶ τοῦ χρόνου καθ’ ὃν ἡ νῦν δυναστεύουσα πόλις ᾤκίσθη τοῖς τε πρὸ ἐμοῦ γενομένοις κάμοι δοκοῦντα τοιάδ’ ἐστίν.

<sup>12</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 326a (citing Liv. 6.1.2); *Numa* 1.1 (citing Κλώδιος τις ἐν ἐλέγχῳ χρόνων, *FRHist* 16 F 1).

<sup>13</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 12.2 (*οἴονται*); *Cam.* 22.1 (*εἴ τῳ πιστὸν ἀποσώζεσθαί τινα τῶν χρόνων ἀκρίβειαν*).

that ‘it’s hard to be precise about chronology’.<sup>14</sup> As for Romulus, he regarded him as beyond the period of time ‘that can be reached by probable reasoning and provides a basis for factual history’; he knew that mythology masquerading as history was all his paired lives of Theseus and Romulus could hope to be.<sup>15</sup>

This more flexible approach probably owed much to an author of whom Plutarch repeatedly speaks with the utmost respect: Juba of Mauretania, ‘numbered among the most learned of the Greeks’ for his culture and historical erudition,<sup>16</sup> and cited by Plutarch on a very wide range of subjects.<sup>17</sup> One example indicates the sort of material Juba could provide: he is our sole source for the Sabine Antro Curiatius, whose marvellous heifer, if sacrificed at the temple of Diana on the Aventine, would decide which people should rule over Italy.<sup>18</sup>

Whether or not it was thanks to Juba, Plutarch was evidently able to draw attention to items that Dionysius either didn’t know or had chosen to ignore. Take for instance the great melodramatic story of the boyhood of Romulus and Remus and their revenge on their wicked uncle Amulius: Dionysius told the tale at length, and attributed it to Fabius Pictor; so too did Plutarch, but he added that Fabius had taken it from a Greek author, Diokles of Peparethos.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Dionysius knew the work of Zenodotos of Troizen, but quoted him only for the ethnogenesis of the Sabines; Plutarch cited Zenodotos on Romulus’ daughter Prima and son Aollios, children mentioned in no other source.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the most remarkable evidence for the breadth of Plutarch’s reading is his report, evidently at second hand, of the story of Rome’s founder as told about 500 BC by Promathion (or Promathos) of

<sup>14</sup> Plut. *Num.* 1.4 (τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους ἐξακριβῶσαι χαλεπὸν ἔστι), 8.9–10, 22.4; *contra* Cic. *De or.* 2.154; *Rep.* 2.28–9; *Tusc.* 4.3; Liv. 1.18.2–3; D.H. *AR* 2.59.

<sup>15</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 1.1 (τὸν ἐφικτὸν εἰκότι λόγῳ καὶ βάσιμον ἱστορία πραγμάτων ἐχομένη χρόνον), 1.3 (τὸ μυθῶδες ... λαβεῖν ἱστορίας ὄψιν); see Pelling (2002) 171–95.

<sup>16</sup> Plut. *Caes.* 55.2 (Ἑλλήνων τοῖς πολυμαθεστάτοις ἐναρίθμιος); *Ant.* 87.1 (τῷ χαριεστάτῳ βασιλέων); *Sert.* 9.5 (τοῦ πάντων ἱστορικωτάτου βασιλέων).

<sup>17</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 14.6, 15.3, 17.5; *Num.* 7.5, 13.6; *Comp. Pel. Marc.* 1.5; *Sull.* 16.8; *Mor.* 264c–d, 269b–c, 282e, 285d, 972b–c, 977d–e (*BNJ* 275 F 23, 24, 25, 27, 51, 53a, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95). Juba wrote too late for Dionysius to use him.

<sup>18</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 264c–d = *Quaest. Rom.* 4 (*BNJ* 275 F 91), providing more information even than Varro. For other versions of the story cf. Liv. 1.45.3–7; Val. Max. 7.3.1; *De viris illustribus* 7.10–14.

<sup>19</sup> D.H. *AR* 1.79.4, 83.3; Plut. *Rom.* 3.1, 8.7 (*FRHist* 1 F 4, *BNJ* 820 F 2).

<sup>20</sup> D.H. *AR* 2.49.1; Plut. *Rom.* 14.7 (*BNJ* 821 F 2); see Palombi (2019/20) 371–2.

Samos;<sup>21</sup> Dionysius was evidently unaware of Promathion's work, which he would surely have mentioned if he had known about it.

It is therefore quite possible that even where Plutarch didn't name his authority he was using a source independent of, and perhaps earlier than, those known even to Dionysius. That may help to explain a surprising feature of his account of Romulus' final wars.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. The Wars of Romulus

Romulus was a warrior. His father was Mars, who assured the Vestal he had just impregnated that her offspring would be worthy of him and excel all men in valour and warlike deeds;<sup>23</sup> Romulus himself was assured by oracles that the city he founded would thrive on wars and become the greatest of all,<sup>24</sup> and to that end he told his citizens, in a message delivered in a vision to Iulius Proculus, to cultivate the art of war.<sup>25</sup>

In all the surviving narratives the first wars Romulus fought were the direct result of his abduction of the young women of the neighbouring communities who had come at his invitation to a festival.<sup>26</sup> Naturally the aggrieved parties made war to get their daughters back: they were the men of Caenina, Crustumium, and Antemnae (according to Livy and Dionysius), or Caenina, Fidenae, Crustumium, and Antemnae (according to Plutarch), or Veii and Caenina (according to Florus), or Caenina and others (according to the *De viris illustribus*).<sup>27</sup> The five sources are unanimous that only after these had been

<sup>21</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 2.3–6 (*BNJ* 817 F 1); see Mazzarino (1965) 196–9 and 584–6, Wiseman (1995) 57–61. Plutarch evidently knew the Promathion story via an intermediate source, since Tethys' prophecy of a single founder (Plut. *Rom.* 2.4) was merged with the later story of the twins.

<sup>22</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 23.5–25.5, cf. 26.1 (τοῦτον ἔσχατον πόλεμον ὁ Ῥωμύλος ἐπολέμησαν).

<sup>23</sup> *Origo gentis Romanae* 20.1 (*affirmantisque ex ea natos dignos patre euasuros*), citing Fabius Pictor and Vennonius; D.H. *AR* 1.77.2 = Fabius Pictor *FRHist* 1 F 4 (τέξεσθαι δ' αὐτὴν ἐκ τοῦ βιασμοῦ δύο παῖδας ἀνθρώπων μακρῶ κρατίστους ἀρετὴν καὶ τὰ πολέμια).

<sup>24</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 14.1 (φιλοπόλεμον ὄντα καὶ πεπεισμένον ἐκ τινων ἄρα λόγιων ὅτι τὴν Ῥώμην πέπρωται πολέμοις τρεφομένην καὶ ἀυξομένην γενέσθαι μεγίστην); cf. D.H. *AR* 2.32.1 (ὥσπερ αὐτῶ τὰ μαντεύματα προεθέσπισε).

<sup>25</sup> Liv. 1.16.6 (*proinde rem militarem colant sciuntque et ita posteris tradant nullas opes humanas armis Romanis resistere posse*), whence Ov. *Fast.* 2.508.

<sup>26</sup> Not just the Sabines: see Liv. 1.9.2 (*uicinas gentes*), 1.9.7 (*finitimis*); D.H. *AR* 2.30.3 (τὰς ἔγγιστα πόλεις); Florus 1.1.10 (*a finitimis*); *De viris illustribus* 2.3 (*feminas finitimorum*).

<sup>27</sup> Liv. 1.9.8; D.H. *AR.* 2.32.2; Plut. *Rom.* 17.1 (apparently assuming these peoples were Sabine); Florus 1.1.10–11 (no other source mentions Etruscans at this point); *De vir ill.* 2.3 (*primi Caeninenses*); Jer. *Chron.* Ol. 8.3–9.1 combines them all (*Caeninenses Antemnates Crustumini*

variously defeated did the Sabines under Titus Tatius begin the much more substantial war that ended with Romulus and Tatius as joint kings of a shared Rome.<sup>28</sup>

According to Dionysius, there was one war fought by the two kings together against Cameria, described as a colony of the Albans that had previously been a famous settlement of the Aborigines.<sup>29</sup> Single kingship resumed after the death of Tatius (killed at Lavinium in revenge for an attack on Laurentine envoys),<sup>30</sup> and Romulus' final wars, variously motivated and reported only in the three main sources, were against Fidenae and Veii (Livy) or Fidenae, Cameria, and Veii (Dionysius, Plutarch).<sup>31</sup> Here too Plutarch's treatment was interestingly different from that of Dionysius.

Although both authors reported that the Sabine part of the joint citizen body did not resent Romulus' acquittal of Tatius' killers, only Plutarch gave the reason: 'they regarded him as a benevolent god',<sup>32</sup> evidently in anticipation of his self-declared apotheosis as the Sabine deity Quirinus.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, both authors presented the second of their wars as retaliation for a surprise attack by Cameria when Rome happened to be afflicted by plague;<sup>34</sup> but only Plutarch explained that the plague was accompanied by a rain of blood, a dire portent that unnerved the Romans with fear of the gods' anger.<sup>35</sup>

*Fidenates Veientes*). Antemnae, Fidenae, and Crustumerium were on the left bank of the Tiber north of Rome (Plin. *HN* 3.54); Caenina was evidently in the same area (Ogilvie (1965) 68).

<sup>28</sup> Elaborately narrated by Liv. 1.11.5–13.7; D.H. *AR* 2.36.3–47.4; Plut. *Rom.* 17.2–20.3; summarised by Florus 1.1.12–14 and *De vir. ill.* 2.4–10.

<sup>29</sup> D.H. *AR* 2.50.4–5; no other source attributes any such joint action to the kings. The site of Cameria is unknown, but must have been north of Rome in the triangle formed by the Tiber, the Anio, and the Sabine mountains, not far from Nomentum: see D.H. *AR* 5.49.3, with Quilici and Quilici Gigli (1993) 32.

<sup>30</sup> Liv. 1.14.1–3; D.H. *AR* 2.51–2 (Cameria for the second time); Plut. *Rom.* 23.1–4. Florus and *De viris illustribus* ignore Tatius and go straight from the end of the Sabine war to the disappearance of Romulus.

<sup>31</sup> Liv. 1.14.4–15.5; D.H. *AR* 2.53.2–56.6; Plut. *Rom.* 23.5–25.5.

<sup>32</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 23.4 (ὡς θεῶν χρώμενοι εἰς πᾶσαν εὐνοίαν), Loeb translation by Bernadotte Perrin.

<sup>33</sup> Apotheosis: Cic. *Rep.* 2.20 (*se deum esse et Quirinum uocari*); D.H. *AR* 2.63.4 (ἐγὼ δὲ Κυρῖνος); Ov. *Fast.* 2.507 (*placentque nouum pia turba Quirinum*); Plut. *Rom.* 28.2 (ἐγὼ δὲ ὑμῶν εὐμενῆς ἔσομαι δαίμων Κυρῖνος); Florus 1.1.18 (*Quirinum in caelo uocari*); *De vir. ill.* 2.14 (*ipse pro deo cultus et Quirinus est appellatus*). Sabine: D.H. *AR* 2.48.2 (from Varro); Ov. *Fast.* 2.475–80; Festus (Paulus) 43L; Servius on Virg. *Aen.* 1.292; cf. Lydus *Mag.* 1.5. See Robinson (2011) 300–6.

<sup>34</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 24.2–3; D.H. *AR* 2.54.1.

<sup>35</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 24.1: ὥστε πολλὴν προσγενέσθαι τοῖς ἀναγκαίοις πάθεσι δεισιδαιμονίαν.

A third distinctive feature of Plutarch's narrative was his attention to the Roman calendar.<sup>36</sup> The war against Fidenae ended when Romulus sent Roman colonists there, on the Ides of April; the war against Cameria ended when Romulus sent (more) colonists there, on the Kalends of Sextilis; the war against Veii ended with Romulus' triumph, on the Ides of October.<sup>37</sup> The last of those dates was accompanied by an explanation of the ritual phrase 'Sardians for sale!' that was cried each year on that day at the *ludi Capitolini*.<sup>38</sup> Here, however, Plutarch did not mention the games: he called the occasion a victory-sacrifice.<sup>39</sup>

The other calendar dates were also annual victory-celebrations, the festival days of the temple of Jupiter Victor (Ides of April) and the temple of Victoria (Kalends of Sextilis).<sup>40</sup> The men who vowed and dedicated those two temples were successive commanders in the great war against the coalition of Samnites, Etruscans, and Gauls, respectively Q. Fabius Maximus Rullianus, consul for the fifth time in 295 BC, and L. Postumius Megellus, consul for the second time in 294 BC.<sup>41</sup> In his earlier narrative of the battle with Tatius' Sabines in the Forum valley, Plutarch had noted that Romulus rallied his forces 'where the temple of Jupiter Stator is now';<sup>42</sup> that temple was dedicated by M. Atilius Regulus, Postumius' consular colleague in 294 BC.<sup>43</sup>

The following year, on the Ides of February 293 BC, the consul L. Papirius Cursor held his triumph over the Samnites, and two days later dedicated the

<sup>36</sup> Already in evidence at *Rom.* 12.1 (Rome founded *a.d.* XI Kal. Mai.), 15.5 (women abducted 'on the eighteenth day of the month once called Sextilis, but now, August, on which day the festival of the Consualia is celebrated' (really the 21st)); also 29.2 (disappearance of Romulus 'on the Capratine Nones', in July).

<sup>37</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 23.6, 24.3, 25.5.

<sup>38</sup> Liv. 5.50.4; Plut. *Mor.* 277c–d (*Quaest. Rom.* 53); Festus 428–30L. The games were attributed either to Romulus, after the dedication of the temple of Jupiter Feretrius (*Scholia Bernensia* on Virg. *Geo.* 2.384), or to Camillus, after the city was freed from the Gauls (Liv. 5.50.4).

<sup>39</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 25.5 (καὶ νῦν ἔτι θύοντες ἐπινίκια).

<sup>40</sup> Jupiter Victor: Ov. *Fast.* 4.621–2; *Fasti Antiates maiores* (Degrassi (1963) 8). Victoria: *Fasti Antiates maiores* and *Fasti Praenestini* (Degrassi (1963) 16 and 134–5).

<sup>41</sup> Liv. 10.29.14–18, 33.9; the *Fasti Capitolini* date their respective triumphs to 4 September 295 and 27 March 294 (Degrassi (1947) 543–4).

<sup>42</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 18.7 (οὐ νῦν ὁ τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Στάτορος ἱδρυταὶ νεώς); unlike the other sources (Liv. 1.12.6; D.H. *AR* 2.50.3; Ov. *Fast.* 6.793–4; Florus 1.1.13; *De vir ill.* 2.8), Plutarch does not say that Romulus himself vowed and/or built it.

<sup>43</sup> Liv. 10.36.11 and 37.15–16; Regulus triumphed on 28 March 294, the day after his colleague (Degrassi (1947) 544). The temple's dedication date was 27 June: Ov. *Fast.* 6.793; *Fasti Priuernates* (Zevi and Cassola (2016) 292–3).

temple of Quirinus that his father had vowed long before.<sup>44</sup> When Romulus announced his new identity as Quirinus in a vision to Julius Proculus on the Quirinal hill, he made it clear that the Romans should build him a temple on that very spot.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, Papirius' year of office was marked by a plague, afflicting both city and countryside, that was treated as portentous;<sup>46</sup> hoping to take advantage, the Samnites and Falisci resumed hostilities.<sup>47</sup> That exactly matches Plutarch's scenario, in which the plague brought sudden death to humans, rendered crops and animals barren, caused superstitious terror, and prompted Cameria to take advantage and attack Rome.<sup>48</sup>

These repeated parallels are so striking that I think there is only one rational explanation for them: we must assume that Plutarch's main source for the wars of Romulus composed the narrative with the events of 295–293 BC specifically in mind. At this point, however, there is a methodological issue to be confronted.

### 3. Myth Creation

Guy Bradley's book *Early Rome to 290 BC* (2020) is now deservedly the standard work on the subject, valued in particular for its treatment of the archaic Mediterranean-wide world in which the Roman *polis* came into being.<sup>49</sup> Bradley's chapter on 'myths and legends of the foundation of Rome' keeps that background firmly in mind, positing unspecified 'Mediterranean myth' as the likely origin of the various foundation stories.<sup>50</sup>

The chapter begins with a firmly stated declaration of principle that informs the entire subsequent argument:<sup>51</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Liv. 10.46.7–8; *Fasti Capitolini* (Degrassi (1947) 544); *Fasti Antiates maiores* (Degrassi (1963) 5); Ov. *Fast.* 2.475–512; Plin. *HN* 7.213. See Oakley (2005) 449–50.

<sup>45</sup> See n. 33 above, with Cic. *Rep.* 2.20 (*ut sibi eo in colle delubrum fieret*); *Leg.* 1.3 (*templumque sibi dedicari in eo loco iusserit*); *De viris illustribus* 2.14 (*aedes in colle Quirinali Romulo constituta*).

<sup>46</sup> Liv. 10.47.6 (*pestilentiae urentis simul urbem atque agros ... portentoque iam similis clades erat*); the Sibylline books advised that Aesculapius be summoned from Epidaurus, and an embassy was sent the following year (Liv. 10.47.7; *Per.* 11; Val. Max. 1.8.2; *De vir ill.* 22.1).

<sup>47</sup> Zon. 8.1.10 (*καταφρονήσαντες τῶν Ῥωμαίων διὰ τὴν νόσον*); cf. Plut. *Rom.* 24.2 (*ὡς ἀδυνάτων ἀμύνεσθαι διὰ τὸ πάθος*).

<sup>48</sup> See nn. 34 and 35 above.

<sup>49</sup> Bradley (2020), esp. 35–80.

<sup>50</sup> Bradley (2020) 81–102, esp. 81–3 ('Mediterranean myth'), 88 ('the fragments that survive to our day are likely to be part of a much greater body of myth that is now lost').

<sup>51</sup> Bradley (2020) 81.



[T]he fragmentary nature of the early evidence makes arguments from silence perilous. Scholars have then been tempted to identify particular periods and motives for ‘myth-making’. But this is an exercise with many pitfalls. In the first place, fragments rarely allow a detailed idea of what an author wrote to be built up, and the vast majority of these works have been irretrievably lost. Secondly, the idea of political or religious motivations for myth creation has been overplayed by historians. Most myths probably formed through a long process of retelling in oral form, rather than springing fully formed from an individual propagandist’s head.

The axiom is repeated a few pages later: ‘It is unlikely in these circumstances that these myths are largely late and “invented” in connection with specific Roman historical events; rather, earlier myths are adapted for later means’.<sup>52</sup> If true, that would invalidate our argument in the previous section.

However, there are problems with Bradley’s treatment of myth-creation. Firstly, ‘late-generated mythology’ is not an invention of modern scholarship but a concept familiar in the ancient world; the classic case is the exploits of Dionysos and Herakles in India, modelled on those of Alexander.<sup>53</sup> Secondly, arguments from silence are more persuasive when the visual evidence is included; the lost epic narratives of the deeds of Theseus, for instance, can be plausibly dated by the sudden popularity of those deeds among artists and their customers in the last quarter of the sixth century BC.<sup>54</sup> Thirdly, for Roman foundation-stories the argument from silence is valid in any case, thanks to the systematic listing of rival accounts by Dionysius, Plutarch, Festus, and Servius, none of whom cites any author earlier than about 500 BC.<sup>55</sup> For Bradley, on the other hand, ‘it is more likely that the myths first took form in the period when foreign interaction became regular, in the ninth and eighth centuries BC’.<sup>56</sup>

The concept of myths ‘formed through a long process of retelling in oral form’ is too abstract to be helpful.<sup>57</sup> Myths are stories, and every story was once

<sup>52</sup> Bradley (2020) 88–9.

<sup>53</sup> Strabo 11.5.5 C505 (ὕστερογενῆ τὴν μυθοποιίαν ἐμφαίνει); 15.1.9 C688.

<sup>54</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 1451a16–22; Strabo 1.2.8 C19; Plut. *Thes.* 28.1; discussion and bibliography at Lipka (2018) 224–5.

<sup>55</sup> D.H. *AR* 1.72–3; Plut. *Rom.* 1–2 (cf. n. 21 above on Promathion); Festus 326–9L; Servius *auctus* on Virg. *Aen.* 1.273.

<sup>56</sup> Bradley (2020) 89, apparently implying foundation-stories that pre-dated the creation of the Roman city-state.

<sup>57</sup> Bradley (2020) 81; cf. 90 (‘The foundation of Rome by Romulus is ... a typically captivating tale shaped by centuries of retelling in oral tradition’), 91–3 (‘These variants are typical of stories preserved in oral traditions, where disagreements arose through the

told for the first time. It is not true that ‘a legend has no author, and no date’.<sup>58</sup> When, where and how a story was first told are questions that should at least be formulated—and in fact we know quite a lot about story-tellers at the time Rome was evolving into a city-state in the seventh century BC.<sup>59</sup>

Alkinoos in the *Odyssey* is scathing about the ‘rogues and charlatans of whom the dark earth breeds so many, fashioning lies from no-one knows where’; on the other hand, as Eumaios observed, ‘all over the world, the inspired bard who gives delight with song is a welcome guest’.<sup>60</sup> One such was Demodokos, ‘honoured by the peoples’, who sang for a great audience at a public festival in the *agora* of Scherie in the land of the Phaeacians,<sup>61</sup> legendary equivalent of the Corinthian colony of Corcyra.<sup>62</sup> The founder of that colony was a Bacchiad,<sup>63</sup> and so too was the ruler of Rome in the late seventh century BC, Lucumo son of Demaratos.<sup>64</sup>

The story of Demaratos’ relocation, with his wealth and his workforce, from Corinth to Etruria in about 657 BC, and of his son’s continuation of his enterprise as ruler of Rome, was told by Dionysius and Strabo;<sup>65</sup> Dionysius and Strabo are the only authors known to have used the ‘Italic History’ of

fragmentation of a narrative not committed to an authoritative text’), 134 (‘clearly these stories of miraculous heroism have been shaped by oral tradition into powerful sagas’).

<sup>58</sup> Grandazzi (1991) 253 (‘une légende n’a pas d’auteur, pas de date non plus’), quoted with approval by Bradley (2020) 88.

<sup>59</sup> Assuming that an *agora* defines a *polis*, see Ammerman (1990) and Hopkins (2016) 27–38 on the creation of the Roman Forum in the second half of the seventh century BC.

<sup>60</sup> Hom. *Od.* 11.364–6, 17.385–6; see West (2014) 35–43 for the late seventh century BC as the likely date for the *Odyssey* in the form we have it.

<sup>61</sup> Hom. *Od.* 8.472 (Δημόδοκον λαοῖσι τετιμένον), 8.109–10 (βὰν δ’ ἴμεν εἰς ἀγορῆν, ἅμα δ’ ἔσπετο πούλις ὄμιλος | μυρῖου), 8.261–369 (tale of Ares and Aphrodite), 8.485–522 (tale of the wooden horse).

<sup>62</sup> Hellanicus *BNJ* 4 F 77; Thuc. 1.25.4; Apollonius Rhodius 4.1210–13; Callimachus fr. 12 Pf.

<sup>63</sup> Strabo 6.2.4 C269: Chersikrates, colleague of Archias the founder of Syracuse, therefore ca. 734 BC.

<sup>64</sup> For his historical context see now Bradley (2020) 74, 118–19; doubts about his historicity, as in Cornell (1995) 124 and Forsythe (2005) 101, are no longer necessary.

<sup>65</sup> D.H. *AR* 3.46.3–5; Strabo 5.2.2 C219–20; 8.6.20 C378; cf. also Pol. 6.11a.10; Cic. *Rep.* 2.34; *Tusc.* 5.109; Liv. 1.34.2; Zon. 7.8. The workforce consisted of craftspeople working in terracotta (Plin. *HN* 35.16, 142), and some of their raw material will have come from the clay-beds now known to have existed at Rome between the river harbour and the site of the Forum (Ammerman et al. (2008), Winter–Iliopoulos–Ammerman (2009)).

Antiochos of Syracuse,<sup>66</sup> and since Syracuse too was a Bacchiad foundation,<sup>67</sup> Antiochos was well placed to know the essential facts about Demaratos and his son.<sup>68</sup> In the much later Roman historiographical tradition Lucumo was absorbed into the seven-kings sequence as ‘Lucius Tarquinius Priscus’, but three innovations quite independent of the dynastic saga were also attributed to him: he created an *agora* (the Roman Forum) surrounded with workshops and porticos,<sup>69</sup> he laid out the ‘hippodrome’ fairground known as the Circus Maximus,<sup>70</sup> and he founded the ‘great games’ that became the *ludi Romani*.<sup>71</sup>

Festival games were where story-tellers typically performed, whether in prose or verse.<sup>72</sup> In the ancient world, as Plato pointed out, most people’s knowledge of gods and heroes came from the stories they heard, or saw enacted, at public sacrifices.<sup>73</sup> Since the Bacchiads were descended from

<sup>66</sup> D.H. *AR* 1.73.4 (οὐ τῶν ἐπιτυχόντων τις οὐδὲ νέων συγγραφεύς); Strabo 6.1.4 C254 (Ἀντίοχος ἐν τῷ περὶ τῆς Ἰταλίας συγγράμματι); *BNJ* 555 F 2 and 4–6 (from Dionysius), F 3a and 7–13 (from Strabo).

<sup>67</sup> Thuc. 6.3.2; Strabo 6.2.4 C269 (whence the city’s wealth).

<sup>68</sup> Antiochos was evidently a contemporary of Herodotus: his history of Sicily stopped at 424/3 BC (D.S. 12.71.2).

<sup>69</sup> Liv. 1.35.10 (*circa forum priuatis aedificanda diuisa sunt loca; porticus tabernaeque facta*); D.H. *AR* 3.67.4–5 (τῆν τε ἀγοράν ... ἐκόσμησεν ἐργαστηρίους τε καὶ παστάσι περιλαβών); see n. 59 above.

<sup>70</sup> Liv. 1.35.8–9 (*tum primum circo qui nunc maximus dicitur designatus locus est. loca diuisa ... fori appellati; spectauere furcis duodenos ab terra spectacula alta sustinentibus pedes*); D.H. *AR* 3.68.1 (κατεσκευάσε δὲ καὶ τὸν μέγιστον τῶν ἵπποδρόμων ... ποιήσας περὶ αὐτὸν καθέδρας ... ἐπ’ ἰκρίους, δοκῶν ξυλίνας σκηναῖς ὑποκειμένων). For the stands for spectators cf. Nielsen (2002) 117 fig. 49 (Attic BF, ca. 570 BC), 171 fig. 77 (Tomba delle Bighe, Tarquinia, early fifth century BC); Photius s.v. Ἰκρια; Pollux 7.125.

<sup>71</sup> Cic. *Rep.* 2.36 (*primum ludos maximos, qui Romani dicti sunt, fecisse accepimus*); Eutropius 1.6.1 (*circum Romae aedificauit, ludos magnos instituit qui ad nostram memoriam permanent*); *De vir ill.* 6.8 (*circum maximum aedificauit, ludos magnos instituit*); ps.-Ascon. 217 Stangl (*Romani ludi sub regibus instituti sunt magnique appellati, quod magnis impensibus dati*).

<sup>72</sup> For prose narrators see for instance Pind. *Pyth.* 1.94 (καὶ λογίους καὶ ἀοιδοῖς); Thuc. 1.22.4 (ἔς μὲν ἀκροάσιν ... ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν); Lucian *Her.* 1–2 (πλήθουσιν τηρήσας τὴν πανήγυριν); Pol. 3.31.12 (ἀγώνισμα); Cic. *Fin.* 5.52 (general public listens to history); D.H. *Thuc.* 6 (εἰς ἀπάτην καὶ γοητείαν τῶν πολλῶν); *FRHist* 48 T 1 = schol. Hor. *Sat.* 1.3.86–9 (historian performing *in spectaculo*); Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 674e (τὸ τῶν λογογράφων καὶ ποιητῶν ἔθνος); Lucian *Hist. conscr.* 10–11 (audience includes τὸν συρφετὸν καὶ τὸν πολὺν δῆμον), 44 (ὡς μὲν τοὺς πολλοὺς συνεῖναι, τοὺς δὲ πεπαιδευμένους ἐπαινέσαι).

<sup>73</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 10.887d (‘such as the young delight to see and hear when performed at sacrifices’); cf. Paus. 1.3.3 (‘heard from childhood in choruses and tragedies’). For the quasi-historical content of Roman hymns, cf. D.H. *AR* 1.31.2 (Faunus), 1.79.10 (Romulus and Remus); 5.25.1 (Horatius Cocles); 8.62.3 (Marcius Coriolanus); for the Roman *ludi* as honour to the gods, cf. Liv. 6.42.12–13 (*honoris deum immortalium causa*); Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.36 (*cum dignitate maxima et religione*).

Herakles,<sup>74</sup> it is likely that the ancient Roman cult centre of the deified hero, the *ara maxima*, dated from Lucumo's time. Its annual festival on 12 August, celebrated in Lucumo's Circus Maximus,<sup>75</sup> was probably where the story was first told of Herakles' reception by the Arcadian Euandros (Evander) at 'Pallantion' during his return to Argos with the cattle of Geryon. We know the story from Virgil and Ovid, but it evidently goes back to Stesichoros in the sixth century BC.<sup>76</sup>

The dating of such cult-site contexts becomes a little more straightforward with the advent of archaeologically recognisable stone-built temples. The first at Rome—and one of the first anywhere—was built in about 580 BC at the foot of the Capitol next to the river harbour.<sup>77</sup> The cult there was of Matuta, identified as Leukothea, goddess of the Corinthian Isthmus; her story, as retold by Ovid, involved Hercules and Arcadian Evander too.<sup>78</sup> The temple was opposite Hercules' *ara maxima* on the other side of the river harbour, and when it was rebuilt about 530 BC its roof carried a terracotta statue-group of Athene escorting Herakles to Olympus.<sup>79</sup> The hero was portrayed wearing the lionskin, a feature newly introduced by Stesichoros.<sup>80</sup>

Rather than vaguely imagine 'myths formed by oral tradition' in an unspecified distant past, it is better to remember the realities of Mediterranean society from the seventh century BC onwards. Every temple built implies an aetiological story retold each year at the *dies natalis*;<sup>81</sup> every lavish festival paid for, as wealthy Lucumo paid for his *ludi magni*,<sup>82</sup> implies visiting poets and story-tellers whose opening gambit would be to praise the host city and its noble

<sup>74</sup> Thuc. 6.3.2; D.S. 7.9.4.

<sup>75</sup> *Fasti Amiternini* (Degrassi (1963) 190–1). The earliest Circus Maximus *ludi* were in honour of Poseidon Hippios, as at the Isthmian Games: D.H. *AR* 1.33.2; 2.31.2–3; Plut. *Rom.* 14.3; Lydus *Mag.* 1.30; cf. Liv. 1.9.6 (*Neptunus Equester*); see Zevi (2014) 75–7.

<sup>76</sup> Virg. *Aen.* 8.102–305; Ov. *Fast.* 1.461–585; Stesichoros *Geryoneis* fr. 21 (Paus. 8.3.2); see Usener (1912) 330, Davies and Finglass (2014) 290.

<sup>77</sup> Hopkins (2016) 53–63, esp. 56–60 on the pedimental decoration, like that of a contemporary temple at Bacchiad Corcyra; for the site see Brock–Motta–Terrenato (2021) 14–17.

<sup>78</sup> Paus. 1.44.8; 2.2.1; Ov. *Fast.* 6.475–550, esp. 495–6 (Isthmus), 505–6 (Evander and Arcadians), 519–20 (Hercules and the cattle), 545 (*Leucothea Graia, Matuta uocabere nostris*).

<sup>79</sup> Cristofani (1990) 119–20 (5.1) and Tav. IX; Hopkins (2016) 66–74; Bradley (2020) 160–6.

<sup>80</sup> Athenaeus 12.512f–513a, from Megakleides (fourth century BC).

<sup>81</sup> See n. 73 above; for the *dies natalis* of a temple cult see for instance Varro *ap.* Nonius 209L (Fors Fortuna), Cic. *Att.* 4.1.4 (Salus).

<sup>82</sup> See n. 71 above, with Liv. 1.34.1 (*uir impiger ac diuitiis potens*), 1.34.11 (*Romanis conspicuum eum nouitas diuitiaequae faciebant*); Zon. 7.8 (*πολλὰ πατρόθεν διαδεξάμενος*).

founders.<sup>83</sup> At Rome in the sixth century BC that would be Evander and his Arcadians, who welcomed Herakles and Leukothea.

The coup that drove out Rome's Corinthian dynasty in about 508 BC, and took the credit for their great Capitoline temple to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva,<sup>84</sup> also succeeded in appropriating their accumulated ancestral treasure.<sup>85</sup> How the new regime used that confiscated wealth is attested both archaeologically and in Dionysius' narrative of new temples built and new sacrifices and festivals publicly funded.<sup>86</sup> New myths would be created, such as Saturn's golden age in Latium and the saving of Rome by Castor and Pollux at Lake Regillus.<sup>87</sup>

#### 4. A Latin Founder

It is important to register the continued 'Greekness' of Rome even after the fall of the Corinthian dynasty. The two goddesses who in 493 BC shared their new temple with Liber (Dionysos) were Demeter and Kore, the law-giving deities (*Thesmophoroi*) honoured in democratic Athens;<sup>88</sup> a generation later, when mortal lawgivers drew up the Twelve Tables, the guidance of Hermodoros of Ephesus was recognised with a statue in the Comitium.<sup>89</sup> In that context Guy Bradley rightly notes that 'Rome was a Hellenised society

<sup>83</sup> Aristophanes *Birds* 904–59; Men. Rhet. 1.353–9, cf. 1.344 (καὶ ποιητὰς καὶ συγγραφέας καὶ ῥήτορας πάντας); ps.-D.H. *On Epideictic speeches* 257; Russell and Wilson (1981) 47–59, 363.

<sup>84</sup> It was dedicated by the *pontifex* M. Horatius (Cic. *Dom.* 139; Val. Max. 5.10.1; Sen. *Consolatio ad Marciam* 13.1–20), supposedly one of the founding consuls of the republic (Pol. 3.22.1; Liv. 2.8.4–8; D.H. *AR* 5.35.3).

<sup>85</sup> Liv. 2.5.1–2; D.H. *AR* 5.5.2–3, 31.3, 32.1–2; see Zevi (2014) 57–62.

<sup>86</sup> Archaeology: Hopkins (2016) 126–52 on the 'continuity of splendour'. See especially D.H. *AR* 6.1.4 (Kronos = Saturn, 501 BC), 6.10.1, 6.17.2, and 6.94.3 (Demeter, Dionysos and Kore = Ceres, Liber and Libera, 493 BC), 6.13.4 (Dioskouroi = Castor and Pollux, 484 BC). The known chronology of the Castor temple encourages trust in the foundation dates given in the literary tradition; for the Ceres-Liber-Libera temple see also Vitruvius 3.3.5 (Etruscan style, terracotta decoration); Plin. *HN* 35.154 (archaic inscription of terracotta artists Damophilos and Gorgasos).

<sup>87</sup> Saturn *latens in Latio*: Virg. *Aen.* 8.319–27; Ov. *Fast.* 1.235–40; Macr. *Sat.* 1.7.19–24; *Origo gentis Romanae* 1.1, 3.1–7. Epiphany of Dioskouroi: D.H. *AR* 6.13.1–4; Val. Max. 1.8.1; Plut. *Cor.* 3.4.

<sup>88</sup> Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusae* 297–8 (εὐχεσθε τῶν Θεσμοφόρων, τῇ Δήμητρι καὶ τῇ Κόρη); D.S. 5.5.2–3. Liber himself was a calque of the Athenian Διόνυσος Ἐλευθερέυς: Alexander Polyhistor *BNJ* 273 F 109 (Plut. *Mor.* 289a = *Quaest. Rom.* 104).

<sup>89</sup> Strabo 14.1.25 C642; Plin. *HN* 34.21; Pomponius in *Digest* 1.2.2.4.

that regularly drew on the cultural experiences of neighbours, particularly the Greek cities of southern Italy'.<sup>90</sup>

In fact, Rome itself could be thought of as a Greek city.<sup>91</sup> Already in the fifth century there were mythographers who said it was founded by Odysseus or Aeneas, contradictory tales combined by Hellanikos into an improbable joint foundation.<sup>92</sup> Aristotle believed the founders were Achaeans, blown off course on the return from Troy with their captured Trojan women.<sup>93</sup> Even if Herakles and Arcadian Euandros had gone out of fashion, Rome's origin was still a part of pan-Hellenic myth.

Romulus, however, is a Latin name, and Bradley is entitled to see Romulus' story as an 'indigenous' myth.<sup>94</sup> The question is, when was it created?<sup>95</sup> As it happens, a quite precise answer can be given, because both the *terminus ante quem* and the *terminus post quem* are datable to the second half of the fourth century BC.

Our earliest evidence for the name comes from the historian Alkimos of Syracuse, one of the sources cited by Verrius Flaccus in the Augustan age for the article 'Roma' in his encyclopaedic work *De uerborum significatu*. The citation survives in Festus' abridgement of Verrius' work:<sup>96</sup>

Alkimos says that Romulus was the son of Aeneas' wife Tyrrhenia, and from Romulus was born Aeneas' granddaughter Alba, whose son, called Rhodius[?], founded the city of Rome.

Verrius Flaccus went on to cite another Syracusan author, from the generation after Alkimos:<sup>97</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Bradley (2020) 256; for archaeological confirmation see Hopkins (2022).

<sup>91</sup> Herakleides of Pontus fr. 102 Wehrli (Plut. *Cam.* 22.2): πόλιν Ἑλληνίδα Ῥώμην.

<sup>92</sup> Hellanikos *BNJ* 4 F 84 (D.H. *AR* 1.72.2). See Fowler (2013) 566: 'both traditions had enough traction in Hellanikos' day to require this construct'.

<sup>93</sup> Arist. fr. 609 Rose (D.H. *AR* 1.72.3–4); according to Kallias of Syracuse *BNJ* 564 F 5 (D.H. *AR* 1.72.5; Festus 329L) the city was named after one of the women.

<sup>94</sup> Bradley (2020) 85, 89; but cf. 99 ('a process of collaboration, the result of interaction between various Mediterranean peoples in the "middle ground" of the central Tyrrhenian').

<sup>95</sup> For the idea that it could date back to the ninth or eighth century BC (Bradley (2020) 88–9), see nn. 56 and 57 above.

<sup>96</sup> *BNJ* 560 F 4 (Festus 326–8L): 'Rhodius' may be a textual error (perhaps for 'Rhomos?').

<sup>97</sup> *BNJ* 564 F 5b (Festus 329L, where Scaliger emended 'Caltinus' to 'Callias' on the strength of D.H. *AR* 1.72.5).

Kallias, the historian of the deeds of Agathokles the Sicilian, thinks that among the band of Trojans who fled when Troy was captured was one called Latinus, and that he had a wife Rhome after whom, when Italy had been occupied, he called the city he founded ‘Rome’.

Dionysius adds that according to Kallias Latinus and Rhome had three sons, Rhomos, Romulus, and Telegonos.<sup>98</sup>

Believing that the Romulus story had already long existed, Bradley has to regard Alkimos’ account as merely a ‘different version of the myth’.<sup>99</sup> But what both the Syracusan authors attest is a Romulus without a twin, who did not found Rome. They provide evidence not for a story, but for a sequence of eponyms.

‘Tyrrhenia’, Aeneas’ wife in Alkimos, was the Greek name for west central Italy;<sup>100</sup> ‘Alba’, daughter of Romulus in Alkimos, was the land overlooked by the *mons Albanus*, federal cult-centre of the Latins;<sup>101</sup> Telegonos, Romulus’ brother in Kallias, was the founder of the Latin city of Tusculum;<sup>102</sup> ‘Latinus’ and ‘Rhome’ are of course self-explanatory. These passages are Romulus’ first appearance in history, and they present him in a conspicuously Latin context. That is easily explicable, but only if we set aside Bradley’s disqualification of myths ‘invented in connection with specific Roman historical events’.

In 338 BC a decisive military victory had given Rome control over the whole of Latium, and in the settlement that followed most of the Latins were incorporated into the Roman citizen body.<sup>103</sup> That would be an appropriate moment for Rome to re-invent its origin story and present a founder with a Latin name.

The victorious consuls held their well-deserved triumphs,<sup>104</sup> and were honoured with a novel accolade, equestrian statues on the Rostra.<sup>105</sup> Pliny

<sup>98</sup> *BNJ* 564 F 5a (D.H. *AR* 1.72.5); for Telegonos, missing in the transmitted text of Dionysius, see Synkellos 227 (Adler and Tuffin (2002) 281).

<sup>99</sup> Bradley (2020) 97; cf. 85 (‘might be taken to indicate Greek ignorance of the story of the twins’).

<sup>100</sup> Not just Etruria: D.H. *AR* 1.25.5, 29.2 (including Latins and Rome); cf. Hes. *Theog.* 1011–16 (*Latinos* as one of the sons of Circe ruling over ‘the famed Tyrrhenians’).

<sup>101</sup> Full details and sources in Grandazzi (2008).

<sup>102</sup> Festus 116L; cf. Hor. *Od.* 3.29.8; Ov. *Fast.* 3.92; Liv. 1.49.9; D.H. *AR* 4.45.1; he was more usually identified as the son of Odysseus and Circe (n. 100 above). Tusculum was incorporated into the Roman state in about 380 BC (Liv. 6.26.8; 8.14.4).

<sup>103</sup> Liv. 8.14.2–4; see Bradley (2020) 303 on this ‘innovative and flexible arrangement’.

<sup>104</sup> *Fasti triumphales* (Degrassi (1947) 541): L. Furius Camillus and C. Maenius, respectively 27 and 29 October.

<sup>105</sup> Liv. 8.13.9 (*additus triumpho honos ut statuae equestres eis, rara illa aetate res, in foro ponerentur*); Eutr. 2.7.3 (*statuae consulibus ob meritum uictoriae in rostris positae sunt*). The Rostra only now

refers to one of them in his treatment of the horse-and-chariot statue groups that portrayed *triumphatores* in later times.<sup>106</sup> Compare that with what Dionysius and Plutarch say about one of Romulus' 'late wars' (section 2 above), against the Latin city of Cameria:<sup>107</sup>

From this campaign [Romulus] celebrated a second triumph, and dedicated to Hephaistos a bronze four-horse chariot from the booty; next to it he erected a statue of himself, with an inscription of his exploits in Greek letters.

Among other booty, he brought from Cameria a bronze four-horse chariot and dedicated it in the shrine of Hephaistos, having had a statue made of himself crowned by Victory.

The shrine of Hephaistos was the Volcanal, in the Comitium next to the Rostra.<sup>108</sup> The parallel of Romulus' triumph with those of 338 BC is unlikely to be a mere coincidence.<sup>109</sup> It is only circumstantial evidence, but good enough to justify a hypothesis: that this was the time when Romulus was created, as a founder and a warrior king.

## 5. Expanding the Hero's Story

So far, there is no sign of a twin brother. The *terminus post quem* for the story of Romulus and Remus depends on a fact not often mentioned, that one of the new temples of post-Tarquin Rome was that of Mercury (Hermes) in the Circus Maximus, dedicated in 495 BC.<sup>110</sup> Its *dies natalis* was the Ides of May,<sup>111</sup> the month named after Mercury's mother,<sup>112</sup> and the Kalends of May

received that name, from the beaks of Antiate ships added to the platform by Maenius (Liv. 8.14.12; Plin. *HN* 34.20; Florus 1.5.10).

<sup>106</sup> Plin. *HN* 34.19–20 (*equestres utique statuæ Romanam celebrationem habent ... unde et nostri currus nati in iis qui triumphauissent*); Maenius' statue is given as an example of *celebratio columnarum*, set on a pillar, but perhaps Furius was portrayed in a *biga* or *quadriga*.

<sup>107</sup> D.H. *AR* 2.54.2; Plut. *Rom.* 24.3; see nn. 29 and 31 above.

<sup>108</sup> D.H. *AR* 7.17.2; 11.39.1; Coarelli (1999). The inscription 'in Greek letters' was probably the archaic inscribed stele discovered in 1899, evidently unintelligible at the time the story was created: see Cornell (1991) 27–30.

<sup>109</sup> Compare Liv. 1.38.4 (Cameria as an *oppidum* of the *prisci Latini*) with Plin. *HN* 34.20 (C. Maenius *cos.* 338 BC, *qui deuicerat priscos Latinos*).

<sup>110</sup> Liv. 2.21.7, 27.5–6 (date); Ov. *Fast.* 5.669–70 (site).

<sup>111</sup> *Fasti Venusini* and *Caeretani* (Degrassi (1963) 57 and 67); Ov. *Fast.* 5.663–70.

<sup>112</sup> Varro *ap.* Censorinus 22.12; Ov. *Fast.* 5.81–104; Plut. *Mor.* 285b (*Quaest. Rom.* 86).



honoured the Lares Praestites, Rome's guardian gods, who were the twin sons of Mercury by Tacita, 'the silent goddess'.<sup>113</sup> Ovid in his calendar poem told the story of their birth in February (nine months later), for the *Feralia* festival.<sup>114</sup>

The relevance of wild beasts (*ferae*) is made clear by the scene on a bronze mirror from the second half of the fourth century BC, which shows the twin boys suckled by a she-wolf and guarded by a lion.<sup>115</sup> The scene is witnessed by Hermes/Mercury with a veiled lady who must be the 'silent goddess', and by Pan Lykaios and Quirinus, whose respective festivals (*Lupercalia* and *Quirinalia*) immediately preceded the *Feralia*. The iconography is unmistakable,<sup>116</sup> and Bradley's assertion that 'despite some doubts, the mirror almost certainly shows the myth of Romulus and Remus' is surely untenable.<sup>117</sup> On the contrary, it attests the pre-existing template from which the tale of Romulus and Remus was created.<sup>118</sup>

How and when was their story first told? If the argument in section 3 above has any validity, we may look to the Roman festivals as the likely scene. In 365 BC the most elaborate of them, the *ludi Romani* in September, had been made the responsibility of a new magistracy, the curule aediles.<sup>119</sup> In 296 BC the curule aediles Gnaeus and Quintus Ogulnius set up at the Lupercal a bronze statue group of 'the founders as infants under the she-wolf's teats'.<sup>120</sup> Perhaps they had just presided over the first presentation of 'one of the most famous myths in history'.<sup>121</sup> Perhaps too (since it was very unusual for two brothers to hold the same magistracy in the same year) the Ogulnii were twins themselves. That can only be speculation, but one thing is certain: when the bronze mirror

<sup>113</sup> *Fasti Venusini* and *Esquilini* (Degrassi (1963) 56–7 and 87); Ov. *Fast.* 5.129–36 and 2.615 (twins). For Tacita see also Plut. *Num.* 8.6 (one of the Camenae?); the *mater Larum* is elsewhere named as Lara or Larunda (Lactantius *Divinae institutiones* 1.20.35) or Mania (Varro *Ling.* 9.61; *Antiquitates divinae* fr. 209 Cardauns; Macr. *Sat.* 1.7.35).

<sup>114</sup> Ov. *Fast.* 2.583–616 (21 February).

<sup>115</sup> Rome, Antiquario comunale inv. MAI 49; Bradley (2020) 95 fig. 3.1; Wiseman (2004) 79–80 with fig. 21, 114–15 with fig. 51.

<sup>116</sup> For the figures' identifying attributes see Athenaeus 12.537f (Hermes and the *πέτασος*); Justin *Epitome* 43.1.7 (Pan Lykaios and the goatskin cape); Ov. *Fast.* 2.477–8 (Quirinus and the spear). The sequence of festivals is 15 February (*Lupercalia*), 17 February (*Quirinalia*), 21 February (*Feralia*), all part of the period of *parentatio* from 13 to 21 February (Ov. *Fast.* 2.533–70, Degrassi (1963) 408–9) when communication was possible with the world of the dead; Mercury fathered the twins in his role as *psychopompos* (Ov. *Fast.* 2.609–14).

<sup>117</sup> Bradley (2020) 95; see Wiseman (2004) 325 for bibliography.

<sup>118</sup> As argued by Schweigler (1853) 432–5, even before the mirror was known.

<sup>119</sup> Liv. 6.42.12–14; 7.1.2; cf. Festus 436L.

<sup>120</sup> Liv. 10.23.12 (*ad ficum Ruminalem simulacra infantium conditorum urbis sub uberibus lupae posuerunt*); D.H. *AR* 1.79.8 (*χαλκᾶ ποιήματα παλαιᾶς ἐργασίας*); represented also on one of the earliest Roman silver coin-issues (Crawford (1974) 137, no. 20).

<sup>121</sup> Bradley (2020) 90.

was engraved (somewhere in the region of 330 BC), the twins suckled by the she-wolf were not Romulus and Remus, founders of Rome; but by 296 BC, they were.

The description of them as *conditores urbis* suggests another *terminus post quem*. Since this tradition of a joint foundation—even a period of joint rule—is well attested,<sup>122</sup> the story of Remus' death, struck by the over-zealous Celer (or Fabius) at the building of the walls, was evidently a later development.<sup>123</sup> There is no need to assume a long time-interval: the next set of curule aediles, or the dedicator of the next new temple, might have good reasons to develop a popular story in a new direction.<sup>124</sup> In this case the gods showed their displeasure at Remus' death by sending a plague,<sup>125</sup> so the context of the new story may have been the great plague of 293 BC.<sup>126</sup>

That hypothesis would help to explain Plutarch's account of Romulus' wars (section 2 above), with its prominent references (*a*) to the *dies natalis* of the temple of Jupiter Victor, dedicated in 295 BC,<sup>127</sup> (*b*) to the *dies natalis* of the temple of Victoria, dedicated in 294 BC,<sup>128</sup> and (*c*) to a portentous and terrifying plague.<sup>129</sup>

## 6. Uniting the Peoples

It seems likely, therefore, that the myth of Romulus, far from existing already in the ninth or eighth century BC, was formed by the invention of successive stories datable to the fourth or early third. It is possible that episodes in the life

<sup>122</sup> Cassius Hemina *FRHist* 6 F 14; Varro *Rust.* 2.pref.4, 1.9; D.S. 37.11.1; Virg. *Aen.* 1.292–3; Prop. 2.1.23; Konon *BNJ* 26 F 1.48.7; Strabo 5.3.2 C229; Plin. *HN* 15.77; Just. *Epit.* 43.3.1; *Origo gentis Romanae* 23.1; Servius on Virg. *Aen.* 6.777; *CIL* 6.33856; Lydus *Mens.* 4.150, *Mag.* 1.3. It is likely to be the original narrative: Wiseman (1995) 5–6.

<sup>123</sup> D.S. 8.6.2–3; D.H. *AR* 1.87.4; Ov. *Fast.* 4.837–57; 5.467–72; Florus 1.1.8; Plut. *Rom.* 10; Festus (Paulus) 48L; Servius on Virg. *Aen.* 11.603; Jer. *Chron.* Ol. 6.3 (Fabius). Later still was the fratricide story, naturally believed in times of civil war: Livy 1.6.4 (*foedum certamen*), 1.7.2 (*uolgatior fama*); cf. Licinius Macer *FRHist* 27 F 3; D.H. *AR* 1.87.1–3; see Bannon (1998) 162–73.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Wiseman (1995) 138 on the nature of non-literary transmission: 'Once a story has been presented to an audience and accepted, it exists in their mind from that moment. If you don't like the story, you can't just say "it isn't true" ... You have to present another story, and get *that* one accepted in the same way.'

<sup>125</sup> Servius on Virg. *Aen.* 1.276 (*Remo scilicet interempto, post cuius mortem natam constat pestilentiam*), 1.292 (*post pestilentiam ad placandos fratris manes geminis omnibus usus est Romulus*).

<sup>126</sup> Livy 10.47.6–7; Ov. *Met.* 15.626–33; Val. Max. 1.8.2; Zon. 8.1.10.

<sup>127</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 23.6, with n. 40 above.

<sup>128</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 24.3, with n. 40 above.

<sup>129</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 24.1, with nn. 34, 35, 46, and 47 above.

of the founder-hero were presented to the citizen audience at each year's *ludi* and progressively developed and reinterpreted in succeeding years. Indeed, the festival context may itself have suggested one famous story: how Romulus set up the first-ever Roman *ludi*, the *Consualia* on 21 August,<sup>130</sup> in order to find women for his new foundation.<sup>131</sup>

When the festival was publicised the neighbouring communities came *en famille* at Romulus' invitation, but had to go home without their daughters. It is doubly misleading to refer to this episode as 'the rape of the Sabine women'. The abduction was very deliberately followed not by rape but by marriage,<sup>132</sup> and the outraged fathers who made war on Rome were the Latins of Caenina, Crustumerium, and Antemnae, followed by the Sabines only after a substantial interval.<sup>133</sup>

Naturally, it was possible to dispute Romulus' motivation. Dionysius summed up what his sources said on the subject:<sup>134</sup>

Some say the reason for the abduction was shortage of women,<sup>135</sup> others that it was an occasion for warfare; but the most plausible writers, with whom I am in agreement, say it was to attach a necessary friendship to the neighbouring communities.

Plutarch made a similar point about the conflicting accounts, but added that Romulus hoped 'to make the injustice a starting-point for a sort of fusion and fellowship with them', and thus 'to unite the peoples and draw them together into one'.<sup>136</sup> That was achieved not only through the marriages themselves but

<sup>130</sup> *Fasti Antiates maiores* (Degrassi (1963) 17); misdated at Plut. *Rom.* 15.5 (n. 36 above).

<sup>131</sup> Cic. *Rep.* 2.12; Liv. 1.9.6; D.H. *AR* 2.31.2; Plut. *Rom.* 14.3, 15.5; Tertullian *De spectaculis* 5.5.

<sup>132</sup> D.H. *AR* 2.30.4 (φυλάττειν ἀγνὰς ἐκείνην τὴν νύκτα), 2.30.5 (οὐκ ἐφ' ὕβρει τῆς ἀρπαγῆς ἀλλ' ἐπὶ γάμῳ γενομένης); Plut. *Rom.* 14.6 (ἄτε δὴ μὴ μεθ' ὕβρεως μηδ' ἀδικίας ἐλθόντας ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρπαγὴν).

<sup>133</sup> Liv. 1.10.2 (*lente agere his Tatius Sabinique uisi sunt*); D.H. *AR* 2.33.1 (τῶν Σαβίνων καὶ ἀναβαλλομένων εἰς χρόνους μακροὺς τὴν περὶ τοῦ πολέμου βουλήν); Plut. *Rom.* 17.1 (ἔτι τῶν ἄλλων Σαβίνων ἐν παρασκευαῖς ὄντων). See above, nn. 26 and 27 (Plutarch added the Latins of Fidenae, Florus added the Etruscans of Veii).

<sup>134</sup> D.H. *AR* 2.31.1: τῆς δὲ ἀρπαγῆς τὴν αἰτίαν οἱ μὲν εἰς σπάνιν γυναικῶν ἀναφέρουσιν, οἱ δ' εἰς ἀφορμὴν πολέμου, οἱ δὲ τὰ πιθανώτατα γράφοντες, οἷς κάγω συγκαταθέμην, εἰς τὸ συνάψαι φιλότητα πρὸς τὰς πλησιοχώρους πόλεις ἀναγκαίαν.

<sup>135</sup> As in Liv. 1.9.1 (*penuria mulierum*).

<sup>136</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 14.2 (τρόπον τινὰ συγκράσεως καὶ κοινωνίας ἀρχὴν αὐτοῖς τὸ ἀδίκημα ποιῆσειν), 14.6 (συμμίξει καὶ συναγαγεῖν εἰς ταῦτ' οὗτ' ἀδίκημα), whence *Comp. Thes. Rom.* 6.2 (εἰς κοινωνίαν) and 6.3 (συνέμιξεν ἀλλήλοις καὶ συνέπηξε τὰ γένη).

also by the way Romulus treated the Latin communities after defeating them in war.

The narratives of Livy, Dionysius, and Plutarch, though differing in detail, all report that the three Latin communities were granted Roman citizenship, and that there were deliberate exchanges of population as Roman colonists settled in the Latin territories and Latins were encouraged to migrate to Rome.<sup>137</sup> But only Plutarch drew attention to the historical significance of the events:<sup>138</sup>

It was this more than anything else that made Rome great, always incorporating those she conquered and making them her partners.

That must refer in the first instance to the incorporation of the Latins in 338 BC,<sup>139</sup> a settlement in which *conubium* and the *ius migrationis* were an important constituent part.

The subsequent war with the Sabines ended not with a Roman victory but with a peace treaty: the two kings ‘came together’ at the *comitium* (hence the name),<sup>140</sup> and the two peoples were ‘mixed together’ in a purification ceremony at the shrine of Venus Cloacina on the Sacra Via.<sup>141</sup> The Sabines became Roman citizens, and the entire citizen body was renamed *Quirites* after Cures, their principal town.<sup>142</sup> But it happens to be recorded that they were *ciues sine suffragio*, and that unexpected datum enables the creation of the story to be precisely dated.<sup>143</sup>

If it is acceptable to suppose that what happens in the fictional world of myth may mirror what happened in the real world of history, we must

<sup>137</sup> Liv. 1.11.2 (Caenina and Antemnae), 1.11.4 (Antemnae and Crustumerium); D.H. *AR* 2.35.5–6 (Caenina and Antemnae), 2.36.1 (Crustumerium); Plut. *Rom.* 16.4 (Caenina), 17.1 (Fidenae, Crustumerium, and Antemnae).

<sup>138</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 15.5: *τούτου μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν ὃ τι μᾶλλον ἠΐξῃσε τὴν Ῥώμην, ἀεὶ προσποιούσαν ἑαυτῇ καὶ συννέμουσαν ὧν κρατήσειεν.*

<sup>139</sup> Cic. *Balb.* 31 (drawing the parallel with Romulus); Liv. 8.14.1–9; see Oakley (1998) 538–44.

<sup>140</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 19.7; Dio 1.7; cf. also D.H. *AR* 2.45.6 (*συνελθόντας*), 2.46.1 (*συνελθόντων*).

<sup>141</sup> D.H. *AR* 2.46.3 (*κατὰ μέσσην μάλιστα τὴν καλουμένην ἱερὰν ὁδὸν συνεκεράσθησαν ἀλλήλοις*); Plin. *HN* 15.119 (*quippe ita traditur myrtea uerbena Romano Sabinosque, cum propter raptas uirgines dimicare uoluissent, depositis armis purgatos in eo loco qui nunc signa Veneris Cloacinae habet*); see Coarelli (1983) 84–5.

<sup>142</sup> Varro *Ling.* 6.68; Liv. 1.13.5; D.H. *AR* 2.4.2; Plut. *Rom.* 19.7; *Num.* 3.4; Servius on Virg. *Aen.* 7.710.

<sup>143</sup> Servius on Virg. *Aen.* 7.709 (*post Sabinarum raptum et factum inter Romulum et Tatium foedus recepti in urbem Sabini sunt, sed hac lege, ut in omnibus essent ciues Romani excepta suffragii latio; nam magistratus non creabant*); see Mommsen (1886) 580–1. Where Servius found that item is unknown, but his source must have had a reason to be so specific.

remember the conquest of the highland Sabines by Manius Curius, one of the consuls of 290 BC, which brought a vast area of territory under Roman control. The inhabitants were given the Roman citizenship *sine suffragio*, and since they were granted voting rights twenty-two years later, the invention of Romulus' Sabine war can be attributed with confidence to the period 290–268 BC.<sup>144</sup>

That fits well with the hypothesis proposed in section 2 above, that some of the details in Plutarch's life of Romulus imply the use of a narrative source with a particular interest in the events of the 290s BC. Such a source could also account for the way Plutarch, unlike Livy and Dionysius, noted the historical significance of Romulus' incorporation of ex-enemies into the Roman state.<sup>145</sup> If the particular nature of Plutarch's account is the result of his wider and more idiosyncratic reading (as argued in section 1 above), this extra dimension of understanding may derive from a narrative source that was close to the time but not used by either Livy or Dionysius.

## 7. Contemporary Evidence

We cannot know what that source was, thanks to the total absence of contemporary written evidence. What went on at the Roman festivals from the sixth century BC to the mid-third was evidently not recorded, and is therefore unknown to us. On the other hand, contemporary visual evidence does exist, and it presupposes an audience with a quite sophisticated knowledge of Greek culture, including drama and philosophy.

Thanks to the thoroughly documented work of vase-painters in Apulia, Lucania, Campania, and Etruria,<sup>146</sup> and the less well-known but equally important output of bronze-engravers in Etruria and Latium,<sup>147</sup> the cultural world of fourth-century BC Italy is astonishingly well illustrated. For Rome in particular, the so-called 'Praenestine' bronze caskets from the second half of

<sup>144</sup> Vell. Pat. 1.14.6 (*M. Curio et Rufino Cornelio consulibus Sabinis sine suffragio data ciuitas*), 1.14.7 (*Sempronio Sopho et Appio Caeci filio consulibus ... suffragii ferendi ius Sabinis datum*); for the nature of *ciuitas sine suffragio* see Oakley (1998) 544–54.

<sup>145</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 14.2, 14.6, 15.5 (nn. 136 and 138 above).

<sup>146</sup> South Italy and Sicily: Trendall (1987) and (1989). Etruria: Beazley (1947).

<sup>147</sup> Etruria: Beazley (1949). Latium: Bordenache Battaglia and Emiliozzi (1979) and (1990). Bronzes, always subject to melting down for re-use, survive less well than pottery.

the fourth century are especially valuable.<sup>148</sup> The most famous of them, the ‘Ficoroni *cista*’, was signed ‘made in Rome’ by its maker, Novios Plautios.<sup>149</sup>

The frieze around the body of the casket depicts an episode from the story of the Argonauts: the binding of Amykos, king of the Bebrykes, after his defeat by Polydeukes in a boxing match. That was the version of the story dramatised by the Syracusan playwright Epicharmos in the early fifth century BC, and later by Sophocles in an Athenian satyr-play.<sup>150</sup> Since Novios Plautios centred his Argonauts scene on old Silenos and put Dionysos and the satyrs on the lid of the *cista*,<sup>151</sup> it seems clear that he knew the story from the stage. Another *cista* even shows a staged scene, with satyrs piping and dancing as Iphigeneia undresses for her sacrifice at Aulis.<sup>152</sup>

That sort of treatment was probably what Rhinthon, another Syracusan dramatist, was producing in Taras in the early third century BC: it was known variously as ‘Italian comedy’, ‘foolery’ (*phlyax*), or ‘cheerful tragedy’, and it ‘transformed tragic themes into the laughable’.<sup>153</sup> *Rhinthonica fabula* was a comic genre familiar in Rome,<sup>154</sup> and one of the other known practitioners, Blaisos of Capri, wrote a play entitled *Satourmos*, using the Latin name of the god who

<sup>148</sup> See Pairault Massa (1992) 139–75, Menichetti (1995), Wiseman (2004) 87–114, Coarelli (2011) 207–29; noticed only in passing by Bradley (2020) 357. Provenance from burials discovered at Palestrina is evidently because Praeneste, unusually for Latium at this period, allowed the burial of precious objects with the dead; it is not evidence for where they were manufactured (Coarelli (2011) 200).

<sup>149</sup> Bordenache Battaglia and Emiliozzi (1990) 211–25, no. 68 (Rome, Villa Giulia inv. 24787); *ILLRP* 1197 (*Novios Plautios med Romai fecid | Dindia Macolnia fileai dedit*); Wiseman (2004) 89–97, Coarelli (2011) 207–18.

<sup>150</sup> Scholiast to Apollonius Rhodius 2.98 (Ἀπολλώνιος μὲν ἐμφαίνει ὡς ἀνηρημένον τὸν Ἄμυκον, Ἐπίχαρμος δὲ καὶ Πείσανδρος φασι ὅτι ἔδησεν αὐτὸν ὁ Πολυδεύκης); Athenaeus 3.94e, 9.400b (Sophocles); *Anthologia Palatina* 7.82 (Epicharmus as a ‘champion of Dionysos and the satyrs’). See Shaw (2014) 61–2, who was evidently unaware of the evidence of the *cista*.

<sup>151</sup> Wiseman (2004) 91–3, figs. 23 and 25.

<sup>152</sup> Bordenache Battaglia and Emiliozzi (1990) 273–7, no. 82 (Rome, Villa Giulia inv. 13134); Menichetti (1995) 65–7, Wiseman (2015) 33 and 38–9, fig. 14. For the ‘stage-set’ window indicating a theatrical setting, as on contemporary Italian red-figure vases, compare Todisco (2020) 156 fig. 52, 161 fig. 62, 162 fig. 64.

<sup>153</sup> Athenaeus 9.402b (τῆς Ἰταλικῆς καλουμένης κωμωδίας); *Suda* P 171 = 4.295 Adler (Ῥίνθων, Ταραντίνος κωμικός, ἀρχηγὸς τῆς καλουμένης ἰλαροτραγωδίας, ὃ ἐστὶ φλυακογραφία); Stephanus Byzantinus 603.1 (Ῥίνθων, Ταραντίνος φλύαξ, τὰ τραγικὰ μεταρρυθμίζων ἐς τὸ γελοῖον).

<sup>154</sup> Donatus *De comoedia* 6.1 (Kaibel (1899) 68); Euanthius *De fabula* 4.1 (Kaibel (1899) 66); Lydus *Mag.* 1.40–1.

gave Latium its identity as *Saturnia terra*.<sup>155</sup> Saturn's temple had stood on the slope of the Capitol in Rome for two hundred years,<sup>156</sup> its festival one of the most celebrated in the Roman calendar;<sup>157</sup> the metre of archaic Roman poetry was called 'Saturnian', because 'it was used by the ancient Latins of the Golden Age under Saturn, after whom it is named'.<sup>158</sup>

Like Epicharmos two centuries before, Rhinthon and Blaisos were teachers of Pythagoreanism.<sup>159</sup> According to Epicharmos the Romans made Pythagoras an honorary citizen, presumably after the expulsion of the Tarquins;<sup>160</sup> by Rhinthon's time he had a statue in the Comitium, erected after Apollo at Delphi had told the Romans to honour 'the wisest of the Greeks'.<sup>161</sup> His teachings were evidently commended by Ap. Claudius Caecus (consul in 307 and 296 BC) in a poem recognised by Cicero as Pythagorean.<sup>162</sup>

The material is scattered and fragmentary, but what it implies is undeniable: Rome in the period under discussion (338–290 BC) was still an integral part of Greek culture, as it had been in the time of Corinthian Lucumo. What makes modern understanding of the period difficult is that Romans were not yet in the habit of recording the words of poets and storytellers on papyrus. The earliest date for a Roman literary *text* was established

<sup>155</sup> Stephanus Byzantinus 357.1 (Βλαῖσος σπουδογελοίων ποιητῆς Καπριάτης); Athenaeus 11.487c. *Saturnia terra*: Varro *Ling.* 5.42. *Latium* from *latere* (Saturn in hiding after the defeat of the Titans); Virg. *Aen.* 8.322–3; Ov. *Fast.* 1.235–8.

<sup>156</sup> Dated variously to 501, 498, or 497 BC: Gellius *FRHist* 14 F 27; Varro *Ant. diu.* fr. 73 Cardauns; Livy 2.21.2; D.H. *AR* 6.1.4; cf. Hopkins (2016) 143 on the archaeological evidence.

<sup>157</sup> D.H. *AR* 6.1.4 (δημοτελεῖς ἀναδειχθῆναι τῷ θεῷ καθ' ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτὸν ἑορτὰς τε καὶ θυσίας); for the *Saturnalia* festival in general see Macrobius *Sat.* 1.7.18–37.

<sup>158</sup> Porphyrio on Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.157: *Saturnio metro usi sunt Latini ueteres aurei s<aeculi> sub Saturno, unde nomen est uersus.*

<sup>159</sup> Lydus *Mag.* 1.41: Ῥίνθωνα καὶ Σκίραν καὶ Βλαῖσον καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τῶν Πυθαγορείων ἴσμεν οὐ μικρῶν διδαγμάτων ἐπὶ τῆς μεγάλης Ἑλλάδος γενέσθαι καθηγητάς. For Epicharmos as an ἀκροατής of Pythagoras see Iamblichus *Vita Pythagorica* 266 and Diogenes Laertius 8.78; other evidence that dates him to the 480s BC is not incompatible, since he lived to the age of ninety.

<sup>160</sup> Plut. *Num.* 8.9 (Πυθαγόραν Ῥωμαῖοι τῇ πολιτείᾳ προσέγραψαν, ὡς ἰστόρηκεν Ἐπίχαρμος ὁ κωμικὸς ἐν τινι λόγῳ πρὸς Ἀντήνορα γεγραμμένῳ, παλαιὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ τῆς Πυθαγορικῆς διατριβῆς μετεσχηκῶς); the authenticity of the reference is often doubted, but for no good reason. For Romans among Pythagoras' disciples see Aristoxenus fr. 17 Wehrli (Porphyry *Vita Pythagorae* 22); Diog. Laert. 8.14; Iamblichus *Vita Pythagorica* 34.241.

<sup>161</sup> Plin. *HN* 34.26; Plut. *Num.* 8.10; see Volk (2016) 39.

<sup>162</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* 4.4: *mihī quidem etiam Appii Caeci carmen, quod ualde Panaetius laudat epistola quadam quae est ad Q. Tuberonem, Pythagoreum uidetur.* For the context (music at festivals) see Volk (2016) 38.

by Cicero's learned friend Atticus, who found documentation of a play produced by Livius Andronicus at the *ludi Romani* of 240 BC.<sup>163</sup>

That could be taken to mean two quite different things: either that there was no previous Roman literature ('we Romans came late to poetry'), or that there was, but it was not recorded ('where are those old songs of ours?').<sup>164</sup> Varro and Livy both took the former view, treating Livius in 240 BC as the start of Roman literary culture.<sup>165</sup> Not unnaturally, modern scholarship has accepted their authority, with far-reaching consequences for our understanding of the Roman world. But what if Livius in 240 BC was only the start of *recorded* Roman literary culture?

### 8. Plutarch's Perspective

Just as Rome was a Greek city for Herakleides of Pontus in the mid-fourth century BC, so for Callimachus a century later Rome was a part of pan-Hellas.<sup>166</sup> There is good third-century evidence for Greeks in the audience at the *ludi Romani*,<sup>167</sup> and that may well have been the case from the very beginning. It should not be a surprise that the first known narrative of what became the canonical Roman foundation-legend was written by a Greek author.<sup>168</sup>

Festivals like the *ludi Romani* attracted story-tellers in prose as well as poets and stage performers.<sup>169</sup> Remember Theopompos of Chios, prolific historian, mythographer, and epideictic orator, of whom it was said that 'there is no public place and no Greek city of any note where he didn't go in person to

<sup>163</sup> Atticus *FRHist* 33 F 6 = Cic. *Brut.* 72 (*et Atticus scribit et nos in antiquis commentariis inuenimus*); Cassiodorus *Chronica* 316 Mommsen (*ludis Romanis*).

<sup>164</sup> Respectively Cic. *Tusc.* 1.3 (*serius poeticam nos accepimus*), *Brut.* 71 (*quid, nostri ueteres uersus ubi sunt?*).

<sup>165</sup> Varro fr. 301 Funaioli = Aulus Gellius 17.21.42 (*primus omnium L. Liuius poeta fabulas docere Romae coepit*); Liv. 7.2.8 (*Liuius ... ausus est primus argumento fabulam serere*).

<sup>166</sup> See above, n. 91; Callimachus *Aitia* fr. 106 Pf (Πανελλάδος, exemplified by 'Gaius the Roman'); cf. also Strabo 5.3.5 C232 (Demetrius Poliorketes on the Romans' *προς τοὺς Ἕλληνας συγγένεια*).

<sup>167</sup> Eutropius 3.1.2 (Hiero of Syracuse, 240 BC); cf. Fabius Pictor *FRHist* 1 F 15 = D.H. *AR* 7.72.1 (*ἵνα φανερὰ γίνοιτο τοῖς ξένοις ...*).

<sup>168</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 3.1, 8.7 (quoted below). According to Bradley (2020) 98, 'this implies that Diocles had a detailed knowledge of what the Romans themselves thought'; but since Plutarch insisted on Diokles' primacy, the default position should be that he was the originator of the story.

<sup>169</sup> See above, nn. 72 and 83.



perform as a speaker and leave a great reputation for his eloquence'.<sup>170</sup> He was certainly interested in Rome and central Italy,<sup>171</sup> and after 338 BC the new regional centre of power might have been an attractive place to go.

However, it was a less famous practitioner who gave Plutarch the story of the birth, rescue, and upbringing of Romulus and Remus:<sup>172</sup>

The most trustworthy and best attested account, in its essentials (for there are also some variants), was first published in Greek by Diokles of Peparethos, whom Fabius Pictor followed on most points.

The long and elaborate narrative that follows culminated in a complex plot involving an Aristotelian 'recognition by external signs', the sign in this case being a hollow vessel (*σκάφη*), as in Sophocles' tragedy *Tyros*.<sup>173</sup> As the 'Ficoronista' shows,<sup>174</sup> Sophoclean plots in one form or another would not be beyond the experience of a Roman audience in the late fourth or early third century BC.

Plutarch himself, with his wide and varied reading, was well aware of the sort of material he was dealing with:<sup>175</sup>

Most of the above is what is said by Fabius and by Diokles of Peparethos, who seems to have been the first to publish a Roman foundation-story. Some people are suspicious of its theatrical and fictitious nature, but we ought not to doubt the fortunate outcome when we observe what plots the Creator composes.

<sup>170</sup> *BNJ* 115 F 25 (Photius *Bibliotheca* 121a): οὐδείς ἐστι τόπος κοινὸς τῶν Ἑλλήνων οὐδὲ πόλις ἀξιοχρεως, εἰς οὓς αὐτὸς οὐκ ἐπιδημῶν καὶ τὰς τῶν λόγων ἐπιδείξεις ποιούμενος οὐχὶ μέγα κλέος καὶ ὑπόμνημα τῆς ἐν λόγοις αὐτοῦ κατέλιπεν ἀρετῆς. Mythographer: *BNJ* 115 F 381 (Strabo 1.2.35 C43); Cic. *Leg.* 1.5.

<sup>171</sup> *BNJ* 115 F 204 (Athenaeus 12.517d–518b) on Tyrrhenian luxury, F 317 (Plin. *HN* 3.57) on Rome taken by the Gauls.

<sup>172</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 3.1: τοῦ δὲ πίστιν ἔχοντος λόγου μάλιστα καὶ πλείστους μάρτυρας τὰ μὲν κυριώτατα πρῶτος εἰς Ἑλληνας ἐξέδωκε Διοκλῆς Πεπαρήθιος, ᾧ καὶ Φάβιος ὁ Πίκτωρ ἐν τῆς πλείστοις ἐπηκολούθηκε. γεγόνασι δὲ καὶ περὶ τούτων ἕτεροι διαφοραί. Diokles *BNJ* 820 F 1; Fabius Pictor *FRHist* 1 F 4a (D.H. *AR* 1.75.4–83.3), 4b (Plut. *Rom.* 3.1–4.3, 6.1–8.6), 4c (*Origo gentis Romanae* 20).

<sup>173</sup> In which the infant twins were exposed: Plut. *Rom.* 3.4–5, 7.6, 8.1–2; D.H. *AR* 1.79.5, 82.3–5; Arist. *Poet.* 1454b25 (οἶον ἐν τῇ Τυροῖ διὰ τῆς σκάφης).

<sup>174</sup> See above, nn. 149 and 150.

<sup>175</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 8.7: ὧν τὰ πλείστα καὶ Φαβίου λέγοντος καὶ τοῦ Πεπαρηθίου Διοκλέους, ὃς δοκεῖ πρῶτος ἐκδοῦναι Ῥώμης κτίσιν, ὑποπτον μὲν ἐνίοις ἐστὶ τὸ δραματικὸν καὶ πλασματώδες, οὐ δεῖ δ' ἀπιστεῖν τὴν τύχην ὀρῶντας οἷων ποιημάτων δημιουργός ἐστι. Plutarch explains the *τύχη* at *De fort. Rom.* 8 (*Mor.* 320b–321b); for his motivation here see Pelling (2002) 148–9, 185–6.

That philosophical tolerance of dramatic story-telling was very characteristic. Plutarch was a connoisseur of performance in prose and verse at the great festivals,<sup>176</sup> and in his own writing he had an audience in mind as much as readers.<sup>177</sup> It came naturally to him to treat historical narratives as theatrical spectacle and historical characters as actors on a stage.<sup>178</sup> So Diokles' 'theatrical' narrative was not in itself a demerit; on the contrary, it was worth reproducing in detail over several pages.

Stage plays themselves had to be treated more cautiously. In the paired lives of Theseus and Romulus Plutarch made it clear from the start that he was 'purifying' myth, making it submit to reason by picking out 'what has been said that is least like tragedy'.<sup>179</sup> In *Theseus* especially, the truth-claims of tragic drama were repeatedly tested. On Minos of Crete, for example:<sup>180</sup>

Minos always ended up being slandered and abused in the theatres of Athens. It did him no good to be called 'most kingly' by Hesiod and 'close friend of Zeus' by Homer: the tragic poets had the last word, scattering from lectern and stage his bad repute as a harsh and violent man.

Or on Phaedra:<sup>181</sup>

Concerning the unfortunate history of Phaedra and Theseus' son, since there is no conflict between the historians and the tragic poets, we must assume that it happened as all of them have represented it.

<sup>176</sup> See for instance *Quaest. conv.* 638b and 674d–f on competitions at the Pythian games.

<sup>177</sup> As at the very start of the *Theseus-Romulus* pair (*Thes.* 1.3): *εὐγνωμόνων ἀκροατῶν δεησόμεθα*. Cf. Pelling (2002) 387: 'Plutarch is a highly dramatic writer, with strong visual scenes and tense personal encounters, and many of his scenes might already seem shaped for the theatre'.

<sup>178</sup> For some conspicuous examples see *Plut. Lys.* 23.4, 26.4; *Comp. Ages. Pomp.* 4.4; *Demetr.* 28.1, 53.4. He could also criticise the practice: cf. *Plut. Per.* 28.1 (*Δούρις ὁ Σάμιος τούτους ἐπιτραγωδεῖ*).

<sup>179</sup> *Plut. Rom.* 1.3 (*ἐκκαθαίρομενον λόγῳ τὸ μυθῶδες ὑπακούσαι*), 2.2 (*τῶν ἤκιστα τραγικῶς εἰρησθαι δοκοῦντων*).

<sup>180</sup> *Plut. Rom.* 16.3: *καὶ γὰρ ὁ Μίνως αἰεὶ διετέλει κακῶς ἀκούων καὶ λοιδορούμενος ἐν τοῖς Ἀττικοῖς θεάτροις, καὶ οὔτε Ἡσίοδος αὐτὸν ὠνεῖ βασιλεύτατον οὔτε Ὀμηρος ὀαριστὴν Διὸς προσαγορεύσας, ἀλλ' ἐπικρατήσαντες οἱ τραγικοὶ πολλὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ λογιῶν καὶ τῆς σκηνῆς ἀδοξίαν αὐτοῦ κατεσκεδάσαν ὡς χαλεποῦ καὶ βιαίου γενομένου*.

<sup>181</sup> *Plut. Rom.* 28.2: *τὰς δὲ περὶ ταύτην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ δυστυχίας, ἐπεὶ μηδὲν ἀντιπίπτει παρὰ τῶν ἱστορικῶν τοῖς τραγικοῖς, οὕτως ἔχειν θετέον ὡς ἐκείνοι πεποιήκασιν ἅπαντες*.

Of course one trusted the historians more, but what the dramatists said was also worth considering.<sup>182</sup> In the *Romulus* he had no drama to use,<sup>183</sup> but at least he could cite Greek aetiological poetry on the subject.<sup>184</sup>

Plutarch himself had probably organised festivals, as wealthy and distinguished citizens were expected to do.<sup>185</sup> He must have understood very well the respective roles of impresario, performers, and audience in providing the necessary combination of entertainment and educational content. In all periods and in all places, since only a minority of the population was literate, festivals were an important part of popular education.<sup>186</sup> Already in his life of Numa, written before the *Theseus–Romulus* pair,<sup>187</sup> Plutarch had made a particular point of that.

Putting his Pythagoreanism into practice, Numa ‘attracted the people with sacrifices and processions and choral dancing’.<sup>188</sup> What matters in this context is that the impresario chose the content of the performance:<sup>189</sup>

Numa’s drama was the love of a certain goddess or mountain nymph and her secret intercourse with him, and his familiar conversations with the Muses.

The result was what he intended:<sup>190</sup>

As a result of such instruction about the divine world, the city became so manageable and so much in awe of Numa’s power that it accepted

<sup>182</sup> Interestingly, he mentions the epic *Thebais* only to dismiss it as obvious fiction: Plut. *Rom.* 28.1 (περιφανῶς ἔοικε μύθῳ καὶ πλάσματι).

<sup>183</sup> He was evidently unaware of Naevius’ *Romulus* and Ennius’ *Sabinae* (Manuwald (2001) 141–61, 172–9).

<sup>184</sup> Plut. *Rom.* 17.5 (Σιμόλος ὁ ποιητής), 21.6 (Βούτας τις αἰτίας μυθώδεις ἐν ἐλεγείοις περὶ τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν ἀναγράφων); these two elegiac poets are not attested elsewhere.

<sup>185</sup> See Jones (1971) 39–43 on the social standing of Plutarch and his friends.

<sup>186</sup> Including republican Rome: Cic. *Planc.* 59 (educational aim of tragedy); *Leg.* 1.47 (*scaena* as part of what forms the mind); *Rab. Post.* 29 (*ut discamus*); Varro *Ling.* 6.18 (*docuit populum*); cf. n. 72 above.

<sup>187</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 1.2.

<sup>188</sup> Plut. *Num.* 8.3 (θυσίαις καὶ πομπαῖς καὶ χορείαις ... δημαγωγῶν), with 8.4–5 on Pythagoras.

<sup>189</sup> Plut. *Num.* 8.6: τῷ δὲ Νομᾷ δρᾶμα θεᾶς τινος ἢ νύμφης ὀρείας ἔρωσ ἦν καὶ συνουσία πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀπόρρητος ... καὶ κοινὰ μετὰ Μουσῶν διατριβαί. For Egeria as one of the Camenae (the Latin Muses) see D.H. *AR* 2.60.5; Ov. *Met.* 15.482; *Fast.* 3.275–6; Juv. 3.16–17.

<sup>190</sup> Plut. *Num.* 15.1: ἐκ δὲ τῆς τοιαύτης παιδαγωγίας πρὸς τὸ θεῖον οὕτως ἡ πόλις ἐγεγόνει χειροῆθης καὶ κατατεταμβημένη τὴν τοῦ Νομᾶ δύναμιν, ὥστε μύθοις ἑοικότας τὴν ἀτοπίαν λόγους παραδέχεσθαι, καὶ νομίζειν μηδὲν ἄπιστον εἶναι μηδὲ ἀμήχανον ἐκείνου βουλευθέντος.

what he said, strange and myth-like as it was, and believed that nothing was incredible or impossible if he wished it to be so.

It is a precise description, by an author very well qualified to know, of how myths could be created in the ancient world.

### 9. Rome before the Culture Wars

That may help a little with the question of Plutarch's unnamed source on Romulus' wars, who drew attention to the dates of temples vowed and/or dedicated in the years 295–293 BC (section 2 above), and was aware of Rome's generous policy of enfranchising her ex-enemies. Whether in prose or verse, in Latin or Greek, the text Plutarch used was probably first composed for delivery at one of the Roman festivals.<sup>191</sup> But there is also a wider consequence to consider.

Festivals, and the story-tellers, praise-singers, and re-enactors who performed there, were a large part of what defined Greek culture, right through the archaic, classical, and Hellenistic periods down to the time of the 'Second Sophistic' when Plutarch was writing. That early Rome was a part of that culture has become clear only in the last thirty years or so, as a result of intensive work on the archaeological evidence.<sup>192</sup> The architecture of stone-built temples, the iconography of their terracotta decoration and the import of Corinthian and Athenian painted pottery have all provided new information with important historical and historiographical consequences.

Firstly, the sheer scale of the sixth- and fifth-century temple foundations contradicts the firmly-held view of later Romans that their city had grown from very humble beginnings,<sup>193</sup> and that 'in the time of the kings all religious buildings were constructed on a small scale'.<sup>194</sup> Secondly, the datable remains of identifiable temples, particularly those of Castor and Capitoline Jupiter, imply that later Roman authors had reassuringly reliable evidence for early temple-foundation dates. Thirdly, there is now no need to doubt the historicity of Lucumo son of Demaratos,<sup>195</sup> or his foundation of the 'great games' and the

<sup>191</sup> The unknown author was familiar with Roman calendar dates (n. 37 above).

<sup>192</sup> The catalyst was Cristofani (1990), a revelatory exhibition in Rome; see Hopkins (2016) and Winter (2009) for excellent syntheses on architecture and its terracotta decoration.

<sup>193</sup> See for instance Cic. *Cael.* 39 (*eos qui haec ex minimis tanta fecerunt*); Sall. *Cat.* 51.42 (*qui ex parvis opibus tantum imperium fecere*), 52.19 (*rem publicam ex parua magnam fecisse*); Liv. *pref.* 4 (*ab exiguis profecta initiis*); Suet. *Aug.* 31.5 (*qui imperium p.R. ex minimo maximum reddidissent*).

<sup>194</sup> Varro *De uita populi Romani* fr. 8 Pittà (Nonius 792L): *omnia regis temporibus delubra parua facta*.

<sup>195</sup> See n. 64 above.

Circus Maximus fairground (section 3 above). And that in turn means that Dionysius' reports of lavish 'festivals and sacrifices' instituted after the expulsion of the Tarquins may be based on authentic information.<sup>196</sup>

This new insight into the culture of early-republican Rome, coupled with the evidence, no longer baffling, for perceptions of Rome as a Greek city, also illuminates the surviving visual evidence for Rome in the fourth century BC (section 7 above). It proves that Horace was quite wrong to say that 'Romans were late in applying their sharp wits to Greek writings, and only in the peace after the Punic wars began to ask what use Sophocles and Thespis and Aeschylus could be to them'.<sup>197</sup> On the contrary, the bronze-engraver Novios Plautios had illustrated the plot of a Sophoclean satyr-play in Rome about 330 BC.<sup>198</sup>

However, Horace was not being deliberately paradoxical; what he said was what people in his time were likely to believe. So the new perspective has raised a new question: how did later Romans come to forget the cultural Greekness of their city?

The most likely answer is that Rome's wars with Philip V (200–197 BC) and Antiochus III (191–188) created a climate of hostility to Greek culture, exemplified by three unprecedented developments. In 186 BC the Senate decided that Dionysiac worship ('Bacchanalia') was an alien import, and instructed the consuls to eradicate it.<sup>199</sup> Marcus Cato as censor in 184–183 BC, attacking the luxurious life-style of the Roman aristocracy, evidently blamed it on the influence of Greek culture.<sup>200</sup> Numa's Pythagorean writings, discovered in 181 BC, were burnt by the urban praetor on the Senate's authority 'because it was not appropriate that they should be read and preserved'.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>196</sup> D.H. *AR* 5.36.4 (θυσίας ἀπέδωσαν τοῖς θεοῖς ἀπὸ χρημάτων πολλῶν, 506 BC); 6.1.4 (δημοτελεῖς ἀναδειχθῆναι ... ἑορτὰς τε καὶ θυσίας, 497 BC), 6.10.1 (θυσίας τε μεγάλας ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἐπιτελέσειν χρημάτων καὶ ἀγῶνας καταστήσασθαι πολυτελεῖς, 496 BC), 6.13.4 (θυσῖαι τε πολυτελεῖς, 496 BC), 6.17.2 (ἀγῶνάς τε καὶ θυσίας τοῖς θεοῖς ἀπὸ τετταράκοντα ταλάντων, 496 BC), 7.71.2 (ἀναλοῦσθαι δ' ἕταξε καθ' ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτὸν εἰς τε τὰς θυσίας καὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας ἀργυρίου πεντακοσίας μνᾶς, 490 BC).

<sup>197</sup> Hor. *Ep.* 2.2.161–3: *serus enim Graecis admouit acumina chartis | et post Punica bella quietus quaerere coepit | quid Sophocles et Thespis et Aeschylus utile ferrent.*

<sup>198</sup> See above, nn. 149, 150, and 151.

<sup>199</sup> Liv. 39.8–19, esp. 15.3 (*prauis et externis religionibus*), 16.8 (*magistratibus negotium est datum uti sacra externa fieri uetarent*). The god's traditional *Liberalia* festival continued, but evidently in a bowdlerised form: Ov. *Fast.* 3.738 (no unwelcome *ioci*), 3.785–6 (*ludi* now shared with those of Ceres).

<sup>200</sup> Cato *ap.* Plin. *HN* 29.14: *quandoque ista gens suas litteras dabit, omnia corrumpet.*

<sup>201</sup> Cassius Hemina *FRHist* 5 F 35 = Plin. *HN* 13.86 (*in his libris scripta erant philosophiae Pythagoricae*); Liv. 40.29.12 (*legi seruariae non oportere*).

The later sense of Roman exceptionalism, memorably expressed by Anchises in *Aeneid* 6,<sup>202</sup> probably dated from these ‘culture wars’ in the 180s.

Not everyone shared this hellenophobic attitude. A Roman senator called Gaius Acilius, active in the mid-second century BC, wrote a history of Rome in Greek (used by Plutarch) in which he inferred from the traditional Greek rites at the *ara maxima* of Hercules that Rome itself had been a Greek foundation.<sup>203</sup> Over a century later Dionysius of Halicarnassus designed his own long history of early Rome to demonstrate that the Romans were originally Greek.<sup>204</sup> By then, however, it had become a paradoxical idea: Livy and Virgil had already made canonical the story of the Romans’ Trojan origins, via the supposed Latin city of Alba Longa, on which the divine ancestry of the Caesars depended.

Nevertheless, Dionysius had good evidence, and it was precisely a festival that provided it. Having reported an ill-omened event in 490 BC that required the repetition of the ‘great games’ for Jupiter,<sup>205</sup> he announced a formal digression:<sup>206</sup>

Since I have reached this point in my history, I think I should not pass over the rituals performed by them at this festival. It is not to make my narrative more attractive by adding theatrical elements and flowery descriptions, but to prove one of its essential points: that the peoples who joined in the settlement of the city of Rome were Greek. [...] I shall take my evidence from the time when the Romans did not yet have dominance over Greece or any other overseas territory, using Quintus Fabius as my authority without the need for any other testimony. For he was the earliest of those who wrote the history of Rome, and the

<sup>202</sup> Virg. *Aen.* 6.847–53: ‘*excudent alii ...*’

<sup>203</sup> Acilius *FRHist* 7 F 7 = Strabo 5.3.3 C230: τοῦτο τίθεται σημεῖον τοῦ Ἑλληνικὸν εἶναι κτίσμα τὴν Ῥώμην, τὸ παρ’ αὐτοῖς τὴν πάτριον θυσίαν Ἑλληνικὴν εἶναι τῷ Ἡρακλεῖ. For Acilius’ date cf. Liv. *Epit.* 53; Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 22.4.

<sup>204</sup> D.H. *AR* 1.5.1 (Ἑλληνας τε αὐτοὺς ὄντας ἐπιδείξειν), 1.79.1 (Ἑλλαδα πόλιν).

<sup>205</sup> D.H. *AR* 7.68–9; cf. Liv. 2.36 (*ludi magni*); Macrobi. *Sat.* 1.11.3–5 (explanation of *instauratio* ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ).

<sup>206</sup> D.H. *AR* 7.70.1, 71.1: ἐπεὶ δὲ κατὰ τοῦτο γέγονα τῆς ἱστορίας τὸ μέρος, οὐκ οἶμαι δεῖν τὰ περὶ τὴν ἑορτὴν ἐπιτελούμενα ὑπ’ αὐτῶν παρελθεῖν, οὐχ ἵνα μοι χαριεστέρα γένηται προσθήκας λαβοῦσα θεατρικὰς καὶ λόγους ἀνθηροτέρους ἢ διήγησις, ἀλλ’ ἵνα τῶν ἀναγκαίων τι πιστώσῃται πραγμάτων, ὅτι τὰ συνοικίσαντα ἔθνη τὴν Ῥωμαίων πόλιν Ἑλληνικὰ ἦν ... ἐξ ἐκείνου ποιήσομαι τοῦ χρόνου τὴν τέκμαρσιν, ὅτ’ οὐπω τὴν τῆς Ἑλλάδος εἶχον ἡγεμονίαν οὐδὲ ἄλλην διαπόντιον οὐδεμίαν ἀρχήν, Κοίντῳ Φαβίῳ βεβαιωτῇ χρώμενος καὶ οὐδεμίας ἔτι δεόμενος πίστεως ἑτέρας· παλαιότατος γὰρ ἀνὴρ τῶν τὰ Ῥωμαικὰ συνταξαμένων, καὶ πίστιν οὐκ ἐξ ὧν ἤκουσε μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ὧν αὐτὸς ἔγνω παρεχόμενος.

evidence he provided was not just from what he had heard but also from what he knew himself.

The long description that followed, a key document for Roman culture in the third century BC, consisted of Fabius' detailed description of the procession to the Circus Maximus at the *ludi Romani*, with Dionysius' own comments interpolated.<sup>207</sup> One particular category of performer illustrates how profoundly Roman attitudes changed in the early second century BC.

The procession as described by Fabius included 'dancing bands of satyr-performers, presenting the Greek dance called *sikinnis*'; some of them were imitating *Sileno*i, in the shaggy costumes known equally from Athenian satyr-play and the fourth-century 'Praenestine' bronzes discussed in section 7 above.<sup>208</sup> As Fabius (in Dionysius) put it, 'they mocked and mimicked the serious movements, turning them into something laughable'.<sup>209</sup> The consuls' crackdown on 'Bacchanalia' took place about twenty years after Fabius was writing.

So effective was its long-term impact that by Cicero's time it had become an exemplary case of 'the strictness of our ancestors'; as he saw it, the old Romans would have had nothing to do with such performances.<sup>210</sup> But Dionysius knew better, as he also knew about the origins of the Roman festivals.<sup>211</sup> He was right to insist on the validity of what a contemporary witness, and a patrician senator at that, had described from his own experience. Free from his Roman contemporaries' idealising notions about the *maiores*, Dionysius had no problem imagining a Greek Rome, with Greek-style festivals, as late as the third century BC.

The same was true of Plutarch a century and a half later, and even more so, in that he wasn't a Rome resident and was much less conscious of the Roman literary tradition (section 1 above). He found in his wide reading various Greek authors who were interested in Roman origins, and he would have understood very well the sort of ambience for which their works were composed. No doubt one of them, unfortunately unnamed, was the source

<sup>207</sup> Fabius Pictor *FRHist* 1 F 15 (D.H. *AR* 7.71–3); briefly discussed by Wiseman (2015) 43–5.

<sup>208</sup> D.H. *AR* 7.72.10. Satyr-play: e.g., Hart (2010) 90–2 ('Papposilenos'), 94–5 (Pronomos vase). Bronzes: e.g., Bordenache Battaglia and Emiliozzi (1979) 41–3 (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum 54.136), Wiseman (2015) 38 fig. 13.

<sup>209</sup> D.H. *AR* 7.72.10 (κατέσκωπτόν τε καὶ κατεμιμοῦντο τὰς σπουδαίας κινήσεις ἐπὶ τὰ γελοιότερα μεταφέροντες); compare nn. 153 and 155 above on Rhinthon (τὰ τραγικὰ μεταρρυθμίζων ἐς τὸ γελοῖον) and Blaisos (σπουδογελοίων ποιητής).

<sup>210</sup> Cic. *Leg.* 2.37 (*seueritatem maiorum*); *Rep.* 4.10–12 = Augustine *De ciuitate Dei* 2.9.1–5, 13.3 (*cum artem ludicram scaenamque totam in probro ducerent*).

<sup>211</sup> See above, n. 196.

that narrated Romulus' wars in the light of temple-building and portentous plague in the 290s BC.

## 10. Conclusions

No-one is likely to dispute Bradley's judgement that the Romulus saga depended on an 'intricate web of oral and written means of memorialisation'.<sup>212</sup> This essay has tried to suggest what that process may have involved in practice, beginning with a necessary distinction between the two principal surviving narratives: that of Dionysius, living in Rome and consciously taking full account of the (comparatively late) Roman historiographical tradition, and that of Plutarch, less subject to such influence and perhaps more attuned to the continuing tradition of narrative performance at Greek festivals.

The various strands of argument may now be drawn together for the following chronological sequence of hypotheses:

- i. ca. 650–600 BC. The origin of Rome as a city-state, defined by the creation of a communal *agora* (the *forum Romanum*), was contemporary with the origin of Roman festivals, the institution of *ludi magni* (later *ludi Romani*) by the Bacchiad Lucumo son of Demaratus, alias Lucius Tarquinius 'king of Rome'.<sup>213</sup>
- ii. ca. 510–480 BC. After the expulsion of the Tarquins the wealth and ambition of the city they had created was inherited by the successor regime, which built grand new temples and funded expensive new festivals.<sup>214</sup>
- iii. ca. 350–300 BC. The cultural world of Rome as a 'Greek city' included familiarity with Athenian and Sicilian playwrights, and the performance of staged tragic plots in a Dionysiac setting.<sup>215</sup> 'Romulus' now existed, but only as an eponym, with no twin brother, no founding role and no heroic career.<sup>216</sup>
- iv. 338–ca. 290 BC. Successive *res gestae* episodes were created to make Romulus a precedent for Rome's hegemony over the Latins: first as

<sup>212</sup> Bradley (2020) 117: 'it is likely that [that] remains typical throughout the Republic'.

<sup>213</sup> Evidence: archaeological for the origin of the Forum; Dionysius and Strabo (perhaps from Antiochos of Syracuse) for Lucumo.

<sup>214</sup> Evidence: Dionysius, archaeologically confirmed for the Capitoline Jupiter and Castor temples.

<sup>215</sup> Evidence: the 'Praenestine' bronzes, and contemporary Italian red-figure vase-painting.

<sup>216</sup> Evidence: the Syracusan historians Alkimos and Kallias.



- the conqueror of the *prisci Latini*,<sup>217</sup> then as the statesman ensuring that victory led to co-operation and shared citizenship.<sup>218</sup>
- v. ca. 300 BC. Romulus was given divine ancestry, and a twin brother, by adapting the existing story of the Lares Praestites (sons of Hermes/Mercury), and the foundation of the city was attributed to ‘Remus and Romulus’.<sup>219</sup>
  - vi. ca. 293 BC. A subsequent story of Remus’ death was necessary, in order to make Romulus the sole founder and ruler. Romulus could now be given a divine exit with the story of his mysterious disappearance, his ascent to heaven in the chariot of Mars and his subsequent apparition announcing his new identity as the god Quirinus, whose temple was now dedicated.<sup>220</sup>
  - vii. ca. 290 BC. The story of the abduction of the women and its consequences was extended by adding a later war with the Sabines, as a precedent for the incorporation of the newly-conquered Sabines as *ciues sine suffragio*.<sup>221</sup> Titus Tatius thus became joint king with Romulus, but a subsequent story narrated his death too.
  - viii. ca. 240–170 BC. Written texts of poetry and narrative prose in Latin became normal. Naevius and Ennius, in drama and in epic, popularised the she-wolf story, with Aeneas’ daughter as the mother of the twins. Fabius Pictor, in the first prose history of Rome from the ‘foundation’, made the Trojan connection chronologically possible with the invention of Alba Longa and its dynasty of kings.<sup>222</sup>
  - ix. ca. 190–180 BC. Hostility to Greek culture was manifested in Roman public policy; rustic frugality was presented as the essential, and ancestral, Roman virtue.<sup>223</sup>
  - x. 133–31 BC. In a period of unprecedented political violence and civil war, the death of Remus was presented specifically as a fratricide, and the ‘ascension to heaven’ of Romulus was retold as his murder and the secret burial of the dismembered corpse by the senators.<sup>224</sup>

<sup>217</sup> Evidence: Pliny, Dionysius and Plutarch on horse-and-chariot statue groups at the Rostra and Volcanal.

<sup>218</sup> Evidence: the story of the abduction and the subsequent wars against Caenina, Crustumerium and Antemnae.

<sup>219</sup> Evidence: Diokles of Peparethos, with the bronze mirror, the statue-group at the Lupercal and the early Roman coinage (Cic. *Leg.* 1.8 for the order of names).

<sup>220</sup> Evidence: Cicero and *De viris illustribus* on the connection of apparition and temple.

<sup>221</sup> Evidence: Servius and Velleius on *ciuitas* without the vote.

<sup>222</sup> Evidence: surviving ‘fragments’ of the respective texts.

<sup>223</sup> Evidence: the action against ‘Bacchanalia’, Cato’s censorship, the burning of Numa’s books.

<sup>224</sup> Evidence: the late attestation of these variants (an argument from silence).

I don't imagine everyone will assent to every one of these hypotheses, but overall I believe they are enough to show that identifiable historical circumstances provide the most likely model for the creation and progressive development of the Romulus saga.

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